



GREENE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Special Meeting

Tuesday, June 4, 2019, @ 7:00 p.m., 40 Celt Road, Stanardsville, VA

CALL TO ORDER

- A special meeting of the Economic Development Authority Board of Directors was held at Greene County Administration Building at 40 Celt Road, Stanardsville, Virginia on June 4, 2019. Call to order at 7:00 p.m., with Mr. Michael Payne, Chairman, presiding.

RECORD OF ATTENDANCE

- **Members in Attendance:** Gretchen Scheuermann, Don Pamerter, Matt Dillon, James Tsikerdanos, Michael Payne, Julia Roberts, Whitt Ledford

INTRODUCTION

- Ms. Roberts, Vice-chairman, provided a brief overview of the EDA's creation, how the Tourism Council came into effect, and how the TOT (transient occupancy tax) came into effect.
- Ms. Roberts stated the following:
 - The mission of the Greene County Economic Development Authority (EDA) strives to promote economic development in Greene County by creating an enabling environment for commerce for the economic vibrancy, health, safety, welfare and prosperity of the community and its citizens.
 - The creation of the Tourism Council took place in 2006 in an effort to promote Greene County as a travel destination and to raise the tourism economic impact, EDA established the Tourism Council. In 2009, by recommendation of the Tourism Council, the EDA requested that the county raise the TOT from 2% to 5% to help promote tourism related activities. The state code of Virginia, §58.1-3819, allows for 2% of that 5% to be used by the county and the remaining 3% will be spent directly for tourism.
- Mr. Payne reminded the public that if they wish to speak, they should sign the log sheets, that public comments can be made after the presentation, that comments need to be constrained to 3 minutes. He stated that following the public comments, Mr. Yost will be invited to address any particular items and then the EDA will have open deliberation.

PRESENTATION BY TOURISM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE ALAN YOST

- Mr. Yost presented a power point on behalf of the Tourism Council. Please see attached. The following is a summary of the presentation:
 - Why is Tourism Important – Greene’s Economic Strategic Plan which has been approved by the EDA, the BOS, and is endorsed within the comprehensive plan includes a focus on retail, industry & tourism which are essential for the economy in Greene; tourism has a low impact on infrastructure; the added activities/restaurants adds to the quality of life for resident; protects our mountain/rural heritage and life; increases jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities; decreases all residents’ tax burden; over the last 5 years, lodging alone brought in \$1.1 million; 1% sales tax and 2% of TOT (totaling 3%) goes into the general fund while 3% is dedicated by State ordinance to be spent on Tourism; Tourism brings new money into the economy: in 2017, Virginia Tourism estimated that Greene Co brought in \$19 million dollars into Greene’s economy from restaurants, gas stations, shopping & hotels; current fiscal year had \$5.6 million came solely from lodging.
 - Lodging Gross Receipts – graph of new money into the economy over the past 12 years; increase in lodging gross receipts from ~\$500,000 in FY2007 to \$5.6 million in FY2019
 - Shenandoah National Park – \$87 million dollars brought into the region; an envy of bordering counties that do not have direct access to the park
 - State Code - §58.1-3819. Transient occupancy tax.
 - “...transient occupancy tax not to exceed five percent, and any excess over two percent shall be designated and spent solely for tourism and travel, marketing of tourism or initiatives that, as determined after consultation with the local tourism industry organizations, including representatives of lodging properties located in the county, attract travelers to the locality, increase occupancy at lodging properties, and generate tourism revenues in the locality.”
 - The key is that 3% has to go to Tourism and an organization has to be identified to consult the county on how that money should be spent; Greene County determined that the Tourism Council will be the entity; according to state code, the council is made up of members who are all directly engaged in Tourism; important to note the John Silke is on

the Tourism Council and has recused himself from all deliberations and votes regarding the purchase of the property

