



## MEETING SUMMARY

### Carver-Piedmont Feasibility Study

**June 18, 2015 | 1:30pm**  
**RRRC, 420 Southridge Parkway, Ste. 106, Culpeper, VA 22701**

#### Meeting Attendees

Patrick Mauney, RRRC  
Janet Bearden, VAFEC  
Jenny Biche, RRRC  
Ben Craig, VAFEC  
Michelle Edwards, RRRC  
Ernie Hoch, Culpeper County  
Thunder Lane, Youth Visions  
Patrick Mauney, RRRC  
John McCarthy, Rappahannock County  
Jessica Palmer, PEC  
Ray Pickering, Fauquier County Ag. Development  
Carl Stafford, Virginia Cooperative Extension

#### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Meeting attendees provided brief introductions and interest in the project.

#### 2. Multi-Use Food Processing Feasibility Update

B Craig provided an update of the progress of the Multi-Use Food Processing profiles and assessment. Focus group meetings with producers have been held in Madison and Fauquier, with additional meetings scheduled in Culpeper, Orange and Rappahannock. In addition, an institutional food buyers meeting was conducted with area schools (public and private) and hospitals. These institutional buyers source primarily from large distributors, but make efforts to source from local producers when possible. The main obstacles are budget and seasonality issues, as well as the additional time required to coordinate purchases from local producers (easier to utilize large distributors with ordering platforms, etc.).

B Craig also completed a focus group and tour at the Carver School, which generated positive media coverage from the Orange County Review, Culpeper Star-Exponent, Madison Eagle and Charlottesville Daily Progress newspapers. In general, the focus groups have indicated interest in collaborative opportunities for co-packing, branding, marketing and processing, as well as the desire to make use of seconds and thirds (apples, high-acid fruits, etc.) for value-added processing, freezing and storage. The

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focus groups will continue through June and into July, with a draft report expected at the next committee meeting.

J Bearden discussed meetings between VAFEC/Extension/RRRC staff and the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) AFID grant funders, as well as regulatory and enforcement staff from VDACS and USDA. The initial feedback from these groups is that the project holds great potential for future funding. The regulatory staff provided some initial thoughts on potential changes to the proposed processing site with the Carver School building, which will be discussed with the facility assessment consultant.

T Lane asked whether Culpeper County was interested in selling the building and what that might mean for the project or potential operators at the site. P Mauney stated that the County budget indicates interest in identifying an agricultural or vocational use for the building, but that he is not aware of any interest in selling the building outright. J Bearden noted that the County Environmental Services department has indicated interest in seeing the outcomes of this study and that the County may be willing to complete some of the general facility upgrades (not specific to the processing facility) in the future.

### 3. Facility Assessment Update

P Mauney provided an update on the Facility Assessment RFP process. An RFP is currently advertised until June 30 for an architectural/engineering review of the facility. There has been interest generated in the form of questions to the RFP and the hope is that the review team will have several proposals to review after the deadline. P Mauney also noted that a previous RFP was released, but was cancelled due to an inadvertent request for cost estimates and that the revised RFP was adjusted in accordance with state procurement guidelines.

### 4. Agricultural Research & Training Assessment

C Stafford discussed ongoing project at the site, including the second year of a three-year fungicide trail utilizing adjacent land on Battle Park Farms. He is also hopeful of replicating a hops variety trial that is planned for Blacksburg and Petersburg, with this area used as a comparison site for the Northern Piedmont region. Other potential ideas that will be considered for the agricultural research and training assessment are turf demonstrations, an incubator for beginning farmers, small-scale demonstration plots, research greenhouses, high tunnel and horticulture research.

J McCarthy asked if any of the counties in the region are seeing interest in farm breweries, based on the recent legislative changes. R Pickering indicated that Fauquier County has seen interest growing and that there is a drying facility in Purcellville that may provide increased opportunity for both growing and production in that arena.

J Bearden commented that there is also the potential for some of the small plots on the existing parcel and the adjacent land to grow crops that can be used at the food processing facility, including roma tomatoes, etc.

P Mauney indicated that he would be working with C Stafford and the GWCARC board to develop a scope for the agricultural research and training assessment in July.

### 5. RRRC Food System Plan Status

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M Edwards provided an update on the RRRRC Food System Plan. Presently, she is attempting to translate the economic data report from Crossroads Resource Center and the information gathered from the regional focus group meetings held earlier this year into recommendations for the region's food system. Two possibilities that stand out are working to develop a Regional Food Council as an advisory group (rather than policy group) and the development of a Regional Foods Marketing Plan to be used for both existing producers and to attract new growers into the region. An AFID grant through VDACS seems to fit very well with both of these ideas.

J McCarthy indicated the importance of seeking out match funding from not only local governments, but also foundations in the region that would be supportive of such a planning process. Economic development is not tied to political boundaries, but is proving to be more regionally focused.

E Hoch stated that Culpeper County is interested in understanding the overall economic impact of agriculture from a cost-benefit standpoint and that the region needs to understand, and plan for the fact, that there is increased competition for land.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

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