1	VIRGINIA TOBACCO REGION REVITALIZATION COMMISSION
2	701 East Franklin Street, Suite 501
3	Richmond, Virginia 23219
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7	SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA COMMITTEE MEETING
8	Thursday, October 12, 2023
9	9:48 a.m.
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14	Blackstone Inn
15	707 4th Street
16	Blackstone, Virginia
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25	SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA COMMITTEE MEETING October 12, 2023

Page: 2

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APPEARANCES:
 1
    Delegate James "Will" Morefield, Chair
    Delegate Terry G. Kilgore
 2
    Gretchen B. Clark
 3
     Amanda Cox
 4
     Secretary Matthew Lohr
     Sandy Ratliff
 5
     Sarah L. Wilson
 6
     William Pace
 7
     ABSENT
    Julie Hensley
 8
     Edward Blevins (medical)
 9
     Senator John Edwards
    Delegate William Wampler, III (medical)
10
11
     OTHER STAFF PRESENT:
    James E Campos
12
     Stephen Versen
13
    Vicki Humphreys
14
    Stephanie Kim
     Sara Williams
15
    Sarah Capps
16
     Jordan Butler
17
    Jerry Silva
18
     Suzette Williams
     Hannah Franke-Fuller
19
     Emily Van Pelt
20
    Joyce Knight
21
22
     COUNSEL FOR THE COMMISSION
     Elizabeth Myers
23
24
25
               SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA COMMITTEE MEETING
                            October 12, 2023
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          DELEGATE MOREFIELD: Good morning.
                                                I call the
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     meeting for the Southwest Virginia Committee to
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     order. Call the roll, please.
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                        The Honorable William Morefield.
          MR. CAMPOS:
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          DELEGATE MOREFIELD:
                                Here.
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                  Julie Hensley. (No response.)
     MR. CAMPOS:
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          Edward Blevins.
                            (No response.)
8
          DELEGATE MOREFIELD:
                                Gretchen Clark.
9
          MS. CLARK:
                       Here.
10
                        Amanda Cox.
          MR. CAMPOS:
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          MS. COX:
                    Here.
12
          MR. CAMPOS: Senator John Edwards.
                                                (No
13
          response
14
           Delegate Terry Kilgore.
15
           DELEGATE KILGORE:
                               Here.
16
17
           MR. CAMPOS:
                         Secretary Matthew Lohr
18
           SECRETARY LOHR:
                             Here.
19
20
                         William Pace
            MR. CAMPOS:
21
            MR. PACE:
                       Here.
22
                          Sandy Ratliff
            MR. CAMPOS:
23
            MS. RATLIFF:
                           Here.
24
                            Delegte William Wampler
              MR. CAMPOS:
25
         response.)
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- 1 Sarah Wilson.
- MS. WILSON: Here.
- MR. CAMPOS: Chair, we have a forum.
- 4 DELEGATE MOREFIELD: All right. Thank you. Now
- onto public comments. Do we have any members
- of the public who would like to make a comment?
- 7 (None.) Okay, no public comment.
- 8 We have approval of the May 18th minutes which
- ⁹ are published on the website. Do I have a
- motion to approve?
- UNIDENTIFIED: So moved.
- UNIDENTIFIED: Seconded.
- DELEGATE MOREFIELD: Okay. We have a motion to
- approve and a second. All in favor say aye.
- (Ayes.) Opposed? (None.)
- $_{17}$ Okay.

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- Now, onto the funding applications.
- 19 Ms. Sarah Williams.
- MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.
- Before we get started on the two proposals
- that were submitted I wanted to remind
- everybody a little bit about the background of
- this program.
- 25 A year ago at the September meeting this

Committee agreed to allocate \$2 million of the current balance at the time to conduct this special round. And my idea to do a special round is really based on the Committee doesn't necessarily always have the funding due to full-scale rounds with all the projects that we support. And I was trying to think of how we could pull out a set amount of money and focus it on a particular need in the region.

And this is one that had been on my mind for a long time. I had heard about projects that wanted to develop or were in the process of developing, but we never heard from those projects. And this is something that we have been able to fund for many years. There was nothing special about the program other than it was only for meat processing projects. The program requirements, everything else, was exactly the same.

So \$2 million was set aside in September 2022, and then in January 2023, we had to end the obligation, and that put \$500,000 back in this pod. So today we have \$2.5 million available for this fund. Any funds that aren't used, aren't allocated today will go back to

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the Southwest -- just general Southwest

Committee funds and will be used to act on the projects in January.

We had a really good response to our October 10th deadline. Vicki will share more of that with you later.

So that's just some background. We had a great deal of interest. I thought. You know, seven or so projects contacted me and had at least an initial discussion about the program. In the end we received two applications. think that's because once they got into the funding application and the RFP and they saw what we required -- our requirements are fairly strict with what they had to submit to us. know, we ask for an operating plan, a business plan, building design and cost estimates, current cost estimates, financial information, pro formas. All of that to help us evaluate these projects. And I think when they saw what they needed to provide some of them just did not have the capacity to be able to pull all that together.

