

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

April 27, 2017

The regular meeting of the Campbell County Economic Development Commission was held on Thursday, April 27, 2017, in the Campbell County Citizen Services Building Conference Room, Rustburg, Virginia.

Members Present:

William Anderson
Richard Carroll
Kathy Carson
Willie Jones

Richard Metz
George Rosser
Scott Tweedy

Members Absent:

Hugh Bragg
Frank Davis
Kevin Davis
Lester Wooldridge

Also Present:

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

// Mr. Mike Davidson called the meeting to order at 12:09 p.m.

// Mr. Davidson asked the members if they had any comments or corrections to the minutes from the previous meeting, held on February 23, 2017. No corrections were made and a motion was made by Mr. Richard Metz and seconded by Mr. Richard Carroll to approve the minutes.

// Mr. Davidson reminded the members that the Project Updates were sent out to them a week prior to the meeting and informed them that no changes were made after being sent. No members had comment regarding project updates and the discussion moved on to CEDS updates, which would account for the majority of this meeting.

CEDS

// A main purpose for the meeting was for the EDC members to review the categories and priorities given in the 2012 update of the SWOT analysis, and amend them as needed for the 2017 CEDS update, which needs to be completed in 2017 to meet the Federal EDA's requirement to complete the update within a 5-year window.

// Mr. Davidson informed the Commission that a Citizen Input Committee will be formed soon that mirrors the demographics of the County. Potential dates of meetings were discussed but not solidified. The intention is to provide community members with an update on SWOT information and trends compared from 2012 to 2017 and to receive input from the community. The next big meeting will be to discuss projects and goals. Once the community meetings have taken place, the Input Committee's suggestions will be incorporated into the CEDS update for 2017 for EDC review, and ultimately the final CEDS document will be presented to the Board of Supervisors for approval.

SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis

// The members of the Economic Development Commission reviewed the Strengths and Weaknesses categories ranked in 2012 with the following results.

// STRENGTHS:

Higher Education was voted the highest Strength in the 2012 CEDS Update. It was mentioned that there may be a higher demand for certifications and credentialed programs in 2017. Vocational programs are gaining strength at CVCC, as Mr. Rosser noted and praised, but Mr. Davidson countered that as a state-run institution, CVCC is still emphasizing and promoting degree programs. Mr. Scott Tweedy asked if the schools are stepping up to meet vocational needs, and Mr. Metz indicated that he believed the County schools are declining. Mr. Frank Rogers asked Mr. Davidson if the goal of the exercise of reviewing the SWOT analysis is to determine if the listed items from 2012 are still relevant or if changes need to be made. With an affirmative answer, the question was presented as to whether Higher Education still remains a strength in 2017. The members agreed it should stay on the list.

Quality of Life represented a low cost-of-living and relatively close proximity to the beach, as well as other positive opportunities and was deemed a high strength due to these when ranked in 2011. Mr. Davidson asked if the term “Quality of Life” needed to be renamed and remain a strength. Consensus indicated it should remain on the **Strengths** list.

Workforce Training. Mr. Davidson explained, answering a question by Mr. Tweedy, that the items presented were ranked in 2012 and are listed in the order of importance. As part of the 2017 review, the Commission members will have an opportunity to re-rank.

Downtown Revitalization/Main Street Program. Mr. Davidson informed that the downtown revitalization programs have been completed. Mr. Rogers questioned if one of the County strengths was having the existence of a vibrant town but not necessarily specific to Main Street. The members agreed that the phrase “Main Street Program” was too narrow of a description and should be revised.

Strong Regional Service Collaboration—Regional Alliances. Mr. Davidson explained that this refers to the Blue Ridge Regional Jail, the service authorities, the landfill, and a number of other joint ventures such as the Campbell County libraries. Ms. Kathy Carson indicated that in her line of business she sees this category as being a weakness. Mr. Rogers countered, however, that from a financial position, the regionalization of the landfill has been financially beneficial to the County. Mr. Tweedy questioned, amongst the conversations, if the members could leave this item as a strength but also add it to the **Weaknesses** list, to which Mr. Davidson answered affirmatively.

Local Economic Development Programs. Mr. Davidson updated the members, informing that this category has not changed a great deal. There was no input given by the members and Mr. Davidson continued to the next category.

Mass Transit—Altavista Bus. There was a consensus among members that mass transit in Altavista is not a strength in terms of a selling point to bring new business to the County.