- Limitations of Current Location
 - current limited space prevents:
 - high lighting of local community (currently only one display case that rotates every quarter)
 - additional Open Houses, special events, book signings, poetry readings
 - selling local goods (wines, art, property, etc.) & marketing items (shirts, hats)
 - current space is leased; negotiated a month to month with potential for one more 5-year lease; currently the only other available space in Ruckersville would be strip mall
 - location blends in with the surrounding area; tourists miss the building or the sign
 - parking is an issue when there is a banquet at the restaurant; Saturday morning motorcycle events fill the parking lot and can deter tourists from wanting to stop
- Proposed Site – 9147 Seminole Trail, Ruckersville
 - 1st property that pops out at you
 - its distinctive; it stands out
 - plenty of time with signage to be able to turn in and visit
 - market Greene County to northern VA and Richmond areas
 - this building represents the iconic look of our community
 - this is the brand that Tourism Council identified over the past 5 years
 - an interest in the structure in which a Visitor Center is located is equally appealing to visitors as the information they can find (i.e. Orange County’s train station)
 - this is a good opportunity and a good financial investment purchase; purchase would be a lower rate than market value
 - 50% more space
 - More outdoor space for events, picnic facilities
 - Opportunity to preserve an iconic building
- Required Tourism TOT (3%) – from 2007 with less than \$18,000 to and anticipated \$169,000 currently; shows a 13% growth annually over the last 5 years; boost in Tourism in FY09 during a recession because people don’t want to give up their vacations so will stay more local; it’s projected that after the mortgage is paid and all upkeep expenses, etc. are paid, there will still be \$112,000 to spend on marketing; the purchase of this property and its related expenses are not going to impact the current tourism initiatives
- Licensed Contractor Improvement Quotes – structural engineer, building inspector, professional roofer, professional chimney, professional electrician all inspected the property and submitted quotes; largest expenses are cosmetic; all of these expenses are accounted for
- Proposed Tourism Budget 2019-2020 – micro-view of proposed budget for next year; the mortgage will be \$50,000 but according to USDA, that begins after the first year so the \$3800 listed under mortgage/rent is just for the current rent (which needs to be updated to \$4000); escrow for future repairs is listed and it is going to be requested that the \$50,000 not needed for the mortgage year 1 be put into

that escrow with yearly additions each year after; \$40,000 owed to the EDA for the Lydia Lodge matching grant will be paid off in the next fiscal year (\$20,000 this year and \$20,000 next year)

- Recap – Tourism is important to the economy; this is not a new idea; predecessor, Tony Williams, sent an email in favor and said that this was something that the Tourism Council wanted to do 10 years ago; presentation for a new Visitor Center was found in files from 10 years ago. The building is in good shape; only tourism funds will be used to purchase and upkeep it having zero impact on the residents.
- Mr. Yost read an email from a gentleman who was raised in the house (his grandfather built the house), stating why he felt the Taylor house should be repurposed to a Visitor Center. Mr. Yost said the history of this house represents what people come here for today, it represents the values of Greene County

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

- Victor Schaff spoke in favor of the project. He thinks it's a great project and believes the public understands what tourism means to the tax base in the county, keeping some tax burden off of residents and property owners. He previously did some math calculating out the current rent at a 3% increase a year for 30 years. In 30 years, we would spend \$1,027,000 on rent. It is a very good investment for the county to buy the property especially when its being paid for by folks outside this county.
- Andrea Wilkenson spoke in favor of the project. She is glad to see the county get the opportunity to acquire a property that is so appropriate for the use and she thinks Ruckersville deserves it. She looks to see ownership over renting. She mentioned that the voters of Greene approved the food & beverage tax because they wanted to gather tax dollars from passers-by and feels this investment is the same thing.
- Ken Hess - passed
- Robbie Morris spoke in favor of the project. He and his wife operate a sign company and he previously served on the EDA board. He thanked the EDA for their service. He served on the Ruckersville Area Plan Committee and the Ruckersville Area Council and understands the importance of community input. He is so proud of our citizens for being here to voice their opinions. He thinks the project is important for Greene and understands the value of purchasing over renting. He has developed property in the past and understands the extensive costs incurred. He thinks the county will always have a visitor center so why not investment in this property.
- Gary Lowe spoke in favor of the project. When he visits communities throughout the state, he always looks up the local EDA because they know the lay of the land and the available opportunities. He feels it's very important to have an active EDA and that first impressions are everything. He feels a Visitor Center on this property would be a great first impression for anyone coming into the county seeking out information. His concern was how it was going to pay for itself and thought Alan's presentation explained that. He would rather pay on property that at the end of it, the county would have an asset. He would hope that if a fantastic deal came along for another opportunity on the property, the EDA would consider moving the Visitor Center to a new location if it made sense dollar & cents wise. Speaking as mayor, he has worked hard attracting tourism to the town and its very vital to have a vigorous and active tourism council that attracts tourism to the county and brings those dollars into the county. He is working with the Shenandoah National Park to bring the visitors to the park into the surrounding counties so having a Visitor Center is vital that. He thinks this is a win-win for the county.
- Brigitte Freeman spoke in favor of the project. She is a resident of Greene County and thinks the property is a great location and will offer assets to the county. She feels the current location is difficult to see. As an artist, she

