

**Campbell County
Economic Development Commission/CEDS Committee**

September 26, 2019

The regular meeting of the Campbell County Economic Development Commission was held on Thursday, September 26, 2019, in the Campbell County Citizen Services Building Conference Room, Rustburg, Virginia.

Members Present:

Willie Jones	Frank Davis	Kathy Carson
George Rosser	Hugh Bragg	Scott Blankinship
William Anderson	Richard Carroll	Kevin Davis

Members Absent:

Richard Metz
Eric Fletcher
Scott Tweedy

Also Present:

Frank Rogers, County Administrator
Mike Davidson, Director of Economic Development
Sarah Johnson, Economic Development Specialist
Kim Stewart, Economic Development Administrative Assistant

// Chairman Willie Jones called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m. and asked for comments. Mr. Jones proposed a correction to the meeting minutes of June 20, 2019, in the form of changing ‘megawatts’ to ‘megahertz’ at the bottom of the first page. With no other comments, Mr. Frank Davis made a motion to approve the minutes with the change, and Mr. Richard Carroll seconded the motion. With all in favor and none opposed, the minutes were approved unanimously.

// Mr. Davidson brought the members’ attention to Mr. Metz’s request in the last meeting for the Economic Development (E.D) department to draft a resolution letter to bring before the Board of Supervisors to request the Board dedicate at least one third of the revenue to be gained by the recently passed meals tax toward future economic infrastructure. Mr. Davidson explained that CCUSA recently met with the Board of Supervisors regarding infrastructure and Mr. Davidson told the EDC that the county actually has more infrastructure than many people may realize that is underutilized, but some areas lack in water and sewer capacity. So, Mr. Davidson stated that he would like to bring a brief summary of the meeting before the EDC at their next meeting for their review as well as some framework for the Commission to adopt as a resolution to then take before the Board. Every place that the Board has identified as “high growth” areas also has some level and limits of water and sewer capacity. However, he also informed the group that E.D. is currently working on the Comprehensive Plan, and that the comp plan is what decides where CCUSA extends their sewer lines. E.D. will send out information on the Comprehensive Plan to the EDC and request their feedback as E.D. makes changes to it. Some forms soliciting feedback from Campbell County citizens on what they would like to see in the County were also passed out at the meeting.

// Mrs. Sarah Johnson then reviewed in summary the items from the Project Updates that have changed since the last meeting. As a reminder, these updates are provided to the members one week prior to the meeting in their meeting packet. Mrs. Johnson informed the group that the Wards Road shopping center construction has begun. The Seneca Cell Tower construction is slated to begin in November. The Tru by Hilton construction is underway. Some new compliance monitoring has been added to the Project Updates. And, finally, the Industrial Development Authority has made the decision to have another building constructed and is in the process of deciding on building dimensions.

// Mr. Davidson next turned the Commission's attention to the CEDS discussion that has been ongoing for the last several meetings. One of the things E.D. does is report certain metrics to several entities including the Board of Supervisors, The Industrial Development Authority, and the Economic Development Commission to show what Economic Development has been working on and to provide statistical information about the county. A new tool to capture this information is called a Dashboard, and Mr. Davidson turned over the meeting to Mrs. Johnson to describe this tool to the Commission and to get feedback from the EDC to make sure that E.D. captures and reports back the information they feel is important to include in the Dashboard.

// Mrs. Johnson described a Dashboard as an interactive means to get information about other areas. A Dashboard could include information such as workforce, wage distribution, job distribution, population statistics, data to encourage business growth and attraction, and more. Mrs. Johnson showed the Commission, by way of a few websites, some examples of Dashboards on a variety of different Economic Development websites. Thus far, the data E.D. has been tracking and plans to add to their Dashboard includes capital investment, job growth, unemployment, educational enrollment, wage distribution, population growth, and housing. Mr. Jones asked what the overall intent of a Dashboard is, and Mr. Davidson answered that it is a report out to stakeholders of what has happened and work that has been done.

// Mrs. Johnson then pointed out the handouts that were left at each person's seat, which were provided to collect ideas from the EDC of what they feel is important to include on the Dashboard. Mr. Richard Carroll spoke up to suggest adding something that will attract middle income residents versus just trying to attract industries. Mr. Davidson answered that the Board of Supervisors is having conversations about that topic currently because in order to service new employers, the county has to have people, and the low unemployment rate right now shows the job market is really tight. However, residential development costs county taxes much more than business and industrial development, and residential development doesn't generate enough taxes to pay for the services that it has. County Administrator Frank Rogers elaborated, stating that the Board is looking for a good way to encourage residential growth and that was one of the reasons for meeting with CCUSA, because there is zoned, available property in proximity or at our utility structure if people want to build. But it is difficult to come up with an incentive strategy that works. With a business, you prove out the tax return and it justifies it to the tax base. You can't do that with residential development, so it is taking a leap of faith that it will bring people and business in. Yet, it won't ever pay for itself. The Board is interested, though, and there needs to be more work done to see if there is a way to encourage it and if the county is going to financially invest in it. Mr. Rogers continued, saying one of the good questions that came out of the work session on utilities is to ask why isn't there a market for residential growth in the county when there are utilities in the ground and land available near the utilities that's zoned for development? Is it because it's not marketed? Is it a perception about the county? Is the pricing structure wrong?

