

**Economic Development Authority
Of
Lancaster County, Virginia
At
Chesapeake Bank Training Center
Minutes – January 21, 2016**

Members Attending: Jeff Szyperski, Alex Fleet, Ed Pittman, Bill Pennell, Joe Curry, Jackie Barrack and Roy Carter.

Others Present: Frank Pleva, Executive Director, Jason Bellows, District 3 Supervisor, Carl Smith, George Bott, Ian Ormesher, Joni Carter, Susan Cockrell, Assistant Kilmarnock Town Manager and others.

Mr. Szyperski called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and welcomed the new EDA member, Roy Carter.

Election of Officers for Calendar Year 2016

a. Chair

Mr. Pennell nominated Mr. Szyperski for Chairman.. Mr. Pittman seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations. **VOTE: 7-0.**

b. Vice-Chair

Mr. Pennell nominated Mr. Fleet for Vice-Chairman. Mr. Pittman seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations. **VOTE: 7-0.**

c. Secretary-Treasurer

Mr. Pennell nominated Mr. Pleva for Secretary-Treasurer. Mr. Barrack seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations. **VOTE: 7-0.**

By-laws – Consideration of Name Change

Mr. Pleva stated that the Board of Supervisors changed the name from the Industrial Development Authority to the Economic Development Authority, but the by-laws have never been changed. He stated that it is basically a “housekeeping” issue.

Mr. Pittman made a motion to change the name to the Economic Development Authority in the by-laws. Mr. Curry seconded the motion. **VOTE: 7-0.**

September 17, 2015 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Fleet made a motion to approve the September 17, 2015 minutes. Mr. Pennell seconded the motion. **VOTE: 7-0.**

Financial Report

Mr. Pleva stated that, as of the end of December, the bank balance was \$91,375.29. He stated that the Poorhouse Tract account balance as of yesterday was \$353,853.22. He stated that the Poorhouse Tract money is under the control of the Board of Supervisors, as opposed to the EDA's funds.

Mr. Pennell gave a brief history of how the Poorhouse Tract funds came into existence. He stated that the funds are from the sale of a parcel of approximately 97 acres that the County sold to the Audubon Society about fifteen years ago and have been earmarked for economic development.

Mr. Curry asked where the funds came from to purchase the Norris property on Pinckardsville Road.

Mr. Pleva replied the money came from the general fund.

Mr. Pleva explained the process of receiving the administrative fees associated with the EDA.

New Business

\$20,000 Grant Request from the Save the Rappahannock Coalition

Mr. George Bott of the Save the Rappahannock Coalition stated that his organization was requesting financial assistance from the EDA to assist Lancaster County in opposing Dominion Virginia Power's proposal to erect transmission towers across the Rappahannock River. He stated that the towers would hurt the environment, tourism and local businesses. He stated that the Code of Virginia gives Economic Development Authorities the power to make loans or grants to any person, partnership, entity or association for the purposes of promoting economic development. He stated that many citizens and local business owners have expressed their support of this effort. He stated that the County passed a resolution last June in opposition to the overhead transmission lines, as did Middlesex County.

Mr. Bott presented depictions of how the proposed towers would look once installed across the river.

Mr. Bott stated that, so far, the legal bills total over \$47,000 and the coalition has raised over \$27,000. He stated that his group is asking for a \$20,000 contribution from the EDA to help with the on-going legal costs.

Mr. Szyperski asked where Middlesex County stood on the issue.

Mr. Bellows replied that Middlesex County passed the same resolution as Lancaster County.

Mr. Szyperski referred to the list of businesses and asked what characterized their involvement.

Mr. Bott replied that the businesses shown had signed a declaration that stated they believed the overhead transmission lines would hurt the local economy.

Mr. Carl Smith stated that after the County passed the resolution against the overhead transmission lines, he received a call from Jason Bellows asking for help with the effort. He stated that they formed a coalition of volunteers very quickly and became very active with calls to government representatives, creating a website and materials for distribution and circulating petitions. He stated that they developed a legal strategy and came up with three possible actions. He stated that those three areas were with VMRC, the Army Corps of Engineers and the State Corporation Commission. He stated that the effort with VMRC was handled entirely by the County Attorney and was unsuccessful. He stated that the effort with the Army Corps of Engineers was not successful either. He stated that their third try was with the SCC and they won an injunction. He stated that the plaintiff in that case was William Barnhardt, a business owner on the Rappahannock River. He stated that those efforts have contributed to their legal fees to date. He stated that the coalition continues to plan fundraisers and is also asking the Board of Supervisors next week for funds.

Mr. Fleet asked what the Board of Supervisors' position was on funding the coalition.

Mr. Bott replied that the Board had a member absent from last month's meeting, so they were making a decision this month.

Mr. Fleet asked if they had appeared before the Town of Kilmarnock,

Mr. Smith replied that the coalition had not asked for funds from the Town of Kilmarnock.

Mr. Fleet stated that he thought everyone would be against the overhead transmission lines, but he had a problem with funding the legal fees.

Mr. Ian Ormesher discussed the design of the towers and fender system. He stated that he is concerned about the aesthetics if the proposed towers are erected. He stated that he wanted to see a solution for the transmission lines that would have less of an impact on the community. He stated that the proposed towers are massive and Dominion's actions were illegal and they tried to deceive the community. He stated that if it was not for the coalition, the towers would already be going up. He stated that the aesthetic impact of the proposed towers would have much to do with the local economy and tourism. He discussed in great detail about the potential loss of tourism dollars if people are

discouraged by the view when they cross the Rappahannock River. He stated that property values will decrease as well. He presented depictions of how the towers would look if erected as Dominion Virginia Power has proposed.

