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TOBACCO REGION REVITALIZATION COMMISSION

701 East Franklin Street, Suite 501
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Southside Economic Development Committee Meeting

Monday, January 6, 2020
12:00 o'clock p.m.

Homewood Suites by Hilton
700 East Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

1 APPEARANCES:

2 The Honorable Thomas C. Wright, Jr., Chairman

3 The Honorable Edward Owens, Vice Chairman

4 Ms. Gayle F. Barts

5 The Honorable Kathy J. Byron

6 Dr. Alexis I. Ehrhardt

7 The Honorable Daniel W. Marshall, III

8 Mr. Robert Mills, Jr.

9 The Honorable Frank M. Ruff

10 The Honorable William M. Stanley, Jr.

11

12 COMMISSION STAFF:

13 Mr. Evan Feinman, Executive Director

14 Mr. Andy Sorrell, Deputy Executive Director

15 Ms. Sarah K. Capps, Grants Program Administrator,

16 Southside Virginia

17 Ms. Michele Faircloth, Grants Assistant

18 Southside Virginia

19

20 COUNSEL FOR THE COMMISSION:

21 Ms. Elizabeth B. Myers, Assistant Attorney General

22 Richmond, Virginia 23219

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1 January 6, 2020

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DELEGATE WRIGHT: Good morning, everyone. I'm going to call the Southside Economic Development Committee meeting to order and ask Evan to call the roll.

6

MR. FEINMAN: Delegate Wright.

7

DELEGATE WRIGHT: Here.

8

MR. FEINMAN: Mr. Owens.

9

MR. OWENS: Here.

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MR. FEINMAN: Secretary Ball.

11

SECRETARY BALL: (No response).

12

MR. FEINMAN: Ms. Barts.

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MS. BARTS: Here.

14

MR. FEINMAN: Delegate Byron.

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DELEGATE BYRON: Here.

16

MR. FEINMAN: Delegate Edmunds.

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DELEGATE EDMUNDS: (No response).

18

MR. FEINMAN: Dr. Ehrhardt.

19

DR. EHRHARDT: Here.

20

MR. FEINMAN: Delegate Marshall.

21

DELEGATE MARSHALL: Here.

22

MR. FEINMAN: Mr. Mills.

23

MR. MILLS: Here.

24

MR. FEINMAN: Senator Ruff.

25

SENATOR RUFF: Here.

1 MR. FEINMAN: Mr. Shelton.

2 MR. SHELTON: (No response).

3 MR. FEINMAN: Senator Stanley.

4 SENATOR STANLEY: Here.

5 MR. FEINMAN: You have a quorum, Mr. Chairman.

6 DELEGATE WRIGHT: Thank you. We'll now ask for
7 the approval of the minutes from September 30th, 2019. Do I
8 have a motion?

9 MR. OWENS: So moved.

10 DELEGATE WRIGHT: I have a motion and a second to
11 approve the minutes. All in favor, say aye. (Ayes). Opposed?
12 (No response). The minutes are approved.

13 Now, we'll have Sarah Capps to tell us about some
14 projects.

15 MS. CAPPS: Yes, sir. Mr. Chairman and members of
16 the Committee. There are two tabled applications, and they
17 were initially heard at your September 30th meeting in South
18 Boston.

19 The first project on the list involves the Town of
20 Halifax. It is a \$179,000 request for the Halifax War Memorial
21 Heritage Tourism Site Enhancement Project, Request Number
22 3581. This is a request to support the improvement to the
23 approach corridors and access to the downtown cultural sites and
24 the commercial area in the Town of Halifax Courthouse Historic
25 District.

1 As far as the previous Staff recommendation,
2 historically Staff has limited nor is it our recommendation for
3 capital improvement investments for tourists and destinations
4 and has to demonstrate the ability to attract and measure visitor
5 spending of national and international destinations for visitors.
6 That level of tourism data was not available. So, Staff did not
7 recommend an award.

8 We did receive some additional information from the
9 Town of Halifax of questions raised by the Committee.
10 Specifically, there was confirmation that there was no U.S.A.
11 Main Street Grant Program for this type of project, which had
12 come up in the Committee meeting.

13 Based on the original application and subsequent
14 information we received, Staff's comments and recommendations
15 remain unchanged from our initial report. So, Staff recommends
16 no award.

17 The second request or application that was tabled was
18 for Nottoway County, and that's a \$50,000 request for the Harris
19 Memorial Armory Restoration Project, Request 3579. This was to
20 support 20-some percent of the original costs for a historic
21 Armory building, and they've identified it as an educational
22 center.

