

ALBEMARLE COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY MINUTES
JANUARY 19, 2021
4:00 P.M.
Electronic Meeting

Directors Present: Kat Imhoff, Don Long, Stephen McNaughton, Stuart Munson, George Ray, David Shreve

Staff Present: Jim Bowling, EDA Counsel; Doug Walker, Deputy County Executive; Roger Johnson, Economic Development Director; J.T. Newberry, Economic Development Coordinator; Jennifer Schmack, Economic Development Project Manager; Richard DeLoria, Senior Assistant County Attorney; Diantha McKeel, Board of Supervisors Liaison to the EDA, Jack Jouett District; Nelsie Birch, Chief Financial Officer

1. **Establish Quorum and Call to Order**

Mr. Long convened the meeting at 4:00 p.m. read the following statement:

Notwithstanding any provision in the EDA Bylaws to the contrary, as permitted under Albemarle County's Continuity of Government Ordinance; Chapter 1283 of the 2020 Acts of the General Assembly; and the Resolution of this body adopted on April 21, 2020, we are holding this meeting by real time electronic means with no Authority member physically present at a single, central location. All Authority members are participating electronically. This meeting is being held in accordance with Section 6 of the County's Continuity of Government Ordinance. All Authority members will identify themselves and state their general physical location by electronic means during the roll call which we will hold next.

This meeting is being recorded and will be uploaded to the County's website.

The public has real time audio-visual access to this meeting over Zoom and real time audio access over telephone, both as provided in the lawfully posted meeting notice. The public is also invited to offer live comment during the meeting's Public Comment period. Comments are limited to three minutes and must be germane to matters on today's agenda. The public is also invited to send questions, comments, and suggestions to the Authority through the County's Economic Development Office at any time.

Ms. Schmack provided the roll call and confirmed a quorum.

2. **Matters from the Public**

Ms. Schmack confirmed no speakers signed up or raised their hand to speak.

3. **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes for November 17, 2020; November 20, 2020 and December 15, 2020 were reviewed.

Ms. Imhoff motioned to approve the November 17, 2020 and December 15, 2020 minutes, which was seconded by Mr. Shreve.

MOTION: The motion passed unanimously (6-0)

Mr. Ray motioned to approve the November 20, 2020 minutes, which was seconded by Mr. Shreve.

MOTION: The motion passed (5-0), Ms. Imhoff abstained.

4. **Financial Report**

Mr. Shreve presented the financial report for period ending December 31, 2020.

5. **Annual Meeting**

Mr. Long proposed the following slate of officers for consideration:

Chair – Don Long

Vice Chair – George Ray

Secretary/Treasurer – David Shreve

Mr. Long opened the floor for any additional nominations.

Ms. Imhoff made a motion to approve the proposed slate of officers.

Mr. Munson seconded the motion.

MOTION: The motion passed unanimously (6-0)

6. **New Business**

Director's Report – Mr. Johnson provided a brief update on Holistic Industries; they expect the State to make an announcement in March.

Mr. Newberry presented an overview of Federal and State economic information to highlight the past year and where we could be going in the future. He shared a slide showing the global forecast projects a long road to economic recovery, and a much longer recovery for levels of unemployment. Expectations to reach pre-pandemic levels of unemployment for most of the world's economies reach into the year 2023. Not all sectors were impacted in the same way, there are some sectors that have had relatively little impacts and others have had a much higher impacts, such as Manufacturing, Wholesale and Retail Trade.

Mr. Newberry shared a slide from Retail Strategies that showed the overall allocations included in the original CARES act versus the latest relief bill. He noted that the biggest buckets allocated were about the same: Unemployment Benefits, Direct Payments to Americans, Small Businesses. However, the Education bucket doubled and there was relatively more for Broadband Access and Rental Assistance.

