



# Grayson County Economic Development Authority

P. O. Box 217; Independence, VA 24348

June 21, 2022

## MEETING MINUTES

### Members Present

Christopher J. Butler, Chair  
Gary Rascoe, Vice-Chair  
Justine Jackson-Ricketts (by zoom)  
Elizabeth Hash  
Elisa Blevins (by zoom)  
Todd Cannaday

### Staff Present

William L. Shepley  
Mitchell L. Smith  
Leesa A. Gayheart  
Deb Jones  
Lyndsie Young  
Tracy Cornett  
Josh Sharitz

### Members Absent

Joseph M. Killon

### Advisory Members

Darin Young  
Jonathan Warren

### OPEN MEETING

Mr. Butler opened the meeting. Next meeting will be July 19, 2022 at 4pm in the GATE Conference Center. Mr. Smith noted that he will be out of the office and unable to attend. Consensus of the board is to move the meetings to the GATE Conference Center for technology. Mrs. Young gave a bried synopsis of the building use including offices, conference room and commercial kitchen. Mr. Butler determined a quorum is present.

### ROLL CALL

Mr. Butler called roll and determined a quorum is present with 4 members present. Mr. Smith noted that Mrs. Amanda Shore no longer wishes to participate on the EDA.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Rascoe made the motion to approve the meeting minutes of May 17, 2022; duly seconded by Mrs. Hash. Motion carried.

### FINANCIAL REPORT

Mrs. Gayheart gave the financial report noting the opening balance is \$738,794.74; payment of \$3,010.41 for rent from Oak Hall Industries along with an interest payment of \$423.59 have been received; a cash disbursement of \$10,000 to Cresthaven Farms, Inc has been issued which brings the balance total to \$732,228.74. Mrs. Gayheart noted that the budget would be approved at the close out meeting for the Board of Supervisors on

June 27, 2022. Mr. Cannaday approved the financial report; duly seconded by Mrs. Hash. Motion carried unanimously.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

None

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- Ag/Multi-Use Facility – Lyndsie Young, Tracy Cornett and Josh Sharitz – presented the following:
  - Collaboration of Elk Creek Fire Department, Grayson Ag Fair Foundation, Grayson County Tourism and Parks & Recreation Departments, Grayson County Schools
  - Presented a concept with a photo from Wyoming County Fairgrounds in New York
  - Vision: Purpose - Agriculture – to host fair, livestock show, horse shows, student ag-related activities and could also serve as livestock sale location.
  - Tourism - Purpose - could host the fiddler’s convention, include a stop on the Ag & Art Trail along with future Legends of Grayson events.
  - Parks & Rec – Purpose - could include a walking track, gym and a connection to hiking/biking trails.
  - Comprehensive Plan Alignment – This facility or project aligns in several areas of the County’s Comprehensive Plan (6-3; 6-4; 6-5; 6-8; 6-9; 9-1; 9-5; and 10-2). This is a large project that will cost a significant amount of money. To begin, a feasibility study will be necessary and is required to pursue grants. This study’s main goal would be to gauge community support. A feasibility study will cost \$10,000 and are asking the Eda to fund the study – if community support is not there, then another path will be looked at. The study will include a business plan and sustainability plan.
  - Proposed location is in Elk Creek adjacent to the former school. The land is already owned by the Elk Creek Volunteer Fire Department which is the main reason for the proposed location.
  - Mrs. Young noted that \$10,000 is relatively inexpensive compared to similar studies at \$40,000 - \$50,000. Virginia Fairs has agreed to conduct the study.

Mrs. Hash noted that she is a member of the Ag Committee and the EDA and will refrain from voting and noted it’s a multi-purpose facility – not just for the fair, etc. Mr. Rascoe and Mr. Cannaday expressed support. Mr. Warren requested the community to tie into the project for the youth and other generations. Mr. Smith spoke in favor of the project especially as a livestock sale facility – support several facets. After some discussion, Mr. Rascoe made the motion to approve the \$10,000 request for the feasibility study; duly seconded by Mr. Cannaday. Motion carried with Mrs. Hash abstaining from voting.

