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4 VIRGINIA TOBACCO REGION REVITALIZATION COMMISSION

5 FALL FULL COMMISSION TWO-DAY MEETING

6 BERRY HILL RESORT AND CONFERENCE CENTER

7 3105 RIVER ROAD

8 SOUTH BOSTON, VIRGINIA

9

10 STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

11 OCTOBER 4, 2022

12 1:09 P.M.

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19 EVANS & COMPANY

COURT REPORTERS

20 POST OFFICE BOX 11822

LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA

21 (434) 239-2552

22

23

24

25 CAROLINE LANE, COURT REPORTER

1 APPEARANCES

Mr. Edward, "Ed" Blevins, Chair

2 Delegate Leslie Adams, Vice Chair

Delegate Kathy J. Byron

3 Mr. T. Jordan Miles, III

Ms. Julianne Hensley

4 Secretary Matthew Lohr

Delegate William C. Wampler, III

5 Ms. Gretchen B. Clark

6

COMMISSION STAFF

7 Joyce Knight

Sara Williams

8 Sarah Capps

David Bringman

9 Andy Sorrell

Vicki Humphreys

10 Stephanie S. Kim

Jordan Butler

11 Emily Van Pelt

Suzette Patterson

12

13

COUNSEL FOR THE COMMISSION

14 Elizabeth, "Liz" Myers

15

16

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

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4 MR. BLEVINS: All right. I would like to
5 welcome everyone to the Strategic Planning
6 Committee meeting. And we will call the
7 meeting to order now.

8 I'll ask Mr. Sorrell to call the roll

9 MR. SORRELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
10 Mr. Blevins.

11 MR. BLEVINS: Here.

12 MR. SORRELL: Delegate Adams.

13 DELEGATE ADAMS: Here.

14 MR. SORRELL: Delegate Byron.

15 DELEGATE BYRON: Here.

16 MR. SORRELL: Mrs. Clark.

17 (Attended)

18 MR. SORRELL: Mrs. Hensley.

19 MS. HENSLEY: Here.

20 MR. SORRELL: Delegate Lohr.

21 SECRETARY LOHR: Here.

22 MR. SORRELL: Mr. Miles.

23 MR. MILES: Here.

24 MR. SORRELL: Delegate Wampler.

25 DELEGATE WAMPLER: Here.

1 MR. SORRELL: I believe several of the
2 members had emergencies come up, so that is why
3 they are not in attendance.

4 However, I do believe we have a quorum
5 with five of our eight members here.

6 MR. BLEVINS: We will now ask for
7 approval of the minutes.

8 Is there a motion.

9 SECRETARY LOHR: I move, Mr. Chairman,
10 that the minutes be approved as submitted.

11 MR. BLEVINS: Okay. Do we have a second?

12 UNKNOWN VOICE: Second.

13 MR. BLEVINS: We have a motion and a
14 second.

15 All in favor, signify by saying "aye."

16 (All affirm)

17 MR. BLEVINS: Opposed, no.

18 (Negative response)

19 MR. BLEVINS: At this time, we will ask
20 for comments, and if there is anyone on the
21 phone, if you will let us know.

22 Any comments?

23 (Negative response)

24 MR. BLEVINS: If not, we will ask Amdy to
25 review our agenda.

1 MR. SORRELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 First off, welcome to Berry Hill. It is
3 a beautiful fall afternoon, here in South
4 Boston, and it is a pleasure to be with you
5 today here. Hopefully, we'll have an
6 opportunity to explore in some of the down
7 time, to see things here, and to get to enjoy
8 some of the walking trails and the sites of
9 Berry Hill.

10 And just a few procedural items -- the
11 bathrooms are in the hallway there. Please
12 remember to use your mike and speak up so that
13 -- for those that are participating online or
14 otherwise can hear you. And as we have a new
15 transcriptionist, make sure that if you have a
16 motion or something that you display your name
17 tag so that she can see that.

18 Yes, ma'am?

19 Joyce, is the audio line working?

20 MS. KNIGHT: Not quite.

21 MR. SORRELL: Not quite. Are you looking
22 for a connection, a Wi-Fi connection.

23 Yes, Joyce can get you a Wi-Fi
24 connection.

25 MS. KNIGHT: The Wi-Fi is Berry Hill

1 Resort and the password is berryhill.

2 MR. SORRELL: Yes. As Joyce said is that
3 the Wi-FI login is Berry Hill Resort, and then
4 the password is berryhill, lower case.

5 THE REPORTER: Ma'am, could you tell me
6 your name?

7 MR. SORRELL: This is Delegate Kathy
8 Byron.

9 THE REPORTER: Thank you.

10 MR. SORRELL: Okay. All right. Well,
11 with that, I will go ahead and start with the
12 review of the strategic plan.

13 First off, let me just give you an
14 overview of sort of why we're doing this, what
15 the Strategic Plan needs, and what the needs
16 are of the Commission for Stratgic Planning.

17 So, the Commission is required by the
18 Code of Virginia to update the strategic plan
19 or prepare a Strategic Plan every two years.

20 The last time this was done was in June
21 of 2020, and so 2022 is the year in which we we
22 need to prepare a strategic plan.

23 And the government has in the past -- a
24 Strategic Plan is your guide for the future.
25 It guides for funding policies, it guides a

1 plan for the future, and it determines when you
2 need to have a tough call on what should be
3 funded, and perhaps what shouldn't be funded,
4 it provides us the guidance.

5 And so we meet pretty often in order to
6 insure that the Commission is funding the
7 project that it desires to fund.

8 So, as part of our Strategic Plan update,
9 like I said, we complete one every two years,
10 so we did one in 2020, and before that in 2018
11 and 2016.

12 2020 was the year in which the plan was
13 updated in more scale than it had been in years
14 past, but I also want to review, before we get
15 into details, to present the plan, I'll mention
16 what our anticipated time remaining may be for
17 providing follow up with that.

18 And again, always subject to change, as
19 we review the plan and determine if more review
20 is needed, and, of course, at the discretion of
21 the chair.

22 So the code requires that as we develop
23 this plan, that we elicit input from, not only
24 local and regional economic developers input,
25 but also state agencies like the Virginia

1 Department of Agriculture, VDBD, Virginia
2 Department of Housing and Community
3 Development, Virginia Port Authority and the
4 Virginia Resources Authority, as well as the
5 Center for Rural Virginia.

6 Staff is anticipating, after we get
7 feedback from the committees and the Commission
8 on this particular draft that was in your
9 packet, opening at least a 30-day input period
10 where these departments would be solicited and
11 feedback would be gathered, that then we can
12 report back to the committee, plus their
13 feedback, and if there would be any changes
14 that should be considered as part of that
15 feedback.

16 We don't plan to limit our outreach to
17 just these communities. We will -- to insure
18 that anybody that wants to provide us any sort
19 of feedback on the Commission's plan has the
20 opportunity to do so.

21 You know, a plan is only as good as the
22 people in which it serves, and within our
23 footprint -- the communities that we are
24 serving -- we should make sure that everybody
25 that is impacted by the program and the project

1 has the opportunity to provide us feedback at
2 some point.

3 At the conclusion of the period, we will
4 pull this together, and would like to have a
5 committee meeting some time in the November,
6 early December time frame, in which we would
7 review the feedback.

8 If the Commission -- the full Commission
9 meeting tomorrow, adopts changes on a meeting
10 policy, then likely that would be a virtual
11 meeting in which the committee members
12 participate virtually.

