



MINUTES

**JOINT MEETING
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

**Bedford County Administration Building
Board Room
122 E. Main Street
Bedford, VA 24523
October 13, 2020**

- 5:00 p.m. Welcome and Introductions**
- EDA Chairman - Mr. Jim Messier
 - Board Chairman - Mr. John Sharp
- 5:15 p.m.-6:15 p.m. EDA Accomplishments, Challenges and Opportunities-Jim Messier and Traci Blido**
- Back to Business Phase I Grant Review
 - Back to Business Phase II Grant Proposal
 - Discussion of Business Recovery
- 6:15 p.m.-6:30 p.m. Closing discussion - All**

Economic Development Authority:

Present:

Rhonnie Smith - Dist. 1; Vicki Gardner - Dist. 2; Wyatt Walton - Dist. 3 (via phone); Matthew Braud - Dist. 4; Kristy Milton - Dist. 5; James Robertson - Dist. 6; Jim Messier, Chairman - Dist. 7

Board of Supervisors:

Present:

Mickey Johnson - Dist. 1; Edgar Tuck - Dist. 2; Charla Bansley, Vice-Chairman - Dist. 3; John Sharp, Chairman - Dist. 4; Tommy Scott - Dist. 5; Bob Davis - Dist. 6; Tammy Parker - Dist. 7

Staff Present: Traci Blido - EDA Secretary; Pam Bailey - Marketing & Business Development Coordinator; Robert Hiss - County Administrator; Amanda Kaufman - Deputy County Administrator; Patrick Skelley - County Attorney; Jordan Mitchell - Director, Community Development; Wyatt Woody - Director, Parks and Rec

Guests: Mary Zirkle, Town of Bedford Director of Planning and Community Development

Transcriber: Julia Peters

Mrs. Blido welcomed everyone to the meeting tonight and introduced the EDA Chairman, Jim Messier. Chairman Messier thanked everyone for attending the meeting, where the EDA members could celebrate their accomplishments and share their vision for the future. He invited the Board of Supervisors (BOS) to join the EDA in a six-month project taking a fresh look at some of the real estate assets in Bedford County. He said that the EDA plans on taking a swath? analysis of the Montvale Center for Commerce, the New London Business and Technology Center, and the Bedford Center for Business. The goal is to create three individual taskforces, each made up of two members of the EDA and two members of the BOS. Members of the Planning Commission and County staff will be included as needed as well as representatives of other agencies such as the BRWA and the Town of Bedford Electric Department. By exploring the strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities of these valuable properties, overall communication will be improved and a shared vision for the future can be created. The goal for completion of this study is early March which ties in well with the budget process. The study will help to identify areas in need of improvement, to aid in the marketing effort, and to work toward the betterment of businesses in Bedford County.

Mrs. Blido reviewed the message Chairman Messier spoke about and added that the particular area around each business park can be included in the analysis by way of how the business parks support these surrounding areas. She asked the BOS if they were agreeable to this project and invited discussion.

Mrs. Blido also noted the unemployment statistics where the combined continuing and initial claims have dropped below 4,000. Continued claims fell 11% in the region, and in Bedford County, the drop was 16%. The mean average wage is \$38,948 and the household income is \$61,541 which is much better than other localities in the region. From a county perspective, she believed Bedford was bouncing back faster than other areas and the sales and meals taxes have not been hit as hard as seen throughout the state and nation. Unemployment is 4.7% due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but last year the rate was 1.9 or 2%. Mrs. Blido felt the better numbers were due to Bedford County citizens being ready and willing to work with a motivated attitude rather than relying on unemployment income.

Her presentation included information regarding the top ten employers in Bedford County and the goal of maintaining and growing in high-tech, higher paying manufacturing jobs with the right companies that will keep the salaries higher. She also noted the value the tours of the Bedford One program provide to high school students, including those tours being held this year virtually. Staff are doing more and more with workforce situations and ag classes in the schools are providing students with skills that will transfer into higher paying salaries. Discussion also included how to include home-schooled students in the programs as well as students in all three high schools.

Mrs. Blido also provided information regarding the incentives granted to various Bedford County companies through the EDA. She explained the Back to Business grant program as well and found some businesses needing help were not eligible due to the parameters of the program. She also covered some interesting aspects learned while administering the grant program and proposed the County provide a Phase II utilizing three different levels of funds; based on the amount of employees and the earnings of the companies.

A brief discussion followed regarding Chairman Messier's proposal of analysis of the Bedford County business parks as well as the Phase II business grant program. A synopsis of current events from an economic development standpoint was also given by Mary Zirkle, the Town of Bedford's Director of Planning and Community Development.

The joint meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

The EDA members remained in the Board Room for a short regular monthly meeting.