

The Alleghany County Board of Commissioners and Sparta Town Council met in joint session on Monday, November 30, 2015, at 7:00pm in the Board Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, 348 South Main Street, Sparta, North Carolina.

Present: County—Chair Tom Smith, Vice-Chair Karen Leys, Commissioner Larry Davis, Commissioner Mark Evans, Commissioner Bobby Irwin, County Manager Don Adams, and Clerk to the Board Karen Evans. Town—Mayor John Miller, Councilman John Brady, Councilman Chris Jones and Town Manager Bryan Edwards.

Chair Smith called the meeting to order.

Mayor John Miller said the Town doesn't have a quorum so they won't call their meeting to order.

Commissioner Leys made a motion to approve the agenda for this November 30, 2015, meeting. Commissioner Evans seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Joint County/Town Meeting  
November 30, 2015  
Agenda

7:00pm	<u>Meeting Called to Order</u> <u>Motion on Agenda</u>
7:05pm	<u>NC Senator Dan Soucek</u>
7:10pm	<u>Pat Polley, Alleghany County Library Board Chair</u> RE: Year of the Library Proclamation
7:15pm	<u>Alleghany County &amp; The Town of Sparta Strategic Economic Development Plan Action Committee Presentations</u> County Manager Don Adams / Town Manager Bryan Edwards – 5 minutes <u>Dale Caveny</u> , Business Recruitment and Development – 10 minutes <u>John Kilmartin</u> , Tourism Development & Marketing – 10 minutes <u>Brett Liverman</u> , Healthcare – 10 minutes <u>Duane Davis</u> , Workforce Development – 10 minutes <u>Amy Lucas</u> , Youth Retention – 10 minutes <u>Brant Banks</u> , Agricultural Advisory Board – 10 minutes
8:20pm	<u>Question and Answer Session</u>
8:50pm	<u>Other Business</u> <u>County/Town Adjourn</u>

Chair Smith introduced Senator Dan Soucek.

Senator Soucek spoke to everyone about having a relationship with the elected officials to the point anyone having issues can pick up the phone to call with questions/concerns. He talked about it is excellent to see the County/Town working together.

Pat Polley presented the proclamation for the 2016: The Year of the Library. She read the proposed proclamation. She reviewed their funding needed for the proposed Library. She talked about the Chatham Foundation has provided a \$75,000 grant that must be matched. She explained that they want to use the proclamation for the fundraising efforts, and tonight is the fundraising kickoff. She thanked everyone for their assistance. She urged everyone to go by the Library during the holiday season. She asked for the adoption of the proclamation.

Commissioner Leys made a motion to approve the proclamation. Commissioner Irwin seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Mayor Miller said the Town will consider the proclamation tomorrow night at their meeting.

Chair Smith thanked everyone for their participation on the Strategic Economic Development Plan action committees.

County Manager Don Adams provided a brief history of the Strategic Economic Development Plan and the purpose of the action committees. He stated his appreciation to all of the committee members and look forward to the reports.

Town Manager Bryan Edwards stated his appreciation to the committee members also.

Dale Caveny representing the Business Recruitment and Development committee presented their report. (see attached report)

John Kilmartin representing the Tourism Development and Marketing committee presented their report. (see attached report)

Brett Liverman representing the Healthcare committee presented their report. (see attached report)

Duane Davis representing the Workforce Development committee presented their report. (see attached)

Amy Lucas representing the Youth Retention committee presented their report (see attached)

Brant Banks representing the Agricultural Advisory Board presented their report (see attached)

Chair Smith thanked everyone for the work and participation on the committees.

Commissioner Leys said she was glad to see a business recruiter mentioned, and thankful for all of the work done by the committees. She further said that she is impressed with a lot of the goals. She talked about the most impressive thing to her is this forced groups to work together but there is still a lot of hard work to do.

Mayor Miller talked about the area having a farming background, and a lot of work has gone into this.

