

CASWELL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

AGENDA

August 12, 2024

1:00 P.M.

Meeting will resume at the Municipal Building

Call to Order	Alvin Foster
Welcome	Alvin Foster
Roll Call	Shirley Wilson
Approval of Minutes	Alvin Foster
Approval of Agenda	Alvin Foster
Old Business	Alvin Foster
EDC Update:	Tony Smith
County Manager	Scott Meszaros
Deputy County Manager	Melissa Williamson
PCC	Dr. Senegal
CCCOC	Jillian Medlin
Town of Yanceyville	Alvin Foster
Ag. Update	Travis Hoesli
Town of Milton	Shirley Wilson
Tourism	Amanda Hodges
Caswell County Schools	N/A
New Business	
Other Information	Open to All
Adjourn	

CASWELL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

July 01, 2024--Minutes

CALL TO ORDER: Alvin Foster at 10:00 a.m.

Members Present: Alvin Foster, Mayor, Darrell McLean, Mayor Pro Tem, Kamara Barnett, Shirley Wilson, Jackie Jeffries, Emily Buchanan, Ruby Graves, Dr. Elin Claggett, Scott Meszaros, Finch Holt, Jason Watlington, Travis Hoesli,

Zoom: Tony Smith

Members Absent: Melissa Williamson, Dr. Senegal

Welcome: Alvin Foster

Roll Call: Shirley Wilson

Introduction of Guests: Alvin Foster

Guest: Senator Graig Meyer, Daphne Gwen, Legal Assistant, Kenny Flowers, Assistant Secretary for Rural Economic Development at the **North Carolina** Department of **Commerce**, Melissa Smith (EDPNC) Tracy Dellinger (EDPNC), Witt Tuttell, Sales & Marketing of the State, Jordan Whicher, Chief Deputy Secretary of Commerce. Carla Smith, Sandra Dove, Angela Upchurch, Mayor Town of Milton, Darrell McLean, Mayor Pro Tem, Yanceyville NC

✚ The meeting participants discussed their presence and availability.

Economic Development Update/Discussion: Senator Graig Meyer

Senator Graig Meyer (Caswell, Orange, and Person County) began with an announcement: At 1:00 today the state will officially announce that Caswell County will receive another matching connecting access to Broad Band award for 3 million dollars to go with Spectrum not another company will leave us high and dry to provide broadband access to 38% of the unserved locations in the county. A total of 589 locations. Will work on a timeline for installation, most grants have a two-year span.

Secretary Flowers (Rural Economic Development) gave a basic introduction that EDPNC being a part of Commerce. Targeted programs we focus on.

- ✚ Building Partnership in rural areas
- ✚ Build Foundation for Economic Growth and success.
- ✚ Investments in Infrastructure in neighborhood, downtown and Main Street, local government capacity building as well
- ✚ **Milton is a partner RC2.**

The meeting focused on the need for collaboration, infrastructure improvements, grants, and resources to address challenges such as internet access, labor costs, housing, and outdated infrastructure in rural areas for economic development and quality of life improvement.

- ✚ The EDPNC and Commerce representatives introduced themselves and explained their roles in economic development.
- ✚ **Tony Smith, the Director of Economic Development for Caswell County**, provided updates on ongoing projects and expressed enthusiasm for new opportunities.
- ✚ The importance of improving internet access in rural areas to support local farmers and increase technology use was discussed. Hope to get everyone that wants internet exposure within the next two years.
- ✚ Labor costs were identified as a major challenge for small-scale farmers looking to expand their operations.

- ✚ We hope to get the Governor down in the next 60 days to make that announcement. Project Acre: A 12-million-dollar investment is about 50 high paying jobs and will be one of the 1sst structures at the Pelham Industrial Park which will be across from PCC CEAD Project so they can work hand and hand together. We are here open for business, and we will accept anything you can send our way.

