

1 VIRGINIA TOBACCO REGION REVITALIZATION COMMISSION

2 707 East Franklin Street, Suite 501

3 Richmond, Virginia 23219

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8 SOUTHERN VIRGINIA COMMITTEE MEETING

9 Wednesday, October 11, 2023

10 1:30 p.m.

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14 The Inn at Blackstone

15 707 Fourth Street

16 Blackstone, Virginia

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24 SOUTHERN VIRGINIA COMMITTEE

25 OCTOBER 11, 2023

APPEARANCES:

1 Mr. Walter H. "Buddy" Shelton, Chair
2 The Hon. Leslie R. "Les" Adams
3 Joel Cunningham, Jr.
4 Mr. Richard T. Hite, Jr.
5 Mr. Jay D. Jennings (remote)
6 The Hon. Daniel "Danny" Marshall (remote)
7 The Hon. Caren Merrick
8 The Hon. William A. "Will" Pace
9 The Hon. Gary D. Walker

ABSENT

10 Mr. Watt Foster, Jr.
11 Senator Louise Lucas
12 Senator Joe Morrissey

COMMISSION STAFF:

13 The Hon. James Campos
14 Mr. Stephen Versen
15 Ms. Sarah Capps
16 Ms. Vicki Humphreys
17 Stephanie Kim
18 Sarah Capps
19 Sara Williams
20 Jordan Butler
21 Jerry Silva
22 Suzette Patterson
23 Emily Van Pelt
24 Hannah Franke-Suller
25 Ms. Joyce Knight

COUNSEL FOR THE COMMISSION

Elizabeth Myers

1 October 11, 2023

2 MR. SHELTON: Call the meeting to order for the
3 business and agenda for today. So first of all I'd
4 like to welcome everyone here to this beautiful
5 site here in Blackstone.

6
7 Before we have our call of the roll I think we
8 need to--we've got some folks participating
9 electronically. I know Mr. Jennings is on the
10 phone. Can you hear us, sir?

11 MR. JENNINGS: Yes, sir.

12 MR. SHELTON: Okay. Delegate Marshall,
13 can you hear us?

14 DELEGATE MARSHALL: Yes, sir. I can hear you,
15 Buddy.

16 MR. SHELTON: Okay. Do we have anyone else
17 that is participating on the phone or
18 electronically?

19 Okay. At this time, I think we need to
20 entertain a motion to accept those into this
21 meeting.

22 MR. PACE: Mr. Chairman, I move to
23 approve that Mr. Jay Jennings and Delegate
24 Danny Marshall requests
25

1 to participate remotely in this meeting in
2 conformance with the Commission's adopted
3 electronic policy and the voice of the
4 remotely participating member can be heard
5 by all persons at this location I so move.

6 MR. SHELTON: There's a motion. Is
7 there a second

8 UNIDENTIFIED: Second.

9 MR. SHELTON: All those in favor
10 signify by saying aye. (Ayes. Any
11 opposed? None. The motion carries.

12 So at this time, Director Campos, call
13 the--or Deputy Director Versen, whoever is
14 going to take charge. Welcome you both, but
15 we do need a roll call, whoever wants to.

16 MR. CAMPOS: The remote participation
17 of Commissioners Jennings and Marshall in
18 this meeting of the TRRC Southern Virginia
19 Committee has been called for at the
20 request of the Committee Chair and is
21 authorized in accordance with the
22 Commission's adopted policy for virtual
23 public meetings. Furthermore, the
24 Commission notes the meeting has complied
25 with the requirements of the Virginia

1 Freedom of Information Act.

2 If alerted to a transmission failure of
3 this meeting, the committee shall recess
4 until public access is restored. The public
5 can notify the Commission of any issues by
6 calling 804-894-9651. Public comment shall
7 be permitted prior to committee business.
8 Any written comment received by the start of
9 the meeting shall be read into the record
10 during public comment.

11 Can everyone hear me? Okay. Great.

12 Roll call. Walter Buddy Shelton.

13 MR. SHELTON: Here.

14 MR. CAMPOS: Delegate Leslie Adams.

15 MR. PACE: He's on his way.

16 MR. CAMPOS: Joel Cunningham, Jr. Joel
17 Cunningham, Jr.

18 MR. CUNNINGHAM: (No response).

19 MR. CAMPOS: Watt Foster. Watt Foster.

20 MR. FOSTER: (No response.)

21 MR. CAMPOS: Richard Hite, Jr. Jay
22 Jennings.

23 Senator Louise Lucas. Absent.

24 Delegate Danny Marshall.

25 Secretary Caren Merrick.

1 SECRETARY MERRICK: Present.

2 MR. CAMPOS: Senator Joe Morrissey.

3 Sen. MORRISSEY: (No response).

4 MR. CAMPOS: Will Pace.

5 MR. PACE: Here.

6 MR. CAMPOS: Gary Walker.

7 MR. WALKER: Here.

8 MR. CAMPOS: There are two individuals
9 that are still coming.

10 Chair, we have a quorum.

11 MR. SHELTON: Thank you. Before we get
12 into our business I believe we have a brief
13 comment from the director of this facility.
14 Maybe not. Maybe doesn't--do we have
15 anyone here that wanted to speak on behalf
16 of the facility? Okay.