Councilman Brady mentioned hearing several areas that crossed over each other and both boards' intention to support the committees. He said it is important to help accomplish some of the goals.

Councilman Jones said that was well said by John Brady. He asked about representatives from each committee meeting together to discuss the similar ideas. He thanked everyone and stated his appreciation.

Commissioner Irwin stated his appreciation for everyone working on this. He talked about the importance of the County and the Town working together. He further talked about seeing changes coming to the Town. He said some things have already started and the need to make sure it keeps going. He thanked everyone including Don Adams and Bryan Edwards. He said he thinks this report is a good first step.

Commissioner Evans said it is good to see the committees taking ownership of this. He talked about there are a lot of good things going. He said that he is excited to see the outcome of this. He said we will do what we can.

Commissioner Davis thanked everyone. He said that it was good to see that the groups are working with the youth and schools because they are the future.

County Manager Don Adams talked about where to go from here and many of them believe their tasks are done and provided examples. He talked about a lot of the information overlaps and those things will come back before the governing bodies. He said that the active ones will be coming back. He provided examples of Workforce Development and Youth Development where other groups could be developed and

things that could be coming back before the boards. He talked about where we go from here include evolving into two/three groups and will see them coming back about potential resources. The Town Manager agreed. The County Manager said items may not need resources and some may, this will be organized and brought back within the next several months. He reiterated his appreciation.

Commissioner Irwin mentioned everyone read the reports and come back to ask the questions. He used an example of dealing with regulations.

Commissioner Irwin and Pat Polley talked about the progress of the library. The County Manager said they are looking to go out to bid in January and the design is going well.

Being no further business, Commissioner Davis made a motion to adjourn at 8:22pm. Commissioner Evans seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Respectfully submitted,

Attest:

Karen Evans  
Clerk to the Board

Tom Smith  
Chair

## **Prioritized Strategies of the Business Recruitment and Development Committee**

The Business Recruitment and Development Committee has met in whole or part approximately once a month since May 2015. The purpose of these meetings was to review and prioritize the strategies of the Strategic Economic Development Plan 2015–2020 in an effort to identify those strategies that would have the most impact on moving this plan forward. Those strategies are aligned under two broad goals:

- Support and develop small businesses
- Bring new business to Alleghany County

After two months of meeting as a whole, three subcommittees were formed around topical areas:

- Commercial and Industrial Recruitment
- Virtual/Technical/Specialty Services
- Main Street and Small Business

In an effort to make the most informed decision, the committee heard reports from a number of individuals. Among them were:

- Alan Merck (BREMCO) – Mr. Merck discussed the infrastructure assets of Alleghany County, specifically in the areas of electricity and broadband internet connectivity.
- Chris Robinson (WCC) – Mr. Robinson discussed workforce demographics specific to Alleghany County.
- Bryan Edwards (Town of Sparta) – Mr. Edwards discussed collaborative efforts to approach economic development from a regional perspective. He also gave an update on the Sparta Streetscape plan.
- Don Adams (Alleghany County) – Mr. Adams gave an overview of past business recruitment efforts. He discussed those efforts that could be defined as successful and those that may be considered unsuccessful. He shared lessons learned from both.
- Zack Barricklow (Versado Communications) – Mr. Barricklow discussed his company's business and specifically described how they work in a global market via a virtual model.
- Jeff Foster (WCC) – Mr. Foster shared the services available through the community college's small business center.
- Brett Jarrett (retired from Lowes) – Mr. Jarrett discussed the criteria used by "big box" stores and national restaurant chains in locating to areas.
- Members of the local business community informally discussed the challenges they face doing business in Alleghany County. They also shared the positive aspects of having a business in this community. The areas discussed were:
  - Workforce
  - Operations
  - Finances

- Regulations
- Members of the committee toured The Results Company in Galax, VA. The Results Company provides a call center for Sirius satellite radio. The manager gave the group an overview of how a call center functions, workforce development needs, workforce retention issues, and infrastructure needs for such a facility.
- The Main Street and Small Business Committee held a joint meeting with the Sparta Revitalization Committee to discuss areas of collaboration and to hear more about what is currently being done in Sparta to assist small businesses.

