

**Economic Development Authority
Of
Lancaster County, Virginia
At
Chesapeake Bank Training Center
Minutes – July 19, 2018**

Members Attending: Chairman Roy Carter, Alex Fleet, Ed Pittman, Ronald Davenport and Lewis Conway. Members Absent: Jeff Szyperski and Rosie Kelley.

Others Present: Don Gill, Assistant County Administrator, Dr. Robert Westbrook, District 5 Supervisor and members of the Broadband Advisory Group.

Mr. Carter called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

New Business

Presentation-Lancaster County Broadband Advisory Group

Mr. Carter asked George Bott, a member of the Lancaster County Broadband Advisory Group, to make some comments.

Mr. Bott stated that he thought the future looked bright for rural Lancaster County in terms of broadband. He stated that he had spoken with Mr. Carter about the Economic Development Authority (EDA) and the Broadband Advisory Group getting together. He stated that the Board of Supervisors will be taking a vote on the newly formed Broadband Authority after a public hearing next Thursday night. He stated that all of the Supervisors were very much in favor of establishing the authority. He stated that they had gotten to this point because Dr. Bob Westbrook, by his own initiative, had asked his fellow Board members about getting something going on broadband. He stated that Dr. Westbrook suggested forming a group to study the issue, which was done. He stated that the group organized and met on many occasions in an effort to move things forward. He stated that a member of the group, David Pere, would give a presentation on broadband. He stated that he would turn it over to Cassie Thompson, who will be the chairperson of the new Broadband Authority.

Ms. Thompson stated that she appreciated the Economic Development Authority allowing them to make their presentation. She stated that all of the members of the Broadband Advisory Group are active citizens in the community. She stated that they want this to work and love the County.

Mr. Pere stated that the Broadband Advisory Group had their first meeting on April 18, 2018 and he thought they had gotten a lot done in a short period of time. He stated that they had received four assignments from Dr. Westbrook in the beginning. He stated that the first task was to research how best the Board of Supervisors might adopt a Broadband

Authority in a short amount of time. He stated that the other tasks included, recommended membership, recommended by-laws and whatever else would define the purpose of the authority.

Mr. Pere stated that the advisory group's work is guided by the following broadband expansion and inclusion goals: promote economic development, increase educational and vocational training opportunities, empower entrepreneurship, provide a gateway to quality of life enhancing technology and innovation and foster greater civic engagement and public safety. He stated that their approach was to divide the work into three phases. He stated that the phases were assessment, planning and implementation and performance management. He stated that the Center for Innovative Technology (CIT) is state funded and not for profit. He stated that CIT has a program for helping communities get to a place where they can issue requests for proposals to have internet service providers or cable providers bid on requirements that are necessary for this service. He stated that his group planned on assessing the landscape, engaging the community and setting goals. He stated that CIT has the methodology for them to follow. He stated that one of the most important things that they can do is to ensure that the cable companies are doing what they say they are going to do and that would include a robust auditing capability.

Mr. Pere stated that his group was just starting to focus on funding and they will need seed money. He stated that they know there are grants out there.

Mr. Pere stated that his group briefed the Lancaster County Board of Supervisors last month and proposed a resolution to partner with CIT, which is a free service. He stated that they also proposed a resolution to establish the Broadband Authority. He stated that the Virginia Wireless Service Authorities Act provides a legal structure for the authority.

Mr. Carter stated that he was well aware of the broadband issues and was impressed with what the Broadband Advisory Group had accomplished in a few months. He stated that the initiative needed to be taken because the people and small business in the County really need it. He stated that Rob Wittman had mentioned a comment period that was coming up concerning broadband. He stated that Mr. Wittman had said that the more comments that were received, the better. He stated that the EDA should be supportive of this. He stated that Mr. Wittman had also said that the way maps are drawn could also skew the way it shows where broadband is located. He stated that Mr. Wittman said they were trying to get the maps redrawn to better show population and service areas.

Mr. Pere stated that one thing that was needed with all of the grants was the answer to what is the County's current coverage. He stated that they have already started to determine what occupied homes have service.

Mrs. Thompson stated that they are planning on conducting a survey for citizens to hear from them on what service they have, if any, and what their interest is in having better service. She stated that CIT will be helping them with this task.

Mr. Carter asked about people who cannot afford the service and if there would be any subsidies.

Mr. Bott replied that it depends on who provides the service. He stated that it could be a variety of costs, depending on the provider. He stated that Northern Neck Electric Cooperative is looking at ways to bundle services to make things more affordable.

Margie Armen, a member of the Broadband Advisory Group, stated that if the Broadband Authority owned the infrastructure, then they could set the rates. She stated that there was a possibility that they could set graduated fees based on income. She stated that this was all hypothetical at this point.

Mr. Pere stated that they were looking into having the service being affordable to families with lower incomes as well.

Ms. Armen stated that she thought everyone would agree that they want a comprehensive solution for broadband and not just a “band-aid”.

Mr. Pere stated that they will be limited in what they can do without some major drivers from the County. He asked Mr. Carter how it works with the EDA as far as an organization who would like to request funds.

Mr. Carter replied that the EDA had never had another County Authority come to them for money, as far as he knew. He stated that the EDA tries to foster economic growth in the community. He stated that a request from the Broadband Authority would have to be discussed by the EDA members. He stated that the EDA does not have a huge budget to work with and because the Broadband Authority will need a lot of money, state and federal options need to be considered as well.

Ms. Armen stated that, as a legal Authority, they would be able to apply for grants and issue revenue bonds, but they would like to get free money first.

Dr. Silverman stated that there were going to be some smaller costs at first, such as the costs associated with the County-wide survey that they are planning.

Mr. Pittman stated that the primary function of the EDA is to use the County’s lending authority for groups to get lower rates for borrowing. He stated that the second focus has been to contribute to smaller groups, such as the Boys and Girls Club or Visions, to help them move forward in the community.

Mr. Carter stated that he wanted to read from the EDA’s by-laws and said “The general purpose of the Authority shall be fostering and stimulating the development of industry and trade in the County of Lancaster for the general good of its people and the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Authority is a separate and distinct legal entity and acts for the benefit of the inhabitants of the County of Lancaster, Virginia either through the increase of their commerce or through the promotion of their safety, health, welfare,

convenience or prosperity.” He stated that gives a general idea of what the EDA is about. He stated that he had spoken with Mr. Szyperski and they definitely want to help show support during the comment period concerning broadband.

Mr. Carter thanked the broadband group for their presentation.

New Business (Continued)

Mr. Fleet stated that this would be his last meeting as a member of the EDA. He stated that he had enjoyed his association with the EDA.

Mr. Carter thanked Mr. Fleet for his years of service to the community.

Mr. Carter stated that he had looked at the by-laws and he thought the EDA might need to vote on the meeting format. He stated that, in his opinion, presenters should be at the beginning of the meeting and not in the meeting when the finances of the EDA are being discussed. He suggested having new business as the third item, instead of it being further down at number seven or eight.

Mr. Pittman stated that there were two ways to handle it. He stated that they could vote to approve the agenda each time, which a lot of organizations do, or they could change the by-laws, but he was not sure of that process.

Mr. Gill stated that the Board of Supervisors allows the chair to revise the agenda’s order of business prior to any meeting.

Mr. Pittman made a motion to amend the by-laws with wording that the order of business may be revised by the Chair prior to any meeting. Mr. Davenport seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0.

Mr. Carter asked the EDA members if they would rather meet at 9:00 a.m. instead of 10:00 a.m. He stated that having the meeting later may interrupt some people’s schedules. After discussion, the consensus was to leave the meeting time at 10:00 a.m.

January 18, 2018 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Fleet made a motion and Mr. Pittman seconded the motion to approve the January 18, 2018 meeting minutes as presented. **VOTE: 5-0.**

Financial Report

Mr. Gill stated that on July 1, 2017, the beginning of the last fiscal year, the EDA had a beginning balance of \$144,396.15. He stated that the expenses included: member meeting stipends - \$1400, Save the Rappahannock Coalition - \$20,000, Boys and Girls Club of

the Northern Neck - \$20,000, Oyster Country branding - \$17,500, River Realm branding initiative - \$5,000, Lead Northern Neck-Visions - \$5,000, and the Kilmarnock Christmas Parade - \$500. He stated that, on the income side from last fiscal year, the EDA earned \$62.85 in interest. He stated that other income included: a service fee collected from the Northern Neck Planning District Commission - \$505, a service fee from the Peninsula Catholic High School - \$1,811.24, a service fee from the James Barry Robinson Facility - \$6,175.45, a service fee from the Mariners Museum - \$12,000 and a service fee from Lancaster County - \$9,816. He stated that the balance, as of July 1, 2018, is \$105,366.69.

Mr. Carter made a motion and Mr. Pittman seconded the motion to accept the financial report as presented. **VOTE: 5-0.**

Mr. Gill stated that the second matter he wanted to go over was that Frank Pleva, the County Administrator, had some serious health issues and had been out of the office since January. He stated that Mr. Pleva serves as the Executive Director and Secretary/Treasurer for the EDA. He stated that the Board of Supervisors had appointed him as the Assistant County Administrator almost a year ago and the County Attorney suggested that the EDA do something similar and appoint him (Mr. Gill) as the Assistant Executive Director and Secretary/Treasurer, so the EDA will have an official staff person in case Mr. Pleva cannot return.

Mr. Pittman made the motion that Don Gill be appointed as the Assistant Executive Director and Secretary/Treasurer to the Lancaster County Economic Development Authority. Mr. Fleet seconded the motion. **VOTE: 5-0.**

Other Business

Mr. Gill stated that the minutes from July 2017 showed that a motion was made to fund the Boys and Girls Club of the Northern Neck capital project in the amount of \$20,000 in FY 18 and \$20,000 in FY 19. He stated that a check would need to be written to them in the near future. He stated that the EDA has also funded the Lead Northern Neck program over the past several years for \$5,000 per year. He stated that there was no specific motion to do that for FY 19, but he had recently spoken to Bill Warren and had learned that they would like that funding to be continued for this year.

Mr. Carter stated that he had met a lot of people who had gone through the Lead Northern Neck program and he was planning on participating in it, starting in September. He stated that he thought it was a very important program and it is great for the community. He stated that, in his opinion, that \$5,000 is well spent.

Mr. Pittman made a motion to approve the funding request from Lead Northern Neck for \$5,000 for FY 19. Mr. Davenport seconded the motion. **VOTE: 5-0.**

Mr. Gill stated that, at the present time, small checks written by the EDA for less than \$125 only require one signature. He stated that any amount larger than that requires two signatures. He stated that the names on the signature card at the present time are Frank

Pleva, Jeff Szyperski and Alex Fleet. He stated that Mr. Fleet has given his resignation letter effective tomorrow and he did not know the future situation with Mr. Pleva so he would suggest that Chairman Carter go to the bank to add his name to the signature card. He stated that the bank requires a copy of approved minutes that show that Mr. Carter is the Chairman of the EDA.

Mr. Pittman asked Mr. Gill about his signature being on the card, too.

Mr. Gill replied that, since he was appointed at this meeting, he would not be able to sign the card until after the minutes of this meeting are approved at the EDA's next meeting in January 2019.

Adjournment

Mr. Fleet made a motion and Mr. Carter seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

VOTE: 5-0.