

**Campbell County
Economic Development Commission**

March 18, 2021

The regular meeting of the Campbell County Economic Development Commission was held on Thursday, March 18, 2021, in the Campbell County Haberer Building Multi-Use Room, Rustburg, Virginia.

Members Present:

Willie Jones
Kathy Carson
Scott Blankinship

Hugh Bragg
William Anderson
Dean Monroe

Scott Tweedy
Eric Fletcher
Richard Carroll

Members Absent:

George Rosser
Frank Davis
Kevin Davis

Also Present:

Sgt. Jeff Rater, Sheriff's Department
Tyler Carraway, Director of Finance and Strategic Initiatives
Nina Rezai, Economic Development Manager
Sarah Johnson, Economic Development Specialist
Kim Stewart, Economic Development Administrative Assistant

// Chairman Jones opened the meeting at 12:02 p.m. and requested a motion to approve the September 24, 2020, meeting minutes. Mr. Carroll motioned, and Mr. Tweedy seconded. With all in favor and none opposed, the motion was approved.

2021 Meeting Schedule

// Ms. Rezai reviewed the meeting schedule and informed the group that they would meet in the Haberer Multi-Use Room for 2021.

CARES Act Extension

// Mr. Carraway explained that the Campbell County CARES business grant has been extended until the end of 2021 or until funds are exhausted. He clarified for Chairman Jones that it is not a revenue replacement program, but a reimbursement for items purchased to help fight the spread of COVID-19, including things like hand sanitizers, masks, gloves, etc. He also told them the original \$5,000 cap per business was removed and encouraged the group to spread the word to their business community. Ms. Rezai interjected to let everyone know that Mrs. Johnson would be resending CARES Act brochure to them to share with their peers.

Projects Updates

// Next Ms. Rezai explained an extension office opening, describing the position as a liaison between Economic Development (E.D.) and the agriculture industry in the County. She encouraged the group to share the opening with anyone they knew who might be interested.

// She also shared the exciting news of the sale of 15.6 acres to Pinnacle Trailers in Seneca Commerce Park, as well as a grant project the department is applying for, for another County business interested in expanding their operations in the County. The USED A grant is for a 35,000 square foot facility and the application will be submitted by the end of the month.

Website Marketing Update

// Mrs. Johnson gave the group a tour of the department's new E.D. website, highlighting the newly established newsletter, business directory, and interactive calendar, as well as information about business incentives, site selection, and many other things. The site selection section links to the Virginia Economic Development Partnership's page, which shows all the sites Campbell County has listed. Ms. Rezai added that any commercial property listings the group may have or know about can be added to the list, which is helpful because out-of-town site selectors use the VEDP's site for this tool. She also said that the EDC members are listed on the website with their names, but contact information can be added if they would like.

Incentive Policy

// The incentive discussion intent was described as determining if the current policy should be revised. Ms. Rezai reminded the members that local government uses incentive programs to stimulate growth in a certain area of business. She also reviewed that for large businesses, the machinery and tools investment is \$1 million dollars minimum and \$250,000 minimum for small businesses, and that the number of employees added must be 25 minimum for large businesses or 10 minimum for small businesses and the jobs have to start at \$16.00 per hour minimum.

// Ms. Rezai asked if the group thought general small businesses that rent a facility should be considered for incentives. Mr. Monroe commented that he would rather see 10 businesses with 5 people come to the county versus one business with 50 people. He also thought that if a business that owned and rented out their property received an incentive, the incentive should trickle down to the renter. Furthermore, he thought that the County should have a system to help stimulate business in the struggling areas of the County, such as Brookneal.