17 ISAIAH JONES: Good afternoon,
18 Committee. My name is Isaiah Jones. I
19 represent the Council--

20 MR. SHELTON: Just a second. You wanted
21 to have a brief welcome to the facilities
22 here. Okay.

23 UNIDENTIFIED: David Miller from the
24 corporate office. Thank you.

25 MR. SHELTON: Would you like to speak?

1 DAVID MILLER: Sorry to interrupt. I
2 work for the ownership group for
3 Blackstone. We just want to thank you for
4 trusting us to host this great event.
5 Thank you for your business. We look
6 forward to seeing you outside later on for
7 the reception. Have fun.

8 MR. SHELTON: Thank you. Approval of
9 our minutes of our May 18 meeting,
10 committee meeting, were published on the
11 website. Are there any additions or
12 corrections to the meeting minutes as they
13 were published?

14 MR. PACE: Mr. Chairman, I move to
15 approve the minutes from the May 18
16 Southern Virginia Committee meeting.

17 MR. WALKER: Second.

18 MR. SHELTON: I have a motion and a
19 second to approve the minutes as published.
20 All those in favor say aye. (Ayes.) Any
21 opposed? (No response.) The meeting
22 minutes are approved as published.

23 Now, we'll move into our public
24 comments, sir. So any public comment from
25 the gallery as this time. Sorry for the

1 confusion. We'll get it right.

2 ISIAH JONES: I guess now is my time.
3 Like I said, good afternoon. I'd like to
4 thank you all. I represent the Town of
5 Brodnax on the Town Council and I'm here to
6 just kind of give you some information on
7 the Rails-to-Trails, and basically here's
8 the timeline. Okay.

9 We secured funding from the Tobacco
10 Commission and VDOT for the project in late
11 2018. Much of the time to get started was
12 to understand the requirements of historical
13 buildings and how it complies with the VDOT
14 regulations.

15 Covid struck and delays in progress
16 plagued the project both in the planning
17 level and as well as within the VDOT
18 approval for steps of the project. Due to
19 the cost of many of the required items to
20 preserve the historical aspect of the depot,
21 cost estimates were high. The project went
22 through five revisions to get the final
23 plan.

24 When the plan was put out to bid, the
25 costs had soared due partly to Covid

1 inflations and the fact that contractors are
2 in short supply. Our cost now exceeds the
3 funds that we had secured. VDOT and Tobacco
4 Commission staff visited the site to look at
5 the project and it is still a worthy project
6 but needs incremental funding.

7 Brodnax is a small town with a total
8 population of 300. We are a low to moderate
9 income town with limited resources. We
10 would ask that your commission work with us
11 in providing funding to make this project a
12 reality. We are seeking an extension from
13 VDOT for the same incremental funding to
14 complete the project, as well as seeking any
15 funding that we cannot get from Brunswick
16 County.

17 As a small town, we truly are limited
18 in our resources and would appreciate the
19 help of this committee to improve the
20 quality of our town and for our citizens and
21 for the Rails-to-Trails museum.

22 I can personally say that I am one of
23 the users. Me and my family like to ride
24 bikes there and it's quite a bit of traffic
25 there with people that use the

1 Rails-to-Trails. So any help we can get
2 from the Committee would be greatly
3 appreciated. Thank you very much for your
4 time.

5 MR. SHELTON: Thank you for your
6 comments.

7 Is there anyone else from the gallery?
8 Any other public comments at this time?
9 Hearing none, we will move into our
10 breakdown with the applications for this
11 session.

12 So, Sarah, turn it over to you. Let's
13 work by category and stop for each category.

14 MS. CAPP: Sounds good, Mr. Chairman.
15 There were 13 applications submitted for
16 the June 7 application deadline for the
17 first round and there were 24 Southern
18 Virginia program.

19 Staff is recommending funding for nine
20 projects. Two projects are being
21 recommended to table. I'll run through
22 them. If you have questions on any of them,
23 let me know and we can discuss them.

24 The first one on the list under
25 Agribusiness is submitted by Campbell

1 County. This is for expanding the Southern
2 Virginia Precision Agriculture and Farm
3 Efficiency project. This is an agriculture
4 cost share program that the Commission
5 approved funding for in January 2022. That
6 first grant was very successful.

7 They expect to serve 85 producers from
8 the first round. The practices that are
9 being installed include livestock handling
10 equipment, precision and improved
11 agriculture technology, hay barns, and cold
12 storage.

13 When the first grant was approved, to
14 try to be equitable, it was to serve all 20
15 counties in our footprint and so each county
16 was allotted \$25,000 to serve essentially
17 five producers or more, depending on how far
18 the cost sharing lasts.

19 It turned out that the interest in the
20 program varied significantly across the 20
21 counties and there is a waitlist right now
22 and Campbell County is requesting--it's a
23 reduced amount. It's \$272,000. I'll
24 explain why that's less than the request.
25 This \$272,000 would be for all producers that

1 are currently on the waitlist.

2 The first grants would actually close
3 with a balance of about \$148,000 and then
4 this new award, assuming you agree to
5 approve it, would support all the waitlist.
6 It's just an easier, cleaner way to
7 administer the project.

8 Campbell County agrees with the reduced
9 funding recommendation for \$272,000.
10 Originally they had just allocated enough
11 money for 72 slots. The total producers on
12 the waitlist is 60 and the amount of funding
13 needed for that cost share is \$267,778, and
14 there's also \$4,000 allocated towards match.

15 Staff is recommending a grant of
16 \$272,000 to support its--rounded up it's
17 \$268,000 cost share for the applicants that
18 are on the waitlist and then \$4,000 for
19 direct costs related to administering the
20 grants.

21 The approval is made on a couple of
22 conditions. So it's conditioned on first
23 that the cost-share funding would be limited
24 to only first-time recipients for practices
25 previously funded by the Tobacco Commission

1 and conditioned on unobligated funds under
2 grant 3891, being deobligated after final
3 reimbursements are processed.

