

**Economic Development Authority  
Of  
Lancaster County, Virginia  
Minutes – April 5, 2021**

The Lancaster Economic Development Authority meeting was held in the Board/Commission Meeting Room of the Lancaster County Administrative Building and through the Zoom platform on Monday, April 5, 2021.

Roy Carter, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Members Attending: Vice Chair Dr. Charlotte Silverman, Michael Laws, and Taryn Brice Rowland. Jeff Szyperski attended the meeting via Zoom. Members Absent: Bruce Sanders and Samuel Rice.

Others Present: Don Gill, County Administrator, Glenn Rowe, Information Technology Director and Crystal Whay.

**Financial Status Report**

Mr. Gill stated that he had sent out the financial report last week to the EDA members. He stated that the ending balance in the checking account, as of February 28<sup>th</sup>, was \$32,565.84. He stated that there were four outstanding checks that total \$17,000, so the available balance was \$15,565.84. He stated that the balance for the certificate of deposit was \$63,070.42, as of February 28, 2021.

Mr. Gill referred to administrative fees and stated that the next fees will come in July, November and December.

Mr. Carter made a motion to accept the financial report. Mrs. Rowland seconded the motion.  
**VOTE: 5-0.**

Dr. Silverman referred to the outstanding checks of \$17,000 and asked if they had not been cashed.

Mr. Gill stated that those checks have not been cashed.

Dr. Silverman stated that those checks represented money that could be used for other purposes, if people were not interested in cashing them. She asked if there was something they could do to address this issue.

Mr. Szyperski stated that because of the age of the checks, they were becoming stale dated. He stated that he didn't know about the Patterson check, but he thought they could void the Visions check of \$5,000 because the Lead River Counties program has not started back yet.

Mr. Gill stated that the Visions check is stale dated and the Patterson check of \$10,000 will be stale dated in April. He stated that he knew Mr. Patterson had been in Florida quite a bit, so he wasn't sure if he was in town now or not.

Dr. Silverman stated that she would like to see a policy on how they deal with uncashed checks.

Mr. Gill stated that, at six months, it's a moot point because they become stale dated.

Dr. Silverman stated that, on their financial report, those funds are not showing as being available and wanted to know at what point would the funds go back into their balance.

Mr. Gill stated that, with the Visions check being stale dated, the checking account balance was \$20,565.84.

Dr. Silverman stated that she would like to have a general policy that says, after six months, if the check is not cashed, those funds are forfeited and go back into the EDA's coffers.

Mr. Szyperki stated that he thought the best method was to communicate with the check holders.

Mr. Carter stated that he thought they could come up with a policy and make a motion that any checks that are issued are considered void after 180 days.

Mr. Carter made a motion that any checks issued for grants or for appreciation, by the EDA, that are not cashed within 180 days, those funds will go back into the EDA's coffers and the checks will be considered null and void.

Mrs. Rowland seconded the motion.

Mr. Laws stated that he thought the criteria by which the checks were issued needs to be fulfilled or answered before they consider the check null and void. He stated that they need to put a plan in place of how the EDA operates when it comes to check cashing.

Mr. Carter stated that he thought they had this issue before and he thought they just needed some clarity. He stated that he did not think they would have this problem that much in the future because after people have asked for the money, they usually cash the check.

Mrs. Rowland suggested that part of the process of accepting a grant would be that the money is used within six months.

Mr. Szyperki agreed and stated that he thought that statement could just be added to their grant policy.

Mr. Carter amended his motion that the grant policy will state that the money must be used within six months. Mrs. Rowland seconded the motion. **VOTE: 5-0.**

## **Internal EDA Updates**

Mr. Carter stated that the first update concerned individual EDA board member objectives.

Dr. Silverman referred to her Power Point presentation and stated that they had a lot of goals in 2019. She stated that some of them they were able to deliver on and some are still outstanding. She stated that, in 2020, not a lot of progress was made because of the COVID-19 pandemic. She stated that she would like the EDA to decide today each individual's area of contribution or they may want to consider changes to the areas of contribution. She stated that every member needed to think about how much time and resources they can devote to economic development.

Dr. Silverman referred to a strategic plan and stated that they have basically copied their plan from the Northern Neck Planning District Commission's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. She stated that it would make sense to look at the EDA's strategic plan and make updates.

