

Accomack-Northampton
Economic Development Committee

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

June 12, 2019

3:00 p.m.

Eastern Shore Community College

Members Present

Joseph Betit, Entrepreneur
Sara Baldwin, Entrepreneur
Robie Marsh, Eastern Shore of Virginia
Chamber of Commerce
Thomas Johnson, Eastern Shore Community
College
Andy Mason, Mason-Davis Realtors
Dr. Mark Reiter, Virginia Tech
Philip Smith for Gary Letchworth, NASA
Dr. Richard Snyder, VIMS
Charles Kolakowski, Northampton County
Ron Matthews, Matthews & Co., CPAs
Jacqueline Chatmon, Citizen
Evelyn Shotwell, Chincoteague Chamber of
Commerce
David Lumgair, Luminary Air Group
Ira Ashby, Accomack County EDA
Karyn Belknap, Business owner

Members Absent

Elaine Meil, A-NPDC
Roland Bailey, A-NPDC
Peter J. Bale, Wallops Island Regional Alliance
Hon. Rob Bloxom, VA General Assembly
Tommy Clark, Don's Seafood Rest. & Tom's
Cove Aquafarms
Honorable Arthur Leonard, Town of
Chincoteague
Lynwood Lewis, VA General Assembly
Mike Mason, Accomack County
John Pavlik, Northampton County JIDA
Richard Williams, Being Well Essentials
Kevin Dennis, Perdue Farms
Ava Gabrielle-Wise, New Road Community Dev.

Others present

Curtis Smith, A-NPDC
Pat Coady, Citizen
Ira Ashby, Accomack County EDA

Clara Vaughn, A-NPDC
Neal Barber, Community Futures
Kerry Kobe, Citizen

Call to Order

Chairman Marsh called the Economic Development Committee meeting to order at 3:03 PM.

Public Participation

Marsh provided members of the public the opportunity to comment. None offered to comment.

Organizational Business

Meeting Minutes

The draft meeting minutes from the December 12, 2018 meeting were presented.

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Vice Chair Baldwin and seconded by Committee Member Betit. No discussion ensued. The motion carried unanimously.

Attendance Record

The attendance record for Fiscal Year 2019 was presented.

Membership Update

The nominating subcommittee presented Phillip Hickman as a candidate to join the Economic Development Committee in a vacant Accomack County Private Sector Seat.

A motion to approve the nomination was made by Committee Member Reiter and seconded by Committee Member Lumgair.

2019 Meeting Schedule

Staff presented the 2019 meeting schedule for the Committee and subcommittees.

Staff Update

Informational Items

- *Federal Opportunity Zone Guidelines Overview* –
Curt Smith reported he is working to coordinate an informational workshop on Federal Opportunity Zones before the end of the calendar year. All members of the Committee as well as local government officials and prospective private sector developers will be invited after a date is set.
- *Go Virginia Update*
 - *Eastern Shore Update*—
Curt Smith announced the A-NPDC was awarded funding to complete a feasibility study for a regional sewer collection system. One component of this project is characterization of potential economic development sites on Virginia's Eastern Shore to be included in the VEDP online state economic development portal. Smith reported the Hampton Roads Sanitation District has expressed its belief that an Eastern Shore sewer line will be feasible. Information on costs and other factors is forthcoming. He reported designs begin at Market Street, in the Town of Onancock, and continue into the Town of Nassawadox. He added this is Phase I of a potentially larger project. The planning grant will conclude this summer.
 - *Water Management Economy Planning Grant*—
Curt Smith attended a workshop in February where Virginia Sea Grant brought together a wide variety of stakeholders to develop a one-year action plan to build new industry surrounding water. He offered to contact Virginia Sea Grant to discuss opportunities to bring a representative to Virginia's Eastern Shore to present on the project. Committee members expressed their support of pursuing this option. Smith plans to follow-up with Virginia Sea Grant after the action plan is publicized.