And so just a reminder, the program can pay 50 percent of facility and equipment for a

publicly owned or nonprofit owned facility or 25 percent of equipment for a privately owned facility.

When we evaluated these projects we did reach out to some other agencies. In particular, VDACs Michelle. The AFID program there was extremely helpful. And we also spoke to Tony Banks who I think is here today with Virginia Affairs. We got his input on some of these. It was important to us that we had an idea of how other agencies were viewing these projects and just to make sure that we all kind of had the same opinion.

So with all that said, we received two applications. And the first one that we will discuss today is Number 4154. It is from Tazewell County IDA requesting \$979,000. This is for the cost -- 50 percent of the cost to construct a 7,500 square foot facility. The private operator that they lease to Blue Ridge Butchery. And that organization is responsible to provide all the equipment which is around \$500,000.

The facility will have two cut floors which will allow it to process a variety of

species. Floor Cut A is dedicated exclusively to beef and will process five days a week. Cut Floor B will do pork, lamb and chicken each on separate days. And while that design can't receive the formal approval from USDA until it is operational, they did consult with USDA inspectors on the design and have confidence that this is do-able.

So matching funds 50 percent of the cost to develop the facility will be committed by Tazewell County, and they will get those funds from a variety of sources including the forgivable loan from VCEDA. They will be seeking loan support from the Small Business Finance Authority. And they will also pursue AFID funding. And that is, you know, in discussions with the program for those funds.

The application identified 10 local producers who have expressed interest in using the facility. That number is based on the number that had directly indicated that they will use the facility, although, the regional demand is much higher. So we expect that number will be much higher, though number of producers will only be limited by just the

operational capacity of that facility.

So again, Blue Ridge Butchery will lease the facility from Tazewell County for 15 years. They will pay monthly rental payments totaling \$67,200 the first year. And then the rate will increase by two percent each year after that.

The tenant will be responsible for all maintenance, taxes, insurances, operating expenses, tenant improvements, et cetera. And the performance agreement also requires Blue Ridge Butchery to employee 10 new full-time equivalent employees within 18 months of operation. These are pretty substantial requirements that the County has placed on the operator. But I think that also speaks to the County's commitment to the success of this project.

Again, Blue Ridge Butchery will need about \$500,000 for equipment. But an additional \$168,000 approximately in working capital will be needed for the first year. So again, we did involve Virginia Affairs and VDACS' AFID staff -- as well as our very own Stephen Versen who knows probably more than anyone about AFID -- in our review. And, you know,

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personally, everyone agreed this was a strong project.

The Blue Ridge Butchery, the principal and the other staff there, they do have experience with processing and with marketing local foods. They understand the work in this industry. They understand the challenges.

The concern, the single concern that we had is that when we looked at the financial information it did seem like operating capital during that first year would be a bit of an There are months where there's a pretty significant deficit. And then there are months where it's pretty close to breaking even. lot of that has to do -- you know, the first month, for example, there's a big insurance payment due. And just things that are part of starting a business. So we have talked to them about that. And we are continuing to work with them to help make sure we have identified all other sources of funding that could help. Whether it's with working capital or if we can help Blue Ridge Butchery with the costs of their equipment.

They were planning to seek a loan for all

1 of this. Our program can actually support 2 25 percent of the cost of his equipment subject 3 to a performance agreement. And so we were 4 working with the County to submit an 5 application for our deadline this week. It did not get submitted for a variety of reasons. 6 We 7 were asked if -- they would like the 8 opportunity to submit that funding. So we may 9 discuss that a little bit later. 10 But overall, we thought this was a strong 11 project. We think the business plan is strong. 12 We think the public-private partnership is 13 strong. And we were excited about this one. 14 The staff recommendation is, staff 15 recommends award of \$979,000 contingent on 16 achieving full project financing. 17 DELEGATE MOREFIELD: Okay. And I will say 18 that the lady that handles the applications, 19 they missed the deadline because she was having 20 a baby. 21 All right. Okay. Do we have any questions 22 from the Committee? 23 SECRETARY LOHR: I have a question.

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Yes, sir.

So is there any private

DELEGATE MOREFIELD:

SECRETARY LOHR:

in this project at all? Or is it all pretty much grant funding they're looking at right now?

MS. WILLIAMS: So the facility will be grant and loan money. Tazewell as well will have some loans. The money for the equipment would be private equity because he's providing it, you know. Unless we're able to help a little bit with the cost of that equipment and just kind of reduce the amount of the loan he has to have. And we have -- the group is here if there are questions.

SECRETARY LOHR: The other question I have is more of a general comment. How common is it in these projects to have a facility owned by the County and leasing out to individuals? Is that normally how it's done? Or is that kind of a rare occurrence?