was allowed to have a show in the previous Visitor Center and thinks the proposed property would have the space to allow this again for herself and other local artists. She also feels it is a lovely house with lots of opportunity and is convenient to those traveling from Northern Virginia.

- Lynn Larkins spoke in favor of the project. She is a volunteer at the current Visitor Center and feels that ours is the best in a multi-county area. She noted that not all visitors come from Northern Virginia, sharing the northern states from which other visitors have come. She spoke of a visitor who needed help when her GPS was going to re-route her around Charlottesville during the riots and was panicked; she was able to personally help her find a different route, calm her down, and give her a map in case she got lost again. She spoke of how the Visitor Center really does perform a service. She spoke about visitors who have stopped to use the restrooms and stayed when they saw everything available for tourists locally and across the state. Ms. Larkins also mentioned how guests have stopped looking for a place to enjoy their lunch and that the new space would be able to provide that. Finally, she spoke of the motorcycle groups that come to the business next door, filling the lot and deterring visitors from stopping.
- Candace Goodyear spoke in favor of the project. Ms. Goodyear previously ran an antique shop in the building. She said that it has great eye appeal, great character, is solid as a rock, and would be a wonderful place. She also said she wouldn't sell short the extra buildings. The charming garage with brick floor could be used for rotating exhibits: art, historical stuff, stuff about Stanardsville: it's so nice, so attractive & so easy to incorporate into the Visitor Center. She also mentioned the lovely restored barn with big empty space which would be great for meetings. The meadow behind the barn for travelers looking for a place for kids to run around. It's got so many things that could be done so easily.
- George W. Haney spoke in favor of the project. Mr. Haney is a retired high school biology/chemistry teacher and is an active farmer now. His family has been in this county since the 1700's and considers himself to be a native. He is 100% behind this project. He thinks the county would be very short sighted if it didn't proceed with this project and noted that Alan has talked about not one penny of county tax would go towards this: personal property tax, real estate tax, sales tax are all safe and will not be used. Only TOT will be used. One of the objectives was health and safety of the county and he could see how a building could be used as a satellite place for the sheriff department or rescue squad, cutting down on response time to wrecks on Rt. 29. Mr. Haney has known John Silke for 13 years and he is a very honest person. He doesn't think there's one crooked bone in his (Mr. Silke) body. He (Mr. Silke) is doing this for the county and there have been some very unsavory things said. They are not true, and they are not fair.
- Allen Olinger spoke in favor of the project. Mr. Olinger grew up in Greene and has always loved that property. He thinks this is an excellent opportunity to do good decisions for business and tourism in Greene County. The lovely property speaks value and quality for visitors and for visitors to feel welcome. It would be a disgrace to see the trees and buildings to go down and turn into commercial property. This is an opportunity that may not be there in the future if you don't act on it. He met Mr. Silke 15-20 years and said Mr. Silke is one of the most honest people he knows and is glad he's giving our county a chance to do something good.
- Steve Kruskamp spoke in opposition of the project. Mr. Kruskamp is a former chair of the EDA. He said the following: this project is absolutely ridiculous. It is a net negative. It is a prime piece of commercial real estate that we could be generating tax revenue off of but instead we want to have county buildings there that are not generating any tax revenue. In addition to that, those funds could be used for things like actual tourism. Mr.