- *Economic Resilience Items:*
 - RAFT/CAWG Update –
Curt Smith reported that nine communities participated in the Resilience Adaptation Feasibility Tool (RAFT) initiative over the last year, which helped participating communities identify actions that, if implemented, would improve resiliency in the face of flooding and sea-level rise. He reported that this program initiated planning that would not have occurred otherwise, but was limited by participants' capacity to devote time to developing resiliency-based plans. Continuing efforts include building local capacity to assist community teams in developing resiliency planning measures, especially for large-scale projects that can present planning challenges, and providing assistance to these communities in identifying funding mechanisms for their plans. During a workshop on funding opportunities held in Williamsburg, the A-NPDC and other PDCs requested local presentations on funding opportunities available. More information on the RAFT program outcomes are available at <https://raft.iem.virginia.edu/>.
 - VA Resilience Funding Forum –
Curt Smith reported that A-NPDC staff participated in the Virginia Coastal Policy Center's Resilience Funding Forum in May. This session provided information on funding available to finance resilience projects. A follow-up event to inform local governments about potential funding opportunities is being developed. County and Town representatives will be invited to participate after a date is set.
 - Curt Smith additionally reported that the A-NPDC has been hosting meetings with VDOT staff to discuss the 2014 Eastern Shore of Virginia Transportation Infrastructure Inundation Vulnerability Assessment, a study that examines the impacts of projected sea-level rise on local roadways and access to local communities. A-NPDC and VDOT staff are currently coordinating a follow-up study that will explore and name viable solutions that, if implemented, would mitigate the effects of sea-level rise on local transportation infrastructure and community access.

Other Projects/Initiatives

- *ANPDC Small Business Funding Summary Document* –
Curt Smith reported that the document has been published and is available at <http://www.anpdc.org/economic-development-resources/>. The intention is to update this resource semi-annually to reflect current information available to local entrepreneurs and businessowners.
- *Rural Coastal Virginia Partnership*
 - A-NPDC Water Trails Website –
Curt Smith reported that A-NPDC staff have added Eastern Shore Bayside water trails to www.virginiawatertrails.org. The Virginia Water Trails webpage has shown significant web traffic increases over the previous site, hosted through Virginia Coastal Zone Management's webpage. This initiative aims to connect local and visiting paddlers to world-class ecotourism destinations across Rural Coastal Virginia.
 - Rural Coastal Virginia Community Enhancement Authority –
Curt Smith reported that Accomack and Northampton counties will be invited to participate in a summit that will develop the operating terms, goals, and objectives of the RCVA Community Enhancement Authority. The summit is currently being planned for July, at a date to be established. Counties will need to sign a resolution to join the Authority, which is designed to unify Rural Coastal Virginia to address

shared challenges and create additional opportunities for the Northern Neck, Middle Peninsula, and Eastern Shore regions.

Smith additionally reported that the A-NPDC submitted a grant application for Community Development Block Grant funding that, if successful, will fund facade renovations to 20 downtown storefronts as well as other downtown revitalization improvements in the Town of Parksley. The announcement of awards for funding is anticipated this summer. Smith reported that this application generated interest in the CDBG program from other Eastern Shore localities and a prioritization process is ongoing to identify upcoming applicants.

Regional Economic Development Plan

Smith presented attendance of the four industry sector subcommittees, which met during April 2019. Attendance for the Arts, Entertainment, Recreation and Visitor Industries Subcommittee dropped to 3 attendees, while other subcommittees remained roughly the same.

Overview of Updates to Regional Action Plans

Curt Smith presented a summary of the Aerospace & Defense Subcommittee Plan; Agribusiness & Food Processing Subcommittee Plan; Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, & Visitor Industries Subcommittee Plan; and Foundational & Entrepreneurship Development Subcommittee Plan. He noted items where significant progress has been made, as well as items lacking significant headway; proposed actions to be added to the plans; and plan items that were completed between October 2018 and April 2019. Updates included:

Aerospace & Defense Action Plan

This group will utilize a forthcoming Wallops economic impact report to advance several key objectives and reported significant progress on a number of other objectives.

Participants of this group recommended that the format of Aerospace & Defense Subcommittee meetings be altered to include only essential local, state, and federal stakeholders due to the unique nature of the industry and confidentiality of some federal activities. Chairman Marsh expressed his support for the change. No Committee members expressed objections.

Completed Items:

- Goal 3, Objective B (Enhance Coastal Resilience) – A strategy to secure funding for a high-priority coastal geology research project at the Chincoteague Inlet and adjacent area has been completed. The Virginia General Assembly appropriated \$300,000 for a three-year study and development of a model that will enhance understanding of past, current, and projected future changes in the barrier island system. The project is being used as match for a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers study to develop coastal management solutions on Wallops Island.

Proposed Actions for Addition:

- None

Noteworthy Progress (October 2018 - April 2019):

- Goal 1, Objective A (Consolidated Marketing Strategy) & B (Grow Wallops Research Park) – Publication of an economic impact study by Old Dominion University is to be anticipated in the near future and will lead to significant progress for several key objectives.

