

Campbell County Economic Development Commission

June 17, 2004

The regular meeting of the Campbell County Economic Development Commission was held on Thursday, June 17, 2004 in the Campbell County Library Conference Room, Rustburg, Virginia. The members present were:

Donald E. Atkins
William Anderson
William E. Calohan, III
G. Michael Damron

Herbert Guthrie
O. Richard Metz, Chairman
William F. Overacre
Frank A. Wright

Those absent:

Kyle S. Rosser
Lester Wooldridge
Marvin L. Clements

Also Present:

J. Michael Davidson, Economic Development Director
R. David Laurrell, County Administrator
Jamie Banton, Administrative Aide

Chairman Richard Metz called the meeting to order at 12:03PM. The April 15, 2004 meeting minutes were approved as presented.

For informational purposes, the Commission was provided a Project Updates Report. The items on this report were as follows:

Industrial Prospect Activity: A Canadian site visit to the Brookneal Industrial Building was held on June 15. A previous site visit was conducted on April 28. While the April visit went well, we could not meet the client's needs.

Economic Development has received several requests/inquiries for facilities ranging from 10,000 to 25,000 square feet. We are not aware of any available buildings meeting those requirements.

On May 28, a VEDP representative toured the Simpson Property near Altavista. This is the only mega site (over 1,600 contiguous acres under single ownership) located in Campbell County. Rail and public water serve the property, with sewer and natural gas nearby, and though highway access does present some challenges, it is acceptable.

The Director is working with a Lynchburg firm that wants to expand by acquiring an existing Campbell County facility. From comments received from VEDP and other sources, prospect activity is increasing.

Tobacco Indemnification Grants: The Southside Economic Development Committee met May 11 to make recommendations on the 2004 Economic Development grant applications. The Tobacco Commission met May 20, at which time they approved the Committee's recommendation. Campbell County submitted two applications (1) Brookneal Building (\$200,000) and (2) a median crossover for the Seneca Commerce Park (\$80,000). The Town of Brookneal submitted an application for \$80,000 for upgrades to their wastewater treatment system upgrades. The Tobacco Commission reduced the Brookneal Building request to \$125,000, and the median break request was denied. The Brookneal request was approved. A second round of grant applications opens in November 2004. We intend to submit applications for the second round. Also, annual reporting on 2003 grants received has been completed, but we had to ask for deadline extensions on all four projects.

Incubator Feasibility Study: Staff met with John Aughenbaugh, project manager, and Dr. Ted Settle, Director of Virginia Tech's Office of Economic Development, on June 7th to discuss progress on this project. An Incubator Study Committee was formed, and they will meet on June 24th to help with Virginia Tech's Demand Analysis. At this point, the final study report is due to Campbell County by August 15, 2004.

Airport Commerce Park: The Project Management Committee met once in April and once in May. The Committee members have toured the park property, and they are becoming educated with the history of the park project, Lynchburg Regional Airport and their mission. The process of evaluating and defining the potential of a Regional Airport Authority was discussed as well.

Seneca Commerce Park: Agreements with VDOT for \$215,000 in Revenue Sharing Funds are complete. We submitted payment to VDOT for a State Environmental Review Process (SERP) that takes at least 60-days to complete. Approximately 26 state agencies are notified of the project, and each have the ability to make comments. We hope to release the RFB by July 2004.

Joint Enterprise Zone Application: No word to date on the status of the applications.

Brookneal-Campbell County Airport Authority: The Authority entered into a contract with Delta Airport Consultants, Inc. for professional services. The Authority received bids for the hangar structure on June 10.

Dearing Ford Business & Manufacturing Center: There is interest in a portion of the property from a commercial developer.

Wireless Broadband Internet Access System: The Brookneal Wireless Broadband Internet Access system is operational and serving business customers. We are ready to install a second set of antenna to reach additional areas and provide service to subscribers. Pure Internet, Inc. the contract operator, is pleased with the progress even though we had to reduce the service price to be competitive.

Industrial Development Authority: IDA activity has increased. The Incubator Feasibility Study is an IDA project. The IDA owns the Brookneal Wireless Broadband system. The ownership and refurbishment of the former Brookneal Building takes a lot of time and energy. The IDA Chair organized a volunteer work crew on June 3rd to paint, trim trees and hedges and to power was the exterior of the facility. A commercial crew was hired to clean up the office space. We secured a lease with Thomasville in Appomattox for the storage of surplus furniture. The revenue will offset monthly electrical costs.

Frank Wright, Chairman of the IDA, stated that he appreciated the work of Mr. Davidson, his wife Brenda, and the other volunteers who helped clean up the Brookneal Building.

// Mr. Davidson explained that during Business Appreciation Week (May 16-22), staff mailed a letter signed by the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors to every business/individual with a Campbell County business license. A total of 3,180 letters were mailed expressing our gratitude for their contributions to our economy. Mr. Davidson received positive feedback from the business community with only one negative response.

Mr. Laurrell stated that the county has contacted legislators about the business license tax. Many business owners feel that the cut-off amount for paying a license fee (\$99,999.99) versus the BPOL tax (\$100,000) is unfair. The state code does not allow localities any flexibility with the tax. Campbell County would like to see the BPOL tax implemented on some sort of sliding scale or to take the first \$100,000 into consideration. As the tax code is written now, if a business makes \$100,000 or more, the BPOL tax reverts back to the first \$1.00 earned even though a business with less than \$100,000 in gross receipts only pays a small license fee for the same dollar.

About 35 people attended the Business Appreciation Week luncheon held at Meade Lake on May 19, 2004. Senator Charles Hawkins spoke during the lunch, and Linwood Duncan, Congressman Virgil Goode's press secretary, also attended. Because of pre-existing commitments, several of our large companies could not attend the function. Mr. Laurrell stated that he felt that there should be either a local or regional appreciation function, but not both.

// Next, Mr. Davidson discussed the 2003 employment creation and capital investment announcements as tracked by VEDP. Four of the ten Region 2000 announcements took place in Campbell County. We announced 58% of the new capital investment for the region and 47% of new employment. Mr. Davidson explained that competition for new project was increasing, and there is information that some states like Georgia and North Carolina have passed legislation to provide more incentives to companies located in their states.

// Mr. Davidson stated that infrastructure development is key to sustained growth. Current usage and availability fees may or may not help attract new business to growth

corridors. In 2000, while residential customers could finance availability fees over a specified period, businesses were required to pay all fees upfront. Some of those requirements have changed to make utility connections more attractive to business. Mr. Davidson explained that these issues need to be discussed with Mike Damron (CCUSA) so that Campbell County can do all it can to assist business growth.

// Lastly, Mr. Davidson gave a brief update on the planning progress for the Airport Commerce Park. The Project Management Committee hopes to have the administrative agreement in place soon. Funding issues will determine the speed of the project.

Following a general discussion of the before-mentioned matters and with no other items presented for consideration, on a motion of Mr. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Adkins, the meeting adjourned at 12:55PM until Thursday, August 19, 2004 at 12:00PM.

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