Kruskamp stated that we have a July 4th event that currently is not doing well; there is very little funds there. Why doesn't the tourism dollars go to help that out? That directly we can see the impacts that would have. Mr. Kruskamp said that additionally, there were statements made that this was a decade old plan. He said that while he was chair of the EDA, he saw nothing about this in any strategic plan. This popped up when the deal fell through with the fast food restaurant; he thinks it's clearly a show of cronyism. That building will be a marker for cronyism in this county. That's exactly what it will be. We talk about quality of life. A million-dollar loan? We're at a six-million-dollar deficit in this county and you want to take out another million-dollar loan? Mr. Kruskamp continued with: You know who's going to inherit that? Me. My family's going to inherit that. I see a lot of people up here in support and they look like they're more in their senior years, their more silver years and I applaud that. I'm happy for them. But you know what? I'm staying here, I'm a resident, I'm a local and I'm pissed because that's more dollars that I'm going to be held accountable for in my property taxes, the taxes that I have to pay and possibly my children. Additional statements made that were false: that Mr. Silke has at no point been at any meetings. Everybody on this board except for one person was at the meeting that was held on the property where Mr. Silke was there when we discussed this. So that is a materially false statement right then and there and that shows you how dirty this is. *At this point in the comments, the public became vocally disruptive and Mr. Payne was required to restore order between Mr. Kruskamp and the public.* Recession proof? We talk about this being recession proof Mr. Alan? You know the only thing that is recession proof? Taxes, that's it. *At this point, Mr. Payne asked Mr. Kruskamp to please address the board.* Zero cost to the residents? We've got tons of money in tourism that could be used again for tourism to help business. We have restaurants that are failing. Three restaurants have failed. How are we going to feed all these people that are coming to the county if we don't even have restaurants? And you know what, you make a statement about Ruckersville and not finding another location. There is a prime piece of real estate that just opened up called Jack's Shop Kitchen that I encourage you to take a look at because there's another opportunity there which also has a \$50,000 loan to the EDA. I think I'm up on time now. I'm sorry if I'm charged up about this but this is ridiculous. The numbers do not add up. This is a net negative for us, period.

- Bonnie Lofton spoke in favor of the project. Ms. Lofton is a retired journalist. She commented that they said that John Silke recused himself from conversation; they didn't say that he physically left the room. She wanted to say that in terms of correct reportage. Ms. Lofton also shared the following: I am not a journalist anymore. I live near the Ruckersville Fire Station. I live on 5 acres. My husband and I bought our house. Someone was here from the 1700s, we've been here since 2017. Maybe the newest person in the room. But the proposed visitor center is a mile from where I have my Airbnb. I have a little studio apartment above my two-car garage attached to the ranch house. I pay the 5% tax to the county and in fact I pay more than I have to because I'm 90% full all the time and four people have stayed beyond the 30-day period where I would have to pay taxes. But I have come in every month for 18 months when it started to the commissioner of revenue and handed a check for 5%. I just wanted to say that I am tickled pink that 3% of that might be used for this purpose. At this point, Ms. Lofton said she has 3 points for being here today: 1. location, location, location; she talked about how some of her visitors have had difficulty finding the current visitor center, how she keeps brochures at her Airbnb for them and they love that but she thinks they'd love them even more if they were displayed at an easy location. 2. Beautiful possibilities; she talked about how visitors could stop and have a picnic, walk their dog, listen to music, so many

possibilities; she was able to get a tour of the facility and said though it looks derelict from the outside, it's beautiful on the inside. 3. Good use of her tax dollars.

