

Meeting Minutes
Allegheny Highlands Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
Committee

April 13, 2007

11:00 AM, Room 502 of the Center for Continuing Education and Workforce
Services Building at Dabney S. Lancaster Community College

Committee Members:

Present: Annette Anderson, Carolyn Barnette, Jack Hammond, Tom Harris, Gail Johnson
(Representing Dr. Teaff by Proxy), David Price, John Strutner, Mark Taylor

Absent: Suzanne Adcock, Glen Anglin, Don Carter, Stephanie Clark, Claire Collins,
Robert Daniel, Charlie Kahle, Butch Kemper, Phil Sparks, Tim Tobin, Bill Zimmerman,
Alan Williams, John Williams

Others Present:

Wayne G. Strickland, Executive Director, RVARC
John Hull, Regional Economic Resources Planner, RVARC
Laura Lee, Office of Congressman Rick Boucher
George "Chip" Snead, Volunteer, Allegheny County

Proceedings:

· *Meeting called to order at 11:00 AM*

Welcome and Introductions:

John Hull, Regional Economic Resources Planner, welcomed the meeting participants and asked the committee members to introduce themselves.

Updates:

- Appalachian Regional Commission Tourism Trail Grant: Mr. Hull noted that the Tourism Trail Project is on the Governor's List of Recommended Projects to go to ARC which usually indicates that funding is secure. Wayne Strickland stated that the State has recommending awarding more money than requested by the region and that this makes the project a \$50,000 project. Mr. Hull reported that work will proceed as soon as RVARC is under contract with ARC for the project which will likely occur in late summer or early fall.

Mr. Hull reported that an initial series of focus groups were held in preparation for the Tourism Trail work and that there was healthy participation from all localities on the trail and from the CEDS Committee and that a number of potential assets and trail theme were identified. He mentioned that another meeting is being planned for May 25th with representatives of other trails to discuss the lessons learned in planning their trail projects and to announce the next steps in the planning process. He mentioned that Diana

Blackburn and Woody Crenshaw from the Round the Mountain Trail and Bill Smith from the Crooked Road plan to participate in this meeting.

- Alleghany Highlands Cluster/Industry Targeting Analysis: Mr. Hull reported that earlier in the year the Alleghany Foundation awarded the project \$23,500 and the Alleghany Highlands Economic Development Corporation awarded the project another \$2,500 providing the \$25,000 in local match required by EDA. He reported that the project technical assistance pre-application is still being reviewed by the US EDA. He reported that EDA staff has said they expect to make a decision in April on the pre-application and that another two months will likely be needed by EDA staff to review the final application on the project.

Committee Member Hammond asked how long it might take to complete the cluster analysis once funding is awarded. Mr. Hull reported that it would likely take 8 or 9 months to complete and will likely be completed in the first quarter of 2008. Mr. Hammond stated he believed the cluster analysis will be a very useful tool in moving economic development efforts forward in the region. Mr. Strickland agreed and reminded the committee that US EDA will not fund any infrastructure improvements in the Commerce Park until this cluster effort is completed.

- Alleghany Highlands Telecommunications Grants: Mr. Hull reported that Alleghany County, the City of Covington, and the Town of Clifton Forge have each submitted a telecommunications planning grant to Department of Housing and Community Development Virginia Rural Broadband Planning Initiative. He stated he did not know of any deadline or known date for funding announcements but that hopefully the results of these applications will be known soon.

Discussion of Draft 2007 Annual Report to EDA:

Mr. Hull noted that an annual report must be submitted to the Philadelphia Office of the US EDA each year by July 1 to maintain the Alleghany Highlands Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. He noted that a draft report was circulated prior to the meeting and that no projects have been added or deleted over the course of preparing the report. Mr. Hull reported that the Committee made a remarkable amount of progress this year and that there are a number of projects that are in progress, a good number that are on their way to being fully funded, and a couple of smaller projects that will be complete by the end of the year.