4 So that is the summary on that one.

5 The second Agribusiness project is
6 submitted by the Institute for Advanced
7 Learning and Research. \$104,452 is
8 requested for Connecting Southern Virginia
9 Producers with Markets Through Value Chain
10 Coordination.

11 The grant funds are requested for 50
12 percent of value chain coordinator over a
13 startup period of two years, as well as
14 funding towards a software solution that
15 will help connect producers with buyers,
16 website development, marketing and travel.
17 Match would also be for new position,
18 laptop, travel, and supplies.

19 There is a \$100,000 match that was
20 secured a number of years ago that was from
21 an anonymous donor and that was made to the
22 Danville Regional Foundation and used
23 towards these projects.

24 It is one that you have seen before.
25 We had approved funding for this in May of

1 2020. It didn't hit at a very good time
2 with Covid. The institute had trouble
3 filling the position and when they were
4 requesting award to the extension we just
5 agreed it would be best to start the project
6 over on a new start date.

7 They have estimated benefitting 10
8 farmers annually with at least \$10,000
9 average annual sales increase for that
10 farming for at least \$100,000 aggregate
11 increase in annual produce sales. The
12 software program that they are considering
13 would track all direct sales.

14 Staff is recommending approval of a
15 \$104,452 grant award.

16 The third Agribusiness project also
17 submitted by the Institute for Advanced
18 Learning and Research is \$145,841 requested
19 and this is for Supporting Controlled
20 Environmental Agriculture Industry in
21 Southern Virginia. Grant funds would be used
22 towards salary and fringe for a technician
23 position for start-up testing services to
24 support growth of the CDA industry.

1 This builds on a project that the
2 Commission supported in January of 2020 that
3 helped establish the Controlled
4 Environmental Agriculture Innovation Center
5 at IALR, which is in partnership with
6 Virginia Tech. The focus of the testing
7 capabilities is on evaluating product,
8 methods, ideas in greenhouse or indoor
9 vertical farm settings.

10 The applicant has identified--we asked
11 for data on a number of CEAs in the tobacco
12 region just to get an understanding of the
13 existing market. There were 30 CEAs in our
14 region that could benefit from this project.
15 It is viewed as a start-up support for proof
16 of concept phase for building testing
17 services that will help drive CEA
18 agribusiness expansion in the region.

19 Staff is recommending approval of a
20 \$145,841 grant award contingent on a report
21 of best practices being provided prior to
22 close out of the grant.

23 The fourth Agribusiness application is
24 from the Southside Virginia Fruit and
25 Vegetable Producers Association. \$1,210,000

1 was requested for the project Envisioning a
2 Local Food Purchasing System for Southern
3 Virginia.

4 This was based on the Local Food
5 Purchasing Assistance Program that's
6 administered by--it's federal funding that
7 AMS administers. There's additional funding
8 to become available for that program.

9 This application was submitted to
10 support administrative costs and build up of
11 proprietary software.

12 The need to support expanded sales
13 opportunities for producer's association is
14 certainly recognized. However, staff felt
15 that this request was extremely large and
16 exceeded the amounts and the scope that is
17 typically supported by the Commission for
18 agribusiness projects.

19 And just to give you a better sense of
20 it, the budget included \$800,000 of Tobacco
21 Commission funding towards technical edits
22 to a proprietary software that would be
23 used. \$250,000 is requested for
24 administrative staff positions.

25 The agribusiness outcome projections

1 were not provided in the application, and we
2 did work with the applicant and recommended
3 to them that the staff recommendation would
4 be to table this application to allow the
5 applicant to come back to us with a revised
6 scope and budget to be considered in
7 January, and the producer's association was
8 in agreement with tabling.

9 So staff recommendation is to table and
10 allow a new application to be submitted with
11 a revised scope and budget to be considered
12 in January of 2024.

13 MR. SHELTON: Thank you, Sarah. As far
14 as the Agribusiness category, do we have
15 any questions or any discussion from the
16 Commission? If not, what is the Board's
17 pleasure on staff's recommendations?

18 MR. PACE: Mr. Chairman, I'll make a
19 motion here. I move that we approve
20 the--agree to the staff's recommendations
21 for Agribusiness in block.

22 MR. SHELTON: Motion. Is there a
23 second?

24 MR. WALKER: Second.

25 MR. SHELTON: We have a motion and a

1 proper second that we approve the staff
2 recommendations in a block for the
3 applications in the Agribusiness category.
4 All those in favor signify by saying aye?
5 (Ayes.) Any opposed? (No response.)
6 Hearing none, those four applications are
7 approved as staff recommends.

8 So we move on to the Business
9 Development category, Sarah.

10 MS. CAPPs: We have two applications
11 under Business Development. The first one
12 is submitted by the Institute for Advanced
13 Learning and Research.

14 This is submitted on behalf of Southern
15 Virginia Regional Alliance, the regional
16 economic alliance that serves the City of
17 Danville, Patrick, Pennsylvania, and Halifax
18 Counties. \$325,562 is requested for the
19 Business Development & Talent Attraction for
20 Investment in Southern Virginia.

21 The grant funds, \$175,000 would support
22 50 percent of new Talent Attraction &
23 Retention position, so that funding would
24 support that position over three years. It
25 is being matched by funding that was secured

1 this week from the Danville Regional
2 Foundation.

3 There is also \$150,000 of Commission
4 funds that would be used towards lead
5 generation and marketing support over a
6 three-year period. And those costs and use
7 of funds are consistent with what the
8 Commission has supported for regional
9 alliances in recent years.

