



## MEETING SUMMARY

### Carver-Piedmont Feasibility Study & RRRC Agriculture Working Group

December 7, 2015 | 1:30pm  
RRRC, 420 Southridge Parkway, Ste. 106, Culpeper, VA 22701

#### Meeting Attendees

Patrick Mauney, RRRC  
Michelle Edwards, RRRC  
Jeff Walker, RRRC  
Becky Sheffield, VCE  
Kenner Love, VCE – Rappahannock  
Ray Pickering, Fauquier County Ag. Development  
Carl Stafford VCE – Culpeper  
Khalil Hassan, Rural Madison  
Ren LeVally, Rural Madison  
Laura Loveday, Culpeper County  
Thunder Lane, Youth Visions  
Martha Morris, University of Virginia  
Janet Bearden, VAFEC (via teleconference)

#### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Meeting attendees provided brief introductions.

#### 2. Carver-Piedmont Feasibility Study Updates

Updates to the various segments of the Carver-Piedmont Feasibility Study project were provided and are summarized below.

*VAFEC Market Analysis Report:* P Mauney reviewed the data collection and methodology used by VAFEC in determining market supply, measured in terms of availability of produce (fruits, vegetables, meat, etc.) to support a food incubator and the identified need for such a facility amongst regional producers and agricultural experts, and the market demand, measured in terms of the demand for such products on the open market in the immediate region, as well as larger target markets, amongst consumers, institutional buyers, retail, and wholesale buyers.

J Bearden reviewed the findings from the market analysis, and discussed the preliminary recommendations and next steps based on the analysis. The findings include:

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

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- A phased approach to developing the food incubator in order to make it economically viable
- Identified need for value-added processing opportunities (fruit, vegetable, meat, dairy, etc.)
- Identified need for storage, freezing/flash freezing, drying
- Identified need for aggregation, distribution, and marketing assistance
- Letters of Intent from interested producers, including two anchor tenants

The next steps for VAFEC and regional partners will be to develop funding sources for kitchen design based on the expected growth phases. The need for separate spaces depending on processing inputs (meats vs. dairy vs. fruits, vegetables) is a critical part of the design process. VAFEC will utilize existing food incubator models, kitchen equipment needs, and layouts received as part of the Union Kitchen consulting contract to guide the design specifications moving forward.

J Bearden also discussed the financials and conceptual plan received from Union Kitchen. This report, in tandem with the market analysis, provides a path forward for management plans, funding structures, five-year budget projections, and collaborative branding and marketing opportunities. Union Kitchen operates on a for-profit model; however, the report indicates that a hybrid model encompassing for-profit and not-for-profit structures is viable at the Carver-Piedmont facility.

*Agriculture Education, Training, & Research Report:* P Mauney discussed the various aspects of this report primarily completed by RRRC staff in support of future agriculture education, training, and research efforts at the Carver-Piedmont center. The region has a large number of education and training resources in existence, including those overseen by Virginia Cooperative Extension, Fauquier Education Farm, Piedmont Environmental Council, and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts. In addition, the public schools and the two community colleges have agriculture curriculum that provides a large user base for potential programs at the Carver-Piedmont facility.

The report should be available later in December for review by the committee and other stakeholders, and will include the final report from the Stone Soup project, the preliminary New Farmers training program information, and other documentation related to the work of the committee over the past several months.

B Sheffield provided an update on the Stone Soup project, which will wrap up its second session (Madison) on December 14<sup>th</sup>. The two sessions served different demographics, which helps to underscore the wide variety of interested participants in the region, as well as to further clarify why and how participants are planning to utilize the training and certifications.

### 3. Regional Food Policy Council

M Edwards discussed the RRRC Farm & Food System Plan, officially released on October 20<sup>th</sup> at the RRRC Annual Meeting. The Regional Commission adopted the plan at its October 28<sup>th</sup> 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 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.

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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.

#### 4. Regional Prime Agriculture Lands Mapping

P Mauney provided a review of two methodologies for developing a regional prime agriculture layer using GIS data. The two methodologies were based on the 2007 Virginia Conservation Lands Needs Assessment Agricultural model, and the 2015 Virginia Conservation Vision Agricultural model, both developed by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Meeting attendees looked over two regional base maps and provided feedback on usefulness and applicability for local planning, zoning, and preservation efforts. In general, the layer based off of the 2007 methodology was preferable to meeting attendees. P Mauney indicated that the regional layer would likely utilize that methodology, but that Regional Commission staff would be open to working with local governments or other organizations to best suit local needs with regard to any use of the model data.

#### 5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 p.m. The next meeting will be announced at a later date.

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