Mr. Hull reported on the evaluation explaining the meaning of the categories 'desired', 'planning', 'pre-application', 'application', 'funded', 'completed'. He mentioned that a mark in the 'desired' column indicates simply that the project is still desired and will remain on the project package. If a project is marked 'planning' it indicates that the project is being actively pursued either through meetings or other activities. The 'pre-application' and 'application' categories denote submission of grant application(s). The 'funded' column is marked only once a project is fully funded. A project is considered 'completed' once constructed or implemented. Mr. Hull explained that a number of the

projects have received some funding but are not yet fully funded and are hence not included in the 'funded' category.

Mr. Chip Snead stated that mention of the fact that Alleghany County has secured substantial zero-based funding from the Virginia Revolving Loan Fund for the Regional Wastewater Treatment Project should be mentioned in the narrative of the report.

Mr. Hull noted that this evaluation framework is used by several other communities in Virginia that have a CEDS process. Mr. Strickland asked the committee to update the staff with any additional information in regards to projects. Mr. Strickland stated that the aim is to adopt this document in the June meeting and RVARC staff will submit to EDA staff before July 1.

ACTION ITEM: Update John Hull on progress of other projects or other changes needed by May 25 (Committee Members).

Mr. Hull noted that there are a couple of projects that staff would recommend be combined with other projects to satisfy the study goals of two or more proposed studies in one effort. Mr. Hull stated that staff would recommend combining the labor market study with the regional cluster analysis since workforce issues will be considered in the industry cluster analysis. Mr. Hull also recommended that the Highlands Retail Development Plan/Time of Day Shopping Study be combined with downtown efforts to be pursued at a later time.

The Committee agreed by consensus that these changes should be made.

The Committee began discussion of the 2008 Annual Priorities. Mr. Strickland encouraged the committee to discuss the priorities so staff could discuss priorities in their contact with Philadelphia region EDA staff. Mr. Hull reported that this year's priorities were the cluster analysis, entrepreneurial and broadband education, and the Alleghany Regional Commerce Center.

Mr. Hull noted that the entrepreneurial and broadband education projects will be complete this year with the Enterprise Fair to be held at Dabney S. Lancaster Community College on May 14th and the Broadband 101 workshop already held at Dabney S. Lancaster Community College in March. Mr. Hull noted that those committee members who are interested in the workshop should register at highlandsenterprise.org. Gail Johnson of Dabney S. Lancaster Community College distributed flyers for the event to the Committee.

Mr. Strickland stated that Matt Miller at the Regional Commission did attend the Broadband 101 session. Mr. Snead commented that the session was very good and that the speaker was quite knowledgeable. Mr. Hull noted that additional broadband education sessions will be held elsewhere in the state and distributed brochures on additional events to the Committee.

Discussion moved back to annual priorities. Laura Lee of Congressman Boucher's office asked regarding the Cluster Study status and when staff expects to complete it. Mr. Hull stated completion should take between 7 and 9 months after receiving funding. Mr. Strickland agreed that the study should be completed by March if the EDA will complete its review of the pre-application and application in a timely fashion.

Mr. Strickland noted that once the cluster analysis is complete, staff can proceed with taking steps to developing a pre-application for improvements to the Commerce Center.

Committee members discussed adding the Greater Allegheny Highlands Tourism Trail project as a third priority. Members also discussed the importance of the CSX Site Redevelopment in light of the recent grant submitted for the CSX Site in Clifton Forge.

The 2008 Annual Priorities are as follows:

1. Allegheny Highlands Cluster/Target Industry Analysis
2. Allegheny Regional Commerce Center
3. CSX Site Redevelopment/Multimodal project
4. Greater Allegheny Highlands Tourism Trail Project

Mr. Hull suggested that the Committee should revisit the discussion of the document in the June meeting and that Committee Members should review the document in the interim and forward any updates or changes to him. He stated that the 2007 Annual Report will need to be submitted to EDA by July 1.

Discussion of Draft Bylaws and Membership Structure:

Mr. Hull explained that changes in the federal regulations concerning the composition of CEDS Committees have necessitated a change in the Committee structure. He explained that EDA promulgated a set of regulations after the adoption of the Allegheny Highlands Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy stating that CEDS Committees are to have a majority (51%) private sector membership composed specifically of senior managers or executives.