23 The application lacked any supporting assessment.
24 There were no financing and operational plans submitted and no
25 commitment from education providers. We also understand the

1 repair estimate was from 2001. We also noticed that the Armory
2 building primarily houses a large gymnasium with a small stage
3 and balcony and ancillary facilities, such as rest rooms. That
4 would suggest that the primary use would more likely be related
5 to a community center. And Staff recommends no award. The
6 applicant communicated to us there was no additional
7 information in the form of an update. So, the Staff
8 recommendation remains unchanged.

9 MR. WRIGHT: Thank you very much, Sarah.

10 At this time, we'll take any comments or any
11 questions from any Commission members. We'll do the Town of
12 Halifax first.

13 MR. OWENS: Mr. Chairman, more information has
14 come in. The Town Manager of the Town of Halifax is here.

15 DELEGATE WRIGHT: Would you please come to the
16 microphone and identify yourself.

17 MR. ESPY: My name is Carl Espy, I'm the Town
18 Manager of Halifax. I appreciate the opportunity to come back to
19 the Southside Economic Development Committee with some of
20 the questions that were posed, and we do appreciate that and
21 thoughtfulness that the Commission members had exhibited and
22 some of the questions that were asked as far as any other
23 funding sources, in addition to the Enhancement 21 money from
24 VDOT. There were actually two pools of VDOT funding for these
25 improvements, and they're rather site-specific, as well.

1 Particularly important is the Halifax County War Memorial and I
2 appreciate the fact that the Committee heard a little bit of
3 background about this from the War Memorial site and tying it in
4 specifically with the Halifax Courthouse.

5 These are two prominent and cultural historic sites
6 that are a part of our heritage.

7 So, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I
8 did have some written comments relating specifically to the
9 questions that were posed, and I think it's reflected in the
10 minutes, too. I appreciate that the Commission Staff answered
11 questions that were posed in the previous meetings.

12 On behalf of the Halifax, Virginia Town Council and
13 great appreciation to the Commission for the opportunity to
14 revisit the Halifax County War Memorial Tourism Site and
15 Enhancement Project application. And that request was
16 \$179,000. There was correspondence, as Ms. Capps said, and
17 that was with Tobacco Commission Staff immediately following at
18 Boston, that meeting on September 30th in the Town of South
19 Boston.

20 I could go over some of the points, but I think
21 Commission members are familiar with it, including Senator
22 Stanley, and ask that we look into other funding sources. What
23 has been invested in the overall downtown revitalization efforts
24 had commenced in 2002 with construction and acquisition of the
25 War Memorial site itself, which was a \$250,000 investment, and

1 that was done by the community and rather unprecedented to
2 have something like that, and that capped off an effort that's still
3 going on today. There's been some changes, and this is one of
4 the significant ones or phases of the project.

5 Lastly, and also, the challenge we have in looking at a
6 free and open site and tracking the visitation numbers, there
7 were some methodologies provided in the original application,
8 there were actually three, and those were furnished to Staff after
9 our meeting on September 30th. I'll go over those three items
10 very briefly.

11 The other funding sources that Senator Stanley asked
12 about is the Main Street U.S.A. Grant Program and Southside
13 Planning District Staff did discuss this with the Southside
14 Planning District, and they confirmed that the National Main
15 Street Program does not offer grants for capital improvements
16 and things of this nature, and that was confirmed by
17 conversations with the Department of Housing and Community
18 Development, and that was confirmed that this is not a program
19 that is available. Although the town and the county had received
20 community development block grants and accomplished some of
21 the improvements, the widening of sidewalks and streetlights in
22 2003, but was completed in 2008. I think there's generally a
23 whole cycle on Community Development Block Grant funding for
24 at least 15 years, but we're still a few years away from looking at
25 that as a potential funding source.

1 This is in contrast to one project, and we're grateful
2 that the Southside Economic Development Committee did fund,
3 and that was a bookmaking project, Southern Virginia Wild
4 Blueway Project, but there were a myriad of other funding
5 sources in that case. Twenty-nine percent of Tobacco funds that
6 were contributed to that project and various other sources. But
7 the request before the Commission today that's been tabled,
8 we're asking for only 27 percent of these costs.

9 This wasn't specifically asked, but just a quick
10 rundown. The estimated total investment made in the Halifax
11 Downtown Revitalization Project since 2003 and multiple phases
12 is estimated to be \$1.9 million for grants in construction and
13 planning. And these come from sources like Community
14 Development Block Grants, Department of Housing and
15 Community Development, and broadband improvements,
16 Telecommunications Planning Grant, Environmental Protection
17 Agency, VDOT Transportation, T21, along with the Department of
18 Historic Resources, cost shares, to make the downtown historic
19 district eligible for historic tax credits. There was also \$890,000
20 of grant funding provided by localities, and an estimate of about
21 \$2 million in private investment.