// Mr. Carroll asked what Bedford County did to explode in growth? Mr. Scott Blankinship said that Bedford County welcomed growth whereas Campbell County does not and that he has developers and investors who will not come to Campbell County because of opposition they have been met with in the past. He does believe that the pendulum is swinging, but that it is still a problem. Mr. Rogers agreed, having worked in Bedford before Campbell County, that Bedford did not have to seek out the growth because it was coming to them on its own. He stated that there is a perception in the development community that Bedford is the place to go. Mr. Carroll stated that the lake kept that perception and Mr. Rogers responded that the lake became a destination in Bedford County and Campbell County does not have a destination yet. Mrs. Kathy Carson spoke up and mentioned that it is her belief that Bedford County's plan to move to two central schools will push people back over to the Evington area so that the children will have somewhere to go to school. Mr. Rogers reiterated that the Board of Supervisors is on board with residential development within the county. Although they do not have a clear strategy for how to do it, he is very interested in changing the narrative around Campbell County as "lesser" compared to, in particular, Forest, and that if the county can get some metrics out particularly regarding quality of the schools, quality of the water, quality of community, etc., that would be a good thing for the county.

// Mr. Jones remembered that the Timberlake area used to be the desirable area back 40 years ago and then there was a shift in the 1980s to Forest. Mr. Rogers agreed and continued that if they could find out how to

shift it back, it would be great. But another challenge for Campbell is the inventory of older houses and the county may have to contemplate a suburban renewal. Mrs. Carson believes it is already happening for Altavista and that as the old Lane Company executives are dying, younger buyers are purchasing those old houses and renovating them. Mr. George Rosser and Mr. William Anderson stated that no new houses were being built, however, to their knowledge. They also cited all the business closings in the area in the last several years that have hurt the area. Mrs. Carson argued, however, that the young people buying houses in Altavista can't afford houses in Lynchburg and Forest. She reiterated that the schools are going to make a difference and that Campbell County needs to market its schools to attract development. Mr. Anderson believed that the county needs more business to attract residential growth, though. Mr. Davidson agreed with Mr. Anderson that jobs do bring people, yet also explained that the trend now is for people to pick where they want to live first, and then find a job close by. They want walkable and bike-able communities with lots of activities, bars, restaurants, etc., nearby.

// Bringing attention back to the Dashboard, Mr. Davidson asked for any other comments or suggestions from the group of things to add to the Dashboard. When Mr. Jones asked for clarification on whether the intent would be tell our story primarily to our citizens or to try to change the narrative about Campbell County as was suggested earlier in the meeting? Mr. Davidson stated that he believed the audience really would be everyone except industry. He elaborated, explaining that industries are looking for how many people you have that could be their potential employees, but they aren't interested in how many new jobs we created last year or how much capital investment we have coming into Campbell County. Mr. Davidson then reiterated that although the Dashboard is a marketing tool, it really is more for the stakeholders and citizens than external customers.

// Next, Mr. Davidson brought the members' attention to the proposed meeting schedule for 2020 and the meeting dates were not in conflict with the members' schedules. Mr. Davidson then turned the meeting back over to Chairman Jones.

// Mr. Jones asked for any further comments from the members and Mr. Rogers informed the group of a Board Input Session coming up on Tuesday, October 15, 2019, at Hyland Heights Baptist Church at 6:00 p.m. The Board of Supervisors had a work session last year as well and garnered a lot of good feedback from the community, and Mr. Rogers said he welcomed their participation once again this year. Mr. Blankinship thought that the Board called for a Broadband committee as a result of last year's session and Mr. Rogers affirmed that he was correct and the Broadband Committee has been meeting quarterly. The Board of Supervisors have identified \$1,000,000 that they are going to use to capitalize a Broadband project and will issue out RFPs to private providers to see how they want to partner with Campbell County. Additionally, Mr. Davidson secured a Tobacco Commission grant for roughly \$160,000 to do a small Broadband expansion in the Naruna area.

// Mr. Davidson then took a moment to reintroduce Mr. Kevin Davis, a former member of the Economic Development Commission who moved away for a job but is now back in the area and serving on the Commission once again.

// Hearing no further comments or questions, Chairman Jones called for a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Carson motioned and Mr. Rosser seconded. With all in favor and none opposed, the meeting was adjourned at 12:48 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Campbell County Economic Development Commission will take place on Thursday, March 26, 2020, at 12:00 noon.