MS. WILLIAMS: Well, we don't have a committee in Southwest so I am not the expert on this. I would say it's probably not that common. But it seems like it's necessary in our region to get these projects moving along; that they have to have that backing.

MSECRETARY LOHR: Thank you.

SECRETARY MERRICK: I'm not a member of this committee, Mr. Chairman, but may I ask a question?

DELEGATE MOREFIELD: Yes, ma'am.

S ECRETARY MERRICK: I think Secretary Lohr's question is very good. I had a question in our last Committee meeting that was actually an item to follow-up with our acting director which is, I think it's very worthwhile for us to have a comparative analysis of how this is done in the localities and just data and information that will help inform our decisions about why the investments. And so I would encourage the Commission to do this sort of comparative analysis.

I also wondered about the gas gate and the infrastructure. How much is paid by the localities and if those -- that sort of information I believe would help this Commission become better informed to make wise decisions.

MS. WILLIAMS: I do want to add to that, that a private entity is not allowed to apply to us directly. They must come through an eligible applicant which is a locality, a

governmental unit or a nonprofit. So even if they're not owning the facility, they're almost certainly going to have to be an applicant because the private ones can't access funds otherwise.

SECRETARY MERRICK: But it is good to know also how -- what is the variety of capital stacks for localities in these types of projects. I'd just like to know.

DELEGATE MOREFIELD: Madame Secretary, thank you.

If it's okay with the Committee I think we have representatives from Blue Ridge and Tazewell County. And maybe you can better explain the challenges that we're faced with in our area as far as access to the processing facilities.

TIM DANIELSON: My name is Tim Danielson.

I'm an economic development director for

Tazewell County. My background, I was in

commercial real estate for 15 years in Chicago.

I also represented -- I was involved with

the -- they were also a site selection company

so we did national site selection for

Caterpillar. Robert Bosh was a client of ours.

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I actually have been in favor of -- and we have a shell building that we're also probably going to be the owner of this shell building and lease it to the tenant with an agreed purchase at the end of the term. And I prefer that approach because if it's my land, my property, I still control the property. So if the business, say, in five years hits a difficult situation that land returns back to me.

So we took a look at that risk for this particular project, and we believe given the demand in our area for this type of business and the fact that it took us a while to find a person who was going to be the owner and operator of this business -- that's the biggest challenge is finding somebody who's going to be the leader. Logan has had many years of experience with this, and a project that we had been kicking around for quite some time. We were just never able to put all the pieces together until Logan approached us.

And then we learned of this program. But in terms of government entities owning property and basically being a landlord, that's actually

fairly common. It happens a lot. Especially, I would say in the more aggressive southern states when it comes to attracting business. If you're in the Chicago area you'll never see that, typically.

But definitely, in the south there's lots of instances where I can give you where the government is really the owner of the facility. They lease it long term, and then they have a buy-out provision of sale at the end of the term.

So anyway, that's an answer. That hopefully answers that question. If you have any others.

And then I can introduce you to Logan. He is actually going to be the owner operator of the facility.

Logan?

LOGAN MORRISON: I just wanted to say that I greatly appreciate the opportunity because this project was kind of at a dead end about a year ago because the funding and everything I could do as far as raising money and everything was pretty stagnant. People wanted a rate of return that there's no way that this project

could have provided for a private investor.

And so Tim was -- actually, we kind of ran into each other. I don't want to say haphazardly, but it felt like that at points.

So I just want to say I appreciate this realization, and hopefully we can get this project up and running. It's something that I've been pursuing for quite a few years, and I've also been running a farm for quite a few years. I did grow up on a farm so it's just -- but I felt like if I couldn't make it financially why would anybody do this. And this would provide a great diversity for the farms in our area.

But if anybody's got any questions I'm more than happy to answer them.

DELEGATE MOREFIELD: I don't have a question but would you explain to the Committee the challenges that local farmers have in accessing, currently having access to meat processing?

LOGAN: Yes. So I can't speak for everybody, but I can speak for myself. We started out farming cattle and sheep. And the market, like any other market, is so up and

down. And when your margins are very, very low those downs are -- hit really hard. And so that's where I took the opportunity to start selling halves and wholes of animals at farmers markets to individuals and things like that. And that, essentially, plateaued my income on So today the market, the commercial my farm. market of cattle and livestock in general are bringing very good -- I won't say very good, but where they should be as income for farmers. But this is not going to last very long. going to last maybe -- we'll be lucky if it lasts for six months. And that's how fast it turns over. And so in those other six months out of season and everything else -- because usually farmers only have about one income which is usually in the fall. Some spread it out longer. Usually, it's a big sale in the fall, and you have to make that income year round, where there's an income right across the road from them when they can take an animal and sell it. So what I was running into is that my income was selling meat into the market and the farm made sense. You know, money wise, in practicality it was worth my labor. It was

worth my time. It was worth my effort.

