

Committee Members:
Conrad Helsley, Chairperson
Sharon Baroncelli
Steve Baker
David Ferguson
Larry Helsley
Gary Lantz

AGENDA
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
August 18, 2010
10:00 a.m.
Board Conference Room
Shenandoah County Government Center

1. Approval of minutes from June 16, 2010
2. Roger Wilkins – Industrial Cooperative Training Program
3. Director’s Report
4. Other Business
5. Adjournment

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

June 16, 2010

10:00 a.m.

Board Conference Room

Shenandoah County Government Center

Present: Chairman Helsley
Steve Baker
Larry Helsley

Staff: Vince Poling
Susie Hill

Others: Bill Pence
Sally Voth - NVD

1. Approval of minutes from May 19, 2010.

Supervisor Baker and Larry Helsley moved and seconded to approve the minutes of the May 19, 2010 meeting. Motion was approved unanimously.

2. Workforce Solutions - Lord Fairfax Community College Update on Program and Work with Mercury Paper/Bill Pence, Coordinator Business and Industry Training.

...Mr. Pence said another avenue for the mechanical funding, it is a benefit relationship. Chairman Helsley said I can also add that the Principal at Triplett Tech is going to join your Board after our next meeting.

Mr. Pence said is that right.

3. Director's Report.

Susie Hill said what I wanted to do today is take the opportunity to touch on some highlights and recap some of my experiences with the County over the last 11 years with both Economic Development and Tourism. I wanted to touch on Economic Development first and then I did want to share a few things about Tourism.

I have always been very assiduous to keep the programs separate when I come to Economic Development and talk Economic Development and Tourism the same. Sometimes people think it is a co-mingled budget, but it is not; two separate budgets are planned and administered. I thought maybe I will be able to share something that sheds lights on what the Tourism entity does as well, just to give you that information and have that information under your belt. With Economic Development relationships, developing relationships with the project managers at the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, I have been active with the Virginia Economic Development Association and attended their meetings. The Partnership has quarterly Ally meetings which I have attended and been able to get to know all of these people at the State that we work with that is so important. Working with FAM trips for project managers and showing them around, available industrial property that we have. Data managers, working

closely with then at the state who take care of all of the data they input in their Virginia scan to make sure they have updated information on all of our industrial buildings and industrial property that we have available here in the County. Also an occasional media fam, we participated in one last week, I was there at Route 11 Potato Chips, we had representatives from the Partnership, this was a food and beverage media fam and they had people there like the editor of the Paula Dean magazine and different food and beverage magazines that were coming thru the Valley and visiting different food processing entities along the way. That is something else you do with Economic Development is work with these existing industries to have these opportunities. For a food processing company to have a story in a food processing magazine is just huge as far as their business is concerned. Also showing property to prospects and we receive RFI's, which are requests for information. As Mr. Poling knows we had one not long ago that was 17 pages long and we have to put everything down and respond to this for different prospects. Early on I had some meetings and really spearheaded some meetings with the Northern Region because we never had a regional Economic Development Entity and then several years ago we joined the Shenandoah Valley Partnership which was very exciting.

The Shenandoah Valley Partnership is a marketing consortium that covers about 13 Counties and they, in turn have joined with the Roanoke Valley Partnership and the New River Valley Partnership and it is call the I-81 Marketing Consortium, it is the largest Economic Development Marketing Consortium in the State. It has really been great to be a part of something larger. I have worked very closely with Joan Hollen who is like the detail person, she is great working with the RFI's. It has really helped the County with its visibility, working through that organization. I served for a year as Project Manager for the County's Agriculture Task Force and Supervisor Baker served on that, we met every two weeks for a year. It was a wonderful educational process for me into the world of agriculture. Also, it certainly was very eye opening in the importance of agriculture, not only in Shenandoah County but the Valley. I have worked with several different companies and some new industries that have come to Shenandoah County on my watch have been Echo Star, Valley Ice, Route 11 Potato Chips, Mercury Paper and Buttercrust, with me doing Economic Development it has certainly been a team effort with Mr. Poling, he has worked closely with me on all of the Economic Development projects that have come forth.

