



**MEETING MINUTES**  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF THE COUNTY OF BEDFORD, VA**  
**Bedford County Administration Ground Floor Training Room**  
**122 E. Main Street**  
**Bedford, VA 24523**

**April 1, 2021**  
**5:30 p.m.**

**Economic Development Authority:**

**Present:** Rhonnie Smith - Dist. 1; Vicki Gardner - Dist. 2; Wyatt Walton - Dist. 3; Matthew Braud - Dist. 4; Kristy Milton - Dist. 5; James Robertson - Dist. 6; Jim Messier - Dist. 7

**Staff Present:** Robert Hiss - County Administrator; Amanda Kaufman - Deputy County Administrator; Traci Blido - EDA Secretary; Pam Bailey - Marketing & Business Development Coordinator; Patrick Skelley - County Attorney; Doug Coffman - General Property Manager

**Staff Absent:** None

**Transcriber:** Julia Peters

**Guests:** Mickey Johnson - County Supervisor District 1

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**(1) APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chairman Messier asked for a motion to approve and/or any amendments to the Authority's April 1, 2021 agenda.

**Mrs. Gardner moved, seconded by Mr. Braud, to approve the April 1, 2021 EDA agenda, as presented.**

**Voting yes: Mr. Smith, Mrs. Gardner, Mr. Walton, Mr. Braud, Mrs. Milton, Mr. Robertson, Mr. Messier**

**Voting no: None**

**Adopted Unanimously**

**(2) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES - March 4, 2021**

Chairman Messier asked for approval and/or any amendments to the Authority's March 4, 2021 meeting minutes.

**Mr. Braud moved, seconded by Mr. Smith, to approve the March 4, 2021 meeting minutes, as presented.**

**Voting yes: Mr. Smith, Mrs. Gardner, Mr. Walton, Mr. Braud, Mrs. Milton, Mr. Robertson, Mr. Messier**

**Voting no: None**

**Adopted Unanimously**

**(3) REPORTS**

**A. Economic Development Director's Report**

Mrs. Blido said she appreciated all the work everyone has done on the SWOT project. Because of the progress all the teams have made, she thinks that they are almost at the point to begin looking at the Strategic Plan, which has not been updated in ten years. She would like to invite the former Deputy Director for the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), who is now a consultant for localities working on economic development, to come and provide a facilitation of a strategic planning process in late summer. The County CIP funding is still looking good for grading Lots 10A and 12A. The Tobacco Commission meets on May 27 and hopefully will grant the remaining funds needed to complete the grading. Mrs. Blido also met with Jamerson Lewis at the Bedford Center for Business The Master Plan which was done about five years ago noted that the soils in the park needed mixing and reworking, which came with a large cost. The EDA at that time decided to spend its limited funds on the New London Park where there was more prospect activity. She thought now would be a good time to go back to the Bedford Center to explore ways to inexpensively grade the land while still doing it the right way. She spoke with Mr. Lewis about the possibility of a phased approach and he will be putting together more concrete plans that she will then share with the EDA members.

Every day there are new challenges. Today she learned that AEP will take longer to approve the Burnbridge Road sewer project due to another project involving the rearranging of power lines. In New London the Belvac project with the shell building is going well. Construction should start this coming Monday. Damage Prevention Solutions will be expanding and more will be discussed later in the meeting. Simplimatic Automation now has 80 full-time employees in Bedford County and 25 in Campbell, and continue to grow. They can expand by 20,000 square feet and they like that the lot next to their operation is available. Liberty University's (LU) CERE building now has seven full-time employees with 150 students. Nanotouch said that business is booming and have 15 full-time employees and sell their products in 15 different countries. Mrs. Blido also participated in a child care discussion due to Bedford County having workforce issues as well as child care issues. She learned that Kindercare has a waiting list of 230 families with children that have nowhere to go, which then becomes an economic development issue.

**B. Marketing/Business Development Report**

Ms. Bailey reported that the federal minimum wage will go up to \$9.50 per hour beginning May 1, 2021. All employees including part-timers will have to be paid either the federal or state minimum wage, whichever is higher, and therefore potentially impacting jobs. On January 1, 2022 the minimum wage will increase to \$11.00 per hour, and \$12.00 per hour on January 1, 2023. It is supposed to increase again in 2025 to \$13.50, and in 2026 to \$15.00 per hour, but that is contingent upon what the General Assembly does by July of 2024. Marijuana will become legal on July 1, 2021, if the Governor speeds the timeline up but it will not impact how employers address any workplace drug policies and they can still do drug testing. The Bedford Chamber of Commerce will be doing a legislative wrap-up if anyone is interested in attending. It is scheduled for April 13, 2021 at 8:30 a.m. via Zoom. Local legislators will be giving updates and any questions can be emailed ahead of time to Ms. Bailey or Wende Gaylor. She can send the link to those interested by email. On the business retention front, there have been visits with the VEDP

and the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance (LRBA) to Sentry, Valtim, and Simplimatic. They also visited Mariners Landing with Tourism and connected them with CVCC and Susie G. Gibson administration. They would like to create a pipeline of students from the Culinary Program and also have students build them a LOVE sign. Mariners is interested in creating an accredited hospitality/apprenticeship program. She will have more to report on the subject in future meetings.