10 The core sectors targeted by the
11 Southern Virginia Regional Alliance include
12 high performance manufacturing, advanced
13 materials, environmental and life sciences,
14 and information technology and professional
15 services.

16 The Commission's--the applicant gave us
17 very solid data on increase in prospect
18 leads that they've been working with over
19 the last several years and there's
20 definitely need for additional staff to help
21 deliver the prospects to commitments.

22 This is also supported by VEDP's study
23 published in May on the Southside-Southwest
24 Barriers and Opportunities. That focused on
25 accelerating regional growth in our region

1 and identified the need for additional staff
2 to support these economic development
3 efforts.

4 The Commission's funding policies limit
5 operating support to a start-up period and
6 the Regional Alliance has committed to
7 launching a three-year capital campaign to
8 seek funding from private and public sector
9 partners to provide sustainability in the
10 project beyond the three-year funding that
11 would be supported from this grant. The
12 Commission's policies also require advance
13 approval of out-of-state or international
14 travel and these details would need to be
15 provided and approved in advance.

16 Staff is recommending approval of the
17 requested \$325,563 grant award. This is
18 contingent on funding for the Talent
19 Attraction and Retention Director being
20 limited to up to 50 percent of personnel
21 costs and contingent on advance approval of
22 event participation fees and out-of-state or
23 international travel.

24 The second project on Business
25 Development is submitted by Virginia's

1 Growth Alliance. This is for the
2 Refresh/Restart Focused Business
3 Development. This is the regional alliance
4 for Southern Virginia that includes five
5 counties, one city, and about ten towns in
6 there in the region as well.

7 The original request to us was for
8 \$57,673. We did work with VGA to evaluate
9 the project budget and it has since been
10 reduced to a request of \$51,950, which is
11 what the staff is recommending.

12 The grant funds would be used towards
13 lead generation, FAM tours, marketing, and
14 participation at trade events. Virginia's
15 Growth Alliance recently developed a
16 strategic action plan, so these marketing
17 dollars would be used to implement the
18 actions identified in that plan to the
19 targeted sectors that were identified.

20 Staff is recommending similar to the
21 last one where we will need to approve
22 out-of-state and international travel.
23 Staff is recommending a \$51,950 grant award
24 contingent on advance approval of event
25 participation fees and out-of-state or

1 international travel.

2 MR. SHELTON: Is there any questions or
3 other discussion of the Business
4 Development section?

5 SECRETARY MERRICK: Yes, Mr. Chairman.
6 I have a question.

7 Thank you, Sarah. Thank you for that.
8 For this particular one that you just
9 mentioned, which is Business Development and
10 Talent Attraction, how will they work with
11 the current team that's doing this kind of
12 economic development? Do you know?

13 MS. CAPPS: I apologize. I'm having
14 trouble hearing a little bit. There's a
15 noise in here. You're asking about the
16 Southern Virginia Regional Alliance--

17 SECRETARY MERRICK: Yes.

18 MS. CAPPS: This position is for a new staff
19 person for the regional alliance so they
20 would--this person would report to and work
21 directly with that team and also to a
22 business development person that was hired
23 earlier this summer.

24 SECRETARY MERRICK: Okay. And then do
25 you know what would be the total number of

1 economic development folks in that office?

2 MS. CAPPS: I think maybe that would be
3 four. Is that--

4 SECRETARY MERRICK: The reason that I
5 ask the question is because we were just at
6 the Governor's Rural Prosperity Summit and
7 Jason El Koubi, and it was stated that if
8 you include only one person (inaudible).
9 So this seems to be in line with that.

10 MS. CAPPS: We thought it was very much
11 in line with that. As I mentioned, the
12 regional alliance just added a third
13 position in June so this would be a fourth
14 position, so two new positions help travel
15 and--

16 SECRETARY MERRICK: Thank you. No
17 pressure, Linda, but we're going to expect
18 results. I know you will do fine.

19 MR. SHELTON: I believe Mr. Hite is
20 checking to see if we can get the air cut
21 off for a few minutes. Hopefully that will
22 help a little bit get through this.

23 Any other questions or comments on
24 these two applications? Anyone else want to
25 speak to it? If not, what is the Board's

1 pleasure on the Business Development section
2 of our business?

3 MR. PACE: Mr. Chairman, I'll make
4 another motion.

5 MR. SHELTON: Mr. Pace.

6 MR. PACE: All right. I move,
7 Mr. Chairman, that we agree to the staff
8 recommendation for both the Southern
9 Virginia Regional Alliance and the Virginia
10 Growth Alliance in the block.

11 MR. SHELTON: Motion. Is there a
12 second?

13 MR. WALKER: Second.

14 MR. SHELTON: We have a motion and a
15 second that we accept the staff
16 recommendation of these two projects. All
17 those in favor say aye. (Ayes). Any
18 opposed? (No response). Hearing none,
19 those two applications, 4163 and 4164, will
20 pass as staff recommends.

21 Moving on to Sites & Infrastructure.

22 MS. CAPPS: We have two Sites &
23 Infrastructure. The first one is from
24 Brunswick County. This is a \$2,234,460
25 request for a Stonewall Industrial Site

1 Development Project. Grant funds are
2 requested for a 100 percent of the final
3 design and grading cost for developing a
4 pad-ready site on 21-acres at the Stonewall
5 Industrial Park. This is a 398-acre site
6 that has been identified by Virginia's
7 Growth Alliance as one of their priorities
8 for development. They did identify the
9 targeted sectors in advanced manufacturing,
10 aviation, distribution and logistics, among
11 others.