13 That is to be determined, and once that
14 occurs, hopefully that would make it easier to
15 participate.

16 Let's see here -- if the Commission,
17 after we get that feedback and the committee is
18 ready to make a final recommendation on a
19 draft, we would look at presenting that to the
20 full Commission at the Commission's January
21 meeting -- a date we would hope to establish at
22 this meeting, so that we would have that on
23 everybody's calendar.

24 We are looking at the very first week in
25 January right after the new year. But we will

1 get adopted -- we are presenting a plan for
2 adoption at that meeting in January, and it
3 will be good for two years, to 2025.

4 And again, this plan is only required for
5 two years. If there is something that affects
6 -- a change of circumstances occurs, this
7 committee can be called again and we can meet
8 and that can be revised.

9 So it is a fluid document, but it is not
10 something that staff amends or edits, but it is
11 something that requires the Commission's
12 approval to do so, and that is why you folks
13 are meeting today.

14 So that's where we are with timing. And
15 just note -- if you have any questions on that
16 before I get into the meat of it.

17 And I think Mrs. Clark -- good afternoon,
18 I'll put you down here.

19 Okay. So first off, I'll just review
20 basically the 2020 plan and just give you some
21 highlights -- this is different from our plans
22 in the past, but the bottom line was the
23 existing Strategic Plan was really focused on
24 getting more involved in community and business
25 lending, and increasing access to capital.

1 And that was something that while we have
2 provided opportunities for that involving loan
3 programs in the past, we did not -- we weren't
4 as involved in community business lending.

5 Since the time period of adopting the
6 Commission's Strategic Plan in 2020, the
7 Commission is set up to create a community
8 lending program, and that is -- that has been
9 in operation for two years now.

10 And so basically, you know, we were
11 looking at a plan in 2020 that, you know, as we
12 entered our third decade of operation, our
13 focus was continuing to -- and we needed to be
14 able to deal with -- understand that with
15 reduced earnings we are working with now, how
16 we are going to continue to be impactful for
17 the future and be involved with our communities
18 in which we have been part of for 20-plus years
19 now.

20 And that would mean focusing more on
21 sustainability and insuring that we are doing
22 things that are bringing revenue back into the
23 Commission that we can put back out into the
24 program.

25 So that means doing a lot more with

1 loans, than dealing with just solely grants.

2 And that doesn't mean that the Commission
3 is not interested or willing to fund grants.

4 There are projects that are suitable for
5 grants, and perhaps might only be suitable for
6 grants.

7 But there are other projects that might
8 have revenue coming in that -- provide that
9 service that are more appropriate for loans.

10 So that is something that we are
11 interested in focusing more on and that's where
12 the Commission 2020 Strategic Plan focuses.

13 DELEGATE BYRON: I have a question.

14 MR. SORRELL: Yes, Ma'am. Delegate
15 Byron.

16 DELEGATE BYRON: Okay. So I have worked
17 on quite a few of these in the past -- since
18 the Tobacco Commission started. And while I
19 realize that our funding -- how many years --
20 (indiscernible).

21 THE REPORTER: I'm sorry. Could you
22 speak up?

23 DELEGATE BYRON: Can you hear me now?

24 I was saying that I have worked on
25 several of these in the past. I think we have

1 been in it since about 24 years or close to
2 that. It doesn't really matter exactly, but --
3 and we have made quite a few investments in
4 those 20-some years.

5 And I would like to know, before we
6 continue down a path that is very heavy on
7 lending, but since we have started up the
8 lending program, and the value as to whether or
9 not we continue -- I'm not so certain that I
10 would -- I had a brief two-year break from the
11 Commission, and I am not sure if I would have
12 done it quite as the same way they have done
13 where they wrote a lot of it on loans and
14 grants. So maybe we could go into that a
15 little bit.

16 MR. SORRELL: Thank you for that.

17 The Commission Lending Program started
18 right as the pandemic was opening up as well.
19 So they came on right online in early 2020.

20 And that definitely impacted its use, I,
21 believe. We have had about five applications
22 to the project -- to the program, and so far we
23 have had one project, one closed -- it was
24 two-point-some million dollars for a
25 telecommunications project.

1 And we have got several more that are in
2 process. It will be ideal if we had more
3 progress towards loans and lending programs.

4 However, it has been impacted by the
5 pandemic. I will say that we have continued to
6 have interest in -- and we have continued to --
7 I probably have at least one or two calls a
8 month of folks that are interested in utilizing
9 the program.

10 And what is appealing, is that it can
11 provide -- the community lending program can
12 provide funding where the Commission's funding
13 priorities might not find it to be an ideal
14 fit.

15 So, for example, the Commission's policy
16 has been made pretty clear that for projects
17 that are expansions of existing programs or
18 existing facilities -- they need to be either
19 edited with other states, if they are not just
20 looking to expand at existing sites in the
21 program that they might already have.

22 And so, in instances where companies are
23 looking to expand, and perhaps it might not
24 qualify them for a TROF incentive, then in the
25 past, they have looked at our Community lending

1 as an available option to get the working
2 capital that they might need in order to do
3 that.

4 That is an example of a community lending
5 program in areas where it might not otherwise
6 qualify for a Commission incentive.

7 Also, another, you know, when a project
8 might have -- might be interested in pursuing a
9 project that does not meet -- but it is a
10 project that is less -- it's lower on the scale
11 of funding than other projects, it might be
12 more appropriate for a lending program as well,
13 whereas, it could be a project that is doing --
14 providing economic impact for our footprint,
15 but it might not be a project that is a great
16 project to be funding.

17 So the CBL program is definitely filling
18 a gap whereas in the past we might not have had
19 an option for awarding to consider that did not
20 fit an ideal funding category.

21 That has been a -- that we can share with
22 those when they don't fit other funding.

23 DELEGATE BYRON: What type of interests
24 have we received in those two years?

25 MR. SORRELL: So in your full Commission

1 packet, you will note, once again -- and this
2 is something that we added in recent years.

3 Let's see. We have got a listing of
4 community business lending programs -- loans
5 that have been applied for. You'll notice that
6 there are, on page 101, there is four programs
7 there, or four projects listed there. And
8 because a lot of these are still percolating,
9 you will notice that they are still under their
10 shielded name.

11 But, generally, one is for
12 infrastructure, another has been for
13 hospitality, and we have had one for automotive
14 industry and another one for
15 telecommunications.

16 And the one that was closed, 3913, that
17 was the one for four million dollars.

18 And so the bottom line is there is
19 interest in the one that the committee -- the
20 loan committee is going to be considering this
21 afternoon is the one that is 4079. And that
22 will be a detailed discussion in closed
23 session,

24 DELEGATE BYRON: I have one question.

25 Where was the language -- I was trying to

1 hop back and forth between the previous ones
2 that we approved, and then this one.

3 Where was the language they talked about
4 the actual Tobacco Commission Loan Agency --
5 was that in the new proposed language, or is
6 that in the --

7 MR. SORRELL: It is in the adopted
8 Strategic Plan of 2020. On the existing plan,
9 we speak of our -- let's see here, funding
10 priority on page 5, we spoke of community
11 lending, about how this would become the
12 largest -- basically looking at a new approach
13 that focuses more on lending, and stewarding
14 our resources than doing more with grants.

15 So it is on page 5 of the existing plan,
16 it talks about funding priorities.

17 And then we also talked about improved
18 fiscal management on page 8 of the plan. That
19 speaks to our efforts towards fiscal
20 sustainability, but insuring that we are trying
21 to do more with lending.