The Sam Moore tour for Bedford One was cancelled due to student lack of interest. One of the career coaches, Trish Sawyer suggested having short 30 minute career conversations every Wednesday for six weeks with different people discussing their specific career pathways and how they got to where they are. She has coordinated calls to Blue Ridge Optics, Innerspec, Hurt & Proffitt, and L3 Harris and has two more to set up. These conversations will be recorded and will play on our Economic Development Youtube Channel, giving students who could not attend an opportunity to review. They will also be connecting to an organization called Iron Lives out of Lynchburg that will partner with local schools to provide leadership and character building programs for students. They will look at the videos and create lesson plans around them and then share them with County students and possibly students from surrounding areas.

The Burnbridge Road Project will start construction soon but is waiting on the AEP easement.

A ribbon cutting ceremony at the disc golf course is scheduled for next Friday, April 9, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. Paul McBeth, who designed the course, will be cutting the ribbon. It is open to the public and many people are looking forward to playing after the ceremony. Mrs. Blido said that the next day, Saturday, there will be a "learn to play" disc golf clinic with the Bedford Area Chamber and she and Ms. Bailey are going to learn how to play.

Discussion followed regarding the hospitality/apprenticeship possibility with Mariners Landing. Mrs. Blido noted she is looking for a grant with DHCD for some funding.

#### **C. Monthly Financial Report (March 2021)**

Staff reviewed the financial report with the EDA members and answered questions.

Ms. Bailey noted that fiscal management staff will come and explain the reports to the EDA members once all the data has been rolled over from the old system to the new Munis system.

#### **D. Monthly Accounts Payable Report – (March bills that have been paid)**

Staff reviewed the accounts payable report with the EDA members and answered questions.

In a response to a questions regarding the cell towers and broadband, Mr. Hiss reported that all the towers are up and operational as of December except Wheat Valley. With grant funds and County funds, this was about a \$4 million dollar project but Briscnet has only 200 subscribers so far. The signal array coming off the towers is not as robust as what the County expected and all parties involved in the project are trying to deal with this problem. The County also has a lawsuit against Blue Ridge Towers regarding ownership of the tower in Big Island. Discussion followed regarding the broadband project and its issues.

### **(4) TOWN OF BEDFORD**

#### **A. Approve EDA Budget for Tree Project**

Mrs. Blido stated that the F&B Contractors, Ltd., estimate was high, so a second estimate was obtained. Mr. Coffman was able to reduce the excavated area from 8' wide to 7' wide to save costs and sent for an

RSG Landscaping and Lawn Care, Inc. quote, which is the recommended company. Grant funding will cover only the trees and soil costs; and through RSG, more of the soil costs could be covered. The Town of Bedford was willing to match their funds with what the County provides, up to \$5,000.

Mrs. Blido noted that it is expensive to put trees where gravel has been laid. Discussion followed regarding the trees dying, different nurseries and the types of trees selected, maintenance issues, Department of Forestry parameters, and funding.

**Mr. Robertson moved, seconded by Mr. Walton to proceed with the tree project as bid, follow the grant guidelines, and approve \$5,000 of EDA funds to complete the project.**

**Voting yes: Mr. Smith, Mrs. Gardner, Mr. Walton, Mr. Braud, Mrs. Milton, Mr. Robertson, Mr. Messier**

**Voting no: None**

**Adopted Unanimously**

**(5) BEDFORD CENTER FOR BUSINESS**

Nothing new to report.

**(6) MONTVALE CENTER FOR COMMERCE**

Mr. Robertson reported that he made two contacts and scheduled a site visit for the second week in April. There is community interest in salvaging the old Montvale school space for other uses. Renovating the space by a developer and marketing the space thereafter are being explored. He hopes to have additional information at future meetings.

**(7) NEW LONDON BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY CENTER**

**A. Lot 7 Build-out Report**

Mrs. Blido reported that building plans were included in the EDA members' agenda packets. Coleman-Adams is working on obtaining the building permit and hopes to begin construction on Monday.

