

1 **TOBACCO REGION REVITALIZATION COMMISSION**

2 701 East Franklin Street, Suite 501

3 Richmond, Virginia 23219

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8 **Southwest Virginia Committee Meeting**

9 Thursday, May 27, 2021

10 2:30 o'clock p.m.

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14 (Electronic Conference Call Meeting)

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1 APPEARANCES:

2 The Honorable Chris L. Hurst, Chair

3 Ms. Julienne D. Hensley, Vice Chair

4 Mr. Edward Blevins

5 Ms. Gretchen Clark

6 Ms. Rebecca Coleman

7 The Honorable John Edwards

8 The Honorable Terry G. Kilgore

9 Ms. Sandy Ratliff

10 Ms. Heidi Hertz for The Honorable Bettina Ring

11 Mr. Richard L. Sutherland

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13 COMMISSION STAFF:

14 Mr. Evan Feinman, Executive Director

15 Mr. Andy Sorrell, Deputy Director

16 Mr. Michael Kaestner, Grants Program Administration Director

17 Ms. Stephanie S. Kim, Director of Finance

18 Ms. Sara G. Williams, Grants Program Administrator

19 Southwest Virginia

20 Ms. Joyce Knight, Administrative Supervisor

21 Mr. David Bringman, Database and Performance Metrics Manager

22 Mr. Jordan Butler, Public Relations Coordinator

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1 COUNSEL FOR THE COMMISSION:

2 Ms. Elizabeth B. Myers

3 Assistant Attorney General

4 Richmond, Virginia 23219

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3 DELEGATE HURST: I'll call on Andy.

4 MR. SORRELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going
5 to read the brief electronic meeting ground rules. Due to the
6 Governor's declared state of emergency, this meeting is being
7 held electronically without a quorum of the public body physically
8 assembled at one location. The nature of this pandemic makes it
9 impractical and unsafe to assemble a quorum in a single location.

10 In addition, the purpose of this meeting is to discuss
11 or transact business that is statutorily required to continue the
12 operations of the Commission. Public notice of this meeting was
13 provided on both the Commonwealth's calendar and the
14 Commission's website, revitalizeva.org, contemporaneously with
15 the notice provided to the Commission members. The meeting
16 agenda and all other meeting materials can be found on the
17 Commission's website. As with all Commission meetings, there
18 will be an opportunity for public comment both at the beginning
19 and at the end of the meeting. Minutes and a recording of the
20 meeting will be posted on the Commission's website as soon as
21 practical after the meeting.

22 Now, a few notes on the electronic meeting and the
23 ground rules. Please remember to mute yourself if you are not
24 speaking. If you are only participating by phone, press Star 6 to
25 mute or unmute yourself. All participants start out unmuted at

1 the start of the meeting, and you will be returned to mute by our
2 moderator if background noise or disruptions occur. If this
3 happens several times, we might need to remove you from the
4 meeting.

5 If members of the public have questions or comments,
6 please reserve them to that portion of the meeting. You can use
7 the raised-hand feature or send a comment in the chat box of the
8 electronic meeting program, and we'll make sure the comment is
9 read into the public record. Typically, the projects, folks that are
10 on the phone to speak about a particular project, we'll give you
11 the opportunity to do so. The public comment sessions are
12 typically for the folks that are wanting to speak on matters not in
13 front of the Commission already. At the time of public
14 comments, please state your full name, your location, and any
15 organization that you might represent. Please try to keep your
16 comments to two minutes each. That's all that I have, Mr.
17 Chairman.

18 DELEGATE HURST: Thank you, Andy. Hopefully, we
19 can try and get through this Committee swiftly, and it's been a
20 long day and I'm sure folks are ready to get up and stretch their
21 legs.

22 Let's go ahead and have Evan to call the roll for us,
23 please.

24 MR. FEINMAN: Yes, sir, Mr. Chairman. Delegate
25 Hurst.

1 DELEGATE HURST: Present.

2 MR. FEINMAN: Ms. Hensley.

3 MS. HENSLEY: (No response).

4 MR. FEINMAN: Ms. Rasnick.

5 MS. RASNICK: (No response).

6 MR. FEINMAN: Mr. Blevins.

7 MR. BLEVINS: Here.

8 MR. FEINMAN: Ms. Clark.

9 MS. CLARK: Here.

10 MR. FEINMAN: Ms. Coleman.

11 MS. COLEMAN: Here.

12 MR. FEINMAN: Senator Edwards.

13 SENATOR EDWARDS: Here.

14 MS. HENSLEY: This is Julie Hensley, I'm sorry, I had
15 trouble unmuting myself.

16 MR. FEINMAN: Not a problem at all, Julie.

17 Becky, I didn't hear you, that you were here. I can
18 see you, so I know you're here, okay.

19 I can see you, as well, Senator, but you may be
20 muted.

21 Delegate Kilgore.

22 DELEGATE KILGORE: Here.

23 MR. FEINMAN: Ms. Jennings.

24 MS. JENNINGS: (No response).

25 MR. FEINMAN: Delegate Rasoul.

1 DELEGATE RASOUL: No response.

2 MR. FEINMAN: Ms. Ratliff.

3 MS. RATLIFF: Here.

4 MR. FEINMAN: Secretary Ring.

5 MS. HERTZ: I'm Heidi Hertz for Secretary Ring.

6 MR. FEINMAN: Hi, Heidi.

7 Mr. Sutherland.

8 MR. SUTHERLAND: Here.

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

10 DELEGATE HURST: Thank you very much, Evan. First
11 up before us is the approval of the minutes from January 8th,
12 2021. They have been published on the website and have also
13 been sent to you all for your review ahead of time. Can I get a
14 motion on the approval of the minutes?

15 DELEGATE KILGORE: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

16 DELEGATE HURST: We have a motion, do we have a
17 second?

18 MR. SUTHERLAND: Second, Richard Sutherland.

19 DELEGATE HURST: Thank you, Mr. Sutherland. We
20 have a motion by Delegate Kilgore and seconded. All those in
21 favor, signify by saying aye. (Ayes). Opposed? (No response.)
22 We have approved the minutes. Wonderful.

23 Now, here's our first opportunity for public comment
24 in this Committee meeting. Andy, has anybody signed up or
25 indicated on chat or otherwise that they'd like to speak in public

1 comment?

2 MR. SORRELL: No, sir.

3 DELEGATE HURST: Just in case there might be
4 somebody out there, if there's anybody to speak here.
5 Somebody I think was trying to speak. Maybe no, maybe I was
6 just mistaken, okay. So, not hearing anybody for public
7 comment here at this first part of the meeting, we will all have
8 an opportunity for public comment later.

9 SENATOR MORRISSEY: Mr. Chairman.

10 DELEGATE HURST: Yes, go ahead.

11 SENATOR MORRISSEY: Hi, this is Joe Morrissey, can
12 you hear me?

13 DELEGATE HURST: Yes, Senator, good to hear you.

14 SENATOR MORRISSEY: Good to hear you, as well. I
15 was trying to reach you during the comment, public, opportunity
16 for public comment, and if this is a good time, I'd like talk about
17 the William King Museum of Arts. Would this be the appropriate
18 time?

19 DELEGATE HURST: I believe the more appropriate
20 time would be when we're actually discussing that grant
21 application in just a little bit, but if you like to go ahead and
22 make your comments now, you're more than welcome to do so.

23 SENATOR MORRISSEY: Thank you very much for
24 giving me that opportunity. I obviously am not in the district
25 where the William King Museum of Arts is located, but I have had

1 the opportunity to talk to several people, including the director,
2 George Whitley, their counsel, about this, and I wanted to
3 express how supportive I am of this project.

4 It is my understanding that the project was their
5 application for \$350,000 was denied, and I wanted to put in my
6 two cents, not just as a member of the public, but as a member
7 of this Commission as to why I think it should be approved.