By utilizing the information gathered from these sources the committees offers the following recommendations as priority strategies for business recruitment and support.

- 1) Develop an overall, comprehensive marketing plan for the county. While the committee supports a broad marketing plan, it also recognizes the need for the flexibility of the plan to address specific areas such as:
  - a. Industrial / commercial companies (An example would be The Results Companies)
  - b. Tourism (Examples: hikers, boaters, bicyclists, etc.)
  - c. Professionals ( Examples: Internet experts, engineers, doctors)
  - d. Real estate / building / live-ability ( Examples: retirees, vacation homes, assisted living)

Other relevant points associated with marketing are the need for an assessment of the county's assets (based on the categories above), and the current and potential economic impact of those assets. This assessment should include infrastructure; buildings and potential building sites; educational and workforce development opportunities; and healthcare.

There has also been much discussion of establishing or identifying a "brand" for the county. Establishment of a brand should result in a more consistent marketing approach.

- 2) Support and potentially re-structure an existing non-profit organization to implement the marketing strategy, recruit new businesses, and support and develop small businesses in Alleghany County. This would allow for a consolidation of current economic development and marketing activities that are spread among the Blue Ridge Business Development Center, Sparta Revitalization Committee, and Chamber of Commerce. It is recommended that a full time, experienced, enthusiastic individual be placed in this organization to address recruitment, support and marketing strategies.

## **Tourism Development and Marketing Committee Prioritized Strategies**

The Tourism Development and Marketing Committee has met once a month since April 27, 2015. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss and prioritize the tourism strategies of the Strategic Economic Development Plan 2015–2020 in an effort to identify those strategies that would have the most impact on moving the plan forward. In that plan, thirteen (13) tourism strategies had been identified for discussion.

In addition to our monthly meetings, the tourism committee hosted two (2) presentations. Members of other economic development committees, business leaders, as well as county and town officials were invited to these presentations. Both presentations were well attended and well received.

- On August 25, 2015 Susan Moffat- Thomas, formally of the Swiss Bear Downtown Corporation, New Bern, NC and Allison Platt of Allison Platt and Associates, Goldsboro, NC presented a program about the revitalization of the town of New Bern. This program focused on downtown revitalization efforts, marketing and branding.
- On October 28, 2015 Eric Woolridge and Matt Powell from Destinations by Design in Boone, NC presented a program centered around developing a marketing and branding strategy. This firm also currently works with the Town of Sparta on the Streetscape Project.

After much discussion throughout the seven (7) months of committee meetings and the above mentioned presentations, the tourism committee offers the following strategies as priorities for tourism development and marketing.

- 1) Develop a marketing plan for Alleghany County/Town of Sparta. Please see the attached document from Destinations by Design which lays out a potential tourism marketing strategy scope of work, time-line and projected cost. (Please note the findings of the tourism development and marketing committee are not all inclusive and additional funding may be required based on other committees' recommendations.)
- 2) Create a public/private Strategic Economic Development Organization to oversee the tasks set forth in the marketing plan, including determining the person who would be devoted to the purpose of marketing and economic development of the town and county.

**Destinations by Design  
Marketing Plan  
Scope of Work, Time-line and Projected Cost**

**Phase 1: Discovery (April 2016- June 2016)**

- Stakeholder Research (interviews, focus groups, etc.)
- Competitive Analysis
- Target Market Research
- Story-Branding & Theme Identification

**Phase 2: Development (June 2016- July 2016)**

- Story-Branding: Provide Key Messaging and Story Creation
- Visual Branding: Develop Logo, Brand Style Guide
- Web Mock-ups: Landing page for all agencies across county, each uniquely incorporating brand
- Ad Mock-ups: Print and Billboard
- Produce final plan

**Phase 3: Implementation (August 2016- December 2016)**

- Redevelop tourism-oriented Website (would replace VisitAlleghanyc)
- Branded Map Guide

If we can get good staff support for this project, we can perform this scope of work for **\$44,000**.