- Goal 1, Objective B (Grow Wallops Research Park) & D (Grow Number of Launches) – A new launch pad to support Rocket Lab’s regular launch operations at Wallops will be completed in the near future.
- Goal 2, Objective B (Grow Number of UAS Tenants) –Future growth is anticipated with planning underway for the construction of a port on the northern end of Wallops Island.
- Goal 3, Objective D (Barrier Island Management) – The A-NPDC reported multiple research and planning initiatives involving owners of the barrier islands that are driving coastal management discussions surrounding the long-term resilience of the barrier island system.

Items Lacking Significant Progress (October 2018 - April 2019):

- Goal 3 (Coastal Resilience) – Updates have not been provided since early in 2017 for several objectives. It is probable that some progress has been made, but the extent is unclear.

Committee Member Shotwell additionally reported that Chincoteague Road needs increased capacity to meet traffic management needs during rock launch and other popular events. Curt Smith reported that Accomack County and the Town of Chincoteague have requested a feasibility study of improvements to this corridor, including assessment of viable solutions to improve infrastructure resilience of the Chincoteague causeway and widening of Chincoteague Road between Route 13 and Atlantic Road.

Philip Smith reported that, with launches anticipated to increase thanks to Rocket Lab, there is an opportunity to attract tourists to nearby sites for launch viewing events. He requested information regarding whether this opportunity, which would curb launch-related traffic on Chincoteague Road, has been explored. **This item will be added to the Parking Lot for the Aerospace & Defense and Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, & Visitor Industries subcommittees.**

Agribusiness & Food Processing Action Plan

This group continues to make progress towards the goals. Significant support is being contributed through the ongoing USDA Rural Development feasibility study.

Completed Items (October 2018 - April 2019):

- Goal 3, Objective A (Develop Sawmill) – Steve Mallette has given multiple presentations to Accomack and Northampton counties to educate officials on the need for a local sawmill. Initial conversations are underway regarding a regional proposal for Agriculture and Forestry Industry Development (AFID) funding to support a recruitment strategy.

Proposed Actions for Addition:

- None

Noteworthy Progress (October 2018 - April 2019):

- Goals 1 & 2 - The USDA Rural Development grant award to the A-NPDC for the ongoing feasibility study has spurred progress in multiple key initiatives. Completion of these items is anticipated with the study’s completion during 2019.

Items Lacking Significant Progress (October 2018 - April 2019):

- None

Arts, Entertainment, Recreation & Visitor Industries Action Plan

Following the Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission's reformation under the Chamber of Commerce in 2018, significant restructuring of this plan was recommended. The plan previously included many activities fundamental to the Tourism Commission's ongoing work that were identified as redundant in the regional action plan. The restructuring of this plan is intended to provide clarity in roles for the regional partners creating assets and pursuing opportunities necessary to support the mission of the Tourism Commission.

Completed Items (October 2018 - April 2019):

- Goal 1, Objective C (Recreational Facilities) – A-NPDC staff completed the strategy to enhance and promote existing water trails by updating the Seaside Water Trail and implementing a marketing strategy in partnership with the Rural Coastal Virginia Alliance.

Proposed Actions for Addition:

- Goal 1, Objective C (Cultural/Historical Facilities) – A new strategy is proposed for developing and marketing an Indigenous People's monument. Curt Smith presented the project during the meeting.

Noteworthy Progress (October 2018 - April 2019):

- Goal 1, Objective A (Promote Events/Resources) – The recent launch of the updated Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism, Water Trails, Oyster Trail, and Birding & Wildlife websites represents major progress under this objective.
- Goal 1, Objective B (Grow ESVA Brand) – The USDA Rural Development feasibility study identified development of a regional marketing strategy for products as an excellent value-added opportunity. The A-NPDC draft retail locations inventory is complete and will lead to a concerted effort to increase the number of retail locations selling local products.
- Goal 1, Objective C (Recreational Facilities) – Significant progress for planning and implementation of the Southern Tip bike trail was reported. Progress was also reported for pedestrian facilities in Chincoteague, Parksley, Onley/Onancock, and Cheriton. The A-NPDC initiated the development of new water trails for several Bayside Creeks.

Items Lacking Significant Progress (October 2018 - April 2019):

- Goal 2, Objective A (Certification Programs) – The Chambers reported networking events, but progress towards formal certification programs by Eastern Shore Community College is lacking. The future of this initiative is unclear following recent staff changes in the Workforce Development program at ESCC.