Dr. Silverman stated that the EDA has also talked about putting together a financial committee and looking at how they might be able to use the \$10 million dollars in bonds as well as looking at angel funding. She stated that they have also discussed coming up with a more formal EDA grant process.

Mr. Carter referred to the website update and stated that he had given Mr. Rowe some updates that morning for the website. He stated that he had given out some information concerning the Virginia is for Lovers website, which he stated was a great website. He stated that website covers all 95 counties in the state and was very informative. He stated that some counties' EDAs have a separate website from their county. He asked his fellow authority members to look at the other websites in the state and come up with possible recommendations of the things that they would like to see incorporated for the Lancaster County Economic Development Authority. He stated that he thought they could update their website fairly easily without having to go through an outside firm. He stated that he had not talked to Mr. Rowe about this. He asked Mr. Rowe if these changes and updates was something he wanted to do or should the EDA consider a web designer for the upgrades.

Mr. Rowe stated that there was a standard structure and they could do a page on the existing website where they can incorporate some enhanced audiovisual content. He stated that the other option would be to have an external website and they would want to consider an outside firm for that.

Mr. Gill stated that Mr. Rowe did not have a lot of time, so if the EDA wanted to consider its own website, they probably should consider an outside vendor for that.

Mr. Szyperski stated that the Business Relations Advisory Committee has refocused since they did not receive the CARES grant and they are now trying to align the County's strategic plan, which is very generic and does not have any directly tie in with the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). He stated that the Business Relations Advisory Committee (BRAC) has been joined by two members of the Board of Supervisors, Jason Bellows and Bill

Lee, along with the School Superintendent, Dan Russell, and are beginning to meet on a regular basis. He stated that, with a new strategic plan and what BRAC had already been tasked with, that may be fertile ground for what could go into a website. He stated that if they do a website, they would have to promote it. He stated that promotion would need to be figured into the costs.

Mrs. Rowland stated that just building a website can cost anywhere from \$2,000 to \$5,000. He stated that maintenance and advertising costs are extra.

Dr. Silverman asked Mr. Carter if he would be the only working on the website issue.

Mr. Carter replied that he would like to have someone else to help out.

Mr. Laws stated that he would volunteer to work with Mr. Carter on the website content.

Dr. Silverman referred to the grant request form and stated that she would update the form and get it to Mr. Rowe for the website.

Mr. Gill suggested adding an area for contact information for the person who is signing the form because he had received two applications with no contact information and only a signature at the bottom.

Dr. Silverman stated that she would take care of that.

Mrs. Rowland suggested adding the question of whether the business will be ready to disperse the grant funds within six months to the grant request form.

Mr. Laws suggested adding an area for office use only to the bottom of the form to enter the date that the funds were dispersed.

Dr. Silverman referred to the EDA's strategic plan and asked about any thoughts from the members.

Mrs. Rowland replied that she would like to volunteer to review/revise the strategic plan.

Mr. Laws asked if they had a reference strategic plan that they were altering or were they developing one.

Mrs. Rowland replied that the EDA's strategic plan basically aligns with the existing Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs).

Dr. Silverman referred to the slides in her presentation and discussed the current strategic plan and goals, such as improved telecommunications infrastructure and improved availability of buildings that would be appropriate for commercial activities.

Mr. Laws asked how would they measure and respond to all of these goals. He stated that the goals were big and there were a lot of them. He stated that, being new to the Authority, he had some questions.

Dr. Silverman stated that the EDA was coming from having no goals at all.

Mr. Laws stated that he would like to define something that was achievable.

Mrs. Rowland stated that she thought this was more of a decision making document, in that, do the grant requests that are being received align with the stated goals.

Mr. Laws asked if they put a timeline on the goals. He stated that they were lofty ideas and he did not disagree with any of them, but he was concerned about implementation.

Dr. Silverman stated that they were coming from nothing and no goals and the strategic plan is a framework of where they want to go. She stated that she agreed with Mrs. Rowland that the goals can help put some structure in their decision making when it came to grant requests.

Mr. Szyperski stated that he would like to be a part of the strategic plan committee. He stated that it was important for the County's strategic plan and the CEDS plan, as well as the EDA's plan to mesh together and be unified.