But what is happening is that being able to find a butcher is so difficult right now. And it's -- they're older. The average age of a butcher in Virginia is around 65 which is retirement age. I'm sure they're going to want to retire if they haven't already. Also too the other answer is for them to go out of business because they do not and have not set up the means for somebody to come up and learn the trade and go on. And that's where we want to fill that gap also with our project. I know I won't be around forever, but I want to see this as long as I'm around if not more and then some.

But the other thing is too, is that where I'm located which is in Southwest Virginia, I've got one option which is about two years booked up right now at this point. Or I travel two and a half hours down to North Carolina. That's two and a half hours there. That's essentially Virginia tax dollars going down to North Carolina that I want to see stay local. Because every time a sale is made in Virginia, whether it be business, whether it be a cattle

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sale or whether it just be transferring neighbor to neighbor, that money stays in Virginia. But when it goes out of state that's when I start to see a really big kind of issue. Not to mention that hurts my bottom line having to fill up the diesel truck at the cost it is now to travel two and a half hours. And I have to do it twice. It's not just once to drop the animal off, but go and pick the animal up. That's kind of the challenges we face.

DELEGATE MOREFIELD: I believe Ms. Clark has a question.

I just want to thank you for MS. CLARK: putting this project together because my family has cattle, and sometimes we have to wait six months just for a date. And at that point, you know, the steer is not ready. We want to process that animal when it's ready. And so, you know, I can foresee us driving from Southside Virginia out to your location just to be able to, you know, make the business work. So I appreciate you putting this together.

Thank you. It really does hit LOGAN: close, you know, as far as -- you know, I've grown up in Southwest Virginia. I didn't grow

up with cattle but cattle's everywhere. It's cattle everywhere. So it would be a shame to see all that go out just because we didn't provide the service.

TIM DANIELSON: This is Mr. John Blankenship. He's our extension representative.

MR. BLANKENSHIP: And just to give you a little background. In 2012, which has been about 11 years ago, we put together a needs assessment of what type of ag needs we need in Tazewell County. And every time we've done this since then, meat processing has come to the top of the list. It's our biggest need. Because as mentioned before, we have producers that are having wait times of over a year. Well, these animals, you know, you can't wait a year when you have finished beef. And also having to travel so far to the facilities.

So we've been working on this project for quite some time. And during the pandemic we realized just how important it was to have an opportunity to locally process the products that we're producing in the town. And the County developed a food safety committee that I

1 chair. And we have kind of ramped up our emphasis 2 on trying to come up with opportunities to process 3 beef, poultry, lamb, goat, whatever we have that 4 we produce in Tazewell County. And there's just 5 an incredible need out there. And we got the 6 Center for Economic Development at Virginia Tech 7 involved with a regional program that looked 8 throughout the coal fields area on needs for 9 agriculture. And then the meat processing there 10 was also one of the top three items that was 11 expressed. 12 DELEGATE MOREFIELD: Any further questions 13 from the Committee? 14 MR. PACE: Mr. Chairman, I have a motion at 15 the proper time. 16 DELEGATE MOREFIELD: Okay. 17 MR. PACE: Mr. Chairman, I move that we grant this 18 \$979,000 award contingent on achieving full 19 project funding for Project 4154. 20 DELEGATE MOREFIELD: Okay. We have a motion 21 to accept the staff recommendation. 22 UNIDENTIFIED: Second. 23 DELEGATE MOREFIELD: We have a second. All in 24

favor, say aye. (Ayes.) The motion carried.

I'll note an interesting note. I just got a text message from a local cattle farmer. They had 330 head of cattle, and they were saying that it takes 6 to 12 months just to scale the cattle for processing.

MS. COX: Mr. Chairman, I just want to thank staff for working through this process. And those of us that don't have cattle, you know, are learning a lot. And I know there's lots of nuances. And it sounds like you've been a partner in (inaudible) so thanks for working through all of this.

MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

I think some of the comments here today really show why when I picked to do this special group is the topics that came up.

Because you do hear it all the time. In any type ag related meeting this is a huge need.

MR. VERSEN: I just want to share in that and commend the staff and the Commission that has helped this project. We brought projects that are incredibly difficult. One created for meat processing plant in Virginia in the past 25 years. What is needed is really strong

1 support from the local government and the state, and 2 most importantly entrepreneurs with the skills and interest to do this. And it's very rare that it all 3 comes together like this. We're very excited and we 4 5 will commit to work very closely with our partners at USDA, Virginia Affairs, Small Business Finance 6 7 Authority. Anyone we can to help finance this. So I do believe we need to 8 DELEGATE MOREFIELD: 9 -- I'll entertain the motion to extend the approval 10 of -- to extend the deadline for the additional 11 funding for equipment and operational support that 12 the County missed because the lady administering the 13 program had a baby. 14 UNIDENTIFIED: So moved. 15 UNIDENTIFIED: Second. 16 DELEGATE MOREFIELD: And we have a motion to 17 approve and second. All in favor say aye. 18 19 (Ayes.) All opposed. (None.) Okay. 20 MS. WILLIAMS: And that application will be 21 submitted shortly and will be heard at the January 22 meeting with the other applications that came in 23 October 10th.