(Please note the findings of the tourism development and marketing committee are not all inclusive and additional funding may be required based on other committees' recommendations.)

# **Alleghany Economic Development –Health Committee**

## Committee Report

### *Goal*

Educate the community on existing health needs, ideas to improve health and our economy and provide opportunities to get involved. (Impact: High; Cost: Low; Timeframe: Short)

### *Overview*

The committee took an approach of reviewing key components to reach the goal of addressing who needs to know about health needs and opportunities, what information do they need to know, and how might they be reached.

### *Community audience*

While the broader community audience is understood to be a key group to communicate health needs and opportunities, to ensure that special groups are remembered during this effort, they have been identified below.

#### *Key community members in the general public include:*

- Community members living in poverty
- Older adults and elderly
- Children at-risk for adverse health problems or risk behaviors
- Socially and geographically isolated community members
- Those who speak a different first language, including Hispanic community members (including farmworkers)
- Retirees and summer/seasonal residents
- Grandparents who are caring for their grandchildren
- Parents

#### *Key community members who are in leadership and leaders whose decisions impact Alleghany County:*

- Alleghany County Commissioners
- Sparta Town Council
- Alleghany Chamber of Commerce members
- Alleghany County employers (especially larger employers): administrators, owners, and human resource professionals
- Local and regional organizations that address health needs or other social, education, or community factors that can influence health indirectly
- Community coalition groups that bring people together to address health issues



*Messages that need to be shared*

The group determined a variety of health information that needs to be shared broadly across the community.

*Key information to share includes:*

- Individual

Information	Method(s)
<p>Community-wide health needs and priorities to address. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chronic disease through addressing nutrition, physical activity, and tobacco use and managing clinical risk factors</li> <li>▪ Substance abuse</li> <li>▪ Behavioral/Mental Health</li> </ul>	<p>-News article series -Community outreach during public events</p>
<p>Message campaigns that may be adapted locally to encourage healthy behaviors including addressing the priority health issues above.</p> <p><i>Example: Million hearts campaign</i> <i>Example: Quit Now NC</i></p>	<p>-Newspaper articles -Group presentations -Information shared through Ministerial/churches</p>
<p>Local healthcare [and community] services available to serve you including how your choice to choose local healthcare impacts your community –tailored messages depending on audience (older adults/elderly; Hispanic Latino, others.</p>	<p>-See above -Broad distribution and promotion of community resource access points</p>
<p>Health Insurance, how to enroll, the sea of options and some tips on choosing the right policy for you; Value of offering health insurance options for employers. Partner with Appalachian District Health Department since they have a grant to promote this service.</p>	<p>-Workshops -Newspaper -Chamber of Commerce event</p>

- Family

Parents and Grandparents: Information about youth risk behaviors and how to prevent them

*Example: Talk to your child about alcohol*

*Example: Use Triple P: Positive Parenting Program or other resources to learn how to set limits*

Caregivers, Social, Education and Healthcare Agency staff about what local resources are available for health and healthcare services: particularly those available for older adults/elderly and children

Hispanic Families: Services available; Health behavior education

- Advertising
- School newsletters
- Parent nights or school or community festivals
- churches
- Various formats may include rack cards, brochures.
- ESL programs at school; Healthcare providers; Farmworker Health; Catholic church; Alleghany Ministerium

- Community

**Promote broadly the Alleghany County Resources available for individuals, families, and community members by enhancing existing Alleghany County Resource Directory to contract a web design firm to develop a locally driven online resource with searchable and printable resource information.**

-Host a training session with community agencies to learn about the website resource and how to refer clients to services

-News article, flyers or rack cards to promote the website can be distributed across the community

-Link the new website to local webpages including health and human service agencies, NC Works Career Centers, Chamber of Commerce, etc.