Mr. Newberry presented slides created by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) showing Virginia's positioning during the pandemic. For the monthly unemployment rate from January through September, Virginia fared relatively well as compared to the rest of the United States. Statewide each region had some variation in the level of impact. Central Virginia's unemployment rate is -7.6% between February and September and the Statewide average was -7.8%. Some of the hardest

hit sectors were Tourism, Local Retail, Restaurants and Hospitality have had significant economic impact reflected by their employment impacts. Leisure and Hospitality was hit the hardest realizing a -21.7% reduction in employment. Notably, Construction and Essential Retail Trade have seen an increase in employment.

Mr. Johnson noted the Virginia Tourism Commission calculated the economic impact of our community's tourism sector at over \$400 million annually, so the return of Tourism and Hospitality industry is critical to our long-term economic recovery.

Mr. Newberry highlighted VEDP's forecast for statewide employment projections, expecting it to be mid-year in 2023 before Virginia reaches pre-pandemic levels.

Mr. Newberry noted the VEDP presentation also included four strategic opportunities for economic recovery and called attention to the opportunity to "Seize telework transition opportunities, with special focus on rural & small metro regions". This highlight refers to the macroeconomic trend for workers currently in metro areas that may be looking for a higher quality of life and a lower cost of living, in a smaller metro area.

Mr. Newberry announced that Steve Allshouse will present the state of the local economy at the Authority's February meeting.

Mr. Newberry reminded the Authority that since the pandemic began, staff has contributed to several programs. Project Rebound, the community's plan to maintain the economy during the pandemic. There have been multiple rounds of Lift Grants for businesses, Community Lift Grants for nonprofits and Safe Spaces & Places to help ensure there was a safe built environment for people to engage in commerce. Lastly, staff has been working on a Buy Local Campaign, which will continue into 2021. Mr. Newberry shared these were unexpected departures from Project ENABLE and the long-term plan.

Mr. Johnson presented an update on Venture Central and the strategy to leverage the abundance of intellectual capital in our community that is coming from UVA Research and the large number of graduate degrees in our community. Venture Central is a collaboration between the County, Charlottesville, University of Virginia, and the Chamber.

Mr. Johnson reviewed the historical timeline of Venture Central's progress. In 2017, Go Virginia was launched, they created a regional Growth and Diversification Plan for our community. This plan included a recommendation to create an innovation highway, to take advantage of the community's intellectual capital particularly in Charlottesville and UVA. In 2019, the Friends of Venture Central applied for a GO Virginia planning grant and hired the consulting group, Camoin. This report suggested a Governance structure: to be a private sector led non-profit 501(c)3 Board with three advisory committees. The space, dubbed "Venture Hub" would be a place for entrepreneurs to meet, collaborate, and connect with structured programming. The report also included a complete business and financial plan that estimates this concept would cost approximately \$750,000 a year and would need support from the state and local governments to become sustainable. Following a review of the

report, the Friends of Venture Central (FOVC) was formed. This group is working collaboratively together to create Venture Central, a focused, intentional initiative to spur start-up success, job growth, and investment. In 2019, the Venture Central concept was socialized, and all the organizations unanimously agreed this is something the community needs. In 2020, the Charlottesville Regional Chamber agreed to use their existing 501(c)3 for Venture Central's governance. Recently, the Chamber received a \$350,000 grant from Go Virginia to launch Venture Central, requiring the County and City to contribution of \$75,000. Venture Central's Executive Board will also seek private funds.

Mr. Johnson described the difference between an Incubator and an Accelerator. An Incubator is an idea that needs to be vetted, determined to be financially feasible and go through a proof of concept. An Accelerator provides programming to an existing business that needs mentoring, coaching, access to capital and legal advice. Catalyst is an example of an existing accelerator program in our community. Catalyst provides \$20,000 in grant funding, 9 months of programming to include mentoring, coaching, and counseling from funders and founders. There is an application process vetted by investors and determined to be investment worthy. Examples of companies currently in the program are: Cardboard Live, Data Classroom, Icarus and Lytos Tech.