22 And then we also have a section on page 9
23 on lending itself.

24 Perhaps the next -- the best way to jump
25 on the Strategic Plan is -- I just want to go

1 through the plan itself, and then we can sort
2 of pause as we get through those sections,
3 because I think that will probably get to where
4 we are in terms of getting feedback on the
5 individual priorities, in addition to facts and
6 things of that nature.

7 So as the existing Strategic Plan has
8 right now, we are basically three sections to
9 the Strategic Plan.

10 We have got an overview section that
11 reviews the Commission's structure, how the
12 Commission was created, the statutory
13 authority, Commission division.

14 And then we go over the funding
15 priorities and what the Commission goals are in
16 funding projects.

17 And then we talk about its operations.

18 So regarding the Commission -- and I am
19 using Attachment One in your staff report that
20 reviews the particular changes to those -- to
21 those Strategic Plans.

22 But you will notice that we are not
23 proposing any major changes until we get
24 funding priorities. But I'll just note that
25 the footprint map is a little bit jazzed up.

1 We added comments on there about where the
2 localities within the footprint, the counties
3 and southwest cities. That did not change
4 anything related to the footprint, but it just
5 clarified the material.

6 We didn't mention -- we didn't change
7 anything related about the Commission. We also
8 did not change anything related to our vision.
9 That remains the same. And as far as on page
10 4, you will note the heading of priorities.

11 Formerly, that was noted as a new
12 approach. That was when we started laying out
13 the plan that we adopted today in terms of
14 fiscal sustainability for lending.

15 Because that new approach has been
16 implemented, we have have now just moved the
17 tab to priorities.

18 And then as we move along where we get
19 into the discussion of really community and
20 different lending programs, and what it does
21 and why we are focused on that, that starts at
22 the bottom of page 5.

23 So there wasn't any changes to this first
24 paragraph that we see there. That stays the
25 same.

1 However, the second paragraph we added
2 information on how the community different
3 programs work. And that came from the existing
4 plan, and I think it came from the -- let's see
5 here. I know the portion of it that we felt
6 was more appropriate. So that brings -- this
7 location is new, but it is already part of the
8 existing plan.

9 When we get to the -- the educational and
10 workfoce portion, we have no changes to that.
11 That remains the same in terms of our listed
12 education granting, our talent attraction
13 program, and our workfoce financial aid. That
14 continues to be a very important part of the
15 Commission funding strategy and no changes are
16 noted there.

17 I'll also note that these priorities are
18 not listed in order. They are just listed in
19 terms of -- they are not a specific funding
20 priority. So it might say one, two, three,
21 four, five. All of these are priorities of the
22 Commission. So with that correction, we should
23 prioritize, from the most important to the
24 least important, we can do that.

25 But at this point these are not in a

1 particular order of priority.

2 We also did not propose any changes to
3 number three related to agribusiness.

4 Agribusiness continues to be something that is
5 funded through the regional -- regional
6 committee that the project may be within. So
7 if it is an agribusiness -- Southern Virginia
8 project -- it comes into Southern Virginia
9 program, Southwest, it comes into that program.

10 Now the 2020 Strategic Plan did do some
11 modifications to the committees. It
12 streamlined those committees, so in the past,
13 prior to 2020, there had been an agribusiness
14 committee that was just for agribusiness.
15 There was a committee -- a special project for
16 regional type thing. There was a committee for
17 research and development.

18 All the activities of those committees
19 were combined, so now it just depends on where
20 they actually are, as to where those projects
21 -- how we help them.

22 Do they come in on Southern Virginia for
23 example, if it was an agribusiness project in
24 South Boston. Or if it was a regional
25 beneficial project that might formerly have

1 been under special projects, and still be under
2 whatever region it was in.

3 And I'll get into more detail on that
4 when we get into a little bit more in-depth,
5 when we talk about that.

6 And we just have a minor edit on a
7 program that is still a part of -- what is
8 current.

9 And then in number -- page 7, the
10 industrial and business sites and
11 infrastructure.

12 We had not specifically, in our previous
13 plan, called out telecommunications as being a
14 priority for industrial and business
15 infrastructure.

16 In this plan, we remove that particular
17 reference because that was referencing
18 broadband, and the need for which the
19 Commission had been funding that. That's
20 something that the Commission, first of all,
21 still funds through the Southern or Southwest
22 Virginia program, and still remains in our
23 funding -- in our RFP.

24 However, we wanted to make it clear that
25 now that other sources and federal funding has

1 taken part, and are much bigger players in that
2 realm, that it became clear to our strategic
3 priorities that this was not something that we
4 were looking to fund as being the primary
5 funder.

6 You know, perhaps there was a project
7 that had gaps that needed to be funded, and I
8 think we are going to discuss some of those
9 probably tomorrow, in the Southern Virginia
10 Program, but that was the reason that we
11 specifically removed the word
12 "telecommunication."

13 Yes.

14 DELEGATE ADAMS: Mr. Chairman, this is a
15 question for Andy.

16 So with us removing that as part of our
17 focus or part of our focus on how are we best
18 funding this money, I know that we have here a
19 staff note that says, "Does not prohibit
20 broadband applications from being requested."

21 But in reality, if we get an application,
22 and we know full well -- are we going to say --
23 oh, no -- see, what I am asking is that if we
24 really need this, and we are not going to put
25 it in there, are we, in fact, saying that we

1 are going to keep -- when we get this
2 multi-million dollar application, or follow-up
3 with that?

4 And so if we say no we won't consider it,
5 then if we be honest with ourselves, then we
6 would potentially fund a broadband application.

7 I just want to make sure that where we're
8 going with this, that we are all on the same
9 page.

10 MR. SORRELL: Yeah. That is a good
11 question.

12 And if an application came in right now,
13 that would be something that staff would need
14 to review.

15 And staff does a very good job -- our
16 regional staff does an excellent of instructing
17 applicants on, you know, distance application,
18 and what that actually means in terms of
19 providing staff recommendations or not.

20 You know, I might defer to either Sara or
21 Sarah in terms of if an application were to
22 come in under today's current plan for a
23 broadband project, we do have the ability for
24 somebody to apply for it.

25 However, if we were to remove this from

1 the Strategic Plan, we would, I guess remove
2 that -- we would anticipate that we would
3 remove that option from the RFP and have it
4 associate it on a case-by-case basis if
5 something is needed.

6 DELEGATE ADAMS: And please understand,
7 we aren't asking this -- not to point out
8 certain irregularities. But I just want to
9 make sure we are all on the same page.

10 If we do go on a case-by-case basis, and
11 if we do that (Indiscernible).

12 MR. BLEVINS: Well, I agree with Andy and
13 Delegate Adams and I reviewed the new plan. We
14 talked about that. I think the intent here is
15 to basically just clarify that the Tobacco
16 Commission would not be the judge for money for
17 broadband.

18 I don't think that's implied in any way,
19 shape, form that we would not consider an
20 application.

21 MR. SORRELL: Yeah. I think what we're
22 trying to do here is show that this is
23 something that we have been involved in the
24 past, heavily involved in funding both at the
25 middle mile, and at the last mile level.

1 Nowadays, funding is in the multi-million
2 dollar range, and there is much more
3 opportunity for those to take on programs to be
4 funded.

5 Now that doesn't mean that there might be
6 an application that might not fit well with
7 other guidelines and things like that.

8 That might want to -- that we might want
9 to give consideration to.

10 Sarah Capps, I mentioned something that
11 if we were to have an application that came in
12 now for a broadband project, we do have it
13 mentioned in our RFP application -- RFP for
14 Southern or Southwest, but if we were to remove
15 this reference to telecommunication as a
16 strategic priority, then that would lead us to
17 remove that portion from the RFP.