- Bill Hay spoke in opposition of the project. Mr. Hay thanked the volunteers at the tourism center that do volunteer work and help us in the county. He agrees that we do need to bring tourism dollars to this county; he just doesn't think this is the best way of doing it. Mr. Hay continued with the following: First of all, you are locking out a really great piece of property, no argument there. But it would be better used not as a county building but bringing in tax dollars. We have a million dollars we can spend on a building. Why not, at this point, use it to promote events in this county. As been said, the fourth of July event is hurting, no county fair. Come on. We have to do something to bring people to the county besides having a building. Honestly, this is the 21st century and when I go someplace new, I go online and check out their websites and find out what's exciting in that area. Maybe developing a really nice website for the tourism bureau would help. Spend the money on that and then take the other dollars that are coming in and promote events, get events coming here, get Brewfest whatever you can do but right now we don't do anything here. And spending that much money and again locking off a prime piece of real estate for a county building I think is a big mistake.
- Chuck Covington spoke in opposition of the project. Mr. Covington thanked the volunteers and said: the lady who said she was a volunteer I think you were there when we moved here in 2016. She was very helpful. And I agree that the visitor center is a great location to come and learn about where you're going to move into. I agree with some of the people who dissent, it is a lot of money. And I think as any good business decision as economic development authority should look into, there should be options you should have had to look at 2 or 3 different places to decide that this was the best bang for the buck and I'm not sure I ever saw that. I think I would feel better if other options were explored and then given good reasons why these were not chosen. In addition, to say that the TOT taxes aren't Greene County tax dollars, they are Greene county tax dollars. They could be used such as the fireworks and the fair or whatever else to bring in more tax dollars to us and to generate more revenue. I had some other questions. They sound kind of [unclear what word was used] but I had a question that the restaurant that's there had all the parking lots filled, do those people ever come to the visitor center? (*Mr. Payne asked Mr. Covington to please address the board*). I guess my question is, they don't come in? If the Visitor Center was at another location, maybe they would but as the gentleman before me stated, this is the 21st century. I use the internet. I use yelp. I come into some place and I see what's good to eat, where's good to stay and to confuse or to directly tie a visitor center to the success of tourism I think is a bit of a misnomer also. The Airbnb said that they're 90% filled all the time; that's a great success rate. Ms. Deane, Lydia lodge runs an outstanding operation. I've heard on multiple occasions booked out for the entire season. They're not hurting. The Visitor Center's not going to help them. I don't know what it's going to do as far as promoting tourism. That's all.
- Pete Costigan spoke in favor of the project. Mr. Costigan lives in Ruckersville; he knew about this issue and hadn't been paying too much attention to it up until the last week or so when it came to his attention that there was a difference of opinion. Mr. Costigan said: Now, difference of opinions in Greene County are no stranger to Greene County and I think basically that's a good thing because it's a good thing that people come to meetings like this and air their difference of opinion as long as everybody sticks to the facts and can disagree without being disagreeable. Generally speaking, that has happened so far. Of the points made so far, I think the most interesting one and one in which puts me in favor of this new location is the location of the old building. It's been pointed out and it was been pointed out in a letter to the editor in last week's paper that parking in the present

location is very difficult. I and I'm sure every other resident of Greene County has passed Blue Ridge diner hundreds of times and practically every time I pass it except in the middle of the night there are cars in front of it and I suspect 95% of those cars are going into Blue Ridge diner and not the visitor center. Why is that? Because there isn't any room for those people to park. But the other thing is that, as has been said, that building is easy to miss, the current visitor center. Greene County north or south is rather short. Greene County east or west is much longer so I think in the present location the building is, as has been pointed out, easy to see. Once you see it and you go in there and you get some information, then you go right down to route 33 and you make a right and you're in Greene County for several more miles. And you had opportunities both in Stanardsville and also in Ruckersville to stop at other places and at least you know where those places are once you've gotten the information from the visitor center before you come to the intersection, this is if you're coming southbound on 29 before you come to the intersection of 29 and 33. But I think the most important point is the 4th item right here: only tourism funds will be used for purchase and upkeep. And as we heard, that money, those tourism dollars, have to be used for tourism; they can't be used for anything else. So, it's not as if we're really using tax dollars. I and every other resident of Greene County pay their real estate tax and their personal property tax today or tomorrow and that money is not going to be used for this. So, I'm in favor of this.

