

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Roanoke Valley Allegheny Regional Comprehensive Economic**  
**Development Strategy Committee**

July 10, 2008  
3:00 PM, the Claude Moore Education Complex  
109 Henry Street, Roanoke VA 24016

**Committee Members:**

*Present:*

Stephanie Brown, Carl Brinkley, Jerry Burgess, Carolyn Fidler, Randy Foley, Ken Lanford, Hal Mabe, Steve Mullins, Dan O'Donnell, Courtney Penn (representing Michael Maxey), Kevin Persinger, David Preston, Dave Price, Chuck Simpson, Anne Stanley, Mark Stockwell, Mark Taylor, Doloris Vest, Rebecca Walter, Hunter Young, Gary Keener, Tracey Shiflett, Brenda Walker, Teresa Hammond, Phil Sparks (representing Beth Doughty), Jay Foster, Darlene Burcham.

*Absent:*

Don Assaid, Stephanie Clark, Vice Mayor James Houff, Jennifer Durling, Joseph P. McNamara, John Strutner, David Trinkle, Allen Dressler, LeeAnna Tyler, Richard Flora, Kevin Boggess, Consuella Caudill, Joyce Waugh, Ione Callender, Terri Workman, Rob Erdman.

*Others Present:*

Diane Akers, President, ComBiz Solutions  
Terry Hall, Manager External Affairs, Appalachian Power  
Richard Settle (representing Jim Griffith), Verizon  
Wayne G. Strickland, Executive Director, RVARC  
John Hull, Regional Economic Resources Planner, RVARC  
Laura Williams, Economic Development Specialist, RVARC

**Proceedings:**

-Meeting called to order at 3:08

*Welcome and Introductions:*

Wayne Strickland welcomed members of the committee and guests to the third meeting of the Roanoke Valley – Allegheny Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee and asked John Hull to present the results from the recent public input sessions.

John Hull added that the meeting would include a discussion of the public input sessions as well as a review of the potential projects that had already been submitted, but the ultimate goal of the meeting would be to adopt the draft vision and goals statement. He also stated that the entire CEDS project was on schedule.

*Presentations:*

*-RVARC Discussion of Public Input Sessions*

John Hull presented a review of the public informational meetings and the survey results. He highlighted several survey questions that were of particular interest and then asked Ms. Diane Akers to discuss the adoption of the draft vision and goals statement.

*-Discussion of Draft Vision and Goals Statement Adoption*

Ms. Akers commented that the suggestions from the last meeting as well as the suggestions from the subcommittee were taken into consideration into a list of possible revisions to the Goals and Objectives. She read the draft vision and goals and then presented the suggested changes. Ms. Akers then asked for comments, suggestions and feedback.

The complete presentation has been attached to these minutes.

*Discussion and Revisions of the Vision and Goals Statement:*

The Committee discussed possible revisions to the vision statement and came to the conclusion that higher wage employment opportunities should be moved to the first sentence to strengthen the statement.

-Committee Member Steve Mullins asked how outdoor recreation and quality of life fit into the region's economic development.

-Ms. Akers responded that it is part of the package when branding the region.

-Ms. Darlene Burcham also responded by stating that a study had been done on the Roanoke area and comparably sized cities. The study sought to discover why the comparable cities were prospering at a faster rate than Roanoke. The study concluded that Roanoke has an absence of the social and cultural amenities and activities that might attract people and businesses.

-Mr. Mullins then asked how do these amenities relate to workforce.

-Ms. Burcham again responded. She stated that attracting young professionals needs a different approach today. The theory is, if you have quality of life attractions then you will attract the young professionals. Ms. Burcham also stated that the Roanoke Valley area has had a fairly static population growth and the way to increase population growth is through quality of life attractions. Mr. Jerry Burgess supported Ms. Burcham's comments by noting that quality of life issues were important elements in attracting new businesses (including a number of international firms) to Botetourt County.

The Committee discussed the use of the word “universally” in the vision statement and concluded that it would be best to remove it altogether. The Committee also discussed other small aspects of the vision and goals but made no changes at this point.

-Ms. Burcham expressed concern about duplicating the efforts of other organizations in the region.

-Ms. Akers suggested that the committee look at the projects that have already been suggested. She stated that the projects should fall under one or more of the goals. She asked the committee to take a moment and note which projects were not covered by a goal. She then asked what goals should be added to cover those projects. Ms. Akers then stated the next step after that was to look at the goals and make sure that they will help the region achieve the vision statement.

-Mr. Hull added that it is critical that the group has a basis for the projects that it wants to pursue in the CEDS. goals and objectives (there should be a goal/objective supporting each project that the committee would recommend pursuing in the document).

-Committee Member David Price asked if the goals were in order of priority.

-Mr. Hull responded that the committee will prioritize the projects after the project listing is in a more complete form and that the goals and objectives are not currently in any order of priority.

-Mr. Phil Sparks asked how specific other CEDS documents are in terms of project recommendations.

-Mr. Hull stated that the CEDS document will get down to very specific line item issues on the projects.

-Committee Member Chuck Simpson stated that he understands the CEDS to be an ongoing planning process and that goals and objectives will need continual revision as conditions change in the region and its communities.

-Mr. Hull agreed that the CEDS process will be an ongoing planning process.

-Committee Member Jay Foster stated his concern that he thought the committee might be trying to do too much and that the purpose of effectively getting projects done may not be well served by such a wide approach.

-Ms. Akers suggested that the committee look at projects to see that there is not duplication but a sharing of goals between organizations.

- Committee Member Rebecca Walter stated that the goals and objectives should be kept as broad as possible, allowing the committee to move into the future with new projects that still fit into the original vision and goals.

-Committee Member Mark Taylor asked for some guidance on what the criteria is and the measurements we need to have built into the vision and goals statement.