18 I am trying to recall precisely how we --

19 MS. CAPPS: We did remove the broadband
20 from the Southern and the Southwest RFP as a
21 funding priority or as an investment category.
22 I do need to explain that the rules related to
23 broadband projects were very very strict
24 already, and essentially, they set the stage so
25 that, whereby broadband projects would

1 ultimately be considered for loans.

2 And that is still an option if we expect
3 any new project to be pursuing the state body
4 funding for broadband.

5 And when Andy says "multiple million
6 dollars" -- for example Halifax County from 69
7 million in broadband funding, so just providing
8 a little bit of relative factor there.

9 Does that help answer --

10 MR. SORRELL: Yeah. I think that we are
11 just trying to make sure that if we remove it
12 -- the word -- from the industrial
13 infrastructure, that still allows the
14 Commission the opportunity to consider
15 broadband funding projects on a case-by-case
16 basis, if they come in for some unique
17 situation. That was my main thought.

18 DELEGATE ADAMS: Maybe, Mr. Chairman,
19 there is some wording that you can put in
20 there.

21 MR. SORRELL: I expect there is.

22 MR. BLEVINS: I do think that there might
23 be a need for more clarity there, that changes
24 that language. It does not eliminate that from
25 consideration.

1 MR. SORRELL: Okay. So moving along, we
2 have -- I am going to pass this over to Vicki
3 Humphreys, our new grant programs administrator
4 to talk a little bit about several new
5 additions for funding priorities that have not
6 been in the last version of the Strategic Plan,
7 but relating to small town initiatives,
8 community assets and opportunities and economic
9 factors that may be affecting regional
10 competitors.

11 Vicki.

12 MS. HUMPHREYS: Thank you.

13 So one addition to this version we
14 planned is adding a small town initiative.

15 And this was first proposed in 2018. It
16 didn't get traction at the time.

17 So given the emphasis of broadband and
18 other economic factors coming up, we felt that
19 we should reconsider -- and it basically
20 focuses on our rural towns, our downtown areas
21 service for the rural communities economic
22 centers.

23 And because more people are teleworking
24 -- examples of this would include teleworking
25 spaces, initiatives for economic development --

1 incentives for economic development,
2 catalyst-type projects that would spur
3 development in downtowns.

4 So we would look at making grants and
5 loans to support capital investments in
6 downtown properties and entrepreneurial support
7 strategies that would encourage the occupancy
8 of these underutilized buildings.

9 MR. SORRELL: Yeah. I think that to add
10 to what Vicki is saying, this is adding to the
11 focus on -- to our small towns and communities
12 within the footprint that have the
13 infrastructure for the building, and water,
14 sewers, with road connection with an allocated
15 broadband and things like that, providing some
16 extra-focused attention to these communities on
17 a competitive basis, that would help fill the
18 gaps that aren't being funded by other projects
19 -- programs that might fund a facade, for
20 example, in terms of renovating it or coworking
21 spaces or other beneficial uses for the
22 community.

23 So, again, as Vicki mentioned, this was
24 something that the Commission took a look at
25 potentially running what they are doing in the

1 2018 time period.

2 It didn't take off. But we thought that
3 it was important to reconsider.

4 I know that regional directors were both
5 heavily involved in this program and are
6 looking at addressing this earlier, and they
7 might have specific examples of how this can
8 particularly be utilized in our funding program
9 in the future. But that is why we want to
10 continue.

11 DELEGATE BYRON: Mr. Chairman, while it
12 appears like you are -- when you talk about
13 encouraging and trying to support businesses to
14 the extent in those downtown areas, you were
15 referring to more of partnering with the
16 private sector to put business in those
17 downtown areas, and not in the buildings
18 themselves; right?

19 MR. SORRELL: Well, they could be all
20 kinds of different things. And it is purposely
21 made out a little bit open-ended, so the
22 Commission, if they chose, could conclude this,
23 could determine what best fits within these
24 small towns, and what they need.

25 DELEGATE BYRON: As we have done in the

1 past, I think that if we go broad -- you are
2 going to get a lot of applications from people
3 that really expand on your idea of what you're
4 trying to do, and they may or may not do that
5 investment at that time, but they are going to
6 deal with the renovation of buildings, and that
7 just makes it -- tighten it up a little bit and
8 have it with private investment as a big part
9 of that, that we are going to be setting
10 ourselves up for a lot of grief -- put forward
11 for other reasons.

12 MS. CAPPS: I can share just a little bit
13 of insight on this. For one, we have been --
14 there is a type of procedure that we are seeing
15 is more in innovation hubs and business
16 development centers that could be privately
17 operated or government non-profit operated.

18 We already could support these under our
19 grant programs that we have run historically.

20 So the addition to the small town
21 initiative is just kind of repackaging it.

22 Just to give a few examples, we funded --
23 we were the first dollars in on innovation hubs
24 in downtown Farmville, that Concorde is
25 sponsoring the development right now.

1 We were the first dollars in for a
2 business development center in the town of
3 Stuart for projects sponsored by Patrick
4 County. That's going to be a testing
5 development center.

6 One of the projects in Southwest -- our
7 first investment -- one of our first
8 investments that we made and what is referred
9 to as "shared office space" is in the town of
10 Big Stone Gap.

11 And anybody paying attention, a couple of
12 weeks ago, we had a really grand announcement
13 there that a Richmond company is going to be
14 setting up an office there and the reason for
15 their decision was the availability of that
16 co-working space.

17 So that's -- the primary reason we are
18 seeing right now in that program is something
19 which we supported historically, the business
20 of -- what would have been business indicator,
21 and it just takes a little bit to shape right
22 now. It really supports the entrepreneurs, it
23 supports, you know, small businesses. It
24 supports the satellite companies that want to
25 open up satellite offices.

1 The second -- you know, another side to
2 that is the incentive for private businesses
3 that locates into a downtown -- that is a new
4 concept that is intended to be very limited in
5 terms of that opportunity.

6 And what we are saying, the RFP is
7 somewhere up to \$30,000, no more than 25
8 percent of costs for a new business to put them
9 into operation. And the applicants would have
10 to demonstrate how that project would be a
11 catalyst for that downtown.

12 We have had discussions with -- in
13 Southern Virginia, we have been having project
14 meetings. We had a discussion with Sussex
15 County and the town of Waverly. They were just
16 outside of Sussex County. Many signs of a
17 prospect to see a downtown environment to see
18 how their work issues are down there.

19 And then we have had other discussion in
20 Southern Virginia about a potential project, in
21 Patrick County that would bring tourism
22 businesses, plural, back to a property that has
23 been vacant for more than a decade.

24 DELEGATE BYRON: (Indiscernible).

25 MR. SORRELL: (Indiscernible).

1 DELEGATE BYRON: What we just explained
2 in the discussion to make sure that the focus
3 is really on what these projects are, but we're
4 the ones that receive, sometimes criticism, as
5 well as -- we do get our share of that.

6 And we do a lot of good things and we
7 have done a lot of good things in watching out
8 for (Indiscernible).

9 So my question was just in the way that
10 it was presented, and that it didn't really
11 zero in on some of what you are talking about
12 -- you know, talking about business and
13 entrepreneurship and some of those things.

14 MR. SORRELL: Again, entrepreneurship
15 also with start-ups go along very well with
16 increasing start-ups in Virginia. This aligns
17 very closely with that, in addition to creating
18 new jobs.

19 So, again, that would be another part
20 that we would be soliciting feedback from
21 Secretary Lohr on this case as well.