Okay. Moving onto the second project. It

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is Number 4153. It is the Blue Ridge Plateau Initiative requesting \$2.5 million for the Blue Ridge Plateau Meat Processing Facility.

Again, funds are requested to support 50 percent of the estimated \$5 million cost to develop a new USDA meat processing facility in Carroll County. Commission support will be used for land prep, building design, construction, holding pens, and slaughter and processing equipment. The Carroll County EDA will provide a site for the facility.

So this is a project that I know you all have heard from before. It's pretty familiar to this Committee. Just, you know, the background is in 2010 we actually provided a grant which was matched by ARC to support a feasibility study and initial business plan for the project. So we've been involved from the very beginning with this project.

In 2019 we approved a \$500,000 grant really just as challenge money. We were the first money in, and we wanted to show other funders that money was committed. And we really want to try to help push other people to commit to the project and unfortunately, you

know, that didn't happen. Covid years and just a variety of things. Finally in January 2023 we re-obligated that grant. The balance was added to the balance for this special round, and we invited them to submit a new application.

The project's design has changed quite a bit over the years. Initially, it was going to be owned by the non-profit and leased to a for-profit operator. The current structure is for the non-profit to own it, and it will be managed by I think it's a seven-member board and will have a general manager, certified butcher and initial staff of two line workers and one office support.

So at the time of the June 1st deadline the site had not been identified, although, we learned through our review process that the County has acquired a site. So that is very promising news and good progress for this project. Unfortunately, it looks like it still may be a little bit early for us to commit a significant amount of funding. The cost estimates provided with the application were from I think 2011 for construction of facility.

Equipment was from 2018. And there was a note that the amounts in the budget were modified amounts.

They have consulted with experts to kind of see what the current costs would be. But we didn't have any documentation of who those experts were, how they made their calculations. And we all know that construction costs, equipment costs, everything has skyrocketed recently, and so we really didn't feel like we had a good idea of what the actual development costs of this project is.

Additionally, there was a note that said the final design of the facility itself and then of course the associated construction costs and all that could not be determined until a site was selected. So the site has just been selected so now would be the time to move forward with final design on that site and to really determine what the actual costs to develop that site will be.

So with that in mind we felt it was premature for the Commission to commit a significant amount of money to this project.

They are pursuing some planning grant money. I

believe they mentioned planning grants from USDA's Local Food Promotion Program. And they plan to apply for an AFID planning grant which to me shows this project is really still in the planning phase. I think we ought to, you know, continue to monitor this one to be a resource as much as we can to help them continue to develop it. The fact there is a site is very promising. And I think, you know, as they move through that design process they should certainly keep us connected to it because at some point it may be appropriate for them to come back to us.

Again, these types of projects under our current ag business guidelines -- and of course those could change -- do allow, they can come in at any of the Southwest application deadlines for this. We just need to see that it's a little further along, that there are actual construction matching funds committed to the project. Or, you know, even if that is a loan that there's at least some documentation that those loan funds, you know, pre-approval or whatever. We just felt like we still needed a lot of additional information.

1 So for this one staff recommends no award 2 at this time. DELEGATE MOREFIELD: Okay. Any questions? 3 Ouestion for Ms. Williams. In your MR. PACE: 4 discussions with the County and 5 6 Blue Ridge Plateau Initiative, was there any --7 did they give you any timetable of when they 8 may give a final design? 9 MS. WILLIAMS: Well, they did not. 10 that was the block that they did not have that 11 the site selected. There were a couple of 12 properties they were looking at one would need 13 to purchased. And it was very expensive, but 14 it was almost ideally suited. I believe that 15 the property that was purchased, you know, it's 16 a green field site. So they will need to go 17 back and do design. I imagine, you know, the 18 funding to do that is maybe the next issue. 19 But because the site has been selected there's 20 no reason that they shouldn't be able to move 21 pretty quickly to get the design done. 22 Mr. Chairman. UNIDENTIFIED: 23 DELEGATE MOREFIELD: Yes, sir. 24 UNIDENTIFIED: Sara, you said in the 25 beginning that \$2 million was set aside for

1 this special fund for beef processing. And then I 2 thought you said that money would revert back after 3 a certain deadline. Will that money still be 4 eligible for this project in six months when they 5 come back? 6 MS. WILLIAMS: Well, it would go back to just 7 the general Southwest Committee Budget. We received 8 18 applications. A really good response to our 9 October 10th deadline. And so whatever balance we 10 don't use today will be in the pod for money for 11 those projects. And so really it would just be 12 what's left after that. And we don't know. Again --13 or what money was budgeted for Southwest or for the 14 ag business that is still under development. So I 15 believe there will be a place. I just, right now 16 it's hard to say where that place is or how much 17 funding would be available. 18 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you. 19 DELEGATE MOREFIELD: Okay. Do we have any 20 further questions? (None.) 21 No questions? Yes, sir. 22 MR. PACE: Mr. Chair, I have a motion. 23 DELEGATE MOREFIELD: Okay. 24

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MR. PACE:

Move to table.