Dr. Silverman stated that another consideration that was important to the EDA's future was how were they going to make more money. She stated that they needed to consider how they would use the tool that they have, which is \$10 million dollars a year to use for bond issuances. She asked how would they get the marketing to associate with that. She asked Mr. Szyperski about his contacts concerning angel funding in Danville.

Mr. Szyperski stated that the EDA had discussed angel funding right before the COVID pandemic. He stated that, when he was discussing this with his contacts in Danville, they told him that the EDA would not just jump into angel funding, but rather there were building blocks that would come first, if angel funding came at all. He stated that he thought angel funding was a possible outcome that may come from their strategic planning process.

Mrs. Rowland asked Mr. Gill if the EDA could accept tax deductible donations.

Mr. Gill replied that he believed that the EDA could accept tax deductible donations. He referred to the bond situation and stated that, in the past, those persons or entities wanting bonds have sought the EDA out, not the other way around. He stated that he did not know how they could solicit more bond issuances other than letting Sands Anderson and Dan Siegel know.

Dr. Silverman stated that they had also discussed the potential of going out of state to obtain bond issuances.

Mr. Carter stated that Mr. Szyperski had been a member of the EDA the longest of the current members. He asked Mr. Szyperski if the EDA had ever made any requests, either through the state or the federal government, for money.

Mr. Szyperski replied that he was not aware of any such requests during his tenure.

Mr. Carter stated that if the EDA does not ask for money from different sources, they would obviously not get any. He stated that they needed to look at other sources of income.

Mrs. Rowland stated that they are seeing nearby communities getting block grants currently. She stated that she agreed with Mr. Carter that they needed to start asking potential sources.

Mr. Laws asked if it would be easier for the EDA to ask for money if they have their strategic plan in place first.

Mrs. Rowland stated that it was easy to tie their plans into the current strategic plan because it was so broad. She stated that if the EDA did not find a way to bring in more funding, at some point it will become moot. She stated that their funding is entirely dependent on administration fees from bond issuances. She stated that they needed to find a way to be self-sustainable.

Mr. Szyperski stated that he agreed with Mr. Laws. He stated that they definitely needed more sources of additional funding, but the plan they have now is not defined enough to answer the question of what they would do with any money that was received.

Mrs. Rowland stated that she agreed, but just did not want to lose sight of the fact that they need to find additional sources of revenue.

Dr. Silverman stated that they should be figuring out what sources are available before they start asking. She stated that, at this point, they did not know what sources are available. She suggested that all EDA members try to find at least two to three sources of potential revenue for the EDA and report back at the July meeting. She stated that, for the financial committee, she was going to say that all of the EDA members were participating.

Dr. Silverman stated that another consideration was how much effort the members were willing to put towards the EDA. She stated that, as a suggestion, she had put down how many hours a month a member was willing to work on the stated goals.

Mr. Szyperski stated that, from his perspective, helping to work on the strategic plan and the Business Relations Advisory Committee, was all the time that he could give. He stated that would be well over ten hours a month.

Mrs. Rowland suggested that she and Mr. Szyperski have one meeting a quarter to discuss the updated EDA strategic plan and then work on it in between meetings via email.

Mr. Szyperski agreed.

Mr. Carter stated that the EDA has made progress in the last two years, even if the progress has been slow. He stated that he attends community meetings and he thought that every EDA member probably does that to a certain extent and he would consider that time would count towards finding out more about economic development. He stated that he wanted to thank Dr. Silverman for helping to move the EDA forward and, in his opinion, they have made measurable gains in the last couple of years because she has helped them with going in the right direction.

Dr. Silverman stated that they could revisit the amount of effort and time for members to commit to at the next meeting after everyone has had some time to think about it more.

Dr. Silverman referred to the list of criteria used for evaluating grant requests, which included an award of over \$10,000 as an exception for both non-profits and for profits, prioritize unique businesses to the area, prioritize infrastructure buildout, prioritize when matching funds are available and a few other criteria. She stated that they would add that the grant money needs to be used within six months and if it is not, then the check becomes null and void. She asked if anyone thought there was anything else to add.