8 The William King Museum of Art, they have, I guess,
9 about a \$1 million project to, that will serve to increase traffic for
10 their museum. Right now because of the way the museum, the
11 entrance road to the ring road around the museum, another
12 thing, they're not getting the bus tours that they need. This
13 project, \$1 million project will allow them to do that.

14 They have been working on it tirelessly for quite some
15 time. They have raised \$250,000 from benefactors, and that is
16 in the bank. They've got another, I believe, promise from the
17 City of Abingdon for \$75,000. And Washington County has also
18 agreed to distribute some money. Further, Dominion Energy is in
19 the process of approving a \$200,000 grant and the Mary Morton
20 Foundation is also seriously putting up \$200,000. So, they are
21 looking for \$350,000.

22 What needs to be done, and I'll try to be as specific as
23 I can, is there is an access road that leads to the museum that
24 cannot accommodate tour buses. If they can't accommodate
25 tour buses, then tour buses are eliminated from the tours in

1 Abingdon. This project will create an addition to the road,
2 additional parking, it'll improve the walkway from the parking lot
3 to the museum, it'll make things ADA compliant. I think that's
4 what we want to see down there, that's what we want to do, we
5 want folks to come into our Southwest Virginia, we want them to
6 see our museums and our beautiful counties down there. This is
7 what's going to do it.

8 I've got to tell you I was a little disappointed when I
9 saw that their \$350,000 request was denied.

10 So, I thank you for letting me put in this pitch for the
11 museum, the William King Museum of Art.

12 DELEGATE HURST: Thank you, Senator. And, again,
13 we'll have an opportunity to review this grant application in full in
14 just a little bit. And the more appropriate time in the future for
15 folks who are on this Committee, as well, would be to wait until
16 that grant application is coming up.

17 So, with that being said, we want to get right in to
18 Sara. Sara, go ahead and walk us through the grant applications
19 we have for this quarterly meeting.

20 MS. WILLIAMS: Okay, thank you. We have ten
21 projects to present to you today. Nine are new applications that
22 were submitted to this round, although there will be projects that
23 are familiar to you in that list. One was a project that was tabled
24 in January. This is the second round of funding for this program
25 this year. With that in mind, I will say I think this was overall a

1 good group of applications. And I think the quality of those
2 applications will be reflected in the Staff recommendations.
3 There are several that do have some conditions and
4 contingencies associated with the recommendations. And as I
5 give a brief overview of these projects, I will attempt to cover
6 any points that relate to those.

7 If at any point anyone would like additional
8 information, would like to stop me and ask me a question, please
9 do so, because, otherwise, I will just go, go through these. They
10 are divided or organized by the categories. We have four
11 Agribusiness projects, two under Business Development, two
12 under Sites and Infrastructure, and two under Tourism. So, we
13 will begin with the four Agribusiness projects.

14 The first of those is Grant Number 3697 for Abingdon
15 Feeder Cattle Association for Improving Profits Through
16 Sustainable Pastures, requesting \$500,000. You may remember
17 this was the project that was tabled at the January meeting. At
18 that time, Staff had not recommended funding for this project
19 because the activities for this cost share program seemed to be
20 more in line with general farm maintenance, pasture, expenses.
21 Maintenance and consumable are activities that generally are not
22 supported under the Commission's Cost Share Programs, you
23 know that we try to be pretty clear about that in our guidelines.
24 And when we looked at these activities, the application of lime
25 and seed and fertilizer, we learned that these are typically

1 applied every two to five years.

2 We did do some follow-up with the applicant to make
3 sure that we understood how these were used and that we
4 weren't missing anything. And he was able to confirm that these
5 are typically applied every five years. He was able to give us
6 some additional information on the benefits of these applications.
7 For example, fields that have been properly treated with these
8 items often produced cattle that weigh up to 200 additional
9 pounds, and that would translate into a \$300 increase in the
10 sales price per head. So, there's clear evidence that application
11 of these materials result in a pretty good return for the
12 producers. However, for whatever reason, for multiple education
13 attempts by the Regional Extension Agent, it seems that farmers
14 have been very hesitant to do this.

15 I will say that the Commission has considered these
16 items on one other occasion. In January, 2020 under the
17 Agribusiness program, there was a cost share project that was
18 funded that requested funding for the consumables, the limes,
19 the fertilizer, the seed, but also for application equipment. At
20 that time, we had the same view on these items, and we
21 removed them from the application, but did provide a \$250,000
22 grant award for the cost share support for the application
23 equipment. In that application, it was to serve 360 farmers. We
24 noted that 360 were also to be served with this current
25 application, we felt it likely that there was a great deal of overlap

1 between those outcomes, and we didn't see that there would be
2 additional outcomes as a result of this project.

3 And so with all of that in mind, the Staff's
4 recommendation states because there will be no new project
5 outputs and the activities to be funded under this cost share
6 program are better characterized as recurring maintenance
7 expenses, Staff renews its recommendation for no award.

8 DELEGATE HURST: Thank you, Sara. Is there any
9 discussion on this particular grant application? Okay, hearing
10 none, Sara, appreciate the explanation and think it makes a lot
11 of sense and believe that we need to continue to make sure that
12 we are prioritizing our investments in things that would be value
13 added that would be on top of, that would be generating,
14 bringing new things in. And so I support the Staff
15 recommendation, but this Committee operates by motion.

16 Is there a motion for the Committee on this particular
17 application? I'm sorry, maybe I'm unclear on, again, my role of
18 responsibility.

19 MR. FEINMAN: We can, I think for efficiency sake, we
20 can handle these in blocks, except when people deviate from
21 them. And so, we've broken them up by categories, so I think it
22 may be wise to do this and then move those in a block, et
23 cetera, et cetera.

24 DELEGATE HURST: Sure, yes, no problem. If we
25 could move by block considering that we have different ultimate

1 Staff recs. on them, but by category it makes a lot of sense.

2 So, Sara, thank you, sorry to interrupt you. Why
3 don't you go ahead, we'll have an opportunity for discussion after
4 each one, but once that is finished, we'll just have Sara to
5 continue to move on until the next one until we get to the end of
6 the category, all right? So, Sara, please, continue.

7 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you. Next, we have Request
8 3742. That is from the Town of Hillsville, Farmers Market Final
9 Phases IV and V. They are requesting \$300,000.

10 In January, 2019, the Commission supported the first
11 three phases of the development of this Farmers Market in
12 Hillsville, which provided \$152,000 award, to help with the
13 construction of the Center Pavilion, to house vendor space, it was
14 also going to be used for community events and for
15 performances. At that time, they estimated at that phase of the
16 project would increase the number of vendors from 17 to 25.
17 And Phases IV and V, which we see in this application, it will
18 build wings onto that structure. I would like to note that no
19 funds from that first grant have been used, although we do
20 understand that site building is underway and it looks like that
21 project is ready to move forward.

22 This current request brings the total project's cost for
23 this Farmers Market to over a million dollars, which seems
24 excessively expensive for a farmers market. We also felt that
25 that indicated that its primary use, in particular with this

1 expansion, may not be at the Farmers Market, it seems very
2 much to have been designed for community event space,
3 performance space. We felt that was reflective, especially in the
4 fact that the rest rooms are designed to accommodate crowds up
5 to 2,000.

6 If this award is made, the Commission's share of this
7 project would be around \$452,000, which is substantially more
8 than any other farmers market project has received. The
9 Commission has supported 12 farmers markets over the years,
10 including this one, and those awards range from \$20,000 to, I
11 believe, \$228,000. The average award is around \$101,000 per
12 farmers market to give you some reference. So, we felt with
13 that in mind and considering that once again 25 farmers or
14 vendors were to be served by this farmers market, there didn't
15 appear to be any new outcomes associated with this additional
16 funding, with this additional larger development of the facility.
17 And that is reflected in our Staff recommendation.

18 Because this project is primarily to support a
19 community amenity, and there will be no new agribusiness
20 outcomes beyond those captured by the existing 2019 grant,
21 Staff recommends no award.