Regional Tourism Marketing Effort. Mr. Davidson reminded the members that the Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce was the regional tourism marketing organization in 2012 but no longer exists now. The marketing efforts are now the responsibility of the Lynchburg Economic Development Office. Although cooperative work still occurs within tourism to help promote our sites, for example the Artisan Trail, Mr. Davidson recommended it be removed from the **Strengths**. Mr. Rogers suggested it could be moved to an **Opportunity** and Mr. Metz and Ms. Carson suggested it be incorporated into *Regional Service*.

Favorable Government Environment as well as *Major Corporations in the County*. Mr. Davidson believed both of these categories should stay on the **Strengths** and, with no comment from the members, he moved forward.

Overall Economic Health of the County. Mr. Davidson suggested there may be a perception that the County has weakened in this area since 2012 but is not sure if it is accurate and questioned whether the Commission members agreed. Mr. Tweedy indicated that the members had to defer to the Economic Development department as the experts for this. However, Mr. Jones asked if there was data that would compare tax rate versus income data, which would show statistically how the County fares compared to other areas. Mr. Rogers and Mr. Davidson answered affirmatively, to which Mr. Jones commented that this would also feed into *Quality of Life*. No definitive answer was given regarding leaving the category as a **Strength**.

Accessible Healthcare Network. Mr. Davidson suggested that *accessibility* of healthcare has improved since 2012, but it does not speak to changes in affordability or the corporate nature of healthcare over the last five years. The members agreed that this category should remain on the **Strengths**.

Brookneal/Campbell County Airport. Mr. Davidson suggested this category has not changed much excepting the growth of Liberty University's School of Aeronautics, because the school has to have airports outside of the Lynchburg airport to train their pilots, and the Brookneal/Campbell County (BCC) Airport has seen the most use from the school. Mr. Jones questioned, though, if that was a selling point for the County. Mr. Rogers felt this category was too specific and wondered if it should be "*Proximity to Air Travel*," which would also include the Falwell Airport and the Lynchburg Airport, as they are located in the County. Another question brought up, this time by Ms. Carson, was whether Liberty University's use of the New London airport in Bedford County would have an impact on the BCC Airport. Mr. Davidson answered that if some of the aircrafts housed at New London moved to BCC, then the County would receive property taxes on them. Mr. Davidson answered a question posed by Mr. Rosser regarding fuel sales, indicating that they are improving, yet are nowhere near their potential. No definitive answer was given regarding leaving the category as is or renaming.

Renewable Energy Potential. Mr. Davidson explained that he believes this category was added in 2012 due to the conversion of a coal plant to a Biomass plant that Dominion Power operates. He went on to add that this is a selling point to "green" companies interested in renewable energy, and that the word "Potential" may need to be removed from the category. Mr. Metz added that he believes a windmill will come to the area before too long as well.

Available Buildings. Mr. Davidson explained this category needs to be removed from the **Strengths**. Those sites, such as the former Lane Company or Burlington, were stripped and sold for scrap, thus destroying them and removing them as possibilities.

Overall Workforce. Mr. Davidson described this as a still very positive category that needed to remain on the **Strengths**.

Utility Network and Capacity. Mr. Davidson explained this is talking about water, sewer, and electricity and in his opinion remains an asset.

// Mr. Davidson asked the Commission members for any categories that were not on the **Strengths** list they think should be. Mr. Carroll thinks *Teachers* should be added but also said they could be listed under **Opportunities**, **Threats**, and **Weaknesses** as well. He said they, as well as police protection, are paid too low. Ms. Carson agreed. Mr. Metz stated that to effect positive change, it would have to come from the voting booth. Mr. Davidson summed up that, from all the comments he'd heard, he had not heard anything to support *Teachers* as being a strength. Mr. Rogers suggested adding *Retaining Quality Educators* under the **Threats** category. Mr. Tweedy asked if the topic could be revisited later, to which Mr. Davidson answered yes. Mr. Davidson asked if there were any other additions to add to **Strengths** and there were no answers.

// Mr. Davidson explained to the group that he would take the same information presented at this meeting to the Public Meetings to get the public opinion and would have these public meetings take place before coming back together for the next EDC meeting.