➤ Mr. Jack Butler and Town of Fries Mayor Richard Farmer presented the following: Explained the Town of Fries is not asking for money out of support of an idea the Town of Fries has. Mayor Farmer noted that he is a Fries High School graduate, moved away and now that he has returned, he sees a lack of eating establishments. Due to collaboration over the last year or so, the idea of sharing has developed. Mr. Butler owns a building that would make a great location for a higher end destination restaurant and doesn’t want to see the building as “just another hamburger joint”. Mr. Butler gave a brief history of the building and walked the group through a photo tour. There is space for a walk-in

cooler/freezer; dumb waiter has been installed to service all three (3) floors of the building; substantial amount of furniture is available with the property and there are four (4) dining areas on the third floor of various sizes. Power has already been updated and there are plans approved for a fire escape that would have the look of a deck. Mr. Butler is looking to sell but has not listed the building. Mr. Farmer is hopeful the EDA will partner with the town to market the idea of a higher end restaurant. After discussion, the group noted this project is not exactly within the focus of the EDA but there is a great interest in the success. Reaching out to VIAA could help get the word out about the possibility. Mr. Butler and Mr. Farmer shared their contact information.

➤ ZenCity – Mr. Douglas Shontz and Michael Bruwasser presented the following: ZenCity is partnering with Grayson County and this service would be free for to use by the EDA. Mr. Butler noted he would like to survey the EDA internally and using those results to then survey the community. Mr. Bruwasser then reviewed the process. Mr. Butler inquired if the aged rural demographic hinder the results and Mr. Bruwasser noted their results have found no variation of results and he also addressed the digital divide. Mr. Rascoe inquired if there is a bank of questions and Mr. Shontz noted there is a ban of professional survey writers who make sure questions are posed correctly. Group discussion on what information the board wants to know within itself. It was decided that questions from the EDA members are due by July 1<sup>st</sup> to Alison Burchett via email and survey would be compiled by July 19.

➤ Mt. Rogerson Regional Partnership – Tracy Cornett  
Mrs. Cornett gave an update on the Mt. Rogers School Project – new name is Western Grayson Music & Craft Museum/Info Center and gave the following report:

- Virginia Brownfields study was highlighted and described as a type of feasibility study.
- Recommended the 1950's structure be demolished; have a raked road outpost; preserve and renovate the 1930's rock structure which qualifies to be on the National Register of Historic places
- Funding – DEQ Grant for conceptual design - \$20,000 (2020); VOF Grant for Walking Trail/signage - \$25,000 (implement after demo) (2021-2023); MRPCDC – Grant through DEQ for abatement - \$50,000 – completed; IRF Grant for \$200,000 – denied – encouraged to reapply to finish up the project; ARPA US EDA American Rescue Plan Act Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation - \$1.5M – denied for lack of funds
- In Kind Match – Tree removal 14 trees/possible grading for walking trail – Whitetop Community Club; Hill Studio – Budget Planning - \$5,000
- EDA Commitment – April 2021 - \$15,000 for Storm Water, Survey, Engineering; April 2021 - \$85,000 for Demo; September 21, 2021 - \$140,000 for ARPA Tourism Grant Match which we did not receive – Money is not needed.
- Next Steps – RFP out for demo this week; need EDA's \$15,000 commitment for environmental work; topographic survey, project administration; preliminary engineering; final engineering; bidding and construction phase; structural engineering; search for further grant funding in smaller chunks; Whitetop Community Club's Goal – raise \$100,000

➤ Grayson County EDA By-Laws

Mr. Smith noted the need to update the by-laws and asked the board to please share their input. Mr. Smith added that adding a maximum number of absences would be one example of updating the by-laws. Mr. Cannady made the motion to ask legal if two (2) alternates could be allowed to substitute in the absence of one (1) of the seven (7) members with zoom and/or phone participation counting as attendance; unexcused absences of two (2) consecutive meeting or three (3) meeting in a year, shall result in removal; duly seconded by Mrs. Hash. Motion carried 6-0. Any other suggestions to change the by-laws are to be emailed to Mr. Butler who will share with the group and Mr. Smith.

➤ Mt. Rogers Regional Partnership (VIAA) Consultant – Elizabeth Hash

Mrs. Hash noted that she has had discussions with Mt. Rogers Regional Partnership (formally know as VIAA). A feasibility study on how the group could best use funding and the EDA could share in this study. Nicole Hair, Economic Development Manager, needs to be invited to attend the next meeting to share best practices and how other successful EDA's are working. Discussion of the group on possibilities took place and the board would like for Mr. Hair to attend the July meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENT(S)**

Mr. Rascoe noted that he has published a book.

Mr. Smith expressed his excitement regarding the energy of the group.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

None

**ADJOURN**

Mr. Rascoe made the motion to adjourn; duly seconded by Mrs. Hash. Motion carried 6-0.