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    DELEGATE MOREFIELD: Okay. We have a motion to
            And I think with that motion they
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    will -- if we approve that motion they always
    have the ability to come back and reapply.
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         So we have a motion to table.
         And a second?
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         UNIDENTIFIED: Second.
         DELEGATE MOREFIELD: All in favor say aye.
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         (Ayes.) All opposed. (None.)
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         Okay.
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         So now onto extensions and modifications.
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         MS. WILLIAMS: Well, we have several
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     projects that need extensions and modifications.
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     Some of these will be quite familiar to some of you
     on the Committee. A lot of these are construction
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     projects with a variety of funders. Especially,
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     federal funding which almost always slows down the
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     project a little bit.
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          The first one is Number 3198. It's Friends of
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     Southwest Virginia Building Appalachian Spring,
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     Growing the Economy of Southwest Virginia.
                                                  So
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     approved in 2016 for 500,000. There's a $206,053
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     balance which is the portion of the grant that was
24
     supporting
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development Haysi. It was originally
Riverwalk. It's been modified quite a bit.
But Haysi was impacted with a lot of flooding
years ago so they had to completely redesign
the project with additional flood requirements.
So the project as it is now is more for

So the project as it is now is more for like sidewalks, curbs, sliding landscaping.

Basically to increase access from the town, the downtown section, down to the river. And they're closing in on completion.

They have requested a nine-month extension. And so staff is recommending approval of the final extension through June 30, 2024.

DELEGATE MOREFIELD: If it's okay with the Committee when we adopt the recommendations we'll do these in a block.

MS. WILLIAMS: Next we have 3191, Floyd County EDA; Floyd Regional Commerce Center Phase II Development approved for \$420,696 in September 2017. There's a \$406,273 balance. They've requested a one-year extension.

This grant will be used for construction of utilities to serve the additional building pads that are being developed at Commerce Park.

Phase II also includes construction of an access road that's being paid for with ARC access road funding.

Since the grant's approval the cost of this project has increased substantially. When they put it out to bid early 2023 the lowest bid was more than a million dollars over budget so they have submitted an application to USDA to help close that funding gap. And given all that, we really should expect probably an additional extension next year for this project. They are working to raise the money. They want to see it move forward. They're just kind of in a holding pattern while they raise additional money. So staff recommends approval of a one-year extension through September 30, 2024.

Next is 3558 also from Floyd County EDA for the Floyd Light Industrial Building and Growth Center Campus. It was approved for \$497,475 in 2019, and it has a \$28,834 balance.

This supported the development of a building for light industrial users. The project was exceptionally well matched. It had over \$4.8 million of additional funding. We

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were a pretty small player in this one compared to all the other sources.

The holdup right now is just, they are working with their contractor to close out the project and pay the retainage. They want to make sure everything is as perfect as it can be before they release that retainage. So they just need some additional time to do that and process the final payment.

The US EDA approved an extension to the end of January, and we thought the Commission grant should align to that same date. So we are recommending approval of a final extension through January 31, 2024.

Next we have 3464, Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority, Coalfield Regional Tourism Destination Project approved for \$483,220 in 2018. There's a \$401,598 balance.

This grant supports the design and site development for the Three Rivers Destination

Center which will serve as a visitor center for the Clinch River State Park. The design is complete. They finally have all their contracts complete with the HCD. There was a delay. I think they had to do a back-study and

some other stuff before that contract could be executed.

Matching funds were \$1.5 million POWER grant, \$209 DHCD and local support. The project as it was originally budgeted is fully funded. Although, the most recent estimates show that there could be funding deficit. Just because costs continue to rise. But they have a plan to address that. They would do a phase construction. That would allow them to raise money. But also if they have to cut out some of the landscaping and things at the end of the project they're willing to do that. Their goal is to have an open functioning building, and they do have funding to accomplish that.

This one is another one, you know, we approve extensions one year at a time, and so we will likely see this one again next year. Staff recommends approval of a one-year extension through September 30, 2024.

Okay. 3564. Southwest Regional
Recreation Authority Creating a Sportsman's
Economy for Southwest Virginia; approved for
\$125,000 in October 2019. There's an \$80,676
balance. This is request for a final

extension. There's also a bit of a modification included in this too.

