

Grayson County Board of Supervisors
Budget Work Session
February 11, 2020

Members attending were Brenda R. Sutherland, John S. Fant, Michael S. Hash and Thomas R. Revels. Kenneth R. Belton was unable to attend.

Staff members in attendance were William L. Shepley, Mitchell L. Smith and Leesa A. Gayheart.

IN RE: OPENING BUSINESS

Supervisor Fant made the motion to approve the agenda; duly seconded by Supervisor Revels. Motion carried 4-0.

IN RE: PRESENTATION OR REQUESTS

Dr. Dean Sprinkle, President, Wytheville Community College addressed the Board and presented the following:

- Members representing Grayson County are Robert “Robby” Wingate and Joe Reeves
- Total Enrollment in WCC Service Region – 2,113 students
- Total enrollment from Grayson County – 242 students
- Dual Credit Enrollment – 114 Grayson County students enrolled in college credit classes for fall 2019
- Dual Enrollment Credits – a total of 867 college credits were earned by those students
- Heather Cole is the WCC Career Coach for Grayson County High School
- Josh Floyd is WCC’s Dual Enrollment Coordinator
 - There were 13 Grayson County dual enrollment graduates in May 2019
 - Grayson county dual enrollment students can complete the following pathways with concurrent high school graduation
 - General Education Certificate
 - Associate Degree – General Studies
- 108 scholarships were awarded from the WCC Educational Foundation and WCC Scholarship Foundation totaling \$45,891.00
- The WCC Educational Foundation awards a \$300.00 scholarship at each high school in the WCC service Region
- 2 High School Students awarded Local Board Scholarships
- Vision for all Grayson County High School graduates to be able to attend WCC debt-free.
 - “last-dollar” tuition scholarships (tuition costs not covered by federal or state financial aid”
 - Available for two years immediately after high school graduation

- Available to student who have resided in Grayson County for at least two years (junior and senior year)
- Recipients required to do at least 10 hours of volunteer service in Grayson County for each semester they receive the scholarship
- Special thanks to Joyce & Richard Rouse and Angie Lawson for helping head this fundraising project.
- Twin County Foundation Scholarship Program
 - Scholarships that cover 100% of tuition and fees not covered by federal or state financial aid are available to high school graduates from Grayson County, Carroll County, and the City of Galax who attend WCC in five health programs: Dental Hygiene, Medical Laboratory Technology, Nursing, Physical Therapist Assistant and Practical Nursing
 - Beginning fall 2020, the program is expanded to Twin County high school graduates enrolled in other programs. Scholarships will cover 50% of tuition and fees not covered by federal or state financial aid.
 - All students must have a high school GPA of “B” or higher.
- Grayson County and WCC Foundations
 - Citizens and Businesses contributed \$20,165.00
 - Ricky Anderson and J.L. Reedy serve on the WCC Educational Foundation Board of Directors
 - Rodney Halsey serves on the WCC Scholarship Foundation Board of Directors
- Grayson County Economic and Workforce Development offer the following certifications, trainings, and courses:
 - American Heart Association CPR
 - Basic Contractor Business Licensing Course
 - Career Readiness Certificate
 - Customer Service and Technical Customer Service
 - Dental Radiation Safety
 - Nurse Aide
 - Online Provider Courses
 - Veterinary Assisting for Small Animals
 - Customized training can be developed to meet the specific needs of employers
 - CLD Truck Driver Training Program (7 students)
 - Power Line Worker Program (3 students)
 - Underground Power Worker Program (2 students) – Fiber optic training is included
 - Emergency Medical Technician Program (plan to pilot this program in the Twin Counties)
 - BRCGATE Technology Day – tentatively in April 2020 (Blue Ridge Crossroads Governors Academy for Technical Education)
 - Free offerings from Workforce Development: Computer Basics, General Art Class, WCC Concert Band, WCC Choir and WCC Theatre
- WCC FY-21 budget request is \$18,951.35
- Based on personnel changes/ reductions that had to be made this past year, one (1) program was phased out (Accounting) due to a declining participation.

Aaron Floyd, Executive Director of the Blue Ridge Discovery Center gave the following presentation:

- Acknowledged board member Keith Andrews was attending the meeting as well.
- BRDC was founded in 2008 in Grayson County – Mission is to inspire curiosity, discovery, and stewardship through the wonders of the Blue Ridge

- 2015-2019 Impact with programs like: national fishing in the schools, trout in the classroom, avian adventures, deer exclosure study, owl pellet dissection, literacy program, natural heritage program, Mt. Rogers naturalist rally, Blue Ridge Illustrated, summer day camps, kestrel nesting box program, intercession weeks, after school programs. We had 12,499 Participants; 68,649 hours of impact; 7,064 youth participation
- \$2,700,000 has been pledged to date
- The campus:
 - 17,000 SF Residential Education Facility
 - 32 person capacity campground
 - Biological field station
 - Staff housing
 - 9 acre campus of diverse ecosystems
 - Adjacent to 200,000 acres of contiguous USFS
 - Interpretative Visitor Center – to rehabilitate the intersection of Konnarock Rd and Whitetop Rd into an Interpretative Visitor Center – building a gateway to the Mt. Rogers National Recreation Area
 - Currently have a DEQ Grant for Phase I and Phase II Environmental Assessments including the abatement of contaminants and petrol tanks
- World-Class Discovery Center
 - 93% of funding goal for restoration to come from:
 - Residential education & multi-day engagements
 - Dormitories
 - Dining hall
 - Classrooms
- Interpretative Visitor Center Features
 - Reception area staffed by BRDC
 - Local brochures for places to stay/things to do
 - 3D relief maps and printed maps of the Highlands showing assets
 - Critter displays
 - Natural history interpretative displays/publications
 - Locally branded apparel/lifestyle gear
 - Restrooms, Wi-Fi, snacks, and potential EV charging station
 - 3 small BRDC offices for operational support
- Benefits to Grayson County
 - Economic Impact:
 - 21 jobs at BRDC
 - 12,500 unique annual visitations to the area focused on ecotourism with an estimated impact of \$109 per visit = \$1,362,500
 - Secondary/Tertiary impacts on the communities of Whitetop & Troutdale
 - 2018 VDOT estimated the annual traffic at the intersection to be a volume of 237,600
 - Education:
 - Project working with approximately 10,000 participants annually in the programs
 - Advance academic achievements using hands-on experiential activities
 - Provide education opportunities on par with some of the metropolitan resources – bridging the gap for underserved population
 - Historical Legacy
 - Saves an architectural treasure in the historic Konnarock Training School

