



Grayson County Economic Development Authority

P. O. Box 217; Independence, VA 24348

September 21, 2021

MEETING MINUTES

Members Present

Gary Rascoe
Elisa Blevins
Justine Jackson-Ricketts
Elizabeth Hash

Staff Present

William L. Shepley
Leesa A. Gayheart
Carl Caudill, II
Lyndsie Young
Tracy Cornett
Deb Jones

Members Absent

Joseph M. Killon
Christopher J. Butler

Staff Absent

Mitchell L. Smith

INFORMATIONAL

Mr. Shepley noted that in order to put together some initiatives regarding agriculture to bring before the Board, it was important to have someone involved in agriculture. An Ag Advisory Committee was formed with Kevin Spurlin helping in the start-up process and an Agriculture-Economic Development Director was hired – Lyndsie Young came on board approximately 3 months ago. Mr. Shepley introduced Mrs. Young and asked her to give a little background on herself and what is in the works so far. Mrs. Young noted she has a degree in Animal Science and Ag-Econ; horse lover and got interested in agriculture; married into beef farming family; happy to be here in Grayson County and working for the County. Both the Ag Advisory Committee and Mrs. Young herself have a lot of ideas on what to do/bring to the County with one aspect being getting the Ag Fair up and going. Mrs. Cornett helped with the Ag Fair this year and Mrs. Young will be looking for a place for a permanent fair facility. Working on ways to support and market agriculture and the ag industry especially young producers, supporting and encouraging them to come back to this area to farm; looking to have an ag banquet; community agriculture breakfast; working with Mrs. Cornett on the Artisan Trail to incorporate agriculture/farms with that as well. Mr. Shepley also noted that Mrs. Young is in charge of the GATE Center that houses the industrial kitchen and conference center – Ms. Rebekah Roberts will be handling the scheduling of both the industrial kitchen and conference center.

Mr. Shepley then introduced Deb Jones, Grant Writer for Grayson County and has done an unbelievable job for Grayson County. Ms. Jones was hired right about the time COVID-19 hit and she and Mrs. Gayheart have been handling anything to do with COVID-19 and a tremendous help in distributing the money associated with COVID-19. Ms. Jones is also helping with Fries and what's going on with the infrastructure, Mt. Rogers

School and lots of other things going on with the County. Mr. Shepley then noted that Justine Jackson-Ricketts, Gary Rascoe and Elizabeth Hash are in attendance (virtual) and Elisa Blevins joined by telephone. Mr. Shepley then noted that Mrs. Gayheart, CFO, is in attendance; Mr. Caudill, II, IT Director, also in attendance, and has done a lot of work on the broadband initiative, which is exciting.

Mr. Shepley spoke about childcare and recruiting small businesses to the County. We wanted to concentrate on “infrastructure” of the County and get the basics done – broadband, local health care and childcare. The broadband initiative is in the works and the fiber is currently be laid; healthcare clinic has been established in Grant with Tri-Area Community Health and we have made an agreement with Tri-Area Community Health to place a health clinic in the Baywood School which will give us a presence in the eastern part of the County and should open in the next 8 – 9 months if all goes as scheduled. That facility will also contain a 340B Pharmacy – which enables federally owned operations to provide medicines to our citizens at a tremendously reduced rate. It’s estimated that our citizens would save approximately \$2 million a year by utilizing that facility. We are currently discussing the possibility of a health care facility in Elk Creek and also Whitetop. A childcare committee has been established and we are looking at areas to place a childcare facility. The County received approximately \$3 million of ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds which will be used to fund childcare to help get childcare established here in the County. Mrs. Gayheart noted that the County along with Southwest Virginia United Way, received spots for 10 children, ages 3 and 4, have been able to expand the pre-school/head start service in addition to what the school has. The County also has an Industrial Park and it’s being prepared for future business(es) – the groundwork would already be done so it would be easy for someone to move in quickly. Building permits have increased in our County tremendously.

Mr. Shepley noted that the Railroad Café in Whitetop will be opening soon. Mr. Rascoe stated that they hope to open up later this week.