22 So I think these are important indicators of how a
23 project like this can generate a great deal of positive investment
24 here. We believe the economic return from this site would
25 actually be very positive to increase visitation and get people to

1 stay longer and spend more money as far as our cultural sites
2 and spend more money in our community. Thank you very
3 much. Happy to answer any questions.

4 DELEGATE WRIGHT: Are there any questions?

5 MR. FEINMAN: If I may, Mr. Chairman, we've been
6 very complimentary on the work that the town has done and
7 their revitalization, but we have two primary concerns with this
8 project.

9 One is directly related to the project itself, and the
10 other is related to precedent, either of which would be sufficient
11 to support the recommendation of no funding. The on-point
12 concern is simply that while the War Memorial may draw in
13 tourism, but I don't know if there's anyone anywhere in the world
14 that said to themselves, we ought to go travel to the Town of
15 Halifax. It's just not something that's going to increase tourism
16 to engage in the streetscape improvement.

17 The second issue, and one that is of similar
18 importance, we do this in the Town of Halifax. There are many,
19 many other towns that would like to do sidewalk improvements
20 and other improvements, and this is masonry and brickwork and
21 new concrete flooring. And if we do it for Halifax, it's going to be
22 awfully tough to say or explain why we're not doing it for
23 everybody, or South Boston or why we're doing it for this one or
24 that one or Big Stone or Kenbridge or Abingdon, all of these
25 places. This is not the sort of project the Commission has done

1 before, and we're not in a financial position where we can be
2 taking on these areas like this of responsibility.

3 While we wish the town well and excited to continue
4 to work with them on other tourism projects, like a boat ramp
5 that will give a place for somebody to pull in, but this project is
6 simply not a good fit for Commission funding, and that's why we
7 recommended no award.

8 DELEGATE WRIGHT: Any further comments or
9 questions? All right. Anybody in the audience wish to make a
10 comment?

11 MR. OWENS: I understand the Executive Director's
12 opinion and appreciate his comments. When we were here last,
13 there was a little group of questions that were asked and those
14 questions were addressed, so I'd make a motion to accept the
15 proposal for Halifax War Memorial Heritage Tourism Site
16 Enhancement Project for \$179,000.

17 SENATOR STANLEY: Second.

18 DELEGATE WRIGHT: We have a motion and a second
19 on the Halifax Site, Request Number 3581. Any debate by
20 Committee members? If not, I'll call for the question. All in
21 favor? (Ayes). Opposed? (Nos).

22 Would you call the roll.

23 MR. FEINMAN: Mr. Owens.

24 MR. OWENS: Yes.

25 MR. FEINMAN: Ms. Barts.

1 MS. BARTS: No.

2 MR. FEINMAN: Dr. Ehrhardt.

3 DR. EHRHARDT: No.

4 MR. FEINMAN: Delegate Marshall.

5 DELEGATE MARSHALL: No.

6 MR. FEINMAN: Senator Ruff.

7 SENATOR RUFF: No.

8 MR. FEINMAN: Senator Stanley.

9 SENATOR STANLEY: Yes.

10 MR. FEINMAN: Delegate Wright.

11 DELEGATE WRIGHT: No.

12 MR. FEINMAN: The nays have it, Mr. Chairman.

13 MR. ESPY: We do appreciate your consideration.

14 Thank you.

15 DELEGATE WRIGHT: The next one is the Town of
16 Nottoway or Nottoway County, 3579. Anyone here from
17 Nottoway that would like to speak to this matter? If not, any
18 comments, questions from the Committee? If not, ready for a
19 motion.

20 MR. FEINMAN: Mr. Chairman, I think you said you
21 were hoping to keep the project before you and in the absence of
22 a motion to table it for your next meeting, but procedurally I
23 think having been tabled for this meeting, if no action is taken, it
24 will die.

25 DELEGATE WRIGHT: That would be my wish, because

1 at the current time, I don't think it's the best thing to do. So, it'll
2 be tabled until a further date.

3 MR. FEINMAN: We need somebody to make a motion.

4 DELEGATE WRIGHT: Then we need a motion to table
5 this.

6 SENATOR RUFF: So moved.

7 MS. BARTS: Second.

8 DELEGATE WRIGHT: A motion has been made and
9 seconded. All in favor, say aye. (Ayes). Opposed? (Two nos).
10 The motion carries.