Travis Hoesli:

- ✚ The importance of improving internet access in rural areas to support local farmers and increase technology use was discussed. Farmers cannot do a lot until they get a more stable internet service.
- ✚ Labor costs were identified as a major challenge for small-scale farmers looking to expand their operations.
- ✚ Working with PCC on increasing the exposure of food. Small production of vegetables with the food hub coming. Involved with the Farmer's market. We have an average of 110-120 residents. Approximately \$30,000.00 went through the market last year.

Emily Buchanan:

- ✚ We have established new Nursing Cohorts with nights and weekends that have brought in people from outside and throughout the region to come to that program.
- ✚ Raised money for a page or prominent social media to generate growth in education.
- ✚ CEAD PROJECT: CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT. This project started five years ago in collaboration with most of the people in this room and community partners. This is a three Phase Project. Phase One is about 11.5 million dollars. We finished raising money for it. They are completing design development, and we are scheduled to break ground in about ten months.
- ✚ 1st Phase will be a Food Hub with four profit working groups operating it and they have already distributed throughout the region. They have an incubator so students can come to our business class or enter through connections with the Extension.
- ✚ The 2nd Phase is where we need a lot of help with any grants we can get. (Education Center) This building will house a Health Clinic. Nursing students can go there and get clinic hours. APA compliance shelter, business taxes, Extension for AFFA programs can be housed with a welling lab and space for farmers to watch those products and help to level shelter for distribution.
- ✚ Third Phase Walking Trail

Scott Meszaros: County Manager

- ✚ Cleaning up the financial situation.
- ✚ Outside partners lift you up
- ✚ Building communication between towns

Town of Milton: Mayor Angela Upchurch

- ✚ We are not as large as Yanceyville, only 153 residents.
- ✚ We are struggling with infrastructure needs but surrounded by a creek and the Dan River established in 1796 and where we are small in population we are very great in history. We have two Museums that tell the story. Thomas Day House National Historic site.
- ✚ We have been fortunate to work with the Mainstream Rural Planning Program and they provided economic strategies. We are also participating in the RC2 program.
- ✚ We implemented a trail. A historical interest trail. Milton's slogan "Museum Without Walls"
- ✚ We struggle with Ordinance Enforcement and dilapidated and unsafe properties.
- ✚ Store fronts will be in business soon.

Shirley Wilson, Town Clerk:

- ✚ Stated Milton is a food desert. Need help with Food Insecurities (explained the Pros and Cons of being Food Insecure. Milton is at a crossroad.

Town of Yanceyville: Mayor Foster

- ✚ Focusing on a couple of issues: One is quality of life.
- ✚ People do not want to come here, they want to take their kids to a place where they can grow, get a good education, sports, dance etc. There is nothing for the children to do unless the parents drive forty miles to and from.
- ✚ Farmer's Market in front of the Pavilion
- ✚ Infrastructure struggles, low tax base, and high percentage of low-income households, maintenance out of order and now we had to raise water sewer rates 25% last year and it is not near enough to accomplish what is needed to accomplish. (Explained) Providence hooked to Danville Virginia.
- ✚ Economic Development is like a puzzle, and we have to plug in one piece at a time. We are economically challenged.
- ✚ We need to know what you all can do for us but yet what we can do to help you all help us.

Senator Meyers stated that he is going to put this into four big chunks of puzzle. There are people that come to Caswell, come through Caswell and there are people that come back to Caswell after they go somewhere else to work, and then there are the people that stay here all the time, live and work here. The experience of those four groups of people is different and provides some unusual ways of thinking about what is happening in this town.

- ✚ It is good to hear us talk about tourism. Hunting brings in tourism revenue that is very low. The state historic site is going to be a really interesting piece of adding into the state's historical mix and what we do have for destination tourism.
- ✚ No other site related African American Tourism Thomas Day House. Do not have other stories like the way Thomas Day was a free Black man becoming the richest free Black man probably in the south. The story is so interesting. No one can match that. (Create opportunities for other forms of tourism for people who are coming.
- ✚ It hurts a county not to have an interstate through it.