Mr. Shepley noted that a quorum is present but neither the Chair and Vice Chair is present and inquired if any action could take place. Mrs. Gayheart noted she would look in the by-laws. Mr. Shepley then went on to explain that the Whitetop Community Center is in dire need of help with the heating/air conditioning since the system has broken down. Mr. Shepley shared that Supervisor Tom Revels (Whitetop) and Supervisor John Fant (At-Large) has asked if the EDA could provide \$18,000 to the Whitetop Community Center to help them get it fixed and up and running. Mr. Shepley stated he would bring it before the EDA to see if the EDA would consider their request. Mr. Shepley asked the members to consider that request until we could find out if a vote could be taken without the Chair and Vice Chair present.

Mr. Shepley then spoke about a wellness center in the County. Due to the expense of starting a wellness center from the ground up is not feasible for the County but if a building with open space, then equipment could be added to run a basic wellness center. Any ideas from the members would be welcome.

Mrs. Gayheart noted that after looking in the by-laws, there was nothing regarding the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair. Ms. Jones stated that with Roberts Rules, if both are absent and a quorum is present, one of the members could step up and direct the meeting. Mr. Shepley asked if anyone was willing to step forward and Mr. Rascoe

stated he would. Mr. Shepley then reiterated the Whitetop Community Center’s request for \$18,000 to fix the heating/air conditioning. Mr. Shepley explained to Mr. Rascoe he would need to ask for any discussion and if none, then would need to ask for a motion. Mr. Caudill noted that the meeting needs to be opened and a roll call needs to take place and then action can be taken. Mr. Rascoe called the meeting of the Grayson County EDA to order. Mr. Rascoe called roll and determined a quorum is present. Mrs. Hash made the motion to approve the minutes; duly seconded by Ms. Jackson-Ricketts. Motion approved 4-0. Mr. Shepley then went back to the Whitetop Community Center request; Mr. Rascoe asked for discussion and Mrs. Hash asked if that’s the full amount that’s needed and Mr. Shepley noted it is. Mrs. Blevins made the motion to approve the \$18,000; duly seconded by Mrs. Hash. Motion carried 4-0.

Mr. Shepley then moved on to the Elk Creek Fitness Park – citizens are in the process of making their plans and will bring to the EDA eventually. Ms. Jones noted that Supervisor Brenda Sutherland had inquired about any grants for the fitness park and Ms. Jones will be looking for ways to help – feasibility study for the fitness park and possibility a health center – it needs to be decided on what the goal is before investing in the feasibility study.

Mr. Shepley spoke about the new business incentive idea – EDA consider some kind of “package” advertised to the community for the best business plan to establish a new business or a business expansion in the community and the EDA would be willing to support them with some “seed” money. Mr. Shepley asked the members to think on this and all members present agreed that it’s a really good idea. Mr. Shepley noted that it could give Grayson County an edge for entrepreneurs and small businesses.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Mrs. Gayheart presented the financial report listed below which shows a total balance as of September 7, 2021 is \$708,385.70.

Account No Date	Reference	Description	Type	Debit	Credit
001-0-00000-60-0734		Industrial Development	F	Opening Balance:	700,166.92
07/06/21	W 23742	Cash Receipt CS/CK	Batch Id: MILLWORK		709.00
07/12/21	W 23273	Cash Receipt CS/CK	Batch Id: COUNTER2		3,010.42
07/30/21	R 7317	Cash Receipt CS/CK	Batch Id: LGIP 6		34.48
08/05/21	W 24691	Cash Receipt CS/CK	Batch Id: MILLWORK		709.00
08/13/21	W 24164	Cash Receipt CS/CK	Batch Id: COUNTER2		3,010.41
08/31/21	R 7442	Cash Receipt CS/CK	Batch Id: LGIP 6		36.47
09/07/21	W 24692	Cash Receipt CS/CK	Batch Id: MILLWORK		709.00
		Item Total Debits/Credits			8,218.78
		Item Balance			708,385.70
		Fund Total Debits/Credits			8,218.78
		Fund Balance		0.00	708,385.70