22 DELEGATE HURST: Any discussion on this
23 application? All right, Sara, please continue.

24 MS. WILLIAMS: Moving on. Next is Number 3737
25 from the Lonesome Pine Regional Industrial Facilities Authority

1 for Project Thoroughbred, requesting \$500,000, to help with the
2 development of a grain terminal in the City of Norton. This is a
3 project that I'm sure many of you have heard of. It's one that
4 we have worked with for several months.

5 Our funds will be used to purchase equipment for that
6 facility. The project is essentially ready to go. They received a
7 great deal of funding from the A&L money from DMME. They are
8 ready to acquire the property and get started, I think final, final
9 construction, and I believe the facility will open in September,
10 2022, so approximately 18 months from now.

11 This is the last dollar necessary to move forward for
12 this. The terminal will initially be operated by Mountain Empire
13 Community College for the first three years. The college will also
14 be working to develop a training program. The terminal will
15 initially process barley and grain to support Virginia's Pabst
16 brewing industry. There's also the potential to process soy beans
17 there, which is a really interesting double cropping model that
18 farmers can use to produce products on a more year-round
19 basis.

20 At the end of the three-year period with Mountain
21 Empire, the RIFA plans to seek a private operator to continue
22 operation of the facility. At that time, the private operator would
23 begin to pay an annual royalty to the RIFA based on the profits
24 from that facility.

25 This is a revenue-generating project, and generally

1 projects that generate or have the potential to generate revenue
2 are considered from loan funds. However, as we looked at this,
3 we didn't feel that debt was the right option for this project, but
4 we also felt that it was important that because it was a revenue-
5 generating project that we capture that royalty in our
6 determination.

7 And so we are recommending, Staff recommends an
8 award of \$500,000 contingent upon a profit sharing agreement
9 between TRRC and the RIFA that requires the RIFA to pay to the
10 Commission a portion of the anticipated future royalty payments
11 based on the proportion of TRRC's total investment in the project
12 currently estimated at 19 percent.

13 DELEGATE HURST: Thank you, Sara. A great project
14 coming together. Any discussion from the Committee on this
15 grant application? All right, hearing none. Again, I'm glad we're
16 in a position to be able to assist here for what seems like a great
17 opportunity. Thank you. Sara.

18 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you. Next, we have Number
19 3744, Russell County Industrial Development Authority for the
20 Southwest Virginia Aquaculture Network, requesting \$47,800.
21 This money will be used to create a new cost share program to
22 help property owners in the region convert for existing cold
23 springs resources that they have on their property to be used for
24 trout farming. There is a trout hatchery and processing facility,
25 Riverbound, that has located in Russell County. And they have

1 indicated that they need a tremendous amount of trout. I
2 believe they said they could support 800,000 pounds a year.
3 They need 70 to 100 trout farmers to help meet their demand. It
4 needs to be located in a five-to-seven county region.

5 The cost share program is still a little bit under
6 development. We felt that we wanted to do some more stringent
7 guidelines, for example, at this point, this project could serve
8 with the available fund as many as eight producers or as many
9 as four, depending on what the expenditures and activities end
10 up costing. We felt with that in mind that this should be viewed
11 really as more of a more pilot. We are expecting at least two
12 additional applications for this. And so we thought this was a
13 good opportunity to really understand what the needs are, how
14 much have been utilized. We also felt it was important to
15 understand the inspection process and the follow-up.

16 I do want to note that AFID funding is involved here,
17 too, they will help pay for consulting. Riverbound will be very
18 involved with these producers, both offering just guidance and
19 also with an agreement to purchase the fish.

20 So, with that said, Staff recommends an award of
21 \$47,800 contingent upon the approval of more detailed program
22 guidelines that include a detailed list of eligible expenses and
23 final inspection procedures.

24 DELEGATE HURST: Thank you, Sara. Any discussion
25 on this grant application? All right, hearing none, we have

1 reached end of our first block. We have Staff recommendations,
2 but once again, I'll just go ahead and stipulate this has been
3 Agribusiness, Requests 3697, 3742, 3737, and 3744, a Staff
4 recommendation of no award for the first two, \$500,000, and
5 then \$47,800. Can I get a motion from this Committee?

6 SENATOR EDWARDS: Motion.

7 DELEGATE HURST: I heard a motion. Second to the
8 recommendations?

9 DELEGATE KILGORE: Second.

10 DELEGATE HURST: I have a motion and a second
11 from Delegate Kilgore and Senator Edwards, respectively.

12 Evan, is this going to be a voice vote or do we need to
13 do a roll call?

14 MR. FEINMAN: This can be a voice vote.

15 DELEGATE HURST: All those in favor, say aye.
16 (Ayes). All opposed? (No response). All right, the ayes have it.
17 That motion is carried.

18 Sara, move on to our next category, please.

19 MS. WILLIAMS: Next, we will discuss our Business
20 Development Projects. We have two in this category.

21 The first is Application is Number 3748, LENOWISCO
22 Planning District Commission, LENOWISCO
23 InvestSouthwestVirginia 2.0, requesting \$400,000. I'm sure that
24 most of you are aware of the work that Will Payne in Southwest
25 Virginia has been doing the past couple of years in the Southwest

1 Region. This project will provide additional funding. To continue
2 that work, I believe there's been some more focus given on the
3 areas that that work will center around, I believe there were five
4 key areas, technology, data centers, energy, agribusiness, and
5 manufacturing/logistics. There are substantial new matching
6 funds for this phase of the project contributed from Scott County
7 Telephone, from Dominion Energy, AEP, as well as \$200,000
8 award through the Appalachian Regional Commission, making
9 this phase very well leveraged.

10 So, Staff recommends awarding a grant of \$400,000
11 contingent upon, one, the Executive Director's approval of the
12 terms of the renewed contract between the applicant and its
13 consultant, and, two, Staff's continued participation in
14 InvestSouthwestVirginia's leadership and strategy development.
15 Are there any questions about this one?

16 DELEGATE HURST: Sara, why don't you keep going
17 for us.

18 MS. WILLIAMS: Next, we have Number 3743 from
19 the University of Virginia for the Regional Entrepreneurship
20 Ecosystem-Southwest Virginia StartUp Accelerator and Economic
21 Gardening Project, requesting \$145,425. This project seeks
22 funding for two main initiatives. The first approximately half will
23 be used to support Opportunity Southwest Virginia's StartUp
24 Accelerator Program. This is a nine-week accelerator program
25 that will serve a total of 90 new entrepreneurs in the region, in

1 fact, a large support to help them succeed and improve their
2 businesses. There is also a component of this that would utilize
3 UVA-Wise interns to build and maintain websites for businesses
4 in the region.

5 The second part of this request is the Economic
6 Gardening piece. Again, this is another program to provide
7 support for regional entrepreneurs, mainly to create an
8 environment where they can grow and be successful. We did
9 note when we were evaluating these that most of the projected
10 outcomes, the direct outcomes we could see from these activities
11 associated with the Accelerator Program. We have much more
12 difficult time seeing the direct outcomes associated with the
13 Economic Gardening piece.

14 The activities in the Economic Gardening piece seem
15 to be more networking events, conferences, marketing and PR
16 types of things that we really had a hard time associating with a
17 direct outcome, whereas, with the Accelerator Program, it was
18 clear that 90 businesses would be impacted. And so as we
19 looked at it more, we realized that this application which is
20 meant to match the GO Virginia application, and we wanted to
21 try to support that if we could, but only a portion of the grant is
22 needed to match that application, \$70,425 of the request amount
23 was needed for the direct match for the GO Virginia application.
24 The additional funding would just provide extra leverage for the
25 project.

1 And so with all those things in mind, the Staff
2 recommendation is Staff recommends an award of \$83,075 for
3 the Southwest Virginia StartUp Accelerator Program, including
4 Marketing Assistance Program internships.

5 DELEGATE HURST: Sara, thank you for explaining
6 both of those and for the Staff recommendation and your thought
7 process as to why, do we have two, again, two grants in the
8 Business Development block, 3748 and 3743, information in your
9 packet, any discussion among the Committee? If not, I am ready
10 to entertain a motion.