So the grant was approved four years ago to assist with the development of a rifle/pistol complex which would allow Spearhead to diversify recreation opportunities to attract more visitors from just those interested in ATV and to keep the ones that are here, here longer by offering them more to do.

The site that this range was located on, the property was donated. And the previous owner as a condition of that gift required that a historic cabin be restored. And so the application that was submitted to us, the scope of work that we approved called for that building to be renovated, restored and it would house offices, restrooms, those sorts of things.

When we did a site visit we discovered that that cabin had actually been dismantled and they were building a pole barn in its place which we new nothing about. And they could share some information that it was cheaper to build the pole barn than it was to reconstruct the cabin. And so the compromise we finally

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reached was at the time the pole barn was complete and it housed the deliverables we expected in that facility: Offices, restrooms that type of thing, that we would reimburse 50 percent of that cost. And because we did that it actually left a pretty significant balance in the grant.

Spearhead, as many as you know, is under new leadership these days. And their new director, one of the first things he set out that he wants to accomplish is to fulfill the promise made to the landowner who donated the property that the historic cabin will be restored. And so he's asked to use the balance of the grant to restore that cabin as was promised. The estimated cost -- he provided some estimates -- is around \$35,000 and will house a first-aid station. Then any other funds would be used to do a good survey of the property, make sure all the boundaries are correct and marked and in place which I think we all understand is important for a shooting range.

So staff recommends approval of a nine-month extension through July 31, 2024.

Okav. Next we have 3557. Tazewell County IDA Southwest Virginia Corporation. It was approved for \$225,00 in October 2019. There's a \$161,383 balance. The grant was approved to assist with the cost of constructing two additions totaling 2,500 square feet to be added to the building. It would house space suitable for live performances. They mentioned at the time a partnership with Barter Theater and others to bring live performances to the building. Tazewell County is the grantee because the primary beneficiary is a nonprofit that was formed around the time of the grant's approval. However, the building is owned by for profit entity so it's a little confusing, but that's why the County is involved in it.

Since the grant's approval only a small amount of funding has been released. These expenses tend to be for demolition, masonry work, a variety of things. The information we received with this extension also spoke about some property line disputes with neighbors, and it seems like that property has had to be resurveyed, maybe redone a couple of times. There are some expenses associated with having

to mitigate the damage that was done on what they learned was somebody else's property.

There is no general contractor. The grantee is serving as their own general contractor. And most of the work has been done by a single person, but there's no formal contract with him. We don't have the scope of work. We don't have a current cost estimate. We don't have a lot of things that tell us that this project is on track for completion. We understand the grantee has said she can save money by doing it herself. But we're four years in, and so we just really need to see some progress.

So we are -- as a condition of the extension we would like to see the project competitively bid. We would like to see a general contractor selected. We need to know the project cost in today's dollars, and is there money to actually accomplish this.

So staff recommends approval of a one-year extension through October 31, 2024 contingent upon the project solicitation and selection of a contractor through a competitive process suitable to the project. The grant will be

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frozen until the contingency has been met.

DELEGATE MOREFIELD: Any questions from the Committee on --

MR. PACE: We have one more.

MS. WILLIAMS: And finally, we have 3465; Virginia Highlands Community College Educational Foundation, Advanced Technology and Workforce Development Center. It was approved for \$1,000,000 in September 2018. The full balance remains. There is request for a one-year extension.

This grant was awarded through the Special Projects Committee back when we still had that. That's why it's now in this Committee and why you're hearing about it.

So a decision was made -- it's a very expensive project. \$8.5 million total cost. A couple years ago the college determined that with rising steel prices it was better to go ahead and purchase at least the steel and get that structure up while they raised additional money. They just really wanted to lock in those prices before they skyrocketed like we know that they have. But that was a little bit of a concern to us last year, that we wanted to

know that all the funding was in place before we released our money. And we have had a condition placed on the grant at the time of that extension that our funds would be used last dollar after all other funds were in place and had been spent. So we would pay at the very end.

They have been very active with their fund raising this year and have some really good news to report. They need \$3.5 million to complete the project, and they have raised \$3 million of that. They're within, you know, a half a million dollars of their goal. They're very close. So they've asked if we would reconsider that continency. And so we have come up with something of a compromise that still protects our money, but maybe gives them a little more flexibility with when they can spend our money.

And so staff recommends a one-year extension through September 30, 2024 conditioned upon the grant director's approval to release funds to support the final phase of construction. This approval may be requested once the project is under contract and has

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documented that all funds necessary to complete the project are available to use concurrently with the TRRC grant.