Mr. Szyperski stated that, when it comes to grant requests from private businesses, he gets the feeling that they are picking winners and losers. He stated that he can't reconcile giving money to a business that asks for money, but not giving money to a similar business five miles down the road, who didn't ask or might not know that they could have asked. He stated that anything that could help filter that would be beneficial to him.

Dr. Silverman asked if Mr. Szyperski was saying that they should not just give money to a business simply because they request it and there needs to be other criteria that is met.

Mr. Szyperski replied yes. He stated that an example would be two similar businesses where one business owner uses his or her own capital and the other business owner who asks for "start-up" money and does not use their own funds. He asked if the EDA was supposed to fund the second business simply because they asked for funding.

Mrs. Rowland stated that she thought it went back to the EDA's strategic plan and goals. She stated that one of those goals was to help start-up businesses and she would think that matching funds would be required. She stated that they were not picking winners and losers as much as they were trying to see businesses get off the ground.

Mr. Szyperski stated that, in his example, if both businesses were doing the same thing, but one owner was using their own funds, how do they distinguish between the two.

Mrs. Rowland stated that she thought, with the matching funds criteria, any business would have to come up with their own funds in order to be eligible for the grant and that would help with the situation that Mr. Szyperski was talking about.

Mr. Gill stated that most of the grants that the County applies for require a match. He stated that the EDA just started giving grants to for-profit businesses, so maybe one of the criteria should be that, for for-profit businesses, a match will be required.

Mrs. Rowland stated that she agreed with that. She suggested a fifty-percent match.

Mr. Laws stated that his initial thought, when he looked at this sheet, was if all of the criteria were weighted the same in terms of the EDA's evaluation. He suggested that they should go through each of the criteria items and have a weighted average concept by assigning values to the criteria that they deem most important.

Dr. Silverman stated that she like Mr. Laws' idea. She stated that she thought that would make their assessments more quantitative.

Mr. Laws stated that they could add another step to it and have a minimum that has to be met after the values have been totaled. He stated that the values could be assigned individually by the EDA members and then discussed once the EDA meets.

Mrs. Rowland stated that she thought there would need to be a minimum.

Dr. Silverman asked Mr. Laws if he would like to work with her on the grant request process.

Mr. Laws replied yes.

Mrs. Rowland asked Mr. Szyperski his opinion of the suggested fifty percent match for grant requests for for-profit businesses.

Mr. Szyperski replied he thought fifty percent was a great start.

Mr. Carter stated that he liked the fifty percent match requirement as well.

Mrs. Rowland stated that she would like some language added about businesses that receive grants eventually be self-sustaining, so they don't see recurring applications.

Dr. Silverman stated that the last topic under internal EDA updates was about an Economic Development Director. She stated that they had talked about this topic before and she thought that this position would help the EDA tremendously.

Mr. Gill stated that the Board of Supervisors fully intends to fund an Assistant County Administrator position beginning July 1<sup>st</sup> and a main focus of that position would be economic development. He stated that, within the next few months, that position will be advertised.

### **External EDA**

Dr. Silverman stated that, from a public perspective, she thought it would be helpful to have a list of the previous grantees and the grant amounts posted on the current website and possibly on the new website, if that happens.



Mr. Szyperski stated that he thought it was a great idea because they are a public entity with public funds.

Mr. Carter stated that he had reservations because, after seeing that information, the public might not be aware of the EDA's decision making process. He stated that one example was when they gave funds to the Save the Rappahannock Coalition. He stated that someone might wonder how that would translate to the business environment and might think it was a political thing, when the EDA looked at it as preserving the nature of the community and helping with tourism. He stated that another consideration is that some of these businesses or organizations might not want to be listed.

Mrs. Rowland stated that the EDA meetings are public and are recorded now, so she suggested that they list the grantees moving forward since it is all available publicly anyway.

Mr. Carter stated that he would not have any problem with that at all.

Mr. Gill stated that it was all public knowledge anyway and subject to the Freedom of Information Act rules.

Dr. Silverman stated that all of the minutes are on the website, so anyone can see what was awarded and who voted to make the award. She stated that, in the spirit of transparency, she thought the grantees should be listed.

Mr. Laws stated that he thought they should list all of the grantee information and go back five or even ten years. He stated that it would help with public accountability and should be disclosed.

Dr. Silverman stated that she could put a spreadsheet together with the information of the grantee, the amount of the grant and the year that the grant was awarded. She stated that the spreadsheet could be assessable via a link on the website.