11 MS. COLEMAN: Delegate Hurst, it's Becky Coleman.
12 I've got a question. I see Will, didn't I see Will on this call? Hi,
13 Will. Are you there? So, this was the second \$400,000 grant,
14 and it appears to me, correct me, please, if I'm wrong, that this
15 money will be used for operating costs for the next two years?

16 MR. PAYNE: That's, that's correct, as it was, during
17 the first two years.

18 MS. COLEMAN: Okay, that's what I thought. So, my
19 question is, in subsequent years, how will the operating costs be
20 paid for? Is that something that the Commission will pay
21 \$400,000 every two years for operating costs? How will that
22 work?

23 MR. PAYNE: Well, you know, this initiative can exist,
24 it originated with the Tobacco Commission. If the Tobacco
25 Commission chooses not to support that in the future, that's the

1 Commission's choice. But this economic development work
2 continues regardless with private support or otherwise, but my
3 guess is the Tobacco Commission has a vested interest in the
4 success that we've had or will have and will continue to be
5 supported as we grow and have more success.

6 MR. FEINMAN: Mr. Chairman, Ms. Coleman, I'll just
7 add that there are, there are projects that we undertake that do
8 not include, you know, a prospect that then at some point being
9 profitable, you know, it's sort of one category to say, okay, we'll
10 help you build a factory or we'll help you start a new program at
11 your community college, but then there's sort of tuition on the
12 back end. We could certainly work and, you know, if it's the
13 direction of the Commission to do so, we can look at whether or
14 not the projects that are attracted by InvestSouthwestVirginia
15 could engage in some kind of revenue sharing with the
16 community, but ultimately leads to the project putting it on hold,
17 but that would, I don't think that would be incredibly well
18 received by the communities. And I think it would be an uphill
19 fight to get from here to there.

20 MS. COLEMAN: I'm not trying to start a fight, but I
21 recall all projects when we decline after a few years to pay any
22 further operating costs, and so I was just curious how that would
23 work.

24 UNIDENTIFIED: Evan, I was just going to say I had a
25 conversation about a possible, maybe it was a possible vendor

1 for this program last week, so I think there's going to be some,
2 even after this, this initial, there's going to be more money
3 coming in.

4 MR. PAYNE: Mr. Chair, if I may, Will Payne one last
5 time, just as a reminder, our projects that we've been able to
6 deliver projects that never had considered Southwest Virginia
7 until this initiative was created, this team went out with delivered
8 projects, jobs, investment that otherwise never would have
9 happened and see that there's value in investment that you've
10 made into the operations of this operation. That will continue in
11 the future.

12 MS. COLEMAN: Well, not disputing that, but I'll --

13 DELEGATE HURST: Thanks, Becky, for your question.
14 Any further questions, discussions for this block? And if not, I'm
15 looking for, yes, motion on Staff recommendations or any
16 alterations, but I believe that I heard a motion. Can someone
17 bring that motion for me, please.

18 DELEGATE KILGORE: Motion, Mr. Chair.

19 DELEGATE HURST: Got a motion from Delegate
20 Kilgore, do I have a second?

21 SENATOR EDWARDS: Second.

22 DELEGATE HURST: And a second, I believe that was
23 from Mr. Blevins or Senator Edwards, I think Senator Edwards.

24 All those in favor, say aye. (Ayes). All opposed? All
25 right, the ayes have it. The motion is agreed to.

1 And, Sara, please continue us on.

2 MS. WILLIAMS: Okay. Moving on to Sites and
3 Infrastructure, we have two projects here. The first is 3746, the
4 Russell County Industrial Development Authority for the Russell
5 Place Project, requesting \$250,000. This application will be used
6 to really develop a property that the IDA has recently acquired in
7 Lebanon. They have the very good problem there of having
8 located, I believe they said 25 new businesses in recent months
9 and are out of inventory. So that in mind, they have been able
10 to acquire this property, which has been vacant for
11 approximately 20 years. I believe it was a sewing facility prior to
12 that. And they are now asking for some assistance to do some
13 renovation to the existing building there. There's also space to
14 accommodate a potential construction of two new buildings.
15 However, as we were reviewing this project, it became clear that
16 this is a project that is still a little bit under development, and
17 that is because there's a current prospect. And so the final
18 design decision for the development there really will hinge on
19 what that prospect decides.

20 And so with that in mind, we thought it was important
21 that we understand what the final scope of the project was going
22 to be. These do appear to be very natural steps in developing
23 the project, it was just something that we wanted to know. And
24 the Staff recommendation won't reflect that.

25 Staff recommends awarding a grant of \$250,000

1 contingent upon the Executive Director's approval of the final
2 project scope with associated construction cost estimates, as well
3 as documentation of the availability of matching funds required
4 to complete the project. Any questions?

5 DELEGATE HURST: All right, hearing none, Sara,
6 whenever you're ready.

7 MS. WILLIAMS: Next is Number 3745, Smyth County
8 Economic Development Authority, Pathway Park Infrastructure
9 Improvements, requesting \$600,000.

10 This is a site that was supported years ago through
11 the Commission Megasite Program. We provided, I believe 90
12 percent of the cost to acquire that property and to redevelop it.
13 It's another example of a site that had a former industry located
14 on it and that industry was torn down, I believe some steel was
15 sold, and they have had to do really an overall a small amount of
16 work to get it to the point that it is now.

17 However, they are pursuing to move along the Virginia
18 Business Ready Sites Program tier status. In 2020, they
19 completed a master plan, which got them to Tier 4. However,
20 the work presented in this application was identified in that
21 master plan and will help move them further along that Tier 4
22 status.

23 The three projects that are identified in this
24 application are for water and sewer improvement, as well as an
25 access road. The estimate that was provided in the master plan

1 is around \$1.8 million for these. However, they are still working
2 on a preliminary engineering report that will better define the
3 cost for those projects.

4 The project's funding will be, Commission funds will be
5 matched on a tier-to-one basis, so they're requesting \$600,000
6 for us, Smyth County will give \$600,000, and they are also
7 pursuing a RIFA agreement with Bland County, and that RIFA
8 agreement will allow them to be qualified for GO Virginia funding.
9 So, we thought that RIFA partnership was really a step for this
10 project for many reasons.

11 So, again, Staff recommends an award of \$600,000
12 contingent upon, one, the receipt of the Preliminary Engineering
13 Report to confirm estimated project costs; two, receipt of a
14 formal agreement documenting a partnership between Bland and
15 Smyth Counties, and, three, receipt of documentation of
16 sufficient matching funds to complete the project.

17 DELEGATE HURST: Thank you very much, Sara. Any
18 discussion on those two grant applications in this block? All
19 right, hearing none, we have Staff recommendations on those
20 two items that are in this block. I heard somebody. Do I have a,
21 is there a motion?

22 UNIDENTIFIED: So moved.

23 DELEGATE HURST: I didn't necessary say what the
24 motion should be necessarily, could somebody just articulate it
25 for us just for the record?

1 MR. FEINMAN: If I may, I believe the motion that was
2 moved would be to accept Staff's recommendation for Grant
3 Numbers 3746 and 3745.

4 DELEGATE HURST: That works for me. Can I get a
5 second?

6 UNIDENTIFIED: Second.

7 DELEGATE HURST: All in favor, say aye. (Ayes). All
8 opposed? Ayes carries. I will try and get the ship righted on my
9 part.

10 Sara, why don't you finish up, maybe I'll have the
11 hang of it by the end.

12 MS. WILLIAMS: Okay. Moving on to our Tourism
13 section. We have two projects once again for Tourism. The first
14 one is Number 3747 from Virginia's Heritage Music Trail: The
15 Crooked Road. The project is Connecting The Crooked Road
16 Communities, and they are requesting \$9,000. This is a small
17 request to support a community signage program to help identify
18 all of The Crooked Road communities throughout the region.