22 It is important that we should focus on
23 that to insure that the plan also aligns with
24 other plans.

25 MR. BLEVINS: We have a -- I understood

1 what the intent was that I can see how we can
2 agree that it is important we be given time to
3 do it, so we can talk that through, because we
4 want to make it abundantly clear what our
5 priorities are and what are goals are.

6 MR. SORRELL: Community assets and
7 opportunities.

8 MS. HUMPHREYS: Community asset
9 opportunities -- a better term for tourism
10 opportunities or local attractions. This was
11 in prior versions of the Strategic Plan. It
12 was removed from the plan that is currently in
13 place.

14 But we felt like it was important to
15 include it again, and we still receive lots of
16 interest in these types of projects. And
17 because we do have the CBL plan program for
18 additional low interest loan opportunities.

19 MR. SORRELL: Yeah. And I'll just add
20 too, that this is the projects that are
21 regionally attached, not just locally attached.

22 So if a project is, you know, regionally
23 applicable to multiple communities, it is going
24 to draw in dollars in funding from different
25 locality footprints -- your public roads, your

1 Heritage Trails, here in Halifax, for example.

2 That is the type of thing that this would
3 be focused on.

4 Yes, ma'am.

5 DELEGATE BYRON: So the only thing, based
6 on what you just said, that I would wonder
7 about, because I think one of the reasons that
8 you may recall taking this out of the plan, was
9 just talking about the funding going down, and
10 that there was never a lack of abundance for
11 tourism projects.

12 So we do want you to encourage looking at
13 these programs with loans in mind or some
14 grants. I am only bringing that up because
15 there was a reason those were taken out.
16 Monies aren't getting any greater, so we are
17 back to putting things back in -- and that was
18 what the special projects (indiscernible).

19 So you know that is fine. We are going
20 to have to come up with a budget anyway, and
21 decided to add this in, unless they are going
22 to come in under Southside or Southern,
23 Southwest, or whatever the communities are now.

24 MR. SORRELL: Yes. And that is how they
25 are now. As part of the RFP, they are covered

1 within the Southern and Southwest.

2 Sarah, would you mind mentioning --

3 MS. CAPPS: One of our investment
4 strategies in the Southern and Southwest part
5 is tourism. And I just want to clarify that
6 that has not changed. That was there
7 previously. It was in there related to the
8 previous Strategic Plan, in both the economic
9 development programs, and for special projects.

10 So our consideration for investing in
11 tourism projects, that hasn't changed.

12 I think this language in particular was
13 just attention to kind of some of those catch
14 words when it comes to tourism, the community
15 assets, natural assets that define a region.

16 In our RFP, we previously -- under Evan's
17 leadership, we tightened the rules a lot in
18 terms of where our investments would go for
19 tourism projects.

20 That has not changed. So any investment
21 in a destination of whether that be Jefferson
22 Poplar Forest, the D-Day Memorial, or the
23 Heritage Trail -- any investment in a
24 destination, like an infrastructure project has
25 to demonstrate how the project will attract an

1 increased number of visitors, and visitor
2 spending.

3 So that is very -- we get a lot of calls
4 for just small tourist sites, that we have to
5 -- we decline often.

6 The other aspect of the tourism
7 investment strategy is, it is focused on
8 regional initiatives, and really supporting
9 tourism is regional by default. So we do allow
10 investments in tourism marketing when it is
11 appropriate. It is a substantial regional
12 issue.

13 DELEGATE BYRON: Mr. Chairman, where are
14 those located? Are they under grant
15 guidelines?

16 You just sort of referred to percentages.
17 Where are they at now, as far as --

18 MS. CAPPS: Are you talking about the
19 RFP?

20 DELEGATE BYRON: It is defined with
21 tourism.

22 What were the percentages?

23 MR. SORRELL: Yes. I think what Delegate
24 Byron is referring to, Sarah, is the -- we have
25 a -- we open up the application of the Southern

1 and Southwest Community and the details of what
2 the funding priorities are as laid out.

3 First of all, the Strategic Plan, but
4 then it also is what the funding priorities
5 are.

6 MS. CAPPs: Yes. And I have a couple
7 with me, and I'll share one with Delegate Byron
8 and anyone else, so you can see the specificity
9 of those sections.

10 MR. SORRELL: And I'll also note that
11 that is something that we also have general
12 funding policies that the Commission lays out,
13 and I'll get to that. And, again, part of the
14 Strategic Plan. We did remove that as an
15 actual active part of the Strategic Plan, not
16 because it is not a priority, it is not
17 important, but we felt that it was more
18 important --- Evergreen -- that we should take
19 it out of the Strategic Plan, should at least
20 be updated with the Commission's approval, that
21 we could do that.

22 And the R&D process was something we
23 started a number of years ago, in order to give
24 guidance to people who are applicants, so they
25 can say, okay, you know, we are applying for

1 something in a particular grant, what is the
2 current priorities of the Commission on these
3 particular projects?

4 DELEGATE ADAMS: Chairman, what Delegate
5 Byron is referring to, I guess, is -- actually
6 what documents (indiscernible).

7 MR. SORRELL: It would reflect the
8 proposal language.

9 Is that correct, Sarah?

10 MS. CAPPS: Yes.

11 MS. WILLIAMS I just wanted to add,
12 historically we have funded a lot of programs
13 under the Southwest program. Since we
14 published the RFP, and we spent that time to
15 really provide some details for the projects
16 we want to fund, I would say that the number of
17 requests have been reduced dramatically.

18 It went from having, you know, sometimes
19 it felt like half of the requests would be
20 tourism related to just having, you know, maybe
21 two or three in a particular round.

22 So, from that perspective, I do feel like
23 the RFP was successful in helping us to better
24 define what is a tourist project and what is a
25 local entertainment amenity.

1 MR. SORRELL: Yeah. Thank you for that
2 clarification, Sara.

3 I believe that the point is that in the
4 past, we have had requests for proposal
5 process, when we had grounds.

6 And for all this time, we would get
7 projects that an applicant would say: Hey,
8 this is a project, and introduce a plan, but it
9 still wasn't a -- it didn't meet other aspects
10 in terms of bringing in -- those type of
11 things.

12 This request for proposals has definitely
13 helped focus the project, to make it easier for
14 the Commission to make.

15 And that is important in trying to get
16 projects that are meeting the competing
17 objectives, giving them examples of what has
18 been funded in the past, and what has worked.

19 That has really helped to insure that we
20 get projects that are going to be potentially
21 eligible for funding.

22 DELEGATE BYRON: So when I was first on
23 the commission in 2018, I think we were just
24 getting to the point where we were bringing in
25 requests -- is that correct?

1 We had general --

2 MS. CAPPS: We started with the
3 agribusiness program. We changed the format
4 for the -- you know, the guidelines for
5 agribusiness to look more like a RFP, and then
6 we worked on on the other programs after that

7 MR. SORRELL: Yeah. It was around the
8 2018 time period. We have looked at other
9 state parks, and we said: You know, they are
10 looking for funding for limited grant dollars,
11 programs that are based on limited grant
12 dollars. We will request a proposal that
13 clearly defines what are strategic priorities,
14 what are examples, what are funding examples in
15 the past.

16 And having these regional meetings with
17 our partners, so as Sara and Sarah, we would
18 review applications -- review application for
19 projects with partners.

20 You know, we need a little bit more
21 guidance on what you want to fund, whether --
22 or what the priorities are. So that is where
23 that comes from.

24 DELEGATE ADAMS: I apologize, Mr.
25 Chairman.

1 (Indiscernible).