-Mr. Hull reassured the committee and stated that the language in the Regional CEDS vision and goals is similar to other CEDS projects and to other regional economic and community development projects.

-Mr. Strickland added that the committee needed to be expansive in its thinking and try to incorporate as many ideas in the goals and objectives as possible. The committee will monitor this CEDS document every year. The current draft vision and goals support the ability to look at several ideas for each of the localities because it's covered in our goals. The key to the CEDS document is the projects. The vision and goals are just words, we want to move these goals and words forward with projects.

-Mr. Gerald Burgess stated that he had other projects to submit.

-Mr. Dan O'Donnell asked why ineligible localities should bother submitting projects since they cannot receive EDA funding.

-Mr. Hull responded a project located in a locality that is not eligible on the basis of per capita income or unemployment may still be eligible for EDA assistance if the project impacts a locality that is eligible. This becomes possible, he explained, once the region is designated as an Economic Development District.

-Mr. Strickland clarified further that the CEDS document will not include merely capital improvements but will include other projects that will improve economic development. If there is a Capital Improvement project included that is not strongly related to economic development, it will probably be assigned a lower priority by the committee in the prioritization phase than a project that is more directly related to economic improvement.

#### *Adoption of Vision and Goals Statement:*

-Ms. Akers suggested to the committee that the vision and goals statement be adopted with the changes made by the committee, subcommittee, and RVARC staff.

The Committee came to a general consensus to adopt the vision statement, goals, and objectives.

#### *Project Discussion and Requests:*

-Ms. Akers stated that the committee should now focus on the discussion of projects.

-Mr. Hull explained to the committee that RVARC staff sent out a form for project suggestions to many economic development organizations, including chambers of commerce. The RVARC staff received a number of project suggestions. Mr. Hull then

proceeded to explain the project listing to the committee. Following the presentation of the listing, he asked committee members if they had any suggestions for additions to the listing.

A current project listing has been attached to these minutes.

-Mr. Hunter Young suggested a project to create and distribute a relocation guide to attract college students and recent graduates. He suggested that Virginia Tech has career days when the businesses from the region could meet and greet the students and give out the relocation guide. The college students and recent graduates may be more inclined to move here if they are provided with such information. Mr. Hunter then added that if local business could offer internships to college students it would also be a great way to increase the number of young professionals that stay in the region. However he also added his concern that there may not be sufficient short term housing for the college interns. He suggested that businesses interested in the internship programs could pool funds and lease a block of apartments for interns to address the problem.

-Mr. Hull stated that the NewVA Corridor Technology Council currently offers a summer internship program for tech companies in the Roanoke and New River Valleys. The housing component he suggested could potentially be a nice addition to the project. He mentioned that he would call Corey Donovan at the NCTC to determine if the pursuit of a private program by which leases are subsidized for interns would be a worthy addition to the CEDS document.

**ACTION ITEM:** Contact Corey Donovan at the NCTC to determine if the pursuit of a private program by which leases are subsidized for interns would be a worthy addition to the CEDS document. *(RVARC staff)*

-Mr. Hull commented that educational improvement had not been addressed in the projects.

-Ms. Doloris Vest suggested a project to help increase the number of guidance counselors and career counselors at the local public schools.

-Mr. Hull said he would contact local school districts to find out what projects they have in place already.

**ACTION ITEM:** Contact local school districts to compile projects they are working on. *(RVARC staff)*

-Ms. Akers suggested the RVARC staff should send out project information forms to the committee members to flesh out some more project ideas.

**ACTION ITEM:** Send out project information forms to the committee members. *(RVARC staff)*

-Mr. Mark Taylor suggested reordering the project listing by goals and objectives.

-Mr. Hull responded in the affirmative and added the committee would then be able to see what goals and objectives are lacking in projects.

**ACTION ITEM:** Reorder the project listing by grouping projects by goals and objectives.*(RVARC staff)*

-Ms. Burcham suggested that the committee look at more projects from other organizations and see how the other organizations prioritize them.

-Ms. Akers responded “Yes, that is a good idea. Should we form a small subcommittee to help pull that information? That way we can make sure that we have a project that addresses each goal.”

-Mr. Hull stated that the RVARC staff did pull from a number of organizations for the project listing, but added that a subcommittee could look at this issue in detail. He then stated that a subcommittee should be formed.

-Mr. Strickland explained further that the subcommittee could identify key projects organizations are working on. He stated that it would be helpful to see the “community wide picture.”

-Ms. Burcham suggested that the project listing include public transportation projects, as there were none. Ms. Burcham also stated that to some extent the committee ought to be focusing on the projects that have the opportunity to mark off multiple goals and objectives.

-Ms. Akers suggested that the entire committee submit their input on projects in order to have a better idea of what is going on in the community and to find out what kind of projects already exist. The RVARC staff needs you to send in the project ideas and then they can show the committee how to rank, prioritize and identify them.

-Mr. Strickland also asked for input from the committee, “If anyone knows of a project that is on the project listing and has been completed or close to being completed, then that project probably needs to be taken off the list.”

-Mr. Hull suggested that the some projects listed for the Alleghany Highlands might have already been completed and could be removed from the listing.

-Mr. Hull asked for volunteers for the project listing subcommittee.

A project listing subcommittee was formed.

(Chuck Simpson, Hunter Young, Phil Sparks, Carolyn Fidler, Dave Kleppinger)

Committee tentatively set next meeting for September 11, 2008 and asked staff of RVARC to send a full announcement of the meeting date, location and time.

-Mr. Hull thanked the committee members for attending the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 4:55 PM

Minutes submitted by Laura Williams, Economic Development Specialist.

*Website:* <http://www.regionalstrategy.org>