- Continues the legacy of education/support for underserved Appalachian community
- Reinforces the architectural language that defines the high country
- What's needed:
 - \$15,000 investment by Grayson County
 - Matched with \$15,000 from Washington County; \$30,000 from Smyth County, and leveraged for support from the Smyth County EDA and the Virginia Tourism Corporation

Supervisor Fant asked that it be noted for transparency that his wife serves on the Blue Ridge Discovery Center Board.

Kathy Cole, President of Grayson LandCare and Michelle Pridgen of the Independence Farmers Market gave the following presentation:

- Incorporated as a 501c3 in 2007
- Land Stewardship Contest began in 2008 – will now be called Landfill Fair
- Save Green Expo 2010-2018
- Independence Farmers market joined in 2011
- First Friday Film Series 2015-2019
- Permaculture class & project began in 2016
- LandCare Rocks the River 2017-2019 – not doing this in 2020
- Free Market established in 2017
- Plans for 2020
 - Hired first Director, Michelle Pridgen – 16hrs/week
 - Focus on educating community on how to assess and improve their land, whether a yard, a farm or a forest
 - Partnering with Kristina Banks to present an Agricultural Expo to farming/gardening community
 - Annual meeting and service auction to be held at Eagle View Event Center 9/2020 and expand our reach northward

Michelle then gave the following presentation:

- Farmers Market has been growing each year
- The Town of Independence has secured a grant for the Town Park
- All metrics has increased each year
- Will focus on education & school outreach for the upcoming year
- Client base is steadily grown

Ms. Cole then introduced Jean Roznik, Part-time manager of the Free Market and Ms. Roznik and she gave the following update:

- Would like to focus on displays at the facility
- Inventory runs up and down
- Children's section is one of the popular sections
- Gift shop was a huge success at Christmas
- Average number of visitors is 59 people per day
- Hours of operation at Wednesday/Thursday 1pm-5pm; Friday/Saturday 10am/2pm
- Saving \$2,550 in tipping fees from the landfill
- Free Market is requesting \$5,000

Mrs. Mary Ellen Rhudy, Regional Animal Shelter representative, addressed the Board with the following presentation:

- Grayson, Carroll & the City of Galax partnered together 40 years ago to form the animal shelter to serve the region
- Survival rate for dogs is 96-97%
- Survival rate for cates is 51-53%
- With more animals coming through the shelter, has increased the need for an expansion; estimate to remodel the shelter is \$315,000; with pledges and donations we have \$195,000 – still need \$120,000. Friends of the Shelter are asking for \$20,000 from each locality to complete renovations and upgrades that is not covered by PetCo grant/fundraisers – Friends of the Shelter will raise \$60,000.

Ms. Mary Thomas, Director of the Wythe-Grayson Regional Library gave the following presentation:

- Asking for an increase in their budget of 12% which includes full time outreach coordinator (regional position), a full-time library assistant and a 2% increase for all employees for retention of valued employees
- Baywood Resource Center – submitted as a separate request to allow for start-up costs
- Wythe-Grayson 50/50 split; could possibly be renegotiated due to changes throughout the 40 years the partnership was established.

Supervisor Fant mentioned that the Wythe-Grayson agreement should be looked at per capita.

Ms. Melanie Boyer, Captain-Independence Volunteer Rescue Squad, gave the following presentation:

- IVRS was established in 1977
- Historically employers allowed employees to leave work to volunteer but the last two (2) years loss of volunteers resulted in the necessity of hiring part-time staff; we bill for service but no hard billing resulting in \$26,000 in debt write off
- Grant for 80/20 to replace ambulance
- IVRS is primary responder for 104.46 miles of Grayson County
- Currently we have two (2) day-time squads and one (1) nighttime squad
- Requesting \$60,000 for one (1) ALS for a second squad at night

Ms. Laura Bryant of the Grayson County Historical Society, gave the following presentation:

- The Grayson County Historical Society will need funds to keep the Society's office and historic material in the 1908 Courthouse open and available for research and preservation due to funding from a contributor by a supporter no longer available by the end of this fiscal year. Requesting \$3,600 which is rental income to maintain the opening and access to the building.
- Requesting \$15,000 salary for a general office assistant to help keep the building open

William L. Shepley, County Administrator, addressed the Board with items that the Board needs to be mindful of during the budget process:

- Additional money for Broadband to help complete the project
- Teacher parity
- Deputy parity
- Minimum wage change
- Repair work at Mount Rogers School (old section) this fiscal year

- Economic Development initiatives
- SRO grants running out
- Salaries in Department of Social Services (DSS) positions (5-6 employees)
- Work on being in-line with the Comprehensive Plan and measurable goals for 21 budget
- Next budget work session meeting is March 16

ADJOURN

Supervisor Revels made the motion to adjourn; duly seconded by Supervisor Fant. Motion carried 4-0.