Mr. Hull explained that the proposed changes as set forth in the draft bylaws maintain two elected representatives from each local government. He explained that Chief Administrative Officials would be moved to a nonvoting liaison position on the Committee to keep the Committee at a manageable size. A remaining 15 voting members would be nominated by a nominating committee composed of CEDS Committee members.

Committee Member Harris asked if the proposed bylaws would place the Committee in compliance and asked if the term 'technical advisor' could be used in place of nonvoting liaison. Mr. Strickland explained that yes the proposed bylaws would comply and that the change in terminology can certainly be made. He explained that the structure proposed is only a possibility and that it can be modified.

There was discussion as to whether the structure should further be changed so that each locality has one elected official and their chief administrative official as voting members. The Committee agreed that chief administrative officials should serve as technical advisors and that each locality should have two elected members.

Committee Member Taylor asked if there are Committee Members who currently belong to the Committee but have not attended any meetings. Mr. Hull answered that there are. Mr. Taylor asked if there are provisions to encourage participation of Committee Members. Mr. Strickland stated that there are provisions and that if a member misses 2 meetings then he or she will no longer be in good standing.

Mr. Harris suggested that two-thirds of the entire committee membership should be required to make changes to the bylaws not merely two-thirds of those in attendance. The Committee discussed the fact that there is always a dedicated core of attendees and discussed various alternatives. Mr. Harris suggested that since there is a provision censuring lack of attendance then perhaps the bylaws should be changed to read that amendments or changes to the bylaws can be made possible by a vote of two-thirds of those members who are in good standing. The Committee agreed.

Committee Member Strutner stated that he believed locality staff should serve as technical advisors and that elected officials should have voting responsibilities on the committee.

Staff recommended that the Committee act on the bylaws at the meeting so that a full slate of members can be included in the 2007 Annual Report. It was noted that the bylaws can be changed at a later date if necessary. Mr. Strickland summarized the key features of the bylaws including that the membership is composed of 2 elected officials from each locality, 15 nonelected, private sector and institutional representatives, a technical advisor from each locality, and a technical advisor from each the Roanoke Valley Economic Development Partnership and the Alleghany Highlands Economic Development Corporation. Changes to be made include specifying that the bylaws may be changed only by a vote of two-thirds of committee members in good standing, defined as all members who have attended at least half of the CEDS meetings held in the previous year and changing the terminology of 'nonvoting liaison' to 'technical advisor' .

The Committee adopted the bylaws.

Establishment of Nominating Committee:

The following members volunteered to serve on a nominating committee: Mark Taylor, Jack Hammond, David Price, Annette Anderson, and Dr. Richard Teaff. Mr. Strickland suggested that if a member wishes to serve as chair or vice-chair then he or she should contact one of the members of the nominating committee and let them know.

Future Meeting Schedule:

The next meeting was set for June 13th from 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM at Dabney S. Lancaster Community College. An alternate date was set for June 22nd at the same time.

Comments/Questions:

Laura Lee of Congressman Boucher's Office reminded everyone again of the Enterprise Fair to be held on May 14th at Dabney S. Lancaster Community College and asked the Committee to let others know of the opportunity. She noted that lunch will be provided at no cost and that people may register at <http://www.highlandsenterprise.org>. Mr. Strickland also encouraged everyone to attend if only to support the initiative.

Ms. Lee also noted that the Congressman's office will begin to hold regular office hours in the region every fourth Tuesday starting this month at the Clifton Forge Public Library to meet with individuals who are having difficulty dealing with federal agencies.

Mr. Strickland noted that the tourism trail project will be moving forward soon and that he hopes to have a contract soon with ARC on the project. He noted that he also hopes to travel with representatives from the localities and agencies that funded the local match to Asheville to meet with Becky Anderson of Handmade in America to hold a workshop. He discussed some of the trails that Chattanooga implemented as well. He also noted that staff hopes to be able to share news on the Cluster Analysis grant at the next meeting.

Mr. Strickland also noted that he is glad to have Mr. John Strutner, Alleghany County's new County Administrator, on the CEDS Committee.

- Meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.
- Minutes submitted by John M. Hull, Regional Economic Resources Planner.