



MEETING SUMMARY

Carver-Piedmont Feasibility Study

October 29, 2015 | 1:30pm
RRRC, 420 Southridge Parkway, Ste. 106, Culpeper, VA 22701

Meeting Attendees

Patrick Mauney, RRRC
Jenny Biche, RRRC
Michelle Edwards, RRRC
Roger Williams, VAFEC
Becky Sheffield, VCE
Kenner Love, VCE – Rappahannock
Jess Palmer, Piedmont Environmental Council
Ray Pickering, Fauquier County Ag. Development
Paul Howard, Culpeper County
Carl Stafford VCE – Culpeper
Betty Dixon, Rural Madison/Skyline CAP
Jim Hoy, GWCARC
Don Hearl, ESS
Julie Bolthouse, Piedmont Environmental Council

1. Welcome and Introductions

Meeting attendees provided brief introductions.

2. Facility Assessment update

P Mauney provided an update of the facility assessment of the Carver School facilities. A site visit with representatives from Spectrum Design was completed on September 30th, with particular attention paid to structural condition of the main school building and four outbuildings, and the associated electrical, plumbing, HVAC, security and other systems at the facility. A draft of the facility assessment report was provided to RRRC on October 27th. Findings are generally positive, in that the main school building is in good condition and the former lineman's building also is usable with selective upgrades and improvements. The other outbuildings are in less usable shape, though there may be an opportunity for utilization of the former gymnasium/auto mechanics building provided some structural improvements to the side away from Route 15.

All of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems will require some level of upgrades. For instance, the electrical switchgear in the main school building has been upgraded, through the service to

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the rear areas of the building (carpentry shop, cafeteria, auditorium, etc.) is provided through the original electrical system. In addition, the well and septic pump-out were in poor condition and would need to be replaced prior to undertaking further analyses of either system.

The committee asked about potential costs for completing upgrades. P Mauney indicated that Spectrum provided some costs for upgrades to specific areas of the main building (carpentry and shop areas), as well as two of the outbuildings for potential use as a food processing facility. The estimates were based on getting the areas up to 'white-box' standard (not including any food processing equipment, etc.) and ranged from \$300,000 (lineman's building) to \$700,000 (rear portion of main building) to \$815,000 (former gymnasium building).

Comments and questions will be sent back to Spectrum Design for incorporation into the final report.

3. New Farmers Training Program (*in development*)

P Mauney indicated that findings from the ongoing agriculture education/training/research inventory in the region, along with findings from the RRRC Regional Farm & Food Plan, Virginia Beginning Farmers and Ranchers program, and other sources, show that there is a lack of on-farm training programs to fill the gaps following early educational opportunities (Piedmont Environmental Council, Beginning Farmers/Ranchers, etc.).

Roger Williams, working with Janet Bearden, VAFEC, and GWCARC, indicated interest in developing a proposal for a new farmers training program at the Carver School site, utilizing lands adjacent to the school. R Williams has developed the outline for such a program that would use a medium-term, mentored incubator farm providing access to small plots (+/- 2 acres), hands-on guidance and technical training, access to shared equipment, storage, and marketing expertise over 3-5 year period. The outcome would be a farmer with sufficient training and business operations experience to move into lease and/or ownership options elsewhere in the region or beyond.

The second aspect of the program would be educational, using classrooms at the school for instruction from agriculture training, business development, etc. provided to interested participants. This aspect would enable greater collaboration with existing providers, including local and state programs (VCE, VDACS Certified Farm Seeker, etc.) with particular attention paid to those organizations already providing these educational opportunities in the region.

Committee members responded positively to the proposal, noting the importance of working with existing providers and also provided varied options for farmers, including traditional and organic training, rather than serving one of those niches exclusively.

4. Regional Farm & Food System Plan

M Edwards discussed the RRRC Farm & Food System Plan, officially released on October 20th at the RRRC Annual Meeting. The Regional Commission adopted the plan at its October 28th meeting, and gave permission for staff to move ahead on the development of structure and organization of a regional food council. M Edwards provided an executive summary of the Farm & Food System Plan for the committee's reference.

Committee members were asked to provide feedback on how best to structure a regional food council. The council is not intended to undertake lobbying or policy-setting efforts, but would likely make recommendations on specific policy issues and serve as a convener of regional projects. M Edwards indicated that the intent for each county to appoint a member to the council, in addition to technical

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experts appointed by the Regional Commission. This setup will give more weight to the work completed by the food council, but also ensure buy-in from each of the five counties in the region.

J Bolthouse questioned whether 10 members would be enough to represent the large number of stakeholders involved in the food system. M Edwards indicated that the meetings would be public, but that the formal structure would prevent the council from becoming unwieldy. P Howard asked whether the counties would want the additional volunteer board position, as many county volunteer boards are hindered by existing vacancies. Committee members discussed meeting frequency, indicating that monthly meetings would be helpful at the outset, with potential to go bi-monthly once the council is functional. M Edwards stated that she would develop draft documents, including by-laws, membership requirements, etc. for discussion at the next Ag Workgroup meeting.

5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 p.m. The next meeting will be announced at a later date.

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