



MEETING SUMMARY

Carver-Piedmont Feasibility Study

August 27, 2015 | 1:30pm

RRRC, 420 Southridge Parkway, Ste. 106, Culpeper, VA 22701

Meeting Attendees

Patrick Mauney, RRRC
Jenny Biche, RRRC
Michelle Edwards, RRRC
Becky Sheffield, VCE
Deirdre Clark, John Marshall SWCD
Ren LeVally, Rural Madison
Ray Pickering, Fauquier County Ag. Development
David Holtzman, PEC
Ben Craig, VAFEC
Janet Bearden, VAFEC
Dink Kreis, Rural Madison
Betty Dixon, Rural Madison
Thunder Lane, Youth Visions
Carl Stafford, VCE

1. Welcome and Introductions

Meeting attendees provided brief introductions and interest in the project.

2. Stone Soup Project Update

B Sheffield reviewed the Stone Soup project, a collaborative effort between Virginia Cooperative Extension, Culpeper Human Services and Madison County Social Services. The project is designed to help low income individuals improve quality of life through food service workforce training focused on food preparation, sanitation, nutrition and customer service skills. Each program is six weeks long. The first program will run in Culpeper at the Galbreath Marshall building in September and October and the Madison County program will follow in November at the County Extension office.

Meeting attendees discussed the potential sourcing of produce from local farms and/or farmers markets and additional partnership opportunities with organizations such as Rappahannock Goodwill Industries.

3. Facility Assessment Update

Additional background information can be found at <http://www.rregion.org/carver.html>

This project was funded in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Virginia's Building Collaborative Communities Program.

P Mauney indicated that the proposal review process and interviews with four firms were complete. Negotiations are ongoing with the highest-ranked firm and are expected to be completed by next week. The timeline for completing the assessment remains by the end of October.

Meeting attendees asked about other potential uses at the facility, including vocational training. P Mauney answered that Culpeper County continues to look at all options, but that the possible uses referenced are compatible with the food processing and agricultural training and research uses considered as part of this feasibility study.

4. Multi-Use Food Processing Feasibility Update

J Bearden discussed VAFEC's business scenario planning in support of the proposed processing facility at the Carver School. Jill Jefferson has agreed to undertake a business model evaluation as part of a Food Hub Management certification program through the University of Vermont. This part of the feasibility study will identify what role each of the key stakeholders can take as the processing facility develops and will evaluate the benefits and challenges of utilizing for-profit, not-for-profit and hybrid business models. Along with the facility architectural assessment and market analysis, this scenario planning will provide a road map forward for the processing facility use. Additionally, VAFEC has reached out to Dick Daugherty with VT Knowledge Works to review and provide insight on financial structure of the operation.

B Craig provided a presentation of the regional agriculture assessment statistics, sourced from the 2012 Agriculture Census, focus group meetings in each county conducted in May and June. Meeting attendees discussed limitations of the Agriculture Census data, the usefulness of key data sets from the Agriculture Census and the ability to connect those data points with information taken from the local focus groups. J Bearden asked if B Craig would synthesize those data points into a short presentation that would be useful for making the business case to project partners and funders. B Craig agreed and also indicated that he would bring additional data to the September project meeting.

5. Agriculture Research Assessment

C Stafford discussed the continuing efforts at the facility and elsewhere through the George Washington Carver Agriculture Research Center work. GWCARC benefitted from the work of a Virginia Cooperative Extension intern over the summer that helped to set up social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter. GWCARC has also received interest in several potential programs at the Carver-Piedmont facility, including a farm incubator program, small plot development and trials, including a hops variety trial in coordination with Virginia State University.

P Mauney stated that the inventory of existing programs in the region would be developed and gaps identified as part of the feasibility study work in September and October.

6. RRRC Agricultural Project updates

M Edwards stated that the Regional Food System report is almost ready for release in draft form. This draft report, including recommendations, will be presented at the September meeting with additional outreach to follow.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for September 24th.

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