Foundational & Entrepreneurship Development Action Plan

Completed Items (October 2018 - April 2019):

- Goal 1, Objective A (Economic Think Tank) – A strategy to create and hold initial meetings of the Think Tank is completed. The group met during Fall 2018 and Spring 2019.
- Goal 1, Objective B (Entrepreneurship Opportunities), Goal 2, Objective A (Increase Access to Funding), and Goal 2, Objective B (Promote Available Incentives) – Strategies for publication of the summary document of available resources within the region were completed.
- Goal 2, Objective A (Increase Access to Funding) – A strategy to complete the document of available resources within the region was completed.
- Goal 4, Objective B (Water & Sewer) – Each county has either completed updates to or is currently updating its comprehensive plan.

- Goal 4, Objective D (Navigable Waterways) – A strategy to develop a strategic funding plan for dredging of waterways has been completed. The Eastern Shore of Virginia Navigable Waterways Committee has worked with each county to develop dredging priorities. Two applications for Virginia Waterway Maintenance Funding were awarded to Accomack and Northampton Counties for pre-dredging activities at Quinby and Kings Creeks, respectively, during spring 2019. Plans are in place and underway for financing of priority projects.
- Goal 5, Objective. A (Shore University) – Strategies were completed for education and outreach to garner support for development of the university and for developing a working relationship with the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia.
- Goal 5, Objective B (Shore University) – A strategy was completed for launching an advisory committee of local higher education experts to help guide the development of the university.

Proposed Actions for Addition:

- None

Noteworthy Progress (October 2018 - April 2019):

- Goal 1, Objective A (Think Tank) – The Think Tank completed a survey of local governments to solicit local information regarding economic development activities, perspectives, and roles.
- Goal 1, Objective B (Increase Entrepreneurship) – One entrepreneurship training was held, but had minimal participation. Additional events are in the works for 2019. The A-NPDC published the investment funds document. Discussions regarding development of a formal regional entrepreneurship program were held in June 2019.
- Goal 1, Objective C (Create Small Business Incubator) – GO Virginia funds are being pursued to launch the incubator in Exmore.
- Goal 3 (Increase Value-added Opportunities) – The USDA Rural Development feasibility study for local products has generated significant support and driven an effort to accomplish several objectives related to value-added opportunities.
- Goal 4, Objective B (Water & Sewage) – The feasibility study for expansion of the sewer line from Nassawadox to Accomac along Route 13 is completed. The collection would culminate at the Onancock Wastewater Treatment Plant. The Hampton Roads Sanitation District has found the project to be feasible and a host of regional partners are slated to continue pursuing the opportunity during the remainder of 2019.
- Goal 4, Objective D (Transportation Infrastructure) – Significant progress is being made by the -NPDC and Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Navigable Waterways Committee with multiple dredging and beneficial use projects awarded for design and other collaborations with the U.S. Army Corps underway. The A-NPDC and local government partners are also making significant progress towards new pedestrian facilities and trails.
- Goal 5 (Shore University) – The project has garnered significant media attention and the group is on schedule to attain the goal.

Items Lacking Significant Progress (October 2018 - April 2019):

- None

Committee Member Betit additionally reported that HotDesks, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, has offered to assist in establishing the pilot effort on Virginia's Eastern Shore. Committee Member Belknap asked for clarification of the definition of "makers space," which Betit described as tools available for use, including but not limited to 3-D printers and other technologies. Betit described how these spaces, if they eventually expand beyond the first Eastern Shore location, will each feature unique tools and characteristics.

Discussion ensued about the proposed addition of a new strategy for developing and marketing an Indigenous People's monument to the Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, & Visitor Industries plan. Chairman Marsh supported the idea for developing this goal, but cautioned that including this in the regional plan may lead to a multitude of smaller, specific projects in the plan in the future. Committee Member Shotwell noted that this is a specific project, which may detract from the broader nature of the plan. Vice Chair Baldwin added that the Committee can support this project under existing goals, rather than adding a new objective. Several Committee members noted the importance of cultural and historical tourism to the Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, & Visitor Industries plan. Committee Members Snyder suggested creating a broader category that incorporates similar goals to the monument in the future.