- James Murphy spoke in opposition of the project. Mr. Murphy began talking about the word transparency and wanted to take a different look on that. Mr. Murphy said the following: this might come to a surprise and some people are also holding stop signs here with me tonight. But I think these are all great ideas what people have been saying we should use this property for when it comes to the Visitor Center. It would be awesome. It would be great to have a place where people could come and sit out on the porch on a rocking chair and read a book as Mr. Yost said. It would be great to have people come and throw out a blanket and have a picnic and enjoy, I guess you can see the mountains from there, you can also see WalMart & Lowes from there as well but if you like people watching that's a great, prime location. And I think it would be a great place to have a lot of these ideas that have been floated around. But I'd like to then also bounce back again to being transparent on this and be transparent on, let's just talk about what economics 101 are. I know economics is not a hot sexy topic a lot of times and puts a lot of people to sleep. I know I fell asleep in several economics classes in college. But like a couple people said before me, this county was faced with a six-million-dollar budget shortfall this year and in order to pay for that, our real estate taxes increased by 5%. 5%, the largest increase in over a decade in this county. So, I know that we like to push this aside while these are Tourism tax dollars that's real estate tax dollars it's really irresponsible to continue unnecessary spending at this time where it's wants versus needs here. We do need a place for people to come in to see our great county but the county purchase of this property permanently removes it from our inventory of prime revenue generating properties. Again, that goes back to being transparent on economic (*public clapping made the rest of his sentence inaudible*). Tourism office, while it would be great in that location, it's not the highest and best use of that property. It's not (*public clapping made the rest of his sentence inaudible*). So lastly, I ask you guys please to all be transparent, not only this board, the EDA board, but also the Board of Supervisors, chairman here tonight, chairman Martin, please be transparent with the county through all this part. I was shocked to hear that this has been going on for 10 years (*at this point, Mr. Payne informed Mr. Murphy that time expired and Mr. Murphy requested just a few more seconds*). So, I ask now, please keep that in mind as you go through your deliberations as you do this thing. You've heard from both sides but let's just be cognizant of just the simple economics of what this means to our county and where our county is going forwards.
- Mr. Payne invited Mr. Yost to address anything he heard in public comments. Mr. Yost made the following points:

 - Regarding the concern mentioned in public comments of this 1.5 acres being used for this purpose and the potential of development: Current undeveloped property in the Ruckersville growth area that is already zoned and ready to go for any potential development is:
 - B3 = 226 undeveloped acres
 - B2 = 40 undeveloped acres
 - B1 = 13 undeveloped acres
 - With this total amount of available inventory, Mr. Yost is not concerned about this one acre.
 - It's important to know that the Visitor Center is one item for a 5-prong marketing approach that the Tourism Council has put together.
 - Created website - updated weekly and renovated annually; have received multiple calls complimenting the quality of the website on how well it works

- Greenecalendar.com – community events; when linked from the Tourism website, it shows tourist related activities; when linked from the government website, it shows all the government meetings; if a resident goes to greenecalendar.com, they see all activities in the county
 - Social media account – active with posts multiple times a week; it’s also important to recognize that research shows that with bricks & mortar, people value the experience of coming in and being able to have a conversation with someone in addition to the digital component.
 - Brochures and maps
- Mr. Payne closed the public comments and began open deliberation. Mr. Payne stated that he hoped that the EDA board would make a motion to forward this to the Board of Supervisors for their final review and say. And that the EDA board would do so with one of 3 options based on what they heard tonight:
 - Favorable recommendation
 - Negative recommendation
 - Neutral recommendation
 - Mr. Payne asked the board members who would like to begin the discussion. Ms. Roberts asked Mr. Yost what the property was zoned. Mr. Yost replied B3 but was not certain that both parts of the property are since it was previously going to be divided into two during negotiations with a fast food business which was interested in buying half of the property. Mr. Tsikerdanos asked what the tax revenue was for the current building. Mr. Yost did not have that information. Mr. Payne asked Mr. Pamerter to begin the conversation:
 - Mr. Pamerter – there had been long discussion of this with lots of pros and cons one way and the other; he initially was on the anti-side due to his 3 major concerns at that time which were:
 1. The cost of the mortgage with a possible 6-6.25% - he now understands from Alan that the mortgage will have a rate of 4.25% which significantly changes the economics. Mr. Yost interjected that the 4.25% is an informal quote and the final quote is coming.
 2. The repairs needed for the building – he stated that he and others on the board were given a tour of the property with John Silke and were still skeptical about the number of repairs needed. He noted that Mr. Yost has since brought in specialists and developed much more accurate numbers for the repair of the building. He also noted that Mr. Silke, the owner, has agreed to contribute to some of the other costs that would be anticipated so that worry went away
 3. Buying the building would squeeze out potential funds for doing other things in support of Tourism in the county – By looking at these numbers, he is much more comfortable that there’s enough left in the budget that we will still have plenty to spend on many of the important things that we do including the 4th of July or whatever projects that we have.
 - Mr. Pamerter concluded that with those 3 things being taken off the plate, he is persuaded that this is a sensible thing. He also said that he is further persuaded by the fact that he loves old houses and Greene County, through disuse and lack of care and deliberate destruction, lost a huge number of its finest homes. Mr. Pamerter state that we’re working here in town to save the 1840 William Mills house; we lost a house that was one of the original Stanard houses. He would hate to see this house destroyed and become yet another big box store and that’s what it will become if it goes into commercial use. Don’t think that it’s going