Mr. Bruce Sanders stated that he owned and operated Rappahannock Yachts on Carters Creek in Irvington. He spoke about the history of his business and what he plans to do in the future. He talked about the connection between the bridge and the economic success of his business. He stated that his family roots in the County go back to colonial times and he cared about the County. He stated that the fact that the proposed towers are ugly is actually a secondary issue. He stated that it is really all about the economy. He stated that the economy is all about people and the County continues to have a declining population. He stated that they need to get more people to come to the County to grow the economy. He stated that natural beauty and water access are two of the main draws for people to come to the area. He stated that when most people come to the County, they either come over the bridge or under the bridge and it is important to maintain the beauty of the view. He stated that the proposed towers and fenders will spoil the view and make the channel harder to navigate. He stated that he thought few people would support the towers unconditionally and most people would rather have the underwater transmission lines. He stated that all Dominion Virginia Power is interested in is their bottom line.

Mr. Jason Bellows stated that any advertisement or article that people see of the area usually depicts the Rappahannock River bridge and it is very important to keep that view the way it is. He stated that it is the area's signature and front door. He stated that if the bridge's view is marred with the industrial looking towers, it will affect the economy of the County. He stated that Dominion Virginia Power has tried to usurp the voice of the County. He stated that without the coalition's efforts the project would already be underway. He stated that it is important for the economy that the coalition be supported because one person or entity cannot do it alone. He stated that the "big picture" and the future of Lancaster County needed to be considered and should be defended. He stated that there has been a lot of discussion about the cost of the underwater transmission lines. He stated that Dominion had said the cost would be three to five times greater than the traditional overhead lines. He stated that after learning the costs of the underwater lines that were placed in the York River, Dominion's numbers do not hold up. He stated that their request for \$20,000 is about defending the beauty of Lancaster County and its economy.

Mr. Curry asked how much more the average electric bill would be with the underwater transmission lines.

Mr. Bellows replied that there is some question with the figures, but he doubted more than twenty-five cents in a year's time.

Mr. Curry asked if there was any opposition with running the cables underground.

Mr. Bellows replied he had seen very little opposition. He stated that most people are "anti-tower".

Mr. Fleet stated that he would like to see the coalition concentrate on fundraising in the community and then come back to the EDA.

Mr. Curry stated that he had lived in the area for eighty-two years and when he was a child almost every point had a fish factory with a tall smoke stack and none were rebuilt, and he thinks the impact of the proposed towers should not be overlooked. He stated that everyone should want to keep the view of the bridge the way it is and not create an eyesore.

Mr. Barrack stated that he thought the proposed towers would affect property values in a negative way. He stated that once the towers are built, they are there for at least forty or fifty years.

Mr. Szyperski stated that he had inquired about the towers and no one he had asked said it would be good for economic development in the County. He stated that the proposed towers could be seen as an impediment to economic development.

Mr. Pleva stated that he had spoken to no one who wants to see the towers. He said the question has been who should pay the costs to fight Dominion.

Mr. Pennell stated that he knew people were concerned about the aesthetics of the proposed towers, but he thought the narrow bridge itself keeps people away. He stated that the Board of Supervisors has approximately \$350,000 in the Poorhouse Tract fund and he thought that was a better source of funding.

Mr. Barrack stated that if the EDA grants the request, it will not be with tax payer dollars.

Mr. Carter made a motion to approve the request for \$20,000 by the Save the Rappahannock Coalition. Mr. Barrack seconded the motion. **VOTE: 4-3.**

ROLL CALL VOTE

Szyperski	Aye
Fleet	Nay
Pennell	Nay
Pittman	Nay
Curry	Aye
Carter	Aye
Barrack	Aye

Other Business

Visions' Oyster-Related Asset Development Update and Linkage to Regional Tourism Branding

Ms. Joni Carter stated that she had over twenty years of experience promoting tourism and marketing. She stated that she is currently working on the oyster trail with other localities. She stated that culinary experiences are very important in tourism.

Ms. Carter stated that the money the EDA gave for her part-time position and the match for the grant for oyster related activities has been used wisely. She stated that there has been a coalition formed with Middlesex and Gloucester counties, which is called Virginia Oyster Country. She stated that organization has received a \$10,000 grant from Virginia Tourism. She stated that their objective is to be the place to come to learn about and eat oysters. She stated that the motto is "Taste the River Life." She spoke about all of the ways they are advertising, such as magazine ads, billboards and at local events. She stated that there will be exhibits at two of the local museums that will feature oysters in the near future. She stated that there are events planned, such as the oyster academy at the Tides Inn.

Mrs. Susan Cockrell, Assistant Kilmarnock Town Manager, stated that the oyster trail will be like a restaurant trail. She stated that what Virginia Oyster Country wanted to do locally is build programs that are unique to the area. She stated that other things that bring tourism are the water view, connection to the water and outdoor activities.

Mrs. Cockrell showed a presentation of the Virginia's River Realm website.

Adjournment

Mr. Fleet moved and Mr. Curry seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting. **VOTE: 7-0.**

Attest: _____
Frank A. Pleva,
Executive Director