19 Additionally, funds will be used to make radio
20 transmitter upgrades to the 26 existing wayside exhibits. Many
21 of these exhibits are at least ten years old and are badly in need
22 of some upgrade. The waysides are unique to each community
23 and they provide tourists an opportunity to stop off and to learn
24 a little bit about why that community is significant to The
25 Crooked Road.

1 Those are the projects that have appeared in previous
2 Commission grants. Unfortunately, the time did not seem to be
3 right to complete those, and those grants eventually ran out and
4 were not extended. The Crooked Road is at a point now where
5 they're able to complete these projects. They have matching
6 funds in place and they are ready to go.

7 And so with that in mind, Staff recommends awarding
8 a grant of \$9,000.

9 SENATOR EDWARDS: I have a question, John
10 Edwards here. I've had legislation in the past with regard to
11 Wilderness Road or the Great Wagon Road that only provided
12 that the localities would have the option to -- My question here
13 is why don't the localities -- it's not that expensive? Why
14 should the Tobacco Commission pay for it?

15 MS. WILLIAMS: The localities are providing the match
16 for those signs. So, they are contributing, although at something
17 closer to 50 percent rate, I believe.

18 SENATOR EDWARDS: Why don't they do it all?

19 MR. FEINMAN: Senator, because they think we might
20 give them the \$9,000, I think is the short end.

21 SENATOR EDWARDS: If they could use this kind of
22 money, too, the tourism. If it benefits the locality, then -- doing
23 it, I could say sponsor legislation on The Wagon Road, The
24 Wagon Road or it used to be the Wilderness Road, but the idea
25 was the localities would have to pay for it, it's not that expensive,

1 and it helps the localities. Why is the Tobacco Commission doing
2 it?

3 MS. WILLIAMS: Simply that the localities provide a
4 great deal of the funding for The Crooked Road operations. I see
5 Cary on here, she may want to correct me, so in some cases, this
6 portion of the sign is almost a thank you for the other support
7 that those localities financial support that they are already
8 providing for The Crooked Road. But Cary may be able to
9 answer that better than I can.

10 CARY: You're correct, Sara. So, the localities do
11 spend money for The Crooked Road as far as a buy-in. Now,
12 those are at different levels, but The Crooked Road is really
13 invested in making sure that the brand also stays consistent, so
14 rather than having each community could technically buy a
15 Crooked Road sign, if they have paid into The Crooked Road or if
16 we work with The Crooked Road, but this is about maintaining
17 consistency as far as signage.

18 The Wayfaring signs and the signage along the road,
19 as well as the wayside exhibits, do provide a real tight, cohesive
20 look for Southwest Virginia, so for the visitors coming through.
21 This is just a small, a small -- here but also to maintain
22 visibility.

23 DELEGATE HURST: All right, any more discussion on
24 this particular item, Senator Edwards?

25 SENATOR EDWARDS: No.

1 DELEGATE HURST: All right. Thank you, Sara. Why
2 don't you go ahead and finish up this last one for us.

3 MS. WILLIAMS: Okay. And finally, we have Number
4 3741, William King Museum of Art, William King Museum of Art
5 Cultural Campus Phase II, Part I, requesting \$350,000. And I
6 will say that I think Senator Morrissey did a great job
7 summarizing this project. He may take over for me at some
8 point. He did a really good job giving the background on what
9 this project is.

10 There was submitted to the first round of funding that
11 was submitted as part of a larger project there that also included
12 lower campus improvements that were really more of a
13 community amenity. And so when they chose to resubmit this
14 time, they did remove that focus just on the upper campus for
15 the accessibility, whether that accessibility is the building or the
16 parking lot, the driveway, those components that really have
17 centered their ability to recruit, especially the tour buses. They
18 provided documentation that in 2019 --

19 And so, the Staff considered all of that, that the
20 museum also provided some information about two upcoming
21 exhibits that they have that they hope will attract new visitors to
22 view those exhibits. However, as we looked at this and we
23 considered the fact that, yes, 67 tour buses visited and only one
24 came to the museum, even if those other 66 had come to the
25 museum, there was no new economic impact associated for that,

1 that those visitors are already coming to the museum. And, you
2 know, that conclusion, you know, we're forced to recognize, too,
3 that the museum does play an important role in the Town of
4 Abingdon and the tourist assets that it offers; however, what
5 we still did not see was that this project directly led to a
6 significant -- in new visitation from national or international
7 markets. And that's really the test that we use when we
8 evaluate tourism projects.

9 MR. FEINMAN: Mr. Chairman, just to put a minor
10 point on what Sara laid out for you. You know the real question
11 that we have when we support a tourism project is to say, you
12 know, if somebody outside of the region who wasn't previously
13 going to come visit the region, now going to come visit the
14 region as a result of this project. And so that's the rule we
15 couldn't find our way over with this project. I want to reiterate
16 that we, you know, we think it's an absolutely wonderful museum
17 and an incredibly well-led museum, but, you know, it's just hard
18 to imagine the, you know, making the walkways on the ground --
19 for somebody in Cincinnati getting in the car and driving to
20 Abingdon. And that was where, that was what we just couldn't,
21 otherwise, we landed on the recommendation we went on.

22 DELEGATE HURST: Let me ask you a question about
23 this museum raising \$250,000 in private donations for the
24 projects, and is this matching money?

25 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes, and I think Betsy is on here, she

1 may want to address the full amount of funding that has been
2 raised for this project, so I believe they've received some other
3 awards, too.

4 DELEGATE HURST: Betsy, are you there. Muted
5 Betsy?

6 MS. WILLIAMS: How about now?

7 DELEGATE HURST: Yes.

8 MS. WHITE: Thank you, Senator, and thank you
9 everybody.

10 We have, yes, we have raised some money. We just
11 got an award from the Appalachian Regional Commission. We
12 have gotten a pledged amount from the Town of Abingdon,
13 Washington County, like Senator Morrissey said. We do have
14 some individual support going on, and we have right many
15 requests out at this point. We feel like we are almost ready to go
16 funding-wise, we're not all the way there, but we're almost,
17 almost there.

18 SENATOR EDWARDS: I see also that the Abingdon --
19 estimates these visitors brings about \$500 or so to the region.
20 Looked pretty good.

21 MS. WILLIAMS: That's pretty good. I think we have
22 the head of tourism in the room with us, if that's helpful.

23 DELEGATE HURST: All right.

24 MS. WILLIAMS: Would you all like for me to say a
25 couple of words and then introduce her?

1 DELEGATE HURST: Yes.

2 MS. WILLIAMS: Okay.

3 MR. FEINMAN: That'll be fine, go ahead.

4 MS. WHITE: Is that okay? Well, first of all, I am
5 Betsy White, the Director of the museum here. And I think from
6 all of us we'd like to thank the Commission for all the years of
7 support and the many grants that you have given us, including
8 the Art Lab where I am sitting with several people here behind
9 me right now.

10 This application, as Sara said and as Evan said, it will
11 fund the last our campus reservations that have been going on
12 for the last couple of years. And it will, it is designed to provide
13 good access into the museum.

14 And then I guess we can call this museum complete
15 and it might even be our last request. This is a tourism grant.
16 Since the demise of tobacco and now the decline of coal, a
17 growing emphasis is being placed as true economic development
18 in the area of tourism in Southwest Virginia. It's a very large
19 region, and its tourism offices often band together collectively for
20 marketing packages. But as the Senator said, we are always left
21 out of these packages because of the difficulty of accessing to
22 our, into our building.

23 But the project that this grant would fund will fix that
24 problem and allow us to be included. We think that our inclusion
25 in those packages as considerable down to the marketing

1 packages because it is the unique and large cultural attraction
2 with five expedition galleries that include significant art, such as
3 the ones that Sara was mentioning just a few minutes ago.