// **WEAKNESSES:**

Technology/Income/Housing/Skills Divide Throughout the County. Ms. Carson stated there is a lack of availability of desirable housing in the County and a lack of builders. Lenders are sending pre-qualified buyers to Ms. Carson and other agents, and they are unable to find properties for them. She also mentioned, in answer to a question posed by Mr. Tweedy, that Rustburg is a desirable area now due to the school systems, as well as proximity to many areas, including Liberty University and the by-pass. Mr. Rogers commented that the weakness is “Housing Availability.”

Adequate Broadband Deployment. Mr. Davidson indicated that in 2012 this category made the **Weaknesses** list due to a lack of adequate broadband availability. He went on to say the problem still exists but instead of a lack of service, it is a lack of capacity. The wording needs to be revised due to this. Ms. Carson believed it has improved in some areas, but Mr. Davidson indicated the problem still exists in the rural areas, regardless of progress made. Mr. Tweedy stated that it has improved some but still has “far to go,” to which Mr. Anderson agreed.

Specialized, Skilled Workforce—Long Term. Mr. Davidson indicated this as still a weakness, stating that according to the Workforce Investment Board, more than 2,500 jobs in this region could be filled immediately if sufficiently skilled workers were available. Larger companies like Areva and BWXT do not see the problem because they are able to pay well, but the smaller businesses that can’t match those salaries struggle to find workers.

Quality and Quantity of Housing. Mr. Davidson summarized that when this category was chosen in 2011, the issue was that there was sufficient housing starting around \$90,000 but no higher-end housing, such as \$250,000 or \$500,000, available in Campbell County and no builders pursuing those larger projects. Mr. Davidson asked Ms. Carson for her input regarding housing availability currently. Ms. Carson explained that the County does have some upper-end houses now, but most of them are custom-built. There are houses in the \$350,000-\$400,000 range but not as many in the \$250,000 range except for older houses. Mr. Jones asked if the County zoning is hindering housing development, to which Ms. Carson did answer, “A little bit.” Mr. Davidson said that 80-90% of Campbell County is zoned agricultural and that in 2000-2001 the County began doing three-acre lots and stopped one-acre lots, which reduced the number of single-wide mobile-home building permits from 60% to 40%. Mr. Jones then clarified his question to ask if the County zoning is having an *impact* on the lack of availability of homes. Mr. Davidson did not think so, but Ms. Carson interjected that the impact she has noticed has been on lots where multiple homes (for family members, for example) were put on the same land and later the land is sold and sub-divided, but there is not adequate availability for ingress and egress. This is due to the state no longer building residential roads and is therefore a state issue rather than County. Mr. Rogers suggested that the bigger “land use impediment, if there is one” is water and sewer and gave an example of someone wanting a \$300,000 house on a half-acre of land and wanting to be connected to public water and sewer. Mr. Jones, Ms. Carson, and Mr. Metz all agreed this should be added to the **Weaknesses** list.

Lack of Modern Industrial Buildings. Mr. Davidson explained that Modern Industrial Buildings didn’t exist in the area in 2012 and they’re still not in Campbell County in 2017.

Sustainability of Emergency Services. Mr. Davidson thinks there has been improvement in this area, to which Mr. Metz commented that it is transitioning. Mr. Rogers asked if it is coming off the list as a weakness and to be moved to the **Strengths**. Mr. Rosser wondered if there has been a change in volume of service since the Altavista EMS closed, to which Mr. Rogers answered that he has not seen a monthly report as of yet. After some discussion, it was agreed that the category should be moved to the **Strengths**.

Industrial Sites. Mr. Davidson indicated he thinks the industrial sites are in better shape than they were in 2012. The only weakness he sees is that the County does not have large tract acreage industrial sites, but there also are not a lot of large tract projects at this time. He suggested that it could be removed from the **Weaknesses** and potentially moved to the **Opportunities** section to look for larger tract sites.

Loss of Leadership—People Working in the County but Living Elsewhere. Mr. Davidson indicated that when this item was originally added, it pointed to an “exodus” of the types of people they considered to be leadership moving out of the County. He looked back at the last CEDS update to see that this item was referring specifically to the towns of Altavista and Brookneal. The group agreed to remove this item as it no longer applies.

Regional Marketing. Mr. Davidson suggested this item could be removed. In 2012, there was a regional marketing organization, but they had allocated their funds elsewhere and so they were not doing marketing. However, that organization is doing marketing now.

Lack of Infrastructure at Key Locations. The group agreed this point had already been talked about and they moved on to the next item.

Lack of Widespread Rural/Agricultural Protection. Mr. Rogers suggested that it seemed this item was more about “proactively supporting farms.” The group agreed the item needed to be reworded and moved to the **Opportunities** section.