12 The economic outcome projections for
13 the first new business in the park is 50 new
14 jobs with the average wage of at least \$19
15 an hour and \$10 million in private capital
16 investment.

17 The matching funds as proposed were
18 identified as \$2,955,000 appropriation
19 request in federal appropriation that would
20 be used to support the off-site
21 infrastructure, including water and sewer,
22 natural gas and electric.

23 We did check in with Congresswoman
24 Jennifer McClellan's office and confirmed
25 that the earmark has been reduced to

1 \$500,000 and would still need to pass in the
2 appropriations bill.

3 The pad-ready sites--we felt like the
4 pad-ready site can be developed first and
5 the current Tier 4 characterization of
6 Stonewall certifies that all of the off-site
7 infrastructure requirements can be delivered
8 within 12 to 18 months.

9 Recognizing this and the value of
10 vested interest by multiple funders in
11 development and marketing of the site, staff
12 is recommending approval of 50 percent of
13 the \$2,234,460 that would be needed for
14 grading this site.

15 So that--I'll just restate that. Staff
16 recommendation is staff recommends an award
17 of \$1,117,230 for 50 percent of the A&D and
18 construction costs for development of the
19 pad-ready site, contingent on securing full
20 matching funds for the project.

21 The second site project is submitted by
22 Campbell County. This is for the Seneca
23 Commerce Park Grading Project. This was
24 originally requested at \$600,000 and that
25 original request was--when the application

1 was submitted only 60 percent of engineering
2 was completed at that time, so the funding
3 request was based on the best estimate at
4 that point in time.

5 Since the application was submitted,
6 engineering has reached 100 percent
7 completion and they have a much better cost
8 estimate. The revised cost estimate for
9 this project is \$809,836. This results in a
10 revised amount of \$404,918 for 50 percent of
11 the grading cost.

12 This would be for an 8-acre pad-ready
13 site at the Seneca Commerce Park, which is
14 off US Route 29, and this park has been
15 identified by the Lynchburg Regional
16 Alliance as a priority for new site
17 development.

18 Staff is recommending a grant of
19 \$404,918 for 50 percent of approved site
20 development cost.

21 MR. SHELTON: Just as a point of
22 curiosity, Sarah--I should have asked this
23 when we spoke--is any of this still being
24 drawn from the old--these localities old--

25 MS. CAPPS: Allocations?

1 MR. SHELTON: Allocations. I know we
2 have--some have carried over still and some
3 do not.

4 MS. CAPPS: Yes. The Brunswick County
5 projects have been approved with zero
6 allocation. The Campbell County allocation
7 was already zero. I have that list with
8 me.

9 MR. SHELTON: No. I don't need
10 to--just curious.

11 MS. CAPPS: For all of the projects
12 that can be drawn down for the old
13 allocations, that would be how we handle--

14 MR. SHELTON: That's the first--that's
15 what I was thinking.

16 Do we have any other questions or
17 discussion on these two projects?

18 What is the Board's pleasure on Sites &
19 Infrastructure?

20 MR. PACE: I'll do it again.

21 MR. SHELTON: Counting on you.

22 MR. PACE: Mr. Chairman, I move that we
23 approve the Sites & Infrastructures for
24 Stonewall Industrial Site Development
25 Project and Seneca Commerce Park Grading

1 Project by staff recommendation in block.

2 MR. WALKER: Second.

3 MR. SHELTON: We have a motion and a proper
4 second to approve these two applications as
5 staff recommends. All those in favor
6 signify by saying aye.

7 (Ayes.) Any opposed? (No response).

8 Hearing none, these two projects are both
9 passed as staff recommends.

10 And our final category is Tourism.

11 MS. CAPPS: We have five tourism
12 applications. The first one is submitted
13 by the American Civil War Museum. \$41,031
14 is requested for a national advertising
15 campaign to encourage tourism to southern
16 and central Virginia.

17 Specifically, the grant funds are
18 requested to be used towards museum
19 personnel, \$8,894 allocated towards a
20 part-time visitor engagement associate, and
21 then \$32,138 is allocated for AAA
22 advertising campaign.

23 The museum serves as the host site for
24 the Appomattox Town Welcome Center and is a
25 member of the regional tourism organization,

1 Experience of Appalachia.

2 The focus of the project and the
3 advertising is on this AAA campaign. The
4 marketing plan for the museum that was
5 submitted with the application lacked a
6 comprehensive research on the targeted
7 markets and diverse methods for reaching
8 their target audience, and it only included
9 the AAA campaign. It's unclear what is
10 known about the current museum visitors or
11 what supports this approach of advertising
12 as the best marketing strategy for the
13 museum.

14 We need to point out that the Southern
15 Virginia RFP, the tourism section investment
16 category is very limited, and when it comes
17 to supporting marketing campaigns we can
18 consider regional tourism marketing
19 campaigns, and whereas this application is
20 focused on an individual site and that is
21 not a funding priority for the Commission.

22 Staff did advise the applicant of this
23 during the--with the pre-application that
24 was submitted to us. We felt like the
25 Virginia Tourism Corporation's Marketing

1 Leverage Program is a better fit for this
2 type of advertising.

3 Whereas the application is not a
4 funding priority for the Commission, staff
5 suggests the museum work with the Virginia
6 Tourism Corporation's destination
7 development staff for development of a more
8 robust marketing plan and for pursuing the
9 VTC funding opportunities.