4 It also offers travel from travel groups to bus tour
5 groups, guided tours and for shops for longer stays here. There
6 are too many reasons that we think this is important beyond the
7 obvious value to the museum itself. And that is that the region's
8 economy will be boosted because the museum's inclusion in that
9 regional market, especially the motor coach industry, will
10 broaden our appeal and attract the new sort of visitor, the
11 cultural tourist. Most of our visitors or many of our visitors
12 explore the beautiful recreational value that we have here, such
13 as the Virginia Creeper Trail and Natural Tunnel and so forth.

14 And, secondly, it will be a reason to extend the visit of
15 those people that are already visiting. Sara says, and so did
16 Evan, that the people are already here coming to other things.
17 Yes, that is the truth. I think that that is one proof of them to
18 set the pool, but we will provide a reason for them to stay longer,
19 something to do if the day is raining or just plain to stay another
20 day or two and spend the money here.

21 So, that's my preface, I think we do have a couple of
22 other people, including Abingdon's Tourism Office that can speak
23 to that.

24 DELEGATE HURST: Thank you, Betsy. Someone from
25 local tourism available to speak to us?

1 MS. TRIPLETT: Good afternoon, thank you for your
2 time today. My name is Tonya Triplett. I'm the Director of
3 Economic Development and Tourism for the Town of Abingdon.
4 And I agree with everything that Betsy has said so far.

5 Southwest Virginia is a very large region, and it works
6 well together to create marketing packages for visitors, a
7 strategy that's recommended at the Virginia Tourism Corporation
8 and one that works really well. William King Museum adds
9 unquestionable value to the region's tourism as the only
10 nationally accredited art museum, is a major cultural attraction
11 with ever changing exhibitions, workshops, and a new art lab
12 that creates an experience for motor coach operators.

13 However, the awkward, difficult, and unfriendly
14 entrances to the museum building is challenging for bus tours
15 and motor coach companies. Many will not put the museum on
16 their travel list due to this problem. This renovation, which is
17 targeted to accessibility will fix the problem and allow William
18 King to be included in regional marketing packages aimed at
19 attracting visitors from outside the region. The project will give
20 visitors an alternative or an additional site to the recreational
21 sites we already highly publicize extending the region's
22 attractions to include a new visitor, cultural tourists, again, as
23 Betsy said, a reason for folks to stay longer.

24 William King is housed in a historic landmark building,
25 the 1913 William King High School, with its original approach into

1 it. This new accessibility will allow William King to reach its full
2 potential as an economic development asset in Southwest
3 Virginia. As has been mentioned twice already, the Town of
4 Abingdon has committed \$75,000 to this project, and we are
5 committed to help William King during this process.

6 DELEGATE HURST: I have a question. You do believe
7 that it will attract tourism, right?

8 MS. TRIPLETT: Yes.

9 DELEGATE HURST: I see that you're going to have an
10 exhibit on Bernini and Roman Baroque art and The Long Rifle
11 coming up, the history of The Long Rifle, is that right? Very
12 excited, I'm looking forward to coming.

13 MS. TRIPLETT: We booked a group November 4th
14 already for, to create an art project in the art lab from Missouri.
15 So, that is that.

16 DELEGATE HURST: I think it's a great idea. I don't
17 see how the Staff can say that it will not bring new tourism,
18 seems to me it will. I support the project.

19 MR. WAMPLER: Mr. Chairman, this is Will Wampler,
20 when public comments open up, I'd like to offer a few comments,
21 but if not, I can wait.

22 DELEGATE HURST: It is not, so in just a little bit, we'll
23 get back to that. But thank you.

24 I would have a question for Betsy or for I believe
25 Jennifer from the town, which is, you know, again, trying to

1 figuring out how lots are already coming to Abingdon can't get to
2 the museum because of accessibility issues. And so doing this
3 project would allow for more of the buses that come to Abingdon
4 to be able to go to the museum. But I'm still not hearing a very
5 compelling argument that this will bring more buses in total to
6 the town, but I am certainly open-minded to hear that thought
7 process, either the museum or for the town.

8 MS. WHITE: I can certainly speak to that, or am I
9 muted still?

10 DELEGATE HURST: Go ahead.

11 MS. WHITE: And Tiffany, I think would extend this for
12 us, too. Our point is that I think it will bring more buses to the
13 town because it is going to extend the region to a different kind
14 of tourist than we usually have. The majority of our tourists
15 come here to hike and bike and kayak and enjoy this gorgeous
16 scenery. But we don't have a lot to offer that cultural tourist.
17 And the cultural tourist is often what is on those buses. So, I
18 think, I mean I truly feel like it will increase the bus traffic a lot,
19 as well as the regular person that's coming from outside the
20 region.

21 Thank you for those words, Senator, about our two
22 exhibits coming up. Bernini is traveling from the country of Italy,
23 around the United States it's the only place that's going to be in
24 Virginia. And The Long Rifle, of course, is a completely unique
25 exhibition, and those two, just those two can sell, we feel like will

1 draw the individuals, as well as the bus tours. The bus tours are
2 something we've just been completely out of and, therefore,
3 can't help with the marketing packages. But it is more than just
4 that, yes.

5 I don't know if Tonya wants to pipe in there.

6 MS. TRIPLETT: I think the tourism trends are for
7 travelers. Also, they want an experience, so the availability for
8 the art lab or for them to actually be able to go in and do a
9 workshop and take a craft that they have made home with them
10 has extreme value. I've been in the tourism business in the
11 Town of Abingdon for 12 years, and it is extremely difficult to get
12 aging adults into the museum who are on budget routes, and
13 right now, we have a large majority of the people in the aging
14 category that are traveling on those buses. They are the same
15 folks who enjoy browsing the galleries. Not all of those
16 necessarily like to be on The Creeper Trail, we do have some
17 active aging adults that like to do outdoor rec. as well, but I
18 definitely think that we can increase visitation by motor coaches
19 if we could get that facility more accessible.

20 UNIDENTIFIED: I have a question for Betsy or Tonya.
21 Is there any way to quantify that there would be an increased
22 visitation from certain select groups, are any studies done that
23 could quantify that?

24 MS. WHITE: I'll let Tonya answer that. We have
25 estimated our share of the tour bus audience. I think that's in

1 the application to grow from those tour buses, from the tour bus
2 audiences, but I'm sure Tonya has something to say about the
3 additional numbers of tour buses.

4 MS. TRIPLETT: We think with COVID, of course, the
5 motor coach routes kind of slowed down a little, but with the
6 boomers being vaccinated, they're ready to travel. We have calls
7 every day with tour bus booking trips here to Abingdon. The
8 Barter Theatre is still down, performing at the Moonlight Drive-in,
9 so we haven't opened that back up yet, so William King is a great
10 activity for motor coaches when they're coming. This group from
11 Missouri had originally booked their trip to Abingdon, and then
12 we were able to partner with William King on the Make-and-Take
13 Art Project, and we're also working with them on their annual
14 fundraiser for Mistletoe Market. So, this group will visit their
15 annual fundraiser and going to do some activities in conjunction
16 with that fundraiser because it would be difficult for those folks to
17 get into the museum.

18 UNIDENTIFIED: In speaking about The Long Rifle in
19 Virginia, that specifically is designed to attract people from
20 outside the region and all the way down through the Shenandoah
21 Valley through the corridor of I-81, tracing the Southwest
22 Virginia all the way out through to the Cumberland Gap. And we
23 are partnering with the Shenandoah Valley Museum, as well as
24 the Frontier Culture Museum for expeditions of The Long Rifle
25 and the gunsmiths that made them. And actually Virginia

1 Tourism and the Cultural Heritage Commission under Delegate
2 Kilgore will remember this, we've long been trying to create a
3 cultural heritage trail that can be a permanent thing and draw
4 visitors all the way down the Shenandoah Valley and out through
5 here permanently, and this is supposed to be a kickoff from that,
6 the Cultural Heritage Trail, starting up at Winchester, coming out
7 through Staunton, and Martin Station out there at the end of Lee
8 County.

