



MEETING SUMMARY

Carver-Piedmont Feasibility Study

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

Meeting Attendees

Patrick Mauney, RRRC
Jenny Biche, RRRC
Becky Sheffield, VCE
Ramona Chapman, DHCD
Deirdre Clark, John Marshall SWCD
Kenner Love, VCE – Rappahannock County
Paige Read, Town of Culpeper Tourism/Economic Development
Ren LeVally, Rural Madison
Ray Pickering, Fauquier County Ag. Development
Tim Mize, VCE – Fauquier County
John Egertson, Culpeper County
David Holtzman, PEC

1. Welcome and Introductions

Meeting attendees provided brief introductions and interest in the project.

2. ‘Tween Rivers Trail Update

J Biché presented an update on the ongoing Agriculture and Forestry Industrial Development (AFID) grant. The Regional Commission received the AFID grant to develop an agri-artisan trail network in the region and to further develop the Regional Commission’s green infrastructure mapping resource efforts. The website – <http://www.tweenriverstrail.com> – is live and provides information on the region and the current trail member sites. J Biché provided a walkthrough of the website and announced that there would be a social media blitz in September and October, asking visitors to trail sites to post pictures with a designated hashtag. Five prizes (one per county) will be given to random participants.

T Mize asked if the committee reached out to all wineries in the region. J Biché indicated that the county tourism departments have done so. P Read confirmed that outreach was completed, though not all information and signatures have been returned to date. For the first year, membership in the trail is free for those that qualify and the social media blitz is also being used as a membership drive to ensure that all of the qualified agriculture and artisan locations are included. The biggest hindrance for some sites is a requirement of standard operating hours, rather than by appointment only. J Biché noted that

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the site can be open seasonally, but must have standard operating hours during that season in order to be a trail member.

K Love asked about potential to tie-in with MarketMaker, a non-profit database that connects agricultural producers with markets with retailers, processors, distributors and consumers. P Read indicated that the market audience for the trail is visitors and tourists, but that it may be useful to further explore potential cross-market targets for producers in the region.

3. Multi-Use Food Processing Feasibility Update

P Mauney noted that, due to unforeseen circumstances, Ben Craig from VAFEC would not be able to attend today's meeting to present the Agricultural and Industrial profile draft documents. However, these documents should be available via the committee's website in the next week or so and P Mauney will send links out to the committee when available. Mr. Craig will present the draft reports at the next committee meeting.

B Sheffield discussed the Union Kitchen consulting partnership. Union Kitchen is a food incubator located in Washington, D.C. and will be providing assistance to the Virginia Food Enterprise Centers in addressing operations, management strategies, financial and budget projections, workforce and social enterprise opportunities, marketing and branding. In addition, Union Kitchen will offer perspectives and lessons learned from the setup of its two locations in Washington, D.C. with regards to facility design, regulatory interactions, staffing and training needs at the proposed processing facility at the Carver School. An initial visit to Washington, D.C. was taken in late July by B Sheffield and Janet Bearden and the information and expertise provided by Union Kitchen will feed into the overall food processing feasibility study.

4. Facility Assessment Update

P Mauney provided an update on the Facility assessment. The request for proposals closed on June 30 and there was significant interest in the project with ten proposals received. The review committee completed interviews with four firms in late July and is hopeful of having a selected firm in place by mid-August to complete the architectural and engineering assessment at the school. The goal is to have the assessment completed by October.

5. Agricultural Research & Training Assessment

B Sheffield discussed the Stone Soup project. This project is a collaboration between VAFEC, Virginia Cooperative Extension and Culpeper Human Services and is designed to help low income individuals improve their quality of life by participating in food service workforce training. There will be six sessions beginning September 8th in Culpeper and second round of training in Madison to follow. The Culpeper sessions will be held at the Head Start building, as there are existing kitchen facilities and childcare available. Participants who complete the full program will receive a certificate of completion for the National Restaurant Association ServSafe Food Handler program.

P Mauney provided a draft handout outlining the work to be completed for the Agriculture Research/Training/Education market and demand assessment. This portion of the grant remains in development, but will focus on core areas for the agricultural uses at the facility, including demonstration plots, variety trials, small farmer development programs, training programs and potential laboratory and research uses.

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Meeting attendees again indicated interest in pursuing the potential of housing hops trials and brewery related research at the facility. P Mauney indicated that this would likely be a focus of the assessment.

6. Roundtable Discussion

Meeting attendees provided general comments about the ongoing effort and other regional agricultural and environmental projects.

P Read indicated that there is a need to document the historic nature of the facility through the George Washington Carver Alumni Association. P Mauney stated that the GWC Agricultural Research Center board is the main conduit with the alumni association and would ask them to add that to their next meeting agenda for discussion.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

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