

MINUTES
Special Projects Committee

December 19, 2001

4:30 pm

Tobacco Commission Conference Room
Richmond, Virginia

Committee Members Present

Delegate Bennett
Mr. Arthur
Delegate Byron
Senator Wampler

Delegate Bennett opened the meeting at 4:30 p.m. and introduced **Ms. Joyce French**, of the Southside Planning District Commission and the Lake Country Marketing Council, to speak on behalf of the Buggs Island Cove and Harbor Project.

Ms. French made a presentation on their request for \$900,000 for the Buggs Island Cove and Harbor Project in the Town of Clarksville (application attached). This is a regional tourism project designed to connect the Town of Clarksville with the lake and to diversify the economy of Southside Virginia. Clarksville is the only town on a lake in Virginia, however, there is no public access to the lake for boat users. There is a component to the project that will serve like a visitor's center that would promote day trips, scenic tours and Southside and thus add a regional aspect and bring in tourism dollars. The project is expecting to receive funding from EDA, private and municipal funding from the Town of Clarksville.

Delegate Byron asked for the project's time frame.

Ms. French responded that the urgency of the project comes from the Corps of Engineers. They are somewhat of a difficult agency with which to work and until they can show the Corps that they have commitments of money from sources other than the town the Corps will not proceed to approve the environmental. After this point it will be two years before the project will be completed.

Delegate Byron asked if the other funds were committed.

Ms. French replied that the only funds that are not committed are the federal funds, the EDA has invited her to submit a proposal but the funds are not officially committed.

Mr. Arthur stated that he had read over the application many times and thought it was a beautiful project. He then asked if there had been any studies to determine if any jobs would be created from this project.

Ms. French responded that they are hoping for the tourism revenue to stimulate the retail economy and thus create retail jobs.

Senator Ruff commented that this is not the complete solution to the problems of the area, but it is a step in the right direction. The community does not believe that their long-term growth is going to be another Burlington Industries or Russell Stover Candies but rather small start-up businesses that want to be in the area because of the quality of life. The community needs to be attractive to bring in people and businesses to stay.

Mr. Arthur noted that it is a very attractive design but the Tobacco Commission is supposed to be creating jobs with its funding.

Ms. French added that on the other side of the bridge, where the State Park is, adjacent to that they are developing 275 acres of the Regional Industrial Park. The funding for that is in place.

Senator Wampler stated that it looked like a great project. Are there letters of funding intent from the private sector? Has the Town passed a resolution to set the declared dollars aside?

Ms. French replied that the amounts noted were based on research within the private sector but that letter had not actually been written. The Town has passed a resolution supporting the tourism development and it would be no problem to pass one with the particular dollar figure included.

Senator Wampler stated that he has no confidence that even if the Commission provided intent for the entire sum requested that the Corps of Engineers would approve moving earth around the Lake. He has a great deal of concern over the time line when relying on the Corps of Engineers to proceed. Perhaps we should not commit to funding until there is a better idea of what the Corps' intention is.

Delegate Byron noted that this does sound like a beautiful project. She voiced her concern that a large portion of this project is based on a \$900,000 commitment from the Commission. If this is such a wonderful project why is there not funding from other sources? Also, where is the County and region's allocation going?

Ms. French replied that their allocation was going primarily to the Industrial Park.

Delegate Byron continued that it is her belief that it is the charge of the Commission to revitalize the economies of Virginia's tobacco dependant regions in various ways. She questioned why this request was not submitted through the regular funding process, what makes it a Special Project?

Ms. French responded that they need the commitment to move forward with the Corps of Engineers. Also, they are doing their best to make this a regional project, to serve all the surrounding communities.

Senator Wampler reiterated that he would like to see the economic impact. Perhaps it would be helpful for the Committee to recommend to the Commission that they write a letter to the Corps indicating that the Commission believes this to be a worthwhile project and that the Commission will be doing a further review of it.

Delegate Bennett added that the Committee does need to have further information on the job creation and economic impact of the project. He also agreed with **Senator Wampler's** comments about the Corps of Engineers. The Committee had two decisions to make, if the project had the merit to be funded and if it was regional in nature and should be funded by the Special Projects Committee.

Senator Ruff noted that **Senator Wampler's** suggestion might take the pressure off the Committee of having to decide which Committee the request should be heard by. Furthermore, though this project does not currently have a dollar for dollar match and incentive it is something that needs to happen to change the dynamics within the region.

Delegate Bennett stated that this is a project the Commission ought to look at; there are a number of hurdles associated with it however it does have merit.

Senator Wampler stated that he would like to move the project forward and made a motion that they recommend that the Commission Chairman send a letter to the Corps of Engineers indicating the Commission's support and interest in the project and intention to further review the project when economic impact information is provided.

Motion seconded

All in favor by aye vote

None opposed

Motion passed

Meeting adjourned at 5:30.

Submitted by **Carthan F. Currin, III**

Executive Director

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