Economic benefits to your community of choosing local healthcare services  
Value of local healthcare services

-News article, advertising  
-open house events  
-flyers, rack cards

Community supports that help us all live healthier  
*Example: Creating more opportunities for walking downtown and greenways create a safer way to walk, improve our quality of life, and help local businesses stay strong.*

-various advertising and news stories, rack cards

*Example: Our local growers and producers are an integral part of having more healthy food choices available in the county and help us have a stronger economy.*

*Example: Did you know that tobacco use is a known risk factor for over 60% of chronic disease deaths in Alleghany County? Creating a tobacco free community is good for our health and can help our youth prevent tobacco use so they can reach their full potential.*

Community health priorities based on the most recent community health needs assessment report (see individual)

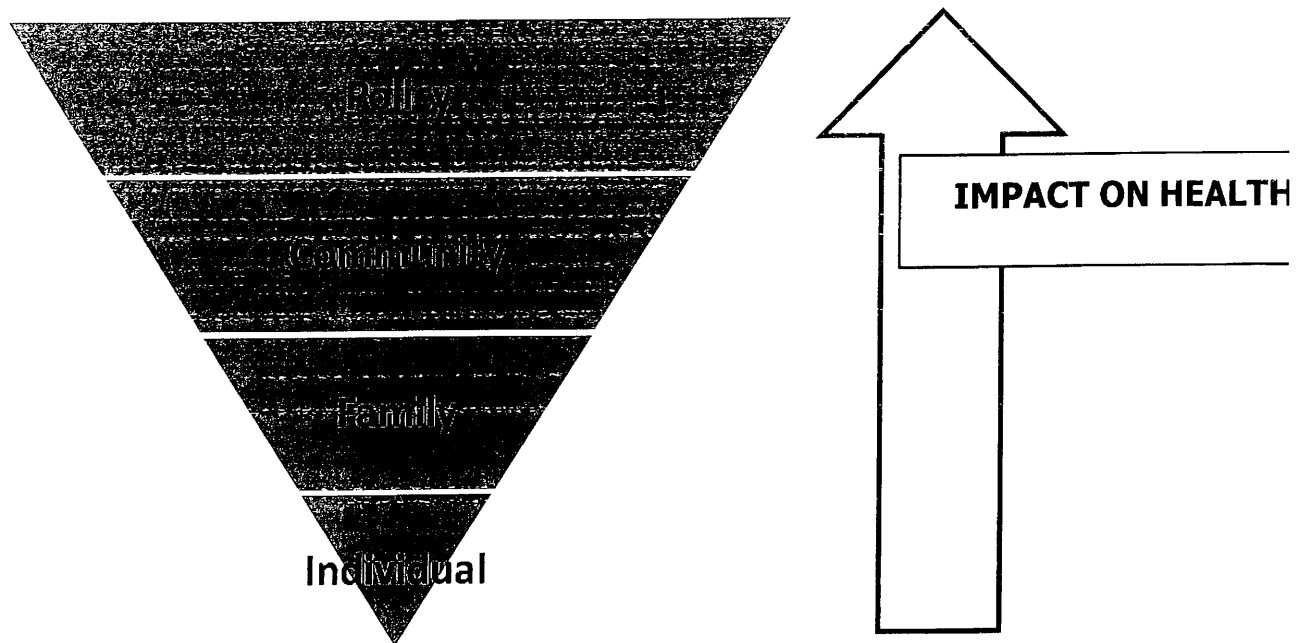
- Policy

Information	Method(s)
Host a leadership event to pull community leaders together to better understand local health priorities and needs as well as ways to support a healthier community, healthcare system, and economy	Host an Alleghany Health Leadership Summit in 2016 with Appalachian District Health Department and Alleghany Memorial Hospital (and others interested)
Develop Alleghany County policy priorities [with input] to create focused effort for communicating opportunities or	Build upon existing policy priorities using those that may