We have organized and hosted the Business Appreciation reception for six years. I have also been active on the Workforce Investment Board, even serving on the Executive Board as the treasurer. They merged, the Northern Valley Board went with the existing Board and we have had a stronger presence since then. I served the Governor's Task Force on Economic Development. I currently serve on the Board of People, Inc. and have participated in several of their conference calls for loan approvals. The Regional Air Quality Task Force I have worked with, as well as the Feasibility Group for Bio-diesel. With existing industries I have worked with planning plant tours for the Board of Supervisors and worked with bringing in representatives from the Virginia Department of Business Assistance. Bill Sirbaugh and his program has been wonderful for us because I am in a position, we support that program, refer individuals to him for counseling, it is like having free consultancy services for people who want to start a business. With the closing of Vanity Fair Jeans Wear and also Johns Manville, I was instrumental in putting together job fairs for those two companies when they closed down. I brought the press release from the grand opening, the Governor appearing at the ribbon cutting ceremony for Mercury, I thought you might like to see. I do want you to know that this Regional Ag., which

we have been meeting for over a year is still very much alive and in discussion. The Shenandoah Valley Partnership is planning a meeting on Monday, July 19th at 7:00 p.m., they haven't told us exactly where that is going to be, but they have all of the Farm Bureau's onboard and we have that discussion that is continuing and very vibrant about the need to have a Regional Ag. promotion person. With that being said it is kind of like Economic Development in a nutshell.

Now I am going to turn to my Tourism hat and just let you know that we do advertise in about 30 different venues, from the Virginia Travel Guide to the Civil War Newspapers. I brought this just to show you an example of what cooperative advertising looks like and how we can partner with other destination marketing organizations and have a huge presence in a paper at a cost that we would never be able to afford ourselves, but by working with other areas we can have a wonderful, wonderful ad. The leads that come in from this publication and this ad even are greater than the ones we get from the Virginia Travel Guide, which is pretty amazing, so this has been a very viable program for us. The Chamber Advisory Group, our office formed that about seven years ago just to bring the Chambers together because there has always been a lot of discussion about us not having a Countywide Chamber. I thought if we could get the Chambers together in one room and talking it would be a step in the right direction. Borne out of that group is the Route 11 Yard Crawl, I brought a shirt to show you, this is the 6th Annual Yard Crawl and you will see on the back we have our sponsors and Mercury Paper, it is their second year as a sponsor and Route 11 Potato Chips is now a sponsor and they have agreed to be the official potato chip of the Route 11 Yard Crawl.

Chairman Helsley said exactly what does that mean?

(Laughter)

Mr. Poling said maybe we need to get Mercury to do some paper.

(Laughter)

Ms. Hill said I have to tell you something, what is really neat about Mercury is when you don't have all of the dignitaries and you are doing a tour of Mercury they embrace the fact they produce disposable, domestic paper products. Mercury is in their second year. The sponsorships pay for the shirt and we have the shirt made locally at Cabin Hill T's, then each of the Chambers sell the shirt for \$6.00. There is a special account that is separate from the Chamber Advisory Group, they turn in the money and that becomes the marketing fund for marketing the Yard Crawl, this is the 6th annual. I can tell you that consistently it has been the largest revenue producing day for many businesses up and down the pike. Three years ago we were approached by Middletown and Stephens City, they wanted to join, we charged each \$500.00 initial joining fee and they are now a part of the Yard Crawl. Actually they tell us they feel more a part of Shenandoah County than they have ever felt with Frederick, so they love being with us on this initiative. It is literally the longest yard sale in the State. I love Larry Baker's story, his Church in Toms Brook (and they don't even have a Chamber) they were selling hotdogs year before last, they ran out of hot dogs, he had to get on the Interstate, go to Woodstock to get more hotdogs, they raised \$1,500 selling hotdogs, this year they are upscaling to barbeque. The event continues to grow and this was borne out of the Chamber Advisory Group. We also do Christmas along the old Valley Pike.

This past Monday was the second annual Chamber challenge golf tournament. The tournament was hosted by Mt. Jackson and they challenge the rest of the Chambers to come and golf. What they do is all of the funds that are raised through this golf tournament are then dispersed to all of the Chambers, so it has become a fund-raiser for all of the chambers. It is just

a wonderful example of how working together can raise the bar.

Chairman Helsley said I think you can do a better job by working together than you can each individually trying to do your own thing.