2 MR. SORRELL: That's correct.

3 DELEGATE ADAMS: Okay. Thank you.

4 MR. SORRELL: This document -- what are
5 your main overarching priorities?

6 And while the overarching priorities --
7 in our first meeting plan, you know, we didn't
8 directly call out community assets and
9 opportunities as a key priority, when honestly,
10 it did remain a priority. And I think that is
11 important to call it out, and then define it in
12 our RFP.

13 All right. And the last new addition
14 here is economic factors affecting regional
15 competitiveness. And this is the most we
16 expect to generate the most complications with
17 the committee, because it is not something that
18 we funded in the past.

19 These items are things that are affecting
20 the competitiveness of the regions as
21 manufacturers, and the companies and industries
22 coming in.

23 And we wanted to bring up the discussion
24 topic and answer that right here.

25 Vicki.

1 MS. HUMPHREYS: I feel that this is
2 written a little bit broadly at this point with
3 the intention of getting input from this body
4 and what types of regional efforts would
5 address these issues that we could potentially
6 petition the Commission to help with that.

7 So every time we go to an economic or
8 workforce summit, what we hear is that child
9 care is lacking. It is too expensive, not
10 available, and that housing is too expensive
11 and that there's a lack of properties for
12 people to buy.

13 SO we have not historically funded these
14 kinds of projects in the past. But we again,
15 to reiterate what Andy said, we wanted to put
16 this on the table as an important issue facing
17 economic development, workforce development
18 right now and further define it, and get input.

19 MR. SORRELL: And as Vicki mentioned,
20 this is something that we need to follow up at
21 regional meetings.

22 We haven't funded it (indiscernible).

23 And as Vicki mentioned that is something
24 that continues to pop up at regional meetings.

25 And so we don't know if this Commission

1 would consider funding, putting this into
2 priority in a plan, if it would mean creating
3 something different for us, or just, you know,
4 doing a hybrid of that.

5 So we want to put it out there as a
6 purpose function.

7 DELEGATE BYRON: Actually, recently we
8 just had a local discussion on this and it
9 doesn't surprise me that we're hearing about it
10 in this area. It is a problem, just like
11 finding workers is a problem, and that we don't
12 have any new additions to the plan for that.

13 I don't know that this is definitely the
14 direction that we need to be going either, but
15 it is definitely something that is of great
16 concern. We have what we call a "desert" in
17 Bedford County in the local center with several
18 people discussing that.

19 And our summarization at the end,
20 listening to some of those challenges, and
21 everything, it was not just about money. It
22 was about a lot of the things that you
23 mentioned, not that we have the answers to
24 that.

25 Part of the problem is the government

1 itself, because we put a lot of regulations in
2 the last three or four years that have made it
3 more difficult for people to offer child care
4 -- not only our church communities that used to
5 do it, but others.

6 So we agreed that there needs to be
7 something done to relook it back and see what
8 it is that we can do from a government
9 standpoint. A lot of people don't want to go
10 into this business because the regulatory part
11 of it prevents them from doing it efficiently.

12 They were having their own problems
13 getting help. So there are some good child
14 care places, but they have, you know, backup
15 lists.

16 But just putting money out there is not
17 going to be the answer to that. I think it
18 goes much deeper than that. And as much as we
19 would want to help, I just don't see where us
20 trying to add funding is going to be the thing
21 that actually gets that any further, unless
22 Sarah or somebody over there has an application
23 that would shed a different light on it.

24 It was more the fact that one, it is
25 expensive to get the building and everything

1 else and have insurance, then you have
2 liability, you have so many other things -- the
3 regulatory process.

4 And I think if we went back to some of
5 the churches that can supply primary care that
6 we would be much better off trusting them with
7 some of our child care so people can go back to
8 work.

9 MR. SORRELL: And it could also be that
10 perhaps the Commission may not be willing or
11 able or desire to go into actual significant
12 funding for child care.

13 Perhaps part of an application review
14 that perhaps the application gets a higher
15 recommendation or perhaps a particular funding
16 up or something like that. But they haven't
17 funded that. If that is part of their -- as
18 they are considered a part of -- or something
19 that is part of the small town initiative.

20 You know, it has always been part of the
21 conversation. It might not be a direct one, or
22 creates a lot of additional funding, but it is
23 something that we have.

24 But this is something that we will
25 address.

1 Is this something that you feel others
2 are adequately funding? Is there something
3 that -- or an aspect of this that we should
4 consider funding, or should we gather the data
5 and bring it back to you, as to what this could
6 potentially be and how we could -- and perhaps
7 this is part of the reason why feedback from
8 our partners would be helpful.

9 If they say: Well, this is a gap that we
10 are funding that is not being currently met,
11 that the Commission could potentially look at
12 the government for.

13 And that's where the Commission has been
14 very good at filling gaps that others haven't
15 been able to do.

16 THE REPORTER: Excuse me. I'm going to
17 move closer to you, so I don't have to keep
18 interrupting.

19 (Whereupon, the court reporter was moved
20 to another location.)

21 THE REPORTER: Okay. I would just ask
22 everyone -- I think the acoustics in this
23 building are not the best, but it is good to be
24 here.

25 So I will just ask everyone to keep that

1 in mind.

2 DELEGATE ADAMS: Mr. Chairman, I'm
3 curious to hear some discussion about the
4 coupling of these two ideas on housing and
5 child care. A lot of regulatory seems to --not
6 necessarily under the same umbrella. So --

7 MS. HUMPHREYS: There really wasn't a
8 rhyme or reason for that. They are just
9 looking broadly at these factors at attracting
10 workers and attracting business to an area.

11 MR. SORRELL: And I will say that we had
12 -- I will say that we have -- Virginia has a
13 really compelling case for including child care
14 in the equation.

15 I am sure we could get a copy of that
16 information and sort of see what they wrote.
17 And I believe they initially had proposed an
18 application as part of our program, but still
19 we were brought to the Commission with that
20 part of the application?

21 MS. HUMPHREYS: Are you referring to the
22 United Way application?

23 Yes. It definitely was (Indiscernible)

24 MR. SORRELL: So, you know, United Way
25 has provided us with some really good

1 information that would show where the gaps are
2 that could initially help us with having more
3 information.

4 DELEGATE ADAMS: Sure. During my travels
5 around the state, I will say that the child
6 care issue and the affordable housing -- I hear
7 it all the time as well. So I don't know, but
8 I don't know what the money can be.

9 I mean clearly I recognize that there is
10 problems. I'm not sure what money is going to
11 do to address it.

12 Your point about maybe we look at what
13 other states have done to kind of address
14 these. We put this in here. We have like
15 specific ideas or things that could be
16 implemented might be a little bit helpful.

17 But I will say that clearly they are
18 issues, but I am not sure what money is going
19 to do to fix it. I am not sure.

20 MS. HUMPHREYS: Thank you for that.

21 We have discussed these factors with the
22 United Way of Southwest Virginia who are
23 looking for creative solutions proposed, and
24 also the Virginia Housing Authority,
25 specifically Ms. McNamara, to address those

1 housing issues in relation to economic
2 development.

3 So maybe we would have some more, I
4 guess, vital examples of ways that we can
5 attach these issues after further input from
6 other stake holders.

7 DELEGATE ADAMS: Maybe just inquire a
8 little bit, sort of linking back to small town
9 initiative, with that new focus, would housing
10 be a component of that, for instance?

11 MS. CAPP: So to support the business
12 development side, one thing that we want to be
13 able to do is to support business development
14 that is in a mixed use project. So we may
15 support an activity that is on the bottom floor
16 that is off Main Street, and then the rest of
17 the building could get developed into
18 apartments.