Mr. Johnson encouraged Authority members to consider participating in future Venture Central networking events and activities.

Mr. Shreve inquired about connecting any new ventures with potential employees and if PVCC has been included in these discussions.

Mr. Johnson stated PVCC has representation on the Go Virginia regional board and they were part of the vetting process when the plan was received, as well as approving the Venture Central business plan.

Mr. Long asked where things stand with finding a location.

Mr. Johnson stated the current plan is to create the Venture Central Board, recruit and hire the Executive Director, and then the Executive Director will work with the Chamber to find a location.

Mr. Long asked if there was an expectation for the board makeup. Would members be designated from different entities or recruited from people who are interested?

Mr. Johnson stated FOVC is primarily seeking a diverse group of private industry individuals with experience as funders or founders.

Mr. Munson asked if there has been any thought in how to keep these businesses in the County. Once they have started up, how to keep them from leaving?

Mr. Johnson stated that staff is currently working with existing developers to create space for these companies. Developers are working to create Class A office space at Albemarle Business Campus and the Barnes Lumber project in Downtown Crozet. Generally, when a company gets funded, they usually

are asked to relocate to where the funds are. Our community needs to create a complete ecosystem where we have funding here locally so that these businesses can stay here.

Mr. Newberry added, as a part of the Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program, Ms. Schmack meets with businesses to learn more about their challenges. If they are growing and are at a high risk to leave, the EDO team works to offer assistance in finding space, workforce development opportunities or other types of support.

Ms. Imhoff asked if the Venture Central project fits in with the CODE Building that Jeffery Woodrow is constructing.

Mr. Johnson stated the CODE Building, from about the fourth floor up will be occupied with businesses. The first couple of levels will be open to the public, they are creating some co-working space.

Mr. Shreve stated he believes the forecasts are too pessimistic. The softness we will see in the economy are associated with entities like the hospitality industry, retail that is connected to that sector and the avoidable repercussions from austerity at the state and local government level, which he believes will change pretty rapidly. If it is a frozen sector that can unfreeze quite readily, he sees a rebound coming much quicker than the forecasts.

Mr. Long inquired about vaccine distributions and if there was anything the Authority can do to support that effort.

Mr. Walker noted there is a lot of work going on behind the scenes to support the work of the regional health district and its efforts to be in the best possible position to deliver the vaccines as they arrive into our community. Part of that effort is about identifying the volunteers that are needed both to administer the shots as well as to do the call taking and paperwork. At this point, that work is going very well. The structure is being developed in the County and the Region to move this vaccine through in the order in which the CDC has provided the guidance. The 1A's and the 1B's are what is currently being discussed. Mr. Walker appreciated the Authority as identifying itself as an entity wanting to be part of the solution, he believes that is what is going to make the biggest difference in our ability to be successful as a region. Mr. Walker announced that Bama Works has underwritten the cost of the K-Mart site. In turn, Bama Works has received donations that have paid for their upfront investment. As the situation evolves, we can identify areas where the Authority can participate. Until then, it's patience, understanding and awareness of how complicated it is. The Health Director will be presenting to the Board of Supervisors and giving an update on where we stand as a Region with respect to our infrastructure to deliver the vaccine and the vaccine itself.

7. Unfinished Business

Mr. DeLoria provided a brief status update on the Woolen Mills Performance Agreement. The Board of Supervisors and the Authority invested \$1Million with Brian Roy in Woolen Mills for the purchase of a bridge, public access to the bridge and additional parking spots. In September 2020, the Board of Supervisors and the Authority granted an extension for some delays. The extension gave authority to

the County Executive to provide additional extensions administratively, as long as the developer was making good faith progress. In December, Mr. Richardson extended the deadline for performance to March 31, 2021. Construction is continuing to move along.

8. **Other Matters**

No other matters were reported.

9. **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Mr. Long adjourned the meeting.

Teste: _____
Donald Long, Chairman

Approved: _____
David Shreve, Secretary-Treasurer

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