<p>concerns about policy decisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Consider appointing a local commissioner to sit on NC Association of County Commissioners committee relevant to public health and healthcare, as well as others determined; or discuss a workable alternative to meet this same objective with local officials</li> </ul>	<p>be part of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-NC Association of County Commissioners</li> <li>-NC Legislative</li> <li>-US Congressional Policy</li> </ul>
<p>Host a legislative event to have a roundtable discussion and local tour with NC Legislative and US Congressional representatives and/or staff representatives to discuss key Alleghany County policy priorities, needs, and opportunities</p>	<p>Plan based on key stakeholder input and legislative/congressional calendars</p>

*Impact across all levels*

The committee understands the value of all levels of communication about health needs, opportunities, and local healthcare services to all audiences. In addition, the group considers both communication methods and actions to support local health outcomes, a strong healthcare system, and thereby a stronger economy should consider the following framework for planning a strategic, multi-tiered communication campaign.



Adapted from: Frieden, T.R. (2010). A Framework for Public Health Action: The Health Impact Pyramid. *Amer J Pub H* (2010); 100(4):590-595.

## **Allegheny Workforce Development Action Committee**

Report to Elected Officials

November 30, 2015

### **Summary:**

The Allegheny Workforce Action Committee convened its first meeting on April 22, 2015, with 12 of the 15 invited members in attendance. Since that first meeting, the committee has met six additional times – May, June, July, August, September, and November. Attendance has declined with each meeting, leaving a core group of six committee members.

### **Strategies:**

The Allegheny County Strategic Economic Development Plan defined eleven strategies under the goal to “Enhance the workforce to meet local, regional and global needs.” Committee members reviewed the strategies and selected their top three, ranking them in order of importance.

The committee has elected to focus efforts on the following strategies and developed initial implementation plans for each:

#### **1-b. Educate teachers and guidance counselors on needs and opportunities for internships.**

##### **A. Develop a job posting system that will connect students to jobs/and or internship opportunities.**

- Training on the NCWorks.gov system, a comprehensive job listing/matching system, was offered to Allegheny High School teachers and counselors in August 2015.
- NCWorks.gov job seeker services include job listings, resume builder, letter builder, job market trends, virtual recruiter, career tips, career explorer, career informer, and events calendar for job fairs and recruiting events.

##### **B. Work with Youth Action Committee, community college, and public schools to host a career fair to inform students, parents, and teachers about job opportunities in Allegheny County.**

- “College Carnival” scheduled for March 15, 2016.

##### **C. Survey local business and industry to gauge interest and support for work based learning opportunities.**

- NCWorks staff survey of business conducted on a monthly basis. Scheduled to begin in December 2015.
- NCWorks business services staff will discuss work based learning during business/industry visits and share information gathered with NCWorks staff and committee.
- Inform business, industry, teachers, and students about assistance with paid work experience opportunities through the WIOA youth services program.

**1-c. Hold a job fair.**

**A. Hold career fair/job fair/business promotion – “business expo” event in late spring of 2016.**

- Event will provide an opportunity to promote local companies, build relationships with business/industry, and provide job seekers with access to job openings.
- Event will help to inform youth, parents, and community about business/industry in Allegheny County.
- “Expo” event and event preparation will also be used as an opportunity to “get a foot in the door” with local companies by offering a tangible service.

**B. Prepare students and jobseekers for success at the event.**

- Resume building and interview skills workshops will be offered prior to the event to high school students and general public. NCWorks youth staff will provide workshops in the high school. Wilkes Community College Human Resources Development (HRD) staff will provide workshops at the NCWorks Career Center. Scheduled for early spring 2016.