10 Recognizing concerns for setting a
11 precedent for Commission funds to be used by
12 a tourism destination for their operating
13 support and staffing, and more importantly
14 the precedent for funding an individual
15 tourism destinations marketing budget, staff
16 recommends no award. That's the first one.

17 The second tourism project--you heard a
18 little bit about this earlier in the public
19 comment--is submitted by the Town of
20 Brodnax. This is \$183,507 request for the
21 Brodnax Depot Renovation Project. It's one
22 that a lot of you may be very familiar with.

23 We had an open grant for about nine
24 years for the same project. Unfortunately,
25 when you get involved with VDOT and funding,

1 the transportation enhancement grant
2 funding, it inevitably draws everything out.

3 The original grant that we had, 22,000
4 was used towards acquisition and A&E design
5 services and the balance of that grant of
6 \$98,000 has been deobligated. So
7 essentially that money has gone back into
8 our pool to be reinvested in a new project.

9 This request is to support the
10 necessary costs for the renovation of the
11 1,754 square foot depot. It is in the Town
12 of Brodnax, which is one of the heavier
13 visited sites areas of the Tobacco Heritage
14 Trail. This is documented by trail counters
15 that the Southside PDC has installed in
16 Brodnax.

17 Staff recognizes the value that
18 redevelopment of the depot will provide for
19 this community and the ability of the
20 project to support increased visitors and
21 visitor spending for Brunswick County.

22 Staff recommends approval of \$181,507
23 grant for up to 20 percent of approved
24 project costs, contingent on approval of the
25 \$473,581 VDOT award. They've already

1 secured one VDOT grant and they're pursuing
2 a second grant, so that's a reference to the
3 second one. And also be contingent on
4 grantee identifying other funding if
5 construction bids are over budget.

6 Next up is the Town of Blackstone.
7 This application was submitted for \$247,217,
8 and this relates to the Harris Memorial
9 Armory building. You all saw the project for
10 this last January, and you approved funding.

11 The grant that was approved in January
12 was for \$581,000 and goes towards the \$3.4
13 million renovation costs.

14 At the very last minute right before the
15 application deadline the town became aware
16 that the USDA funding that they were planning
17 to pursue for equipping the building was not
18 going to work out, and, in fact, the USDA
19 program was going to require that they meet
20 certain historic preservation requirements
21 for the building which would have delayed
22 their construction contract.

23 They had been removing asbestos over
24 the last couple months, and I think they've
25

1 already entered into the renovation contract
2 now. But it would also have increased the
3 project budget by an estimated \$440,000.
4 That's why they submitted this to us.

5 The grant that was approved in January
6 was contingent on hospitality training plan
7 being developed and approved by our
8 executive director. They're still working
9 on that.

10 We felt like it was premature to
11 consider new funding requests until they had
12 enough time to get that developed to make
13 sure that it would meet our interests. And
14 so staff is recommending tabling this, not
15 only for the hospitality planning, but also
16 to allow the town to revise the scope of the
17 funding request to better define the
18 equipping needs for the training areas of
19 that facility and related cost estimates.

20 We did work with the town on this and
21 they are in agreement with the staff
22 recommendation for the application to be
23 tabled. So staff recommends this will
24 tabled.

25 The fourth project on the list for

1 Tourism is the Town of Lawrenceville. This
2 is for the Tobacco Heritage Trail Trailhead
3 Ramp. This is a \$232,287 grant request.

4 This would be used towards a total
5 project cost of \$822,000. That is
6 only--it's a small segment of trail that
7 would be constructed, 550 linear feet,
8 probably about a tenth of a mile. Most of
9 the money is needed for a handicap
10 accessibility ramp and the associated
11 retaining wall.

12 When it comes to tourism and
13 infrastructure, the Commission wants to
14 invest in projects that demonstrates
15 significant visitors, increasing visitors
16 and visitor spending, for visitors from
17 outside of the state, national and
18 international visitors. We did not feel
19 that this project met that criteria.

20 The primary argument that the applicant
21 used for increasing visitation was the
22 ability to connect to a town-owned park that
23 could be used to host additional events, and
24 staff just felt it was important to point
25 out that the Commission has already invested

1 in another property that is very, very close
2 to there that is at the current trail
3 terminus that is 11-plus acres and that
4 seems to be a better opportunity for hosting
5 events.

6 While the proposed project would
7 provide a safer route under Highway 46 for
8 pedestrians to access the town-owned park
9 and the downtown business district, this
10 alone does not provide compelling argument
11 for the projects need and the ability to
12 increase visitors and visitor spending to
13 the region. Staff is recommending no award.

14 The last of the tourism projects was
15 submitted by West Piedmont Planning District
16 Commission. \$118,000 is requested for
17 Regional Outdoor Recreation Economy Program.
18 This would provide an outdoor recreation
19 economy master plan and economic impact
20 study, including an asset analysis,
21 demographics of visitors, evaluation of
22 opportunities for enhancements and
23 improvements and expansions to attract
24 visitors to the region.

25 The project is proposed in partnership

1 with Friends of Southwest Virginia. Two of
2 the West Piedmont PDC localities participate
3 in that alliance. The project scope would
4 include all of the West Piedmont PDC service
5 area.

6 The use of grant funds are primarily
7 for contractual services, a \$100,000 towards
8 the master planning and marketing and then
9 \$18,000 is allocated for staff from Friends
10 of Southwest to assist with project
11 development.

12 The application did not provide tourism
13 outcomes largely because so much of it is
14 focused on planning. Staff felt like it
15 would be best to allow the initial plan to
16 proceed, but then to require that the
17 economic outcomes projections be provided
18 before marketing dollars were spent.