to be a cute boutique that somebody's going to have and put it into beautiful shape or a B & B that you could never make it operate effectively. So, he ended up in favor of the project for those reasons.

- Mr. Yost asked to make a clarification. When he said the informal quote of 4.25/four and a quarter, he just wanted the public to know that he got that number from a conversation with Cynthia Hines from USDA when this opportunity with the USDA came up. During that conversation, Ms. Hines said the last loan they did was at 4.25%; she could not give that as a formal quote. But Mr. Yost wanted the public to know that that was a solid number, not just a random, pulled out of the hat quote. Mr. Dillon asked if that quote is not formal then in that signature line at the bottom of the page, what other terms are also not finalized: amortization for 40 years, no down payment, no penalty for early payment? Mr. Yost replied that those are typical of USDA loans and pre-set.
- Mr. Payne asked if anyone else would like to tell their thoughts on this project.
- Ms. Roberts appreciated everyone coming out. She took a lot of notes and is a pro/con person. She's been involved in this for quite a while and has heard a lot. She's seen a lot of numbers and budgets and when she first saw it, she could see it, vision it. She had some hesitation because it's all about the numbers. How are we going to pay for it? She thinks Alan has done a great job. She's very familiar with the USDA product that he's referring to. It's part of her profession and so she's familiar with it. USDA has great rates. They have this money set aside for communities such as Greene to do projects like this; this is what they want to invest in so that's why you get such great terms. She feels confident about that and with the financials she has seen and the increase in the tourism tax, she knows that it can be paid. The one thing that she did think long and hard on and that she heard several comments based on it tonight is why isn't this property being used maybe to maybe to its highest and best potential? Number one, the property has been sitting there a long time. That's why she asked what this property was zoned. It's B3; we have considerable B3 property. She doesn't think we're taking an already zoned property out of potential hands. But, in the same light, if we buy it, we can sell it. Once the tourism center is there and developed, she doesn't think anybody would take an offer and refuse it if it's well worth the offer. She feels good about that and the repairs. She thinks there's enough evidence there that she supports the tourism center.
- Mr. Ledford is part of the Tourism Council as a liaison from the EDA per the bylaws. He is also in the lodging business and in hospitality for almost 40 years. His big project was buying and restoring the Lafayette Inn and running it for 11 years; this project put the Lafayette, and essentially Stanardsville, on the map, providing good food and good hospitality. He is different from Julia & Matt and goes by his gut feeling. Initially his gut feeling with this project was no way. He looks at numbers but that's not where he hangs his hat. He hangs his hat on: does this feel right? Is this the best use? Is it going to help the majority of the people in this county and make it a better place for all of us to live? And that is pretty much his byline. He is currently running a four-unit AirBnB on Pocosin Mountain for the last 8 years in addition to a farm. He understands the economic factors and the deficits. But it still comes down to what image do we want to put out front out there? Not the digital image, he knows all about that, but the physical image of our county. What is going to draw people to us? What is going to make them, as they are driving down 29, stop? He thinks that building will make them stop; it's very simple. He doesn't think it's a bad use of the tax revenue that is dedicated to this purpose anyway. He takes that perspective from a person who's been in this business a long time. Helping people be comfortable as visitors to an area. And to him, that is crucial in making their

decision. As a result, he supports this. He thinks it's going to work. He thinks the EDA and the Tourism Council are going to make sure that it works, not just for the guests but for the county.