Total Accounts ==>	1		
	Report Totals	0.00	8,218.78
	Balance Totals	0.00	708,385.70

EDA MEMBER TIME

Mr. Rascoe spoke regarding the Sugar Shack at Mt. Rogers Fire and Rescue noting that facility is used for maple syrup processing and is in very bad repair plus it's in a poor location to attract tourists. Supervisor Tom Revels mentioned that if it's associated with tourism we could possibly relocate the facility to a more tourist friendly location and also help document the process of maple syrup making plus increase sales for the fire and rescue. The sugar shack is owned by the fire and rescue. Get a plan together & take before the board that would be over it – buy in from the community is important. Mr. Rascoe and Mr. Revels have agreed to put together a plan to move forward. Ms. Jones added that this concept could be added to future grant proposals, but a budget would be needed. Due to application deadlines, a budget would need to be completely soon. Ms. Jones noted that Mr. Rascoe could keep Mrs. Cornett up-to-date, or he could reach out to her.

Mr. Shepley then noted that when it comes to economic development, there are 2 areas of money that are available – there is \$708,000 that is in the EDA and that money comes from the County – if the money that's currently there is used up, the County would have to put more money into the EDA in order for them to be able to function. The other source is approximately \$200,000 – which totals approximately \$908,000 available for economic development. Mrs. Cornett spoke and informed the members that ARPA – American Rescue Plan Competitive Travel/Tourism & Outdoor Recreational Grant for \$10 million – grant would be written and managed by Mt. Rogers Planning District Commission (MRPDC) and it involves the footprint of Mt. Rogers which includes a group of 4 counties (Grayson, Washington/Wythe/Smyth) along with approximately 12 small towns (including Independence). MRPDC feels certain they will be awarded this grant. The County portion would depend on what the match is and also what the other municipalities request which could be anywhere from \$800,000 to \$1.2 million. Mrs. Cornett then thanked the members for their support of the Mt. Rogers School project – turning the school into the Western Grayson Museum & Heritage Center. Abatement will begin next week, demolishing the brick part of the structure. Mrs. Cornett noted that this grant money would come very close to what is needed to renovate the rock structure portion. Ms. Jones explained this is a first come-first serve and we would like to submit early and it's all about return on investment – it's all about being grant ready and Grayson County is grant ready! In July we put in for the first stabilization (building/site); the next phase is repurposing at about \$1.7 million. The grant would be a 20% match which is a very low match rate – to go for the \$1 million to do the phase II would be \$214,500. Total investment from the previous grant match of \$100,000 and this one would be \$314,500 to receive \$2 million. There is a Phase III but we are not asking for any money for it. Mr. Shepley noted this is a tremendous opportunity. Ms. Jones noted this is ARPA dollars which is available for a short period of them and then they are gone. The Mt. Rogers site also falls into a Qualified Census Tract which means that the Federal Government knows these areas are more at a disadvantage during the pandemic. Ms. Jones noted that when she looks at a project, she looks at our comprehensive plan and this project aligns with it – this project was identified as the

most significant tourism project for Grayson County – the redevelopment of Mt. Rogers School is specifically listed in the comp plan and the number 1 and number 2 priorities of health care and broadband are in place and this one is number 3. This also would be honoring the culture of the area. Ms. Jones also noted that she is assisting the Town of Fries on grant applications for their water infrastructure - \$540,000 in grant money has been secured from 3 separate grants. Mr. Shepley noted that if the EDA wants to pursue this grant, he would taking \$60,000 from the County Economic Development area and \$140,000 from the EDA. Mrs. Hash made the motion to approve \$140,000 from the EDA to pursue the grant match; duly seconded Ms. Jackson-Ricketts. Motion carried 4-0.

Mr. Rascoe inquired about the Grayson County Industrial Park and when any business(es) could potentially move into it; Mr. Shepley replied that currently we don't have any business(es) interested but currently it is not site ready. Mr. Rascoe noted that he has volunteered to help any business that's interested in the process of acquiring a location in the Industrial Park.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

ADJOURN

Mrs. Hash made the motion to adjourn; duly seconded by Mrs. Blevins.