19 Staff is recommending approval of
20 \$118,000 grant contingent on securing the
21 required matching fund and contingent on
22 tourism economic outcome projections being
23 submitted and approved by TRRC staff prior
24 to launching the marketing campaign.

25 MR. SHELTON: Thank you, Sarah.

1 We have a little variance in
2 recommendation in this category. So let me
3 ask first is there anyone here that wants to
4 speak to any of these applications
5 specifically?

6 Is there any discussion or questions
7 from the Committee?

8 MR. PACE: Mr. Chairman, I do have a
9 question of Sarah.

10 MR. SHELTON: Mr. Pace.

11 MR. PACE: So regarding the American
12 Civil War Museum, 4157, my question is a
13 two-parter. In your discussion with the
14 Civil War Museum, do they have any--or any
15 outreach of going outside to reach out to
16 AAA for advertising, like any other
17 entities, or are they just solely focused
18 on AAA?

19 MS. CAPPs: The only information we
20 received was for AAA and we did require a
21 marketing plan for the museum with the
22 application.

23 MR. PACE: Second question, Mr.
24 Chairman, for the same subject matter.

25 MR. SHELTON: Yes.

1 MR. PACE: Did they--I mean, it said in
2 the report that they never once applied for
3 a grant from VTC. Did they give an
4 explanation for why they didn't go that
5 route at all or--

6 MS. CAPPS: I did not ask.

7 MR. PACE: I'm just curious.

8 MS. CAPPS: I think that they had
9 pursued VTC funding in 2019 just based on
10 conversations with the grant staff person
11 at VTC, but they had not applied with the
12 recent opportunities.

13 MR. PACE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 MR. SHELTON: Any other discussion?

15 MR. WALKER: Mr. Chairman, on this West
16 Piedmont application--I'm probably showing
17 my ignorance, but how are you going to
18 measure contingence on the tourism economic
19 outcome projections?

20 MS. CAPPS: How are we going to measure
21 that?

22 MR. WALKER: Since the whole thing is--

23 MS. CAPPS: We're going to--the staff
24 recommendation is to allow the initial
25 assessment of the assets and the planning

1 work to proceed, and then once that work is
2 done, the PDC would have to provide us with
3 the economic outcome estimates. That is
4 part of our application and it would be
5 based on how their marketing of this
6 outdoor plan could increase visitors to the
7 region.

8 MR. WALKER: What level of outcome
9 projections would trigger them getting
10 \$118,000? Is there--

11 MS. CAPPS: I don't have any
12 information. I don't know what they have
13 for their current--what they have for the
14 current visitation. It would need to be
15 based on--every project is you know--

16 MR. WALKER: Yes. Thank you. Thank
17 you, Mr. Chairman.

18 MR. SHELTON: Further discussion?
19 What is the Committee's pleasure on
20 these recommendation?

21 MR. PACE: I'll do it again if I have
22 to.

23 MR. SHELTON: Mr. Pace.

24 MR. PACE: I'll do two sets of motions
25 here. My first motion is in regards to

1 Making Ends Meet, Project 4165. I move we
2 table that. That's my first motion. Move
3 to table.

4 MR. SHELTON: Do we have a second for
5 that specific motion?

6 MR. ADAMS: Second.

7 MR. SHELTON: We have a motion to
8 accept staff's recommendation of 4165 to
9 table that project. It's been properly
10 seconded. All those in favor say aye.
11 (Ayes.) Any opposed? (No response).
12 Hearing none, that motion passes and 4165
13 is tabled.

14 MR. PACE: My second motion,
15 Mr. Chairman, is I move that we approve the
16 staff recommendation for Project 4160 for
17 Brodnax Depot Renovation Project and
18 Project 4156 for the Regional Outdoor
19 Recreation Economy Program from the West
20 Piedmont Planning District Commission.

21 MR. SHELTON: All right. We have a
22 motion to accept the staff recommendation
23 of funding for Project 4160 and 4156. Is
24 there a second to that motion.

25 UNIDENTIFIED: Second.

1 MR. SHELTON: Motion and a proper
2 second. All those in favor signify by
3 saying aye. (Ayes). Any opposed? (No
4 response). Motion carries. 4160 and 4156
5 are approved as recommended by staff, which
6 leaves us with two that have no staff
7 recommendations.

8 So at this point is there--what is the
9 Committee's recommendation on those staff
10 recommendations?

11 MR. WALKER: Mr. Chairman, I move we
12 approve the staff recommendation on both of
13 those projects.

14 MR. SHELTON: We have a motion. Is
15 there a second?

16 SECRETARY MERRICK: Second.

17 MR. SHELTON: We have a proper second.
18 So we have a motion that we approve staff
19 recommendation, which is no award on
20 projects 4157 and projects 4158. All those
21 in favor signify by saying aye. (Ayes).
22 Any opposed? (No response). The motion
23 carries so the staff recommendation of no
24 award for those two projects carries.

25 Sarah, that I believe is all of our new

1 projects. We have some extensions to
2 discuss.

3 MS. CAPPs: We have two extensions
4 under Other Business. It should be page
5 24.

6 The first is from the Virginia Museum
7 of Natural History Foundation. They are
8 requesting a six-month extension for Grant
9 Number 3457. This is a \$75,000 grant from
10 September 2018. It's being used towards
11 construction of an outdoor education
12 pavilion.

13 A total of \$25,000 grant funds have been
14 drawn down for A&E costs. There is a balance
15 of \$50,000 that would be used towards the
16 construction cost. The construction contract
17 has been signed and the targeted date for
18 completion is February 2024. The Foundation
19 is requesting a final six-month extension to
20 allow time for construction to be completed.