19 There is a town, Lawrenceville, Brunswick
20 County has an old building downtown that they
21 are there trying to bring back to life.

22 And you know we already -- I feel like we
23 already have the ability to support that
24 business development site.

25 I think just acknowledging that it is a

1 mixed-use development, but the second and third
2 floors are going to be apartments, is
3 sufficient to help support housing.

4 We don't put our money into the housing
5 part of the building, but we require match for
6 the part of the building that supports the
7 business activity. We don't grant dollars for
8 the apartments. That is just an example in the
9 small towns of how these issues are coming
10 together, and how we currently handle it.

11 DELEGATE ADAMS: I really like that. I
12 live in the town of Chatham, which is just a
13 few towns down the road from where we are, you
14 know where we are and Halifax, South Boston and
15 we think about the footprint. Tobacco fields
16 used to be -- so maybe that makes a lot of
17 sense.

18 And so I don't know, perhaps tweaking on
19 the small town housing side with the way you
20 describe it.

21 I mean, I have seen that myself and the
22 buildings that -- they are just the custom has
23 changed, how they may be used.

24 But the town can be very charming and
25 nice when things are being used and kept up,

1 but depressing when it is empty.

2 But there are a lot people who like the
3 idea of being able to live in town if it were
4 available.

5 MR. SORRELL: It is not a brand-new
6 priority, but included as a small town
7 initiative. And, again, encourage those folks
8 to submit that those communities have been
9 vibrant in the past, and they can be vibrant in
10 the future.

11 MR. BLEVINS: I'm curious -- I'll ask
12 Vicki: In your discussions with United Way and
13 other discussions, did they provide any
14 specifics about how they would incentivise
15 someone to develop housing?

16 MS. HUMPHREYS: That was more child care.

17 DELEGATE BYRON: So did this actual
18 suggestion come from those agencies we are
19 talking about?

20 MR. SORRELL: It came directly from staff
21 after having discussions. So we said: Well,
22 we keep hearing something. It could be
23 something that the Commission should maybe take
24 a look at.

25 And again, we don't sit here and say: We

1 should definitely do this, but more of just
2 like what we are doing right now, having this
3 discussion.

4 DELEGATE BYRON: Once again, going back
5 to that we are all about job creation and, you
6 know, bringing in businesses and for a long
7 time we had research and development and
8 everything related around that.

9 I mean, we need to -- a lot of what I
10 would classify as social service areas where we
11 are servicing in a different way. And I just
12 don't think we need to be going in that
13 direction or indicate that we are going in that
14 direction. They are better prepared to take
15 care of those things. And it is something that
16 everyone is experiencing. So I do understand
17 it has to do with jobs, but the same as people
18 don't have transportation and other things to
19 get to work.

20 That's not for the Tobacco Commission to
21 start going in that direction.

22 MS. HUMPHREYS: There is not a way a
23 proposal specifically dealt with workforce
24 development of child care workers.

25 So those were the type of programs that

1 we were looking at, not really subsidizing
2 anybody's child care or anything along those
3 lines, which would be very expensive, but more
4 along the lines of creating the capacity for
5 developing more child care facilities, which
6 plays into your comments earlier about
7 regulations, a multi-faceted issue.

8 But we were really looking at things that
9 related to things that we have traditionally
10 done in the past in the workforce development
11 programs.

12 DELEGATE ADAMS: Mr. Chairman, and I do
13 the same thing Delegate Byron does in my role
14 as the chairman of the Board of Supervisors.

15 And I agree with several points that
16 Delegate Byron made.

17 But if we can maybe somehow put this on
18 hold for right now at this point because as
19 Delegate Byron was talking about, I would like
20 to hear from somebody (indiscernible)

21 I agree that you can put all the money
22 you want towards this, but but if the
23 regulatory and the past legislation has made it
24 so onerous for the churches and -- you can't
25 have but so many children, if X,Y and Z, if all

1 these boxes aren't checked, then it's just not
2 going to happen.

3 But at the same time, I think it would be
4 advantageous for us to hear, maybe bring it
5 back after we hear, and then either -- that
6 would be my preference to hear from some of
7 these outside agencies.

8 But I agree with Delegate Byron that the
9 regulatory trajectory is going to have to
10 change. I think we are going to have to loosen
11 up a little bit.

12 MR. SORRELL: Thank you for that
13 feedback. I think that reaching out to our
14 partners is something that the Commission can
15 give consideration to, perhaps not as a
16 potential priority, but perhaps including
17 elements of it, but the Commissions has not
18 decided one way or the other.

19 MR. BLEVINS: I would point out and
20 reinforce, when we discussed as part of the
21 Strategic Planning, this is what we wanted and
22 participate, kind of get a reaction and see
23 what the Commission's feelings were on it, so I
24 think what we are hearing is what
25 (indiscernible)

1 MR. SORRELL: That is precisely what we
2 wanted. We wanted to have feedback so that we
3 really -- see what -- (indiscernible).

4 MS. CAPPS: Child care is definitely a
5 problem, but I can see every single small town
6 locality applying for a grant, and they are
7 going to say, well, they are getting one.

8 I mean every single locality when needed,
9 and we don't, obviously have the money, and I
10 don't want to pick and chose.

11 So I think we need to be really careful
12 about how we word it, if we do it.

13 DELEGATE ADAMS: I appreciate that, Ms.
14 Capps. Once you open it up, it is hard to
15 close the door.

16 MS. CAPPS: Then we're the bad guys.

17 MR. SORRELL: Well, thank you for that.

18 Moving along, those are the big changes
19 to the plan that we reviewed.

20 Other changes, including things we
21 already addressed, existing plan that we had a
22 paragraph about building capacity to project
23 development -- we really felt like that had
24 already been dealt with, so we removed it.

25 We had a section in there that said

1 (indiscernible) Project Development figured.
2 That was something that didn't need to be
3 pulled out of a different plan.

4 As far as the committee structure, we had
5 noted under the current plan that we were going
6 to streamline that. Currently it was
7 temporary, so now we just change it to the
8 committee.

9 Prior to 2020, we had a larger committee
10 structure. After 2020 that was filed down to
11 committees that exist today, to Southern
12 Virginia, Southwest Virginia, Education,
13 Incentives and Loans, that is the TROF,
14 Community Incentive Programs, and what else?

15 And then we also have our Strategoc
16 Planning Committee and our Executive Committee
17 doing this work and an ad hoc committee, being
18 the Executive Committee, of course, being the
19 committee that does the policies.

20 Now, the change in 2020 was that the
21 members of the Executive Committee, our chairs,
22 vice chairs of each of those Commission
23 committees changed.

24 So that follows suit with how other
25 boards and Commissions have done that. But it

1 has been working well. We saw it where it
2 provides and pursuant to anybody in that
3 capacity to be a member of the executive
4 committee.

5 Let's see here -- and then we have noted
6 something about, in previous plans, talking
7 about management. We are already focused on
8 lending, so we felt like that particular
9 section of the plan was something that could be
10 taken out, then the portion that related to how
11 the community gets its lending program
12 operating in that earlier session as a
13 strategic priority.

14 We also talked about the need to create a
15 Commission Foundation.

16 This was something that has not yet
17 happened, but something that continues to be --
18 something that the Commission could potentially
19 pursue.

20 Basically, a lot of Commissions work in
21 education and workforce development and talent
22 attraction is potentially (indiscernible) and
23 the Commission was to pursue setting up a
24 foundation. The Commission could potentially
25 pursue other funding dollars in addition to the

1 funding dollars that we already have from our
2 endowment. That could just make those dollars
3 go further.