11 Sarah, we have some extensions.

12 MS. CAPPAS: We have some projects where requests
13 have been made. The first one under other business is Sussex
14 County, Grant Number 3125, a \$290,000 grant award from
15 January of 2016 to support Route 602 Sewer and Water Line
16 Extension. And the county is requesting a fifth year extension
17 through January of 2021. This was expanded to include some of
18 the clearing of some wetlands and storm water management.
19 The County ran into delays with approvals, and those approvals
20 came from DEQ. We received a letter requesting an extension
21 through July of 2020. And Staff recommends approval of a full
22 additional one-year extension to allow sufficient time for bidding
23 and construction contract work to be completed.

24 DELEGATE WRIGHT: Let's do that one and Prince
25 Edward together.

1 MS. CAPP: The next one on the list is from Prince
2 Edward County, 3127, for the Prince Edward County Industrial
3 Access Road, a Request for a Sixth Year Extension through
4 January 12 of 2022. A small grant of \$49,080. And there's two
5 other grants also supporting this, for a total of \$571,960.
6 Matching funds from our grant is to come from a VDOT Access
7 Road fund, and the county did apply for those funds in
8 September. And they're waiting for the Commonwealth
9 Transportation Board approval, which is expected in January.
10 The county has indicated that will need an additional 12 to 18
11 months to complete construction activities.

12 Staff recommends approval of an extension to January
13 12, 2022.

14 DELEGATE WRIGHT: We've heard about 3125 and
15 3127. If there are no objections from the Committee, we'll vote
16 on those two in a block. Are there any comments or questions?
17 If not, I'm ready for a motion.

18 MR. OWENS: I move we approve those two
19 extensions.

20 SENATOR RUFF: Second.

21 DELEGATE WRIGHT: We have a motion and a second
22 to approve the two extensions. Any further comment? All in
23 favor, say aye. (Ayes). Opposed, no? (No response). The
24 motion carries.

25 Sarah, would you proceed with 3038?

1 MS. CAPP: Yes. The third extension request is from
2 the Roanoke River Rails to Trails, Grant 3038, the Lawrenceville
3 Corridor Acquisition Project, and a request for a sixth year
4 extension through May 21, 2021. This is a \$285,000 grant
5 approved in May of 2015. There's a balance remaining of about
6 \$50,900 on the project account. Those funds were originally
7 allowed to complete trail construction and contractual expenses.
8 The Town of Lawrenceville is acting on behalf of the Roanoke
9 River Rails to Trails Group. The Town Manager communicated to
10 us a request for an extension and allow the grant funds to remain
11 available to be used as match for VDOT enhancement. The
12 application has been submitted in September and an award
13 decision is expected to be made in March.

14 The project was delayed because and a majority of
15 the funds were used for land acquisition from Norfolk, Southern,
16 and there were some extra requirements for surveys that took
17 longer than anticipated. The second delay came because when
18 applying for the VDOT Enhancement Grant in October of 2017
19 and the project apparently didn't get funded and then had to skip
20 a year and wait until 2019, but the application has been
21 submitted.

22 Staff recommends approval of a sixth year extension
23 to May 21, 2021, contingent on the September, 2019 application
24 to VDOT being approved for funding in 2020.

25 DELEGATE WRIGHT: Thank you, sir. You heard there

1 was a difference in that there was a contingency on the 2019
2 application to VDOT. Any questions or comments, on this
3 extension request? If not, I'm ready for a motion.

4 SENATOR RUFF: I move to extend it.

5 DELEGATE WRIGHT: We have a motion and a second
6 to extend Grant 3038. All those in favor, say aye. (Ayes).
7 Opposed? (No response). Motion carries.

8 MR. FEINMAN: Just for the record, Senator Ruff, is
9 that with or without the contingencies?

10 SENATOR RUFF: With.

11 DELEGATE WRIGHT: Then we accept the Staff
12 approval.

13 Any public comments? If not, then the meeting is
14 adjourned.

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17 **PROCEEDINGS CONCLUDED.**

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CERTIFICATE OF THE COURT REPORTER

I, Medford W. Howard, Registered Professional Reporter and Notary Public for the State of Virginia at Large, do hereby certify that I was the Court Reporter who took down and transcribed the proceedings of the **Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission, Southside Economic Development Committee Meeting**, when held on Monday, January 6, 2020, at 12:00 o'clock p.m., at the Homewood Suites by Hilton, 700 East Main Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

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

Given under my hand this 15th day of January, 2020.

Medford W. Howard
CCR