Ms. Hill said exactly, the Chambers came together and it was a phenomena that took place because they found out they had so many things in common; it was like chatter, chatter, chatter. Planning events, checking with schedules, sharing information for their different festivals, it has just been a real positive thing. They meet in our office every month and it has been a very strong and viable initiative. I serve on the Board of Directors of the Shenandoah Valley Travel Association, a member of the Blue Ridge Parkway Association, on the Board of Virginia Hospitality and Travel Association. Virginia Association of Convention Visitors Bureau's, of late I was on the Executive Board and I was on the Board of Trustees with the Battlefield Foundation for 6 years, 3 years on the Executive Board and Chairman of their Tourism Committee. I have written some grants and had some nice initiatives. I did a grant for the Shenandoah County Wine Trail and as soon as we did the brochure which we are out of, Crooked Run came online. We now have 5 Wineries in Shenandoah County and we are an incredible winery destination. The Sesquicentennial Committee, Cheryl Jackson at the State characterizes Shenandoah County as the poster child for all of their Sesquicentennial Committees and I have to say this is because of Cyndi Pulis in my office. We have been involved in 3 grants, and just dedicated the sign in Mt. Jackson, the group wants to tell stories of the people during the Civil War. The sign in Mt. Jackson interprets the site where 3 buildings that comprised a major hospital. They could take care of over 500 soldiers at a time, they brought them in by the railroad, left them off in Mt. Jackson. There is going to be a companion piece (brochure), through another grant with the Battlefield Foundation and that is a brochure that will tell stories of caring for the wounded from throughout the entire County. I have partnered with Richmond and Fredericksburg, involved in another grant and what we have done is created a product call the Civil War Circle Tour of Virginia. Last month I attended Pow Wow, which is the International Market Place, along with our partners and we are marketing this multi-day trip to the International Market, but we are also, since we have the product created, marketing it to the domestic market as well. There is a huge interest in Civil War History in the United Kingdom and Germany. These folks can fly in to Dulles and start their tour out to the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley and down with us in Shenandoah County for multiple days visiting our Civil War sites as well as non Civil War sites. We are also participating with Pennsylvania Bus Association. We are cooping their last box lunch as we will be meeting with them and handing these out individually to all of the tour operators. This has been a great, great, exciting initiative to be involved in. Again, this is the first time anyone has partnered with other Convention & Visitors' Bureaus elsewhere in the State and created a Statewide initiative, so this has garnered a lot of attention from others. We have a very robust brochure distribution program, we always have for 19 years Danny Proctor, and his wife, Barbara, did this on a volunteer basis for the County. We print between 300,000 and 400,000 of these brochures each year and they are in all of the state visitor centers. We use VHTA Brochure Distribution Program as well as private distributors and we are in the process of updating this now because there have been some changes. We do an insert that is updated quarterly that lists all accommodations, recreation and restaurants, because this is not a directory that rather just lists all the chambers and all of the attractions in all of the Towns in Shenandoah County. We are very active in the group tour market, a member of the American Bus Association, North Carolina Bus, Pennsylvania Bus and

the National Motorcoach Network. Shenandoah Caverns hosted over 500 motorcoaches last year. As an example when you start doing the numbers and multiplying that 45 people times so much money, one motorcoach into an area can bring quite a lot of revenue. When you multiply that by 500, they are not only selling a lot of admission tickets and gifts in their gift shops, but other visitor friendly businesses in the area are benefitting from that as well. We are in the process of completely redesigning our website. We, because we are a tourism website, we can bring it up into the 21st century. We sent out RFP's and Hank Zimmerman of ShenandoahValley.com is working with Cyndi, we are half way through and it will be finished by the end of this month. We are really excited about it, it is going to have a new look and be very, very visitor friendly. I mentioned the new Civil War Trail sign that we just dedicated in Mt. Jackson. We have more Civil War Trail signs in Shenandoah County than any other County in the 5 State program, we have been really, really active with that and because of that we have a lot of solid Civil War product here for the visitors to come and interpret. We also have been active with the Wilderness Road Program, which is a program that covers the entire valley corridor and the Birding Trail. Coming up next week is the VTC Help Desk. I have been working with the Virginia Tourism Corporation and they are bringing their staff out to the Yellow Barn, they are going to be available from 9 in the morning until 3 in the afternoon to talk to anyone who wants to come and find out about doing business with visitors. They will have representatives from the Virginia Film Office, from the cooperative marketing side, the grant program, electronic marketing, you name it they will have people there. Shenandoah County Tourism will have a table there as well. Anyone who wants to come is welcome and we have opened the invitation to our neighbors, surrounding Shenandoah County as well as us. Last week we did a street team even on Thursday. It is really interesting because in my discussions with the VTC they said we want you to involve your staff because we are bringing so many people out and we want your staff to help us. I don't have, I have one person. What I did was call on all tourism professionals in the County and they turned out. I had Scott Harris from the New Market Battlefield, Allison Dugan from Shenandoah Caverns, Jim Watson from Bryce, had a great, great group of people, Hank Zimmerman helped out. We met at the Yellow Barn, we had strategies, I sent people out to all the different Towns, we took these pre-registrations, we called on folks and then we came back to the restaurant in Woodstock and had a recap meeting. They said it was the best street team they have ever done. I met earlier with Wirt Confoy and Angela Wiggins and we went on Craig Orndorff's show, WSVG at 9 o'clock and talked about the street team before we actually did it. This is going to take place next Thursday, we are really excited and it is a good, good free service that we are offering for all of our businesses here in the area.