21 Initially the project was delayed while
22 they secured the matching fund and then there
23 were significant delays during the pandemic.
24 Of course as a state owned
25

1 facility, the final approval process
2 involves the Virginia Department of General
3 Services, which has oversight of
4 construction.

5 All of the approvals have been made and
6 as indicated the construction contract has
7 been signed. It's on schedule to be
8 completed.

9 Staff is recommending approval of a
10 final six-month extension to March 31, 2024.

11 MR. SHELTON: Okay. On this specific
12 extension request, do we have any
13 discussion or any questions? None.

14 What's the Board's pleasure on this
15 extension request?

16 MR. HITE: Mr. Chairman, I move that
17 the Committee recommend the Commission
18 approval of the final six-month extension
19 to March 31, 2024.

20 MR. SHELTON: Do we have a second?

21 MR. PACE: Second.

22 MR. SHELTON: We have a motion and
23 proper second to approve the extension as
24 requested--as submitted by the staff
25 recommendation on the Virginia Museum of

1 Natural History Foundation request. All
2 those in favor signify by saying aye.
3 (Ayes). Any opposed? (No response).
4 Hearing none, that extension is granted.

5 We have one more.

6 MS. CAPPs: Then next extension request
7 is from the South Boston IDA. This for the
8 John Randolph Hotel Redevelopment Project.
9 It's grant 3289.

10 This is a \$600,000 grant award from
11 September of 2017. It's to support A&D and
12 renovation costs for the hotel.

13 The Commission previously extended
14 this. They were delayed when the original
15 operator/developer pulled out of the
16 project. The town did reach an agreement
17 with a new developer, The Rook Hotels. That
18 was reached in April of 2022. They plan to
19 convert the property into a boutique hotel
20 with at least 30 rooms, a restaurant, and a
21 rooftop bar.

22 The total renovation costs are now
23 \$14.5 million. This includes financing from
24 the DHC's IRF grant loan program of \$3
25 million that was secured in December of '22,

1 historic and new market tax credits for
2 \$4.95 million, and a \$4 million in private
3 loan secured by the Town of South Boston,
4 and an additional private investment of \$2.1
5 million.

6 The project is moving forward. They
7 just need a little bit more time. On this
8 grant they're requesting an additional year.
9 Staff recommends approval of a seventh year
10 extension to September 30, 2024.

11 MR. SHELTON: Is there any questions or
12 discussion on this extension request?
13 Hearing none, what's the Committee's
14 pleasure.

15 MR. HITE: Mr. Chairman, I move that we
16 approve the seventh year extension to
17 September 30, 2024.

18 MR. SHELTON: Do we have a second?

19 MR. ADAMS: Second.

20 MR. SHELTON: We have a motion and a
21 proper second to accept staff
22 recommendations for the extension on the
23 John Randolph Hotel Project. All those in
24 favor signify by saying aye. (Ayes). Any
25 opposed? (No response). Hearing none,

1 that extension request is granted.

2 So I believe at this time we have an
3 update on our active projects.

4 MS. HUMPHREYS: That's correct.

5

6 Okay. We do a good job of coming in
7 and telling you all about new projects and
8 projects that need extensions, but in a long
9 time we haven't come to tell you about what
10 the work of this committee is actively doing
11 in the community right now, so we want to
12 take that opportunity to inform you.

13 And all of you should have received a
14 packet of reports. The top one is for this
15 committee, and I won't take up too much time
16 at all, but I just want to inform you all
17 that we currently have 44 active projects
18 that is putting \$28.6 million out in this
19 region. And if you have any questions, you
20 can see me or Sarah Capps.

21 MR. SHELTON: Thank you. Any questions
22 at this time? I know the staff would be
23 happy to discuss at any point during this
24 session any questions? Thank you for that
25 update.

1 SECRETARY MERRICK: Just a quick
2 question. So it's \$28 million in aggregate
3 for all of the committees or just--

4 MS. HUMPHREYS: No. Just this
5 committee in active projects.

6 SECRETARY MERRICK: Okay. Great.
7 Thank you.

8 MR. SHELTON: Any other questions or
9 comments? All right. Thank you.

10 Mr. Versen, do we have any other
11 business at this point?

12 MR. VERSEN: There is no other
13 business.

14 MR. SHELTON: All right. Is there any
15 final public comment before this committee?
16 (No response). Hearing none, I will
17 entertain a motion to adjourn.

18 MR. PACE: So move.

19 MR. SHELTON: I was counting on
20 Mr. Pace. We won't take a vote. We're
21 adjourned. Thank you everyone.

22

23

PROCEEDINGS CONCLUDED

24

25

1 CERTIFICATE OF THE COURT REPORTER

2
3
4 I, Holly M. Bush, Notary Public for the
5 State of Virginia at Large, do hereby certify that
6 I was the Court Reporter who took down and transcribed
7 the proceedings of the Tobacco Region Revitalization
8 Commission, Southern Virginia Committee meeting, when
9 held on Wednesday, October 11, 2023, at 1:30 p.m., at
10 The Inn at Blackstone, 707 Fourth Street, Blackstone,
11 Virginia.

12 I further certify this is a true and accurate
13 transcript, to the best of my ability to hear and
14 understand the proceedings.

15 Given under my hand this 6th day of November,
16 2023.

17 _____
18 Holly M. Bush

19
20 My commission expires
21 December 31, 2026.
22 Notary Registration No. 257683
23
24
25

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