4 Now, that will require something to
5 enable our legislation. So this might not be
6 something that we pursue, like you know in
7 General Assembly session, but it is something
8 that we should give consideration to, that we
9 consider this. It would just give us more
10 capacity.

11 DELEGATE ADAMS: Mr. Chairman.

12 MR. SORRELL: Yes.

13 DELEGATE ADAMS: In my time with the
14 Commission we talked about this. Is this
15 something that hopefully we will try to take a
16 shot at, maybe in the upcoming legislative
17 session?

18 MR. SORRELL: I think that this -- in my
19 capacity as acting director, I think it is
20 probably not the best idea try to do
21 legislation, but when the time in which we have
22 a permanent (indiscernible).

23 DELEGATE ADAMS: Okay. Thank you.

24 MS. CLARK: I have a question about that.
25 Has any discussion happened with our local

1 community departments about this?

2 My concern is that there is a certain
3 amount of dollars and companies donate it.

4 And I hate to see dollars removed from
5 more local non-profits and foundations, and put
6 here just because maybe those local foundations
7 can do a lot with those dollars to help the
8 community a little better.

9 So I am just wondering -- the example --
10 the Danville Community Foundation. I guess
11 that is a big one in our area. It does a lot
12 of scholarship and helps a lot of people.

13 I wouldn't want these dollars taken away,
14 or just basically re-allocated to this
15 foundation.

16 So I have thought about that and
17 discussed that.

18 MR. SORRELL: I know that that is a very
19 good point, and it's something that we can
20 further refine. It is not the Commission's
21 intent to detract from the local foundation and
22 the good work that they do -- perhaps larger
23 foundations that have in the past, among our
24 local regions that aren't, you know, taking
25 dollars away from other projects.

1 All right. Let me see what we have here.

2 We talked about -- we took out a portion
3 related to our (undiscernible) like we needed
4 to keep all that in there. They already did
5 that.

6 And then in our industrial regions, we
7 talked about -- there is information about
8 Investment Virginia program and our other
9 regional working centers in Southwest Virginia
10 that were very specific. We made it more
11 general in the draft.

12 We also noted the need for insuring that
13 if we did continue funding such projects, that
14 we have adequate measures which set the values
15 and productivity measures, and make sure that
16 there are -- continue (indiscernible).

17 Related to the sort of complicated -- in
18 the previous plan, I think he was kind enough
19 to make them a little bit more user friendly
20 and easier to read. I don't believe we changed
21 too much of the actual wording, but the lines
22 are a little bit more direct, and easier to
23 read, particularly in black and white.

24 Let me see here -- and then finally the
25 other issue that is a big thing, we noted

1 something in our meeting schedule about if the
2 Commission -- how we potentially have those
3 meetings -- provisions for all virtual
4 meetings, provisions for -- (indiscernible).

5 And finally, on the work about names and
6 titles on because name change, but the title
7 doesn't.

8 So we removed the funding policy entity
9 because we felt it was inappropriate to have
10 Evergreen. The Commission regular updates
11 (indiscernible).

12 At this point, I would be happy to answer
13 any other follow-up questions that you may
14 have. We are right at 2:30, but I think we
15 have a break from 2:30 to 2:45. So we have a
16 few more minutes to discuss things.

17 MS. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, can we go back
18 to one program.

19 Back when we started this, we had a
20 discussion about how we structure so that we do
21 not compete with community.

22 Can you remind me how we do that, but
23 also don't take on (indiscernible).

24 MR. SORRELL: So, with our program the
25 Community lending program -- and basically it's

1 something that when the Commission, the way
2 that we don't take on that, insuring that first
3 the project fits within the Commission's
4 general goals of our priorities of revitalizing
5 the economy of Southern and Southwest Virginia,
6 and utilizing the progress. Projects are not
7 only open to communities, but also the type of
8 businesses, but at the end of the day, no
9 dollars go out unless they are fully secured,
10 and comes with a recommendation and risk
11 analysis.

12 They all are underwriters for projects
13 program. Everything is in terms of just taking
14 a look at the project, understanding that we
15 need feedback, send it to the VRA for
16 underwriting and credit analysis. That will be
17 part of the discussions (indiscernible).

18 And we want to make sure that if we are
19 going to provide a loan, that it is going to be
20 something that is beneficial. And we also
21 don't really need -- in a place where our local
22 community banks had the benefit.

23 We hope that that gap we fill -- we are
24 looking for something that might not be an
25 ideal situation for a community bank, but it

1 might not be an ideal situation for a grant,
2 but it could be an opportunity for a moral
3 obligation for the community to get a good
4 interest rate. It might be lower than what a
5 bank might (indiscernible)

6 MS. CLARK: So do we ask that that
7 project, you know, manager, to apply for loans
8 (indiscernible).

9 MR. SORRELL: We don't particularly ask
10 them to provide that information. Oftentimes
11 they come to us through the CBL program after
12 they have gone to a community bank that it
13 wasn't an ideal fit for that particular
14 community bank.

15 And since we have a (indiscernible) on
16 this particular committee, he might be able to
17 provide some feedback on how that works.

18 MR. BLEVINS: I've had discussion with
19 the Commission other Commissions about this.
20 You know I do have some concerns that we should
21 probably ask that question if they have been
22 denied with another lending. There is
23 potential for that to be, if we do not do that.

24 MR. SORRELL: I think it is an excellent
25 idea. Because, you know, we don't want to

1 compete with our community banks. If they can
2 do that, they are going to.

3 MR. BLEVINS: It would be very similar to
4 requirements that you know if a borrower can
5 obtain credit elsewhere, if they can get credit
6 elsewhere, (indiscernible).

7 MR. SORRELL: That is an excellent idea.

8 MR. BLEVINS: I have had concerns
9 (indiscernible).

10 MR. SORRELL: I appreciate that and the
11 definitely feedback that we would incorporate
12 in that application and add more clarity to a
13 lending portion of the plan, to make that clear
14 that it is not our intent to compete against
15 our local banks.

16 If there are any other feedback comments
17 or suggestions from the committees?

18 Well, I have heard everybody's feedback,
19 and we will appropriate that into our draft
20 that I shall get out to you before we get out
21 to our project partners.

22 It has been very helpful to have these
23 discussions with all of you and I do appreciate
24 you in providing feedback.

25 And so I will make sure that we did that

1 and we have that information where I can get
2 that out for our partners later on in October.

3 MR. BLEVINS: Do you have other business
4 for me?

5 MR. SORRELL: I do not.

6 MR. BLEVINS: Hearing no other business
7 is there any public comment?

8 (Negative response)

9 MR. BLEVINS: That would include anyone
10 that is on the phone, any type of comment?

11 (Negative response)

12 MR. BLEVINS: Is there anything else that
13 needs to come before the committee?

14 If not, the Strategic Planning Committee
15 is now adjourned.

16

17

18 (End of the Strategic Planning Committee
19 meeting.)

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1 COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA AT LARGE, to wit:

2 I, Caroline Lane, Court Reporter, Notary
3 Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia at
4 Large, and whose commission expires February 28,
5 2023, do certify that the foregoing is a true,
6 correct, and full transcript of the testimony
7 adduced.

8 I further certify that I am neither
9 related to nor associated with any counsel or party
10 to this proceeding, nor otherwise interested in the
11 event thereof.

12 Given under my hand at Roanoke, Virginia,
13 this 20th day of November, 2022.

14

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18

Caroline Lane, Notary Public

19

Notary Registration No. 238126

20

Commonwealth of Virginia at Large

21

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