9 So, that's a very exciting project. The Bernini exhibit
10 in the fall and that one in the spring, we're just trying to make
11 sure that maximum people can get in the building and people are
12 always horrified when they look at our approach to, in the
13 building.

14 MR. FEINMAN: I would just like to redirect and see if
15 there is a specific answer to Becky's question, which is new buses
16 coming, what is the projection on new visitors coming to the
17 town to benefit the economic development and the economy of
18 the town and the region, not just one particular instance, specific
19 number on projections per visitor increases to the actual area?

20 MS. WHITE: I do not have that number right off. Like
21 I said, COVID has been extremely difficult on motor coach
22 travelers. We know that they're ready to book. We're working
23 on several itineraries right now hoping to get folks back. It may
24 be a little bit slower process with motor coaches because of the
25 fact that people are so close together in traveling, I'm sorry I

1 don't have that projection.

2 MS. WILLIAMS: Could I interrupt again one time?

3 DELEGATE HURST: Sure.

4 MS. WILLIAMS: Mr. Chairman, thank you. I have
5 here sitting beside me Lisa Quigley, who is the Executive Director
6 of Virginia Creeper Trail Conservancy, and she is also a member
7 of Abingdon's EDA, Economic Development Authority, and she
8 will say something about that to try to answer the question.

9 MS. QUIGLEY: Hi, thank you for hearing us today. I
10 am as the ED of the Conservancy come at this from a different
11 perspective. I'm not looking at tour buses, I'm looking at being
12 able to extend folks' stay in the region when they visit. We have
13 over four million visitors to The Creeper Trail every year. And in
14 order to really leverage those folks into more than a single day
15 visit, we've got to expand other activities, amenities, and
16 opportunities right here in Abingdon or in the nearby region.
17 Otherwise, lose, and lose because on a Saturday afternoon about
18 5:30 or so, I'm in my office, which the largest parking lot that
19 trail has at Abingdon. There is a mass exodus out the parking lot
20 taking a right toward Interstate 81 instead of a left into the Town
21 of Abingdon, because they are not finding the diversity of
22 activities or venues that will encourage a longer stay.

23 And to find those, what we are looking for diversified
24 activities. We don't need to send anyone else frankly to another
25 outdoor recreational facility, we've got plenty right here, they

1 come easily. But what we want are families, and families are not
2 one dimensional or visitors are not one dimensional. We may
3 have kids who love the trail, but the next day, they're not so
4 much wanting to do the trails, they want to do something quieter
5 or easier or different. And one of the most beautiful facilities is
6 the Art Lab here at William King. And we urge people to come
7 here, but we have heard the same feedback you all are hearing
8 from others, and that is it's difficult to access, or I don't want to
9 go there, I didn't even understand the museum, those kinds of
10 comments.

11 And not only is it just the diversity of activities or a
12 multi-dimensional family, we often have family members that
13 travel with their grandparents or multi-generation who kind of
14 wander around, which is important and great, but for them to be
15 able to access a facility like William King would be real good to
16 the entire region.

17 At the moment, you all can't see it, but at the
18 moment, I have a flicker in my foot because I have hurting
19 tendons, and I had difficulty getting here today. And I'm a pretty
20 able-bodied person, and I struggle. So, I think the, in Abingdon
21 and in the region at large, we do work really hard speaking with
22 one voice, because we understand the concept of the rising tide.
23 And there's a lot of folks out there right now who can benefit
24 from a rising tide, and I can think of no other one, that would
25 benefit more with William King. So, that's my perspective.

1 Thank you.

2 DELEGATE HURST: Do we have further discussion for
3 this last grant application for this Committee right now?

4 DELEGATE WAMPLER: Mr. Chairman, this is Delegate
5 Wampler, wanted to offer a comment when appropriate.

6 DELEGATE HURST: Delegate, we are not in a public
7 comment period, we have public comment at the beginning of
8 this Committee, we will have it again at the end of the
9 Committee meeting, but we are still in the middle of the
10 Committee's agenda.

11 DELEGATE WAMPLER: I thought I understood the
12 instruction as Senator Morrissey that it was appropriate to speak
13 after the application. I'll hold off until the final public comment
14 period, thanks.

15 SENATOR EDWARDS: Mr. Chair, John Edwards here.
16 I think it's going to prove access to the museum and, therefore,
17 make it a lot easier to get there. And, therefore, they will attract
18 more tourists and have them stay longer, I think it's a great
19 application, it's the kind of thing we ought to be done. I'm very
20 supportive of this idea. I might say I can't wait for the Barter
21 Theatre to open again. I could say that as a fourth cousin of
22 Robert Porterfield, I'm very supportive of Abingdon. And
23 anything you can do to attract tourism, I'm all in favor.

24 DELEGATE HURST: Any further discussion on this
25 item, this is one of two grant applications that we have in this

1 final block? And we have Staff recommendations that have been
2 discussed and are in your packet.

3 MS. WILLIAMS: Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry, I have one
4 more speaker. Could I introduce that person?

5 DELEGATE HURST: I think we still have other
6 business that we still need to attend to even after this. So, let's
7 go ahead. The Committee operates by motion.

8 SENATOR EDWARDS: I move we accept the
9 application, reject the Staff's recommendations.

10 DELEGATE HURST: Evan, do we need to split these
11 up and not take them up in a block?

12 MR. FEINMAN: We'll have to if we're going to do Staff
13 recommendations for one and not the other.

14 DELEGATE HURST: And I think procedurally, we can
15 go ahead and proactively split them up in anticipation or any
16 potentiality, or do we need to move to separate them, to sever
17 them?

18 MR. FEINMAN: No. When we move to accept them in
19 a block, that's putting them in a block, so don't need any motion.
20 The block doesn't exist until, well, we can just, we can make, we
21 can take action on 3747 and then accept action on 3741.

22 DELEGATE HURST: Let's go ahead and do that then.
23 So, for Grant Application 3747, can I get a motion, please? Staff
24 recommendation.

25 UNIDENTIFIED: Your Honor, I'll make that motion.

1 DELEGATE HURST: All right, do we have a second?
2 To reiterate, this is accepting the Staff recommendations not on
3 the museum that we've been discussing, but rather on full
4 funding for The Crooked Road signage.

5 UNIDENTIFIED: I'll second.

6 DELEGATE HURST: All right, all those in favor, signify
7 by saying aye. (Ayes). All opposed? (No). All right, the motion
8 is agreed to.

9 And now moving on --

10 MR. FEINMAN: If I may, Mr. Chairman, I thought it
11 easier when I can see people during a meeting. Senator
12 Edwards, was that you putting no on that? Could somebody tell
13 me who voted no on 3747? I've got to record it. Was it Mr.
14 Sutherland?

15 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes, I believe that was Mr.
16 Sutherland.

17 MR. FEINMAN: We'll put that down after the meeting.
18 I apologize, Mr. Chairman. You can proceed.

19 DELEGATE HURST: Thank you very much. Now,
20 moving on to Grant 3741, the Staff recommendation is to grant
21 no award. But the Committee operates by motion.

22 SENATOR EDWARDS: Mr. Chairman, I move we
23 accept the application and not accept the Staff's
24 recommendation.

25 MR. FEINMAN: Mr. Chairman, if I might offer a

1 compromise. I'll see if Senator Edwards is interested in this or
2 not. While I'm not persuaded, I think if I squeeze it hard
3 enough, I could see the parking improvement and the entrance is
4 tough, so the 88 ramps to get into the building being a direct sort
5 of tourism project, it is very tough for me to find the tourism
6 impact in projects that are getting stuff like plantings or
7 pedestrian walkways on the campus, et cetera. And so if we
8 were going to fund this project, I might offer as a compromise
9 the Commission funding 50 percent of the parking lot, driveway
10 modifications, paving, and ramps as opposed to the totality of
11 the campus.