Chairman Jones wondered if expanding broadband coverage to rural areas would help small businesses, because he noted that the broadband is pretty poor currently. Ms. Rezai asked if the broadband initiative through B2X has reached his area and he said no and that he lives in the suburbs of Gladys. Mr. Monroe echoed Chairman Jones's views for his area, which is Brookneal. Mr. Blankinship didn't understand why the County didn't use InfinaSky for the broadband expansion and asked who was policing the broadband project. Mr. Carraway said the "policing"

is done by those signing up for the service and then making it known if they're having problems with the connections. Ms. Rezai said that the representative for B2X provides updates to the Board of Supervisors each month with their project completion percentage and any issues they are experiencing with the project. She also let them know there is broadband information on both the E.D. website and the County website and that there is a Broadband Authority that County Administration supports and that E.D. is acting as a carrier of information to the EDC. She expressed that as she understood, one of the functions of the EDC is to disseminate the information they learn at the EDC meetings to their business community. She continued that what E.D. sees typically is that when community members have concerns, they reach out to their supervisor to make them known, so if anyone is having problems with County-led projects, she encouraged the EDC to share with their neighbors that they can speak to their supervisor about it. She said that as far as business growth is concerned, maybe some sort of broadband assistance should be considered for new businesses coming in.

// Chairman Jones asked who has the authority to make changes to the Incentive Policy, and Ms. Rezai answered that E.D. develops the incentive plan but the Board of Supervisors has ultimate authority over accepting and adopting the policy. She then asked the group if they thought it was a hindrance for businesses to be required to have a business plan to be eligible for incentives, and Chairman Jones did not think so because he said that the Small Business Development Center spends a fair amount of time working with small businesses to help develop their plan and get them started. Mr. Monroe added that he didn't think any bank would approve a loan to a business without a business plan.

// Ms. Rezai asked next if any type of grant should be explored for helping clean up blighted property but the EDC did not see that as a County responsibility. Mrs. Carson asked if the EDC could propose a change in the minimum number of employees or pay amount required for incentive eligibility, and Ms. Rezai said that the VEC determines the pay amount, but that E.D. could propose a new minimum employee requirement. The group thought a 5-employee minimum would be more realistic for a small business than 10 new employees. Ms. Rezai thanked the group for their feedback and encouraged them to reach out to E.D. any time before the next scheduled meeting in September if they think of other things to propose toward revising the Incentive Policy.

Sgt. Rater Presentation

// Sgt. Jeff Rater introduced himself to the group and explained that he was hired roughly one year before to establish a nuisance abatement program in the County, which is a program in the Code of Virginia. According to the Code, a business owner or landlord can be criminally charged for nuisances such as trash in the front yard, tires, loud noise, etc. He said that when a business owner is noticing these problems with a nearby business, they can call him to start the nuisance abatement process. He said the complaint goes before a grand jury and the offender will be arrested. Sgt. Rater said there is a civil side to it too. A civil suit can be filed in these cases through the County, which goes to the Board of Supervisors. In this process, the business could civilly sue the business that is creating problems and a lien can be put against their property. He said he is also certified in security assessments for things like surveillance equipment to keep businesses safe. He then said he is also certified in crime prevention through environmental

design and he gave the example of a business that is so covered in signs that it is impossible to see through the windows into the business. He described this as dangerous because criminal activity could take place inside without witnesses. He also works with churches to train for active shooter situations. Sgt. Rater told the group the program consists of just him at this time, but the Sheriff wants to grow the unit. He said his title is a Crime Prevention Specialist. Chairman Jones wondered if Sgt. Rater had seen a positive response from the business community thus far, and he said that he had and was also still networking to get the word out about the program. Ms. Rezai told the group that E.D. would send out Sgt. Rater's contact information after the meeting.

// Chairman Jones asked if the group had any matters to bring up and trash along the roads was discussed. Ms. Rezai explained that VDOT had spoken at the March Board of Supervisors meeting and gave as their explanation that they are having staff shortages due to the remediation they're having to do to other roads because of all the rain and water over the last year. So now VDOT does not have the staff to focus on the trash on the sides of the roads. She also said the trash issue is a region-wide problem. She said that citizens have been calling their Supervisor to report the problem in their area.

// With no further commission matters brought up from the members, Chairman Jones adjourned the meeting at 1:15 p.m. The next meeting of the Campbell County Economic Development Commission will be held on Thursday, September 23, 2021, in the Haberer Multi-Use Room at 47 Courthouse Lane, Rustburg, Virginia.