



Agriculture Working Group

Minutes of June 20, 2018

The Go Virginia Region One Agriculture Working Group met on June 20, 2018, at 9:30 AM at Heartwood, Abingdon, Virginia.

In attendance: David Eaton, Becki Joyce, Mason Boyd, Ryan Huish, Kathlyn Terry, Jim Baldwin, Tom Lester, Kevin Simones, Moir Beamer, Ernie McFadden, Penny Horton, Aaron Sizemore, Robyn Lee, Jerry Moles, Danny Boyer, Nick Adam, Jonathan Belcher, Albert Awang, Craig Barbrow, Joe Gillespie, April Wilson, Charlie Perkins

Meat Processing Facility Discussion

A discussion took place regarding the meat processing facility. Danny Boyer reviewed the original application Grayson County and Carroll County started and explained its current status. The facility will work at break even with 25 head per week, and currently have commitments equaling 75 head per week. An independent consulting group recommended the site be near Exit 14, and the county provided the land. Whole Foods is hoped to be an anchor business and if contracted it would trip product. The facility site is campaign ready and more anchors are expressing interest. An ag complex addition would provide STEM training to students, genetics testing, and food product. April with Circle W inquired to the processing of sheep and goat and Danny indicated it would be predominantly cattle but could process sheep and goat. Hogs would be limited. After a discussion between Danny, Moir, David Eaton, Ernie & April, there appeared to be enough capacity for two meat processing facilities, one in Carroll County and one in Russell County and the potential to work with niche markets. Danny informed the group that construction would be complete on the Carroll County complex within a year. Nick Adams a farmer in Tazewell County stated that Carroll County was too far for him to travel to take his cattle. Nick does grass finished beef. Creating a niche product that like the Vidalia onion is the right track, and demand for grass finished beef can't be met right now. A revenue sharing agreement has already been formed with Grayson, Floyd, and Carroll Counties, and they are looking for support and would consider revenue sharing with other counties. David Eaton informed the group there was a regional IDA meeting the afternoon of June 20, and he would discuss at the meeting.

Full Agriculture & Food Manufacturing Working Group Meeting

David Eaton called the group closed the Meat Processing facility discussion and called the full working group meeting to order.

Region One Grant Overview

Robyn Lee provided a GO Virginia Region One Grant overview and explained how funding should align with the Growth and Diversification Plan. Robyn explained the average pay in this region is \$33,865.00 and projects should focus on initiatives that bring in higher wages than the average. A review of the grant application and approval process was provided. It was emphasized that regional collaboration was encouraged and projects should consider collaborating within the region and outside with other GO Virginia regions. Most importantly the project should be sustainable and align with one of the targeted industry sectors. The broader the partnerships the stronger the grant application.

Craig Barbow with the USDA presented on some grants available and provided examples of how those grants could be utilized. Craig will provide additional information on the grants and follow up through email.

Albert Awang discussed the Vibrant Virginia agriculture meeting and reviewed some of the items discussed including tax incentives for new farmers (just like new industry coming in to the area has) , and assistance with purchasing land for new farmers, a database of all property in the region and what each is best situated for (specific crop production, cattle, solar, forestry).

Kathlyn Terry provided an update and more detail regarding the Enhanced Capacity grant submission and explained that they needed letters of support from the counties in order to re-submit the application. Kathlyn explained that ASD saw a need for someone to be a primary driver of agriculture projects in the region and they were willing to step up and take that role. She indicated they would not be over every project, but would work with counties and the region to help keep projects moving forward. David Eaton asked what the primary objectives of the grant were and Kathlyn committed to sending everyone an email with that detailed. Kathlyn stated if there were no letters of support then re-submitting the grant was not feasible.

A manual documentation of ag assets in the region was completed and Becki will provide.

Action items for the next meeting are:

1. Kathlyn Terry will email Becki with the objectives of the grant.
2. Craig Barbrow will email Becki with additional USDA grant info.
3. Danny Boyer will send David Eaton more information on the meat processing plant studies.
4. David will follow up with Danny after the Regional IDA meeting.
5. Becki will share Kathlyn's information with Economic Developers and they will consider sending letters of support.
6. Becki will research Opportunity Zones and provide information at the next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on July 17, 2018 at 2:00 PM at Heartwood, Abingdon, VA.

David adjourned the meeting.