12 SENATOR EDWARDS: I'll motion to that.

13 MR. FEINMAN: I had to do a quick, this is quick math,
14 so we can, I would say, you know, give us a little leeway
15 afterward, but as I look at their proposed budget, you've got
16 4,800 per 88 in ramps at the entrance, 45,000 for the east lot,
17 34,400 for the Art Laboratory lot, and then 175,000 for repaving
18 the upper loop road. So, that takes us to about \$259,200 as we
19 can only cover dollar for dollar, I would then say, you know, this
20 Commission award should be \$129,600 if you were to go in that,
21 in the direction I'm suggesting.

22 DELEGATE HURST: What's the total amount?

23 MR. FEINMAN: It would, my quick math, though I
24 would, I'd ask that the motion also include the ability to amend it
25 for other costs related to parking and driving accessibility. I

1 believe the cost would be \$129,600.

2 DELEGATE HURST: One hundred what?

3 MR. FEINMAN: \$150, \$129,600.

4 UNIDENTIFIED: Evan, can I --

5 MR. FEINMAN: Two fifty-nine two hundred.

6 UNIDENTIFIED: Mr. Chairman?

7 DELEGATE HURST: Yes, please.

8 UNIDENTIFIED: I would be more aligned with Evan
9 and Staff on this. I think that at least we're investing some in it,
10 in this project, and I'm more aligned with what --

11 SENATOR EDWARDS: A hundred twenty-thousand six
12 hundred dollars, \$250 --

13 MR. FEINMAN: If that's, to be saying, we could say,
14 you know, up to 140, you know, to make sure that we were
15 covering half the costs of improvements to the drive, parking to
16 accommodate the tour buses, and entrance to the museum. I
17 never like doing math on the fly like this, so I always want to
18 leave us a little wiggle room to work with the applicant and make
19 sure we're picking up half the tab on what we mean to pick up.

20 SENATOR EDWARDS: What's the applicant's response
21 to that?

22 DELEGATE HURST: Hold on one second before we get
23 to that, Evan. What would be the, would it be viable for us to
24 grant no award for this and continue to work, I know that this
25 would now be an additional round, but some of these other grant

1 applications seem to be changing, as well, that the museum has
2 going, seeing how those percolate. And also given a chance not
3 to be doing as much as I totally am sure that your math is
4 correct, just on the fly, back of the envelope, calculations of
5 precious resources, I just am loathe to do. Is that a possibility,
6 as well?

7 MR. FEINMAN: We certainly can, you know, in the
8 alternate what you can do is just authorize this with a no more
9 than number, and then we can work with the applicant on a
10 budget so that we don't have to do the quicker math right here.

11 UNIDENTIFIED: Mr. Chairman, I'm prepared to make
12 a motion that no more than \$150,000 less than to, to make that
13 award.

14 UNIDENTIFIED: I'll second that.

15 DELEGATE HURST: Real quick. Does Senator
16 Edwards need to withdraw his motion first, or can that be --

17 SENATOR EDWARDS: No.

18 MR. FEINMAN: Need to withdraw his motion or
19 accepting an amendment to it, or we could vote on Senator
20 Edwards' motion?

21 DELEGATE HURST: I think you had an amended
22 motion. Yes, it's amended motion, Senator Edwards, sorry about
23 that.

24 UNIDENTIFIED: We're entirely grateful for this
25 reconsideration. We'll just offer both because I don't think that, I

1 don't think you understand that those top, those top three areas
2 are front patios, Evan? Those are the, that chain you see are
3 awkward entrance for all truly disabled. Those are the things
4 that eliminate that step.

5 Delegate Kilgore, you will appreciate that, I know. If
6 you could possibly consider a loan with that, that would be, that
7 really is an awkward entrance.

8 MR. FEINMAN: Let me, looking at what you got here,
9 total request was three hundred some thousand, I think if the
10 amended motion is to not exceed \$150,000, and to work with
11 you on 88 compliant entryway and parking improvements
12 necessary to accommodate tour buses, you know, we could, if
13 the expenses just went up to 150, then that's what it would go
14 to, otherwise, we'd come in below that number. And then if
15 there remained a gap, you'd certainly be welcome to reapply.

16 UNIDENTIFIED: Okay, we appreciate it, thank you.
17 Thank all of you.

18 SENATOR EDWARDS: Me, too, Me and my motion, Mr.
19 Chairman, to say up to 150 instead of 140? Is that what I
20 gather, Evan?

21 MR. FEINMAN: I think that gives us enough wiggle
22 room to figure out, you know, I want to make sure if we do
23 something, we do it completely. I don't want to leave them with
24 a half-filled, you know, porch.

25 SENATOR EDWARDS: I'll amend my motion to, to

1 150.

2 DELEGATE HURST: I accept that.

3 UNIDENTIFIED: Second.

4 DELEGATE HURST: We have a motion and a second.

5 All those in favor, say aye. (Ayes). All opposed?

6 Let me hear it again, I'm sorry, let's just clear the roll
7 out here again.

8 All those in favor, please say aye. (Ayes). All
9 opposed? (No.) All right, the ayes have it. That motion is
10 agreed to.

11 We have one final business here, I believe, before we
12 get back to the public comments. Sara, please take it away,
13 thank you.

14 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes, thank you. We do have one
15 extension to consider. I believe the agenda showed two. We
16 later realized that the second extension can be handled
17 administratively. So, right now, we need to consider Grant 2982,
18 it's the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center Foundation
19 for the WireTough Phase 2 Project. This was a \$2 million grant
20 awarded in May, 2014. There is approximately \$97,000 left in
21 that grant. And this extension will be through December 31st,
22 2021.

23 There are a few reasons for this extension. One being
24 that to WireTough's credit, they have always been very careful
25 with spending the Commission's funding. They have successfully

1 received several other awards from DOE in particular that
2 seemed, every year or so they've been approved for another one
3 of those, but over the year in particular they've experienced
4 some delays due to the pandemic. In particular, their supply
5 chains have been disrupted, so they have not been able to get
6 the supplies that they need when they need it. It's also impacted
7 some potential contracts that they had pending pre-pandemic.
8 So, this extension would just give them a chance to recapture
9 the moment that they had pre-pandemic and to help with
10 completing some of the contracts that were pending several
11 months ago. Again, this would take you through December 30th,
12 2021. And Staff recommends approval of an extension through
13 December 30th, 2021.

14 DELEGATE HURST: Any discussion on this item for us
15 in this Committee? Hearing none, we have a Staff
16 recommendation to extend through December the 30th, 2021. Is
17 there a motion?

18 UNIDENTIFIED: So moved.

19 UNIDENTIFIED: Second.

20 DELEGATE HURST: We have a motion and a second.
21 All those in favor, say aye. (Ayes). All opposed? (No response).
22 All right, the motion is agreed to.

23 Sara, do you have any more business for us?

24 MS. WILLIAMS: I do not.

25 DELEGATE HURST: Wonderful. All right, friends,

1 we're almost finished here. Any other business from you, Evan?

2 MR. FEINMAN: No, Mr. Chairman, I have no new
3 business for this Committee.

4 DELEGATE HURST: All right, and finally, we do have
5 another opportunity for public comment. Is there anybody who
6 wishes to speak in this Committee meeting? Okay, folks, thank
7 you very much for rolling with the punches here. We are
8 finishing up strong. And without any other business before this
9 Committee, can I have a motion to adjourn?

10 UNIDENTIFIED: Motion.

11 DELEGATE HURST: All right.

12 UNIDENTIFIED: Is there public comment, Mr. Chair?

13 DELEGATE HURST: I didn't hear anybody for public
14 comment, but if there are individuals who would like to speak,
15 speak now, or we'll just have to wait until next time.

16 All right, those in favor of adjourning, I heard a
17 motion with a second. All those in favor of adjourning, say aye.
18 (Ayes). All opposed? (No response). All right, this meeting is
19 adjourned. Thank you very much, everyone.

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21 **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, Southwest Virginia Committee Meeting**, when held on Thursday, May 27, 2021, at 2:30 o'clock p.m., (by Electronic Conference Call Meeting).

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 _____ day of July, 2021.

Medford W. Howard

CCR