Committee Member Snyder moved to approve the updated plans as presented, which Vice Chair Baldwin seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Presentation: ESVA Marketplace & Cooperative Marketing Feasibility Study

President of Community Futures Neal Barber is assisting Virginia Tech's Office of Economic Development in an ongoing feasibility study exploring the viability of a regional marketplace or foodhub for local agricultural products, as well as marketing opportunities for local producers and artisans on Virginia's Eastern Shore. He presented study findings to date to the Committee. He reported that data has been collected via a local distributed survey, telephone and in-person interviews, local site visits, and a national review of best practices. Challenges to the study include projected population declines and limits to tourism visitor spending, while opportunities include growing tourism numbers on the Eastern Shore.

Recommendations to date included:

1. *Do not pursue a region-wide food hub.* This is based on the Melfa food hub built by VDACS approximately 20 years ago, which is now for sale; the large number of existing local food sales points on the Eastern Shore; the lack of a large, regional organization to oversee such an effort; and the nation-wide high failure rates of similar operations.
2. *Establish an organization of small to mid-size farmers.*
3. *Develop strategies to serve markets in Hampton Roads, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C.*
4. *Explore an online agricultural market connector.*
5. *Do not pursue an additional, regional farmer's market facility.* This is based on the large number of existing farmers markets, pop-up markets, and farm stands on Virginia's Eastern Shore.
6. *Do not pursue an additional commercial kitchen.* This is based on the existence of and plans to open commercial kitchens on the Eastern Shore.
7. *Explore outside partners or private sector partners for a mobile meat processing unit.*

8. *Explore feasibility for a “destination” artisan center.* This is based on the large number of artisans on Virginia’s Eastern Shore and high level of organization among artisans. In addition to artisan product, the marketplace could potentially house local, value-added, and non-perishable agricultural products for sale.
9. *Develop strategies for supporting local artisans and artisan organizations.*
10. *Partner on existing brand initiatives.*
11. *Keep exploring aquaculture-related opportunities.* This is based on feedback showing aquaculture producers are currently able to sell all products they produce.

Consultants are working to develop separate sub-committees of farmers and artisans to guide the remainder of the study. Based on final study recommendations, the Committee will update the Agribusiness and Food Processing Subcommittee Plan.

Think Tank Subcommittee

Curt Smith reported that the Subcommittee distributed local government surveys to solicit guidance and provide insight on economic development opportunities and activities on the Eastern Shore. Only eight government staff and elected or appointed officials responded to the survey.

Based on survey results, discussions among local economic development practitioners began to identify opportunities to enhance conventional economic development strategies at the local government level. The A-NPDC coordinated and hosted the first meeting of the Eastern Shore of Virginia Economic Development Practitioners Working Group in June 2019. The group is made up of County staff.

The Think Tank will meet again this calendar year to continue exploring recommendations identified through the survey and to explore development of an online data dashboard hosted on the A-NPDC economic development website that would provide social and economic data as metrics to measure success of the Regional Economic Development Plan. Interested Committee members are encouraged to attend the meeting.

Regional Economic Development Mission and Vision Statement

Curt Smith reported that the Committee has discussed in the past the need to refine its mission and vision statements. He reviewed samples of other economic development organizations’ mission statements to provide context for this exercise. Committee Member Betit suggested a separate meeting devoted to development of a Mission Statement, which Smith plans to organize and share with Committee Members via email.

Prioritization of Projects

Curt Smith reported the need to develop priorities within the regional Economic Development plans to create a guide for implementing plan goals. He requested an annual rating system for a viable one-year plan be established. Vice Chair Baldwin suggested Smith create a list of 10 priorities, to be distributed to the Committee to select top-priority projects. Committee Member Chatmon suggested developing priorities within each Subcommittee. Chairman Marsh suggested establishing formal subcommittee groups to ensure consistency and institutional knowledge within each subcommittee. Smith reported this would require amending the Committee by-laws to appoint chairs to each subcommittee. Until this time, Committee Member Betit and Committee Member Mason volunteered to be point-persons for the Foundational & Entrepreneurship Development subcommittee; Committee Member Belknap and Committee Member Reiter volunteered to be point-persons for the Agribusiness & Food Processing subcommittee; Committee Member Lumgair volunteered to be point-person for the Aerospace & Defense subcommittee; and Chairman Marsh and Committee Member Shotwell volunteered to be the

point-persons for the Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, & Visitor Industries subcommittee. Smith will report via email the date of these meetings so any interested Committee members can participate.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be December 11, 2019. A reminder will be sent in advance of the meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:55 PM upon a motion by Committee Member Mason and seconded by Chairman Marsh. The motion was unanimously approved.

Robie Marsh, Chairman

Elaine Meil, Secretary

DRAFT