I have this economic impact on tourism spending that I wanted to share with you. They don't have 2009 out yet, but if you want to look at the different municipalities in the area, these figures are based upon a consistent uniform formula that has been developed by the Virginia Tourism Cooperation, which includes transient occupancy tax and a percentage of restaurants and gas stations. You will note that consistently Shenandoah County leads the pack on tourism spending. I fully expect 2010 to surpass \$200 million. Hotels tell me they are a little bit flat, but they are still running strong and this again shows you that tourism is one of the top industries in the County. Also the Fulfillment Program, many of you know Doris, our 83 year old volunteer who comes in every Friday and fills envelopes, we received qualified leads from the Civil War Newspapers and from the Virginia Travel Guide and she probably fills 20,000 plus envelopes every year that go out. When we go to the Regional RSVP Program she is always recognized as

having more single hours as a volunteer than any other single volunteer in the Region, it is pretty amazing what she does for Shenandoah County on a volunteer basis.

We have been, through Competitiveness Grant Program, through the Northern Valley Tourism, from the Northern Valley PDC, years ago they started a grant program and they require that the 5 Counties in the footprint, that their tourism people come together and create a regional entity to be qualified for their grant program, for the tourism component. They did that, the 5 Counties came together, the grant program dried up years ago, but the Northern Valley Tourism Council remains intact. We meet quarterly, we do a weekly live show in Front Royal at WFTR and the River 95.3 called Tourism Tuesdays. We are on every Tuesday live at 12:30. We have been able to do other things too, again, working together with the other Counties we have been able to have a presence at some Triple A shows and have some different advertising and marketing initiatives that we wouldn't be able to afford on our own. There is also a website that is called Top of the Valley. Another example how working together and partnership with other Counties you can come together and have a larger result. That is just really, really a nutshell. I am not touching on everything, just the high points. I can't tell you, I love what I do here, I truly, truly believe in Shenandoah County. What a joy and pleasure to be able to work and market something as wonderful as this. Whether it is the industrial base, working to attract new industry to this place and again Phil Rundel said it Friday and I hear it all of the time about the quality of the workforce here in Shenandoah County or to be able to market it to the visitor to come in because it is truly one of the most beautiful places on earth. This is a brief description of what I do. Thank you for letting me share that with you.

Chairman Helsley said thank you very much and on behalf of this Committee and also the Board we want to thank you for your years of service, you came in as a different hat, but got handed other hats as you went along. Thank you for Economic Development, as well as Tourism. I know one time you have to have one hat on, the next day the next hat and it is hard to juggle everything all of the time. In fact, the Personnel Chairman has ask that the staff go back and look at this because we had discussed possibly separating Tourism from Economic Development as positions, several years ago, then the economy tanked. This may be a proper time to look at that again and see what we think. We will get that recommendation back in August. On behalf of the Board I want to thank you for all of your service to the County, we appreciate all of the hard work you have done. I know there are often times when you fill out those Economic Development surveys or whatever you want to call them only to find out that you rushed through that only for them to tell you six weeks later they are not interested anymore. You always want to do it and you always want to encourage Economic Development here in Shenandoah County. I think the time is coming when we are going to get some good Economic Development but we have to wait until we get out of our recession and so forth and I think we will see a lot of interest in this area.

4. Other Business.

Chairman Helsley said I think in August, when we have our meeting, who was to come, a guy from the school system.

Ms. Hill said actually Sharon Johnson, the lady we were talking about who wrote the grant for this whole green initiative is going to be overseeing the \$5 million dollar grant program, Lord Fairfax being one of the participants said she would be happy to come and address us.

Mr. Helsley ask is Roger not available?

Ms. Hill said he is not available until August, but we found that out after Sharon had agreed to come and address the group, so we can bring him in September. WE have tried several times to get Roger, his schedule has been a little bit crazy. I will try to set that up.

Chairman Helsley said I think in August, this meeting will be on the 18th.

Ms. Hill said or we can try to get Roger in her and reschedule Sharon if that is your preference.

Chairman Helsley ask what do you all think?

Supervisor Baker said that might be an idea because in September they will be back in school.

With no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

Conrad Helsley, Chairman