Limited Air Service. In 2012, as Mr. Davidson explained, this item was referring to commercial air service and that this item has become even more of a weakness since 2012. In 2012, Delta was still in Lynchburg, but pulled out to focus their assets in Roanoke. Due to this, now only one airport is flying out of Lynchburg and it only flies south to Charlotte. There is no northern connection. He went on to explain that for someone who needed to fly north, depending on their destination, they would be better off driving and may reach their destination in as little as only two hours later than flying, which might entice them to just drive.

Limited Historic/Cultural Attractions. According to Mr. Davidson, nothing has changed from 2012 to 2017 for this item category.

Limited Road Network. Mr. Davidson indicated this category had been referring to the lack of a major interstate in the area, to which Mr. Anderson commented that we still need one. From an industrial perspective, prospective businesses appear to be more open now than in 2012 to the reality that they would not be located directly off of an interstate and are more open to good four-lane access. Mr. Davidson indicated also that there’s nothing the County can do to get an interstate in the area and that this item should come off the **Weaknesses** list.

Declining Industrial/Population Base in Towns. Mr. Davidson shared that this continues, and that he believes Altavista is much more stable than Brookneal, but, as Mr. Anderson commented, it is still a weakness.

Demographic Changes. This item was concerning trying to retain the youth in Campbell County, and that the issue the County has with the age of the workforce has not changed. Mr. Rosser commented that from the last CEDS update, it explained that kids would come back to visit their parents but not to move back to the area, and he agreed that that is still true. Per Mr. Davidson, the County needs to do a better job of retaining local college students after they have graduated. Ms. Carson, however, pointed out that she is seeing multi-generational families moving to this area to be near their children who are attending Liberty University.

Expectation of Government Services Versus Willingness to Pay. According to Mr. Rosser, this will continue, because people will continue to need EMS. He also mentioned that the volunteers do not have the necessary time off or money to pursue further education.

Localized Economy. Mr. Davidson has seen a change for this item. Mr. Rosser agreed, saying that Campbell County is not seeing the economic growth some other counties are experiencing. Mr. Davidson commented that the northern end of the County fares better than the southern end.

Manufacturing Sector. Mr. Davidson indicated he was unsure why this was put on the **Weaknesses** list. Several EDC members mentioned layoffs in the Altavista area over the last five years, and Mr. Davidson countered that there have also been several new hires in the area as well, specifically mentioning the companies BGF, Graham Packaging, Schrader Bridgeport, and Standard Insurance. There was discussion amongst Ms. Carson, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Metz, and Mr. Davidson regarding where some workers are living versus working, and Mr. Davidson stated that Economic Development does not have a way to get that information.

// Mr. Davidson asked if anyone had any other weaknesses to add to the list and Mr. Rogers asked what feedback Mr. Davidson has gotten from prospects that decided to go somewhere else. Mr. Davidson answered that 90 percent of responses is that the County does not have the buildings they're looking for.

// Mr. Rosser asked Mr. Davidson if any construction companies have sought to go in to build a building like a warehouse, or industrial park, to help save the County money. Mr. Davidson answered that there are companies that specialize in doing that sort of project, but that the County has not found them. He also explained that companies that do those types of builds expect to have a tenant in place within 30 days of finishing the build or for the County to start paying them rent. He added that most private companies do not wish to invest in industrial property, because they don't know if the property will sell. They will invest in residential housing because they know that will sell.

// Mr. Davidson informed the Commission that due to time constraint, the **Opportunities** and **Threats** would be discussed at a future meeting. Furthermore, ranking for all the categories would take place at a future meeting as well. Mr. Davidson also informed the members of the community meetings whose dates have not been determined yet. He informed the members that Economic Development would send out invitations to specific people as well as follow up with phone calls and emails, and would also post an advertisement in the newspaper.

// Mr. Davidson asked Mr. Rogers if he had any County Administration topics to bring before the members, and he informed everyone that the County Budget would go to a Public Hearing on May 2, 2017.

// Mr. Davidson then asked the EDC members if they had anything for discussion, and they did not.

// With no other items presented for consideration and a motion from Mr. George Rosser, seconded by Mr. Richard Metz, Mr. Davidson adjourned the meeting at 1:37 P.M. The next EDC meeting will be held on Thursday, June 22, 2017, at 12:00 noon in the Campbell County Citizen Services Conference Room.