Highlights:

- ✦ The participants emphasized the need for collaboration, community engagement, and outside partnerships to drive economic development and infrastructure improvements in the area.
- ✦ The participants are discussing the need for grants and assistance to support a project in Milton.
- ✦ They mention the importance of good planning and historical interests in the area.
- ✦ The participants highlight the challenges faced by small towns, such as outdated infrastructure and low tax base, and emphasize the need for economic development, quality of life, and workforce attraction.
- ✦ Housing is a chronic issue in North Carolina, especially in rural areas, and there is a need for transformative investments in housing.
- ✦ Day trips and tourism grants have been beneficial for communities, and there are opportunities for higher-level connections and collaboration in terms of funding and programs.
- ✦ There is interest in developing the southwest part of the county, potentially for a project like the Toyota plant.
- ✦ Infrastructure, such as water and sewer systems, is important for attracting large manufacturing projects.
- ✦ There is a need for comprehensive planning to address the demand for development and determine what types of projects are desired in the county.
- ✦ The lack of affordable housing and low-performing schools are identified as challenges that need to be addressed to attract businesses and families to the area.
- ✦ The participants are concerned about the lack of stoplights and improvements to highways in the area.
- ✦ They feel that there are solutions to these issues that are not being implemented.
- ✦ The participant is interested in obtaining grants and resources to address the county's challenges, particularly in housing and tourism.
- ✦ The participants discussed the importance of coordination between different organizations and individuals to support small communities.
- ✦ They emphasized the need for exchanging contact information to facilitate communication and collaboration in the future.

ACTION ITEMS TO CONSIDER

- ✦ Consider leveraging the statewide tourism grant and main street rule planning program for community development.
- ✦ Continue to actively seek and welcome any prospects interested in investing in the county.
- ✦ Follow up on the announcement of the CAP spectrum program and ensure that all interested parties in the county have access to internet within the next two years.
- ✦ Coordinate with the governor to schedule a visit to make an announcement about Project Anchor, a \$12 million investment that will create fifty high-paying jobs.
- ✦ Explore options for improving internet access in the area.
- ✦ Work with PCC to increase exposure to food and support local farmers.
- ✦ Address the labor cost challenge in small-scale farming.
- ✦ Continue developing and expanding the local food chain.
- ✦ Increase attendance and sales at the local market.
- ✦ Raise funds for phase two of the Center for Educational and Agricultural Development project.
- ✦ Consider obtaining a 501(c)(3) option if necessary.
- ✦ Plan and participate in the independence celebration on July 6th.
- ✦ Focus on improving quality of life in the community, including education and recreational opportunities for children.
- ✦ Explore high-level investments in housing in rural areas of North Carolina.
- ✦ Share information about communities and key issues with RC two for potential resource allocation.
- ✦ Investigate grant opportunities for funding infrastructure projects.
- ✦ Coordinate a meeting in July with EDA Hillary Sherman to discuss DOT funding related to rail and road projects.
- ✦ Explore options for infrastructure development, particularly in regard to water and sewer systems.
- ✦ Conduct a site mapping project to identify potential locations for development.
- ✦ Discuss the comprehensive plan and determine the desired development for the county.
- ✦ Address infrastructure issues, particularly regarding water and sewer systems.
- ✦ Explore different grants and funding options to support the project.
- ✦ Share information about Caswell County's challenges and opportunities to help shape future planning.
- ✦ Connect with Tracy Dellinger, the regional representative, for further discussions and engagement.
- ✦ Determine the county's brand and identify the reason people should visit or stop in the area.
- ✦ Communicate with EDPNC about any infrastructure needs related to tourism and vacation rentals.
- ✦ Schedule a red primer session to discuss specific programs and funding options.
- ✦ Send dates for the red primer session to the participant from Yanceyville Chambers device.
- ✦ Connect with RC2 and their staff to discuss potential collaborations and support.