DELEGATE KILGORE: I'm going to vote for all of these modifications and extensions, but I do note that, I mean, looking at the list it's 8 years, 7 years, 5 years, 6 years, 5 years, 5 years and 6 years. I mean, I'm glad they're not building a house because it would be -- it takes too long to do this. But I mean, you know, all these individuals came to us at the time and said, hey, we're ready to go. We're ready to do this and ready to do that. And, you know, here we are 8, 7, 5, 6, 6, years down the road and our money is tied up. But I'm glad to know the money hasn't gone out. But we just need to really -- and Sara, you're doing a good job. We need to really impress on them that this is it. We can't go much further than this. I mean, because other projects may come along that we would like to fund, and we're tied up with these projects that obviously haven't gone as well as they should have gone. And I know that COVID and all that set in. But I am going to vote, but I just think we ought to let them

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know maybe that, hey, this is it.

MS. WILLIAMS: We do close a lot of the We want to see that the project is actually active. And some of these, especially when you get some of the federal money involved, it takes a long time to get those properties under contract. There's a lot of requirements, you know. So some of those delays are just we came in early, and we moved faster than a lot of our funding partners. then some are just, you know, other things.

SECRETARY MERRICK: Mr. Chairman, I was just going to say, as long as I've been on the Commission, Delegate Kilgore has been talking about this issue. And I don't know if there's a way to tighten timelines or set some parameters. It seems like we really haven't had any. And we file extension after extension to be as helpful a parter as we can, as Sara said. But they're tying up dollars that could be maybe possibly better served in the here and now. So I don't know if there's something that we can look at far as timelines go.

DELEGATE KILGORE: We mean it this time.

DELEGATE MOREFIELD: I agree with you.

course many of these projects applied right before the pandemic occurred. But now we're faced with an economic issue with inflation. So I know that project costs in some cases increase by 25, 35 percent. But I agree with you. I think we should certainly look at that. I know that Sara and staff have done an incredible job to try to provide as much flexibility as they can.

MS. WILSON: Mr. Chair, kind of going back to what Secretary Merrick said. If we could have timelines or scroll for information on what's the usual timeframe that we're extending these grants, and then we have something we can fall back on. You know, typically, this is it, and we need to close it so that money could be used.

MS. COX: Seven years is well before Covid so we just need to look at guidelines maybe. I don't know.

DELEGATE KILGORE: I'll make a motion to, in a block, to approve all extensions and modifications as delivered by Sara with her requirements.

DELEGATE MOREFIELD: Okay. We have a motion.

1 Do we have a second? 2 UNIDENTIFIED: Second. 3 DELEGATE MOREFIELD: Second. All in favor 4 say aye. (Ayes.) All opposed. (None.) 5 Okay. We can move onto other business. 6 MR. Versen. 7 MR. VERSEN: Ms. Humphreys was going to 8 provide an update on (inaudible) grants and all 9 the activity. 10 MS. HUMPHREYS: Right. First of all, I'll 11 talk about this latest deadline which was 12 October 10th before we came in. We received 18 applications for the next Southwest Virginia 13 14 Program Economic Development round totaling 15 about 4\$.14 million. Three of those are agri-16 business, two business development, six sites 17 in infrastructure, seven tourism and two in the 18 "other category." 19 So additionally, in your stack of handouts 20 that you have there is a report of the active 21 grants that emanated from this Committee that 22 are currently in progress. And I'm not going 23 to take up much time because I know we're 24 bumping up against the next meeting. But we

want to keep you all informed about what we're

1 doing in the community and how much money we're 2 putting out there. And currently there are 49 3 projects in the Southwest Virginia area related 4 to economic development, and we have 17.1 5 million invested in that. 6 DELEGATE KILGORE: How much? 7 MS. HUMPHREYS: \$17.1. 8 That concludes my report. 9 DELEGATE MOREFIELD: Okay. So now 10 we have 11 (inaudible) grants. 12 All right. I believe that concludes the 13 business of the Committee. Do you have any 14 questions? (None.) 15 All right. I'll entertain a motion to 16 adjourn. 17 MR. PACE: So moved. 18 DELEGATE MOREFIELD: So moved. All in 19 favor say aye. (Ayes.) All right. Meeting 20 adjourned. 21 PROCEEDINGS CONCLUDED at 10:40 a.m. 22 23 24 25

1	CERTIFICATE OF THE COURT REPORTER
2	
3	I, Mary E. Donivan, Court Reporter and
4	Notary Public for the State of Virginia at Large, do
5	hereby certify that I was the Court Reporter who
6	took down and transcribed the proceedings of the
7	SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA COMMITTEE Meeting, when held on
8	Thursday, October 12, 2023 at 9:48 a.m. at
9	Blackstone Inn, 707 4th Street, Blackstone,
10	Virginia.
11	I further certify this is a true and
12	accurate transcript, to the best of my ability to
13	hear and understand the proceedings.
14	Given under my hand this 20th day of
15	October, 2023.
16	
17	
18	
19	Mary Elizabeth Donivan
20	
21	Virginia Notary Registration No. 270874
22	My commission expires May 31, 2024
23	May 31, 2024
24	
25	

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