**B. Authorization of temporary construction entrance for Lot 3B**

Mrs. Blido said Coleman-Adams has been working on getting the building permits for the expansion for Damage Prevention because their engineering firm has been slow in responding. While doing so, Coleman-Adams found telecommunications conduit in the ground. These lines should have been buried deeper down and they also needed to determine who actually owned the telecommunications and how to get them buried deeper. Southside Electric was contacted regarding these findings and informed Damage Prevention that the entrance could not be built in the proposed area unless two new junction boxes were placed on either side of the entrance, which would cost approximately \$62,000. Damage Prevention cannot afford to pay the additional cost so they are exploring moving the entrance. However, in the meantime, their building has arrived and they want to install it but are asking for some financial help in constructing a temporary entrance while the engineering company redraws the plans and a permanent entrance location is determined. The stone gravel needed to construct the temporary entrance will cost \$6,750 at \$30 per ton and 225 tons is needed. Mrs. Blido said that it is possible that the permanent entrance could be located at this temporary place but there are two choices and she is not sure that the temporary location will be the permanent location ultimately. Discussion followed regarding the history of the project, Cardinal Engineering and their errors and omissions insurance that should cover the costs of the changes required to move the predetermined entrance. Also discussed was providing \$3,000 versus

\$6,750 or loaning Damage Prevention the \$6,750 on a condition of repaying the EDA within a set period of time, giving them incentive to file a claim for errors and omissions.

**Mrs. Milton moved, seconded by Mr. Robertson to authorize a loan from the EDA to Damage Prevention for \$6,750 with no interest for the purpose of providing the materials needed to construct a temporary entrance, and repayment required when the Certificate of Occupancy is issued.**

**Voting yes: Mr. Smith, Mrs. Gardner, Mr. Walton, Mr. Braud, Mrs. Milton, Mr. Robertson, Mr. Messier**

**Voting no: None**

**Adopted Unanimously**

## **(8) OTHER BUSINESS**

### **A. Burnbridge Road Sewer Project**

Ms. Bailey reported that all is in place. BRWA has sent letters to all property owners to get their approval to use the monies being held by the EDA for the sewer project. The new wrinkle with AEP may push the timeline further out, but Doyle Allen and Tom Scott have been very helpful through the process.

### **B. Tourism Zone Discussion**

Mrs. Blido stated that the EDA can begin thinking about the establishment of this zone. An ordinance approved by the Board of Supervisors (BOS) would begin this process and the EDA would be the flow-through for the tourism projects brought to them by Mrs. Blido or Nicole Johnson, Director of Tourism. The tentative area for this zone would be from Downtown Moneta to Mariners Landing, including the State Park and to Hales Ford Bridge. More information will come in future meetings. Mrs. Blido included the incentive guidelines in the EDA agenda packets and asked the EDA members if they would consider using the guidelines for companies in the Tourism Zone for cash incentives. The restaurant sector was discussed as well as revisions to the guidelines. Mrs. Blido thought that if and when the EDA has a strategic planning meeting, the incentive guidelines could be reviewed and asked the EDA members to think of any updates they may want to make.

### **C. Brief Updates from EDA Subcommittees**

Mrs. Gardner provided attendees with information her committee compiled during their SWOT analysis of the Smith Mountain Lake Region. She thought it was a great exercise and much was learned and shared. Discussion followed about Explore Park and the possibilities for Bedford's 300 acres, as well as various outdoor activities available at Smith Mountain Lake and surrounding areas.

Mr. Walton provided attendees with information his committee compiled during their SWOT analysis of the New London Business Park. He noted his committee focused on the opportunities available in the business park and how they can be used for economic development in the future.

Chairman Messier's committee for the Bedford Center for Business met with the Chairman of the Town EDA and discussed collaboration possibilities with them. Dealing with the Center's soil issues and how to best resolve these issues were also discussed.

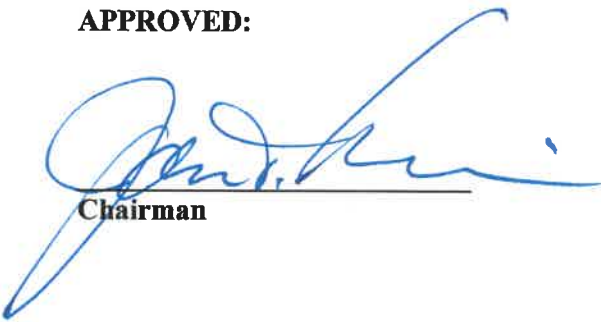
Mr. Robertson reported that one point his committee members would like to address is promoting the agricultural side of the County and utilizing the land more, such as expanding to provide rodeo events.

EDA members also discussed the passenger railway and a Bedford stop, federal monies available to help fund projects, and tourism draws and opportunities.

**(9) ADJOURNMENT**

7:11 p.m.

**APPROVED:**



Chairman



Secretary