- Ms. Scheuermann drives by the property every day, 2-3 times a day. When she heard that Burger King was potentially going to tear it down and put concrete and another fast food place, she was very sad. She thinks the house has great potential. With there being a lot of other B3 properties available for other businesses to be on, she thinks the character of the building, its location, and the property around, it is a great site for the visitor center to move. And, understanding that the finances do not impact residents' real estate taxes and personal property taxes, this is another reason why she is in favor of it.
- Mr. Tsikerdanos has been battling the pros and cons the same way as Don and Gretchen. The repairs, the upkeep. He thinks the loss of tax revenue is a significant thing that would need to be addressed. At the same time, he thinks Gretchen brings up a good point when it comes to it being used for commercial use. He's not convinced that anything is going to move in there; he thinks it's likely to be torn down. He thinks keeping history and using it as the front step for Greene county is a good and viable use. With that though, he does expect two things from the county taking over this property:
 1. it would be eligible for purchase if a good enough offer came up
 2. it be used to super charge the marketing efforts of economic growth in Greene County; it needs to be active and encourage more people to be there
- Mr. Dillon grew up in Orange and loves small town living. He would not want to see this property be turned into commercial space. He tries to be fiscally conservative and his initial reaction to this project was absolutely not. Mr. Dillon continued with: Looking at the TOT revenue, it's not going to help our \$6 million-dollar deficit this year; it's simply not. I don't know that this project depletes the coffers to not be able to help the 4th of July project, to not be able to help the other things that we do. At some point the 4th of July committee would need to make a presentation to the EDA board if they want our help and as far as I've been here, that's not happened. So, where do you say: well we're in trouble as a county, which I don't buy into, and then cut your nose off to spite your face. After the presentation, after what I know about the project, I lean more towards yes. I think you have to continue the vitality of a small community and in order to do that you have to draw people from outside that community. We're not going to increase our tax base by sitting here and not drawing people in so I try to think through things critically and that's where I'm at.
- Mr. Payne stated that he has been very vocal about his concerns at the meetings in the past. His concerns are very similar to Mr. Hays' concerns about locking up a property in front of a high traffic area. He can address that by saying that we have numerous similar areas available and those are not presently generating substantial interest. So, he agrees with Ms. Roberts that we're not taking something irreplaceable out of an inventory. He questioned is the visitor center an antiquated concept. He still doesn't know the answer to that but he doesn't have to know for the purpose of this meeting. This is like any other loan that comes before the EDA. We have a group, the tourism council, which is statutorily given the power to make this recommendation. That is their function, their core. They have demonstrated themselves to be good stewards of the resources that they have been given. Through their diligent efforts, we saw where TOT dollars have steadily grown and are projected to grow even through a very horrible recession. They will be paying off a note potentially a year early to us and we have a liaison to their board on our board so we know these men and

women and there's some comfort to that. So, there's revenue with a request from a valid body and I think that a favorable response from us is appropriate in this case. Like James, I would offer a few concessions:

1. That we'd be able, if the right offer comes in the future, to sell the property and whether that's in 5 years, 20 years, 40 years or 100 years. It represents potentially a windfall for the citizens of our community
2. Suggest that it would be prudent to add a percentage point or fraction there of coverage cost to the loan to help further other programs that the EDA might be interested in

Mr. Payne agreed with James that we need to ensure that it is being used to super charge our economic efforts. He received an email and had a phone call with a citizen from the community who wanted to have an additional agriculture venue. He hopes she would find this to be of her interest which is namely a beautiful property with a dedicated system of volunteers and the ability to very easily implement e-commerce or other pickup options for our farming community. With all that being said, he is in favor of this and with no further deliberation, he asked for a motion as he requested at the beginning to forward this matter on to the board of supervisors either with a favorable, a neutral, or a negative endorsement.

- Mr. Ledford made the motion that we move to advance this proposal to the board of supervisors with our favorable recommendation. Mr. Pamenter seconded. Roll call vote was taken with all board members responding aye.

ADJOURNMENT

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm.