

Meeting Minutes
Allegheny Highlands Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
Committee

February 16, 2006

12 Noon, Room 509 of the Center for Continuing Education and Workforce Services
Dabney S. Lancaster Community College

Committee Members:

Present: Annette Anderson, Bernard “Mac” Campbell (Representing Tim Tobin by Proxy), Don Carter, Stephanie Clark, Allen Dressler, Thomas Harris, Gary Partridge, David Price, George “Chip” Snead, Mark Taylor, Dr. Richard Teaff, Christine Visscher

Absent: Suzanne Adcock, Glen Anglin, Carolyn Barnette, Robert Daniel, Jack Hammond, Butch Kemper, Phil Sparks, Alan Williams, William Withrow, Bill Zimmerman

Others Present:

John Hull, Regional Economic Resources Planner, RVARC
Wayne G. Strickland, Executive Director, RVARC
Eddie Wells, Senior Planner, RVARC

Proceedings:

· *Meeting called to order* at 12:00 Noon.

Welcome and Introductions:

Presentations:

- John Hull gave a presentation on the difference between goals, objectives, and projects within the CEDS document. He also discussed how the goals/objectives section is to be organized. Mr. Hull stated that in developing this section of the document, the committee should start with goals as the most general level of detail and move to objectives that are more specific, measurable, and lead logically to specific projects.

- Eddie Wells presented draft goals/objectives that were developed from Committee discussions at the January meeting. Each goal/objective was explained in detail.

Discussion of Goals and Specific Projects:

- A set of draft goals/objectives was distributed to the committee prior to the meeting. Committee members were asked to bring comments and suggestions. Wayne Strickland explained that in this portion of the meeting comments would be taken and incorporated into the list of goals/objectives literally ‘on the fly’ and projected on a large screen (via Microsoft PowerPoint) so that committee members could see the revisions being made and provide further comments.

- Several committee members commented that Goal #1 (Enhance the Alleghany Highland's positive identity and its image) seemed to indicate the Highlands image is already quite good. After some discussion, consensus was reached that the goal should be revised to state, "Create a positive identity for the Alleghany Highlands."

-Committee Member Taylor suggested that a possible project might involve developing a "community profile," which would include a regional overview, information on top employers, and a demographic analysis. Committee Member Partridge agreed that the Alleghany Highlands Economic Development Corporation (AHEDC) could use additional material that would utilize information on specific sites and programs available and stated that this project should be largely the AHEDC's responsibility.

- Committee Member Harris commented that web sites and new and emerging electronic media should be written in to the strategy as new internet technologies and other communication technologies/media will become more important with the passage of time.

- Mr. Strickland asked Mr. Partridge if he would flesh out the exact needs of the EDC in terms of collateral materials for inclusion in the CEDS as a project and Mr. Partridge agreed to look at what the EDC needs.

ACTION ITEM: Collect information on the needs of the Alleghany Highlands Economic Development Corporation in terms of marketing materials to include printed collateral, electronic marketing media, and other such needs to include estimated costs. *(Committee Member Partridge)*

- Prior to discussion on Goal #2 (Economic diversity) Committee Member Clark asked Mr. Strickland to clearly differentiate the work of the CEDS Committee versus what other economic development groups in the region are doing.

- Mr. Strickland asked if Mr. Partridge would discuss the differences between the upcoming EDC Economic Summit and the CEDS meeting process. Mr. Partridge explained that the EDC Economic Summit is focusing more on organizational issues related to the EDC and is meant as a strategic planning exercise that will utilize case studies and best practice analyses of other economic development agencies across the country. The Economic Summit is not project specific and is meant as an organizational strategic planning effort. Mr. Harris and Mr. Strickland made similar comments to the effect that the CEDS is to be a very specific, project-level planning document that will seek to address very specific needs across the Highlands region that relate to economic development.

- Several committee members commented on the need for a small business development center or a way to teleconference with the existing small business development center in Roanoke or Harrisonburg. There was consensus among committee members that the establishment of a small business development center should be a project under Objective 2.1.

- Committee Member Teaff commented that the word diversity should possibly be stricken from the language of Goal #2 and be replaced with 'vitality'. After some discussion, it was suggested that the goal read, "Encourage economic strength and diversity through the development of small and entrepreneurial businesses, retaining and expanding local businesses, recruiting appropriate businesses and industry to the Highlands region, pursuing appropriate economic clusters, and developing the region's tourism potential."

- Committee Member Price asked when the committee would begin to look at the issue of what agency/locality will be responsible for each project. Mr. Strickland responded that the committee will begin to look at projects at the next meeting and responsibility for projects will be assigned in future meetings.

- Discussion moved to Goal #3 (Infrastructure). Under Objective 3.3, Dr. Teaff suggested that a specific project be included regarding the widening of US 220. Mr. Harris suggested that specific language be included on the subject of rail infrastructure.

- In discussion of Goal #4, Mr. Harris suggested that the words "and public sector" be added to Objective 4.2 so that it now reads, "Seek out regional funding partners in the private sector and public sector (e.g. Federal/State/local government, foundations, community banks, etc)."

- In discussion of Goal #5, which addresses workforce readiness, Mr. Campbell suggested that the words "and participation in" be added to Objective 5.1 to read, "Increase community awareness of and promote community participation in training and education programs available in the region." Mr. Price suggested that language be added to 5.2 in support of developing telecommunications capability since many cannot take advantage of distance learning classes in the region due to the lack of broadband Internet connectivity.

- Discussion on Goal #6 indicated that committee members supported the expansion of Goal #6 to include tourism language and that the tourism objective be removed from Goal #2. Committee members requested that Goal #6 be expanded to include several specific objectives related to the development of cultural amenities, recreation, quality of life, and tourism.

- In discussing Goal #7, Mr. Wells read some proposed objectives regarding housing rehabilitation, expanding housing opportunities for all income levels, housing for the elderly, and the development of more market – rate housing. Committee Member Snead added that an objective regarding the development/encouragement of the second home housing market should be added given that second homes increase the tax base and usually demand fewer services.

-The committee indicated that there was consensus on the goals and objectives as developed in the meeting. Mr. Strickland stated that staff would incorporate comments

received from the committee and begin to add specific projects and strategies under each objective.

ACTION ITEM: Synthesize committee comments and redistribute list of goals/objectives and projects to committee (*RVARC staff*)

- Mr. Snead commented that the work session was very successful and that the minutes should indicate that those committee members who were absent missed a good, productive, and energetic work session.

- Mr. Strickland mentioned that a public meeting should be held in the coming month to get public input on the goals and objectives. Committee discussion ensued on an appropriate time and when the public meeting should be held in relation to the next committee meeting in March. It was decided that a public meeting should be held in late March after the next committee meeting on March 16, 2006. The next committee meeting should focus on further review of the goals, objectives, review of some project ideas, and discussion of the upcoming public meeting. It was suggested that the public meeting might be held at several different times of the day to ensure that residents have adequate opportunity to comment.

- Mr. Strickland mentioned that the goal is to have a document adopted by all the region's local governments in June or July.

- Committee members were asked to return their demographic surveys. Mr. Strickland explained that the demographic surveys are required so that the staff can report on the demographic make up of the committee. The EDA evaluates the demographic composition of CEDS committees when evaluating the overall CEDS document and process.

ACTION ITEM: Complete the demographic survey sent out in committee packets or also available through the CEDS web site - <http://www.rvarc.org/ceds> - and return to RVARC staff by faxing to 540-343-4416 (*Committee Members*)

Mr. Strickland thanked the group for their continued interest and participation.

- Meeting adjourned at 1:40 p.m.
- Minutes submitted by John M. Hull, Regional Economic Resources Planner.