Mr. Szyperski stated that he thought it would be powerful for them to include the cumulative amount that the EDA has given over the last ten years that has not come from taxpayer dollars.

Dr. Silverman stated that it was important to add that these funds were non-taxpayer dollars.

Mr. Carter stated that he thought the EDA was formed in the 1970's so it might be a tedious job to try to find out what the cumulative amount would be. He stated that providing information for the last ten years would be more reasonable.

Mrs. Rowland asked for clarification about whether they planned on listing the cumulative amount of funds given out or listing the grantees as well.

Dr. Silverman stated that they were also talking about listing the grantees, too. She stated that the information would be on a spreadsheet.

Mr. Szyperski made a motion to include, on the website, both a cumulative amount and a listing of grantees that the EDA has given money to for the last ten years. He stated that it did not matter to him whether the specific amounts given to grantees was included or not and he would defer to his fellow EDA members on that.

Dr. Silverman stated that it was important to her that the individual amounts are listed with the grantees. She stated that it gives them transparency about what has been awarded in the past.

Mrs. Rowland stated that the EDA has given larger amounts than \$10,000 in the past and since they have passed a policy making \$10,000 the limit, unless there was an exception, she thought they would be opening themselves up to questions about that unless it was addressed. She stated that she thought there should be language included that explains the recent policy.

Dr. Silverman stated that the amendment to Mr. Szyperski's motion was that there would also be language contained with the grantee list and amounts that discussed the policy change of a \$10,000 limit to grantees. Mr. Szyperski seconded the amended motion. **VOTE: 4-1.**

Mr. Carter stated that the only reason he objected to the motion was because he thought just the cumulative amount of grants should be included.

Dr. Silverman stated that another topic was the public awareness of the EDA. She stated that she had given a talk at the library a couple of years ago to give people an idea of what the EDA was about. She stated that she thought the EDA should do more to let the community know about them and what they do. She stated that they needed more public awareness. She stated that, if they look at who the grantees have been, she would like to see more diversity and they were not reaching those demographics.

Mrs. Rowland asked if they should consider a marketing committee.

Dr. Silverman stated that she would be open to that idea, but she does not have a marketing background.

Mr. Carter stated that he thought having more diversity and public awareness was a great idea. He stated that the biggest issue that the EDA has right now is money because they can get the word out and have a lot of potential grantees come to them, but they would have to turn a lot of them down or give much smaller grants because of the lack of funds. He stated that he thought they should really focus on raising money whether it is angel funding, going after grants or philanthropy. He stated that having an Economic Development Director will be a great step in the right direction and could help the EDA achieve its goals.

Mr. Szyperski stated that, once they have the ten-year cumulative number of grant money that has been given, they could generate a press release to the Rappahannock Record that would say what the EDA does and give a general overview, as well as point people to the website.

Everyone thought that was a good idea.

Mrs. Rowland suggested asking for press coverage of the EDA meetings. She stated that she could reach out to Jackie Nunnery of the Rappahannock Record and ask her.

Mr. Szyperski stated that he would be willing to draft the press release once he received the cumulative grant amount and send it out to the other members for their review.

### **January 21, 2021 Meeting Minutes – Consideration of Approval**

Dr. Silverman made a motion to approve the January 21, 2021 meeting minutes. Mr. Carter seconded the motion. **VOTE: 5-0.**

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Szyperski made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Rowland seconded the motion. **VOTE: 5-0.**

### **Action Items**

- Mr. Carter and Mr. Laws to work on website content.
- Dr. Silverman will update the grant request form.
- Dr. Silverman and Mr. Laws to work on the grant request process.
- Mr. Szyperski and Mrs. Rowland will be working on the EDA's strategic plan.
- Consideration of having a separate website from the County website.
- All EDA members try to find 2-3 sources of potential revenue for the EDA.
- All EDA members think about the amount of time/effort they can commit to the EDA.
- A list of grantees and the amounts given for the last ten years to be published on the website.
- Press release to the Rappahannock Record including general overview and grant amounts.
- Ask the Rappahannock Record about possible coverage of EDA meetings.
- The next regular EDA meeting will be Thursday, July 15, 2021 at 8:30 a.m.