**C. Conduct business/industry survey on a monthly basis before the event.**

- Survey local business/industry for a number of months before the event concerning staffing needs, workforce issues, interest in work based learning, etc. NCWorks staff to conduct monthly survey beginning in December 2015.
- Gather data from the event for use in workforce development and youth retention efforts. Information will help identify needs and realize that others are non-issues.

**1-h. Conduct annual analysis of training compared to available jobs.**

**A. Gather data from business expo event, career fair, and employer survey to provide local job market information.**

**B. Continue business/industry visits using “1000 in 100” initiative as model for local team.**

- Team visits to commence in January 2016. Goal to complete one visit per month.

**C. Share data with public schools and community college to inform development of training programs.**

## **Youth Retention Action Committee**

Report to Alleghany County Commissioners and Sparta Town Council

The Alleghany Youth Retention Action Committee has met monthly beginning in April of 2015. The first meeting was held on April 27, 2015 with eleven committee members present. During the first meetings, members focused on prioritizing key strategies as was outlined by the Alleghany / Sparta Strategic Economic Development Plan.

After reviewing the nine strategies that were outlined in the Strategic Plan, members chose to focus on three areas. These were prioritized by members using a multivoting method. The top three priorities included:

- **Encourage local companies to expose youth to careers through internships and apprenticeships**
- **Develop program in High School that connects students to internships with local businesses**
- **Revitalize summer jobs program**

Each strategy was then discussed in length and potential partners and action items were identified for each.

### **Encourage local companies to expose youth to careers through internships and apprenticeships.**

***Potential Partners:*** Alleghany High School – Student Services Director (position not filled at this time), BDC, Wilkes Community College – Workforce Development, business partners

***Action Items:***

- Create better networking between Alleghany High School, Wilkes Community College and businesses. The potential Student Services Director could help facilitate these connections
- Host career day in conjunction with High School, Wilkes Community College and open to the public.
- Work to develop guidelines for potential businesses to outline expectations for interns as well as expectations of host business.

## **Develop program in High School that connects students to internships with local businesses**

**Potential Partners:** Alleghany High School, Get R.E.A.L. Youth Career Coach/Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act, Community Members, Business Leaders, BDC, Communities in Schools, Gear Up Program

### **Action Items:**

- Compile list of internships/apprenticeships and determine avenues to increase awareness at High School, Community College and general public
- Develop mentoring programs of professionals that are willing to provide soft skill and professional skill mentoring. This would also involve the Gear Up Program. This would potentially be a one-on-one mentoring program offering long-term experiences.
- Make introductions between Alleghany County School Systems and Communities in Schools. Director of Communities in Schools met with Youth Retention Committee and key partners of Alleghany High School in September of 2015. Potential benefits of Communities in Schools was explained and what future steps would be needed if Alleghany County felt this would be a good fit.
- Host *Real World* Event in spring of 2016 for all Alleghany High School juniors

## **Revitalize summer jobs program**

**Potential Partners:** Alleghany County and Town of Sparta, Alleghany High School, Wilkes Community College, BDC, local businesses

### **Action Items:**

- Improve networking between potential summer job employees and employers.
- Establish contact location/database for potential employers/employees

It was also clear that several of the identified efforts were already in progress and will need help to be sustained and enhanced.

As the Youth Retention Committee continued to meet, the group evolved to focus largely on strategy two. Additional members were invited to attend that would be beneficial in completing action items. A core group of members are continuing to meet but with a different primary goal than was first established, largely priority two.

There is also an awareness that as many of the action items are accomplished, additional strategies will also be met.

# Alleghany County Agricultural Advisory Board

## 2015 Summary

The Alleghany County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAAB) was appointed as one of the recommendations of the comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan adopted by the County in November 2013. This board was then assigned to serve as Agricultural Committee for the Economic Development Plan.

The board started meeting in Sept. 2014 and has held 4 regular meetings and 1 called meeting since then.

The following members make up the AAA Board/Committee:

### **Board Members:**

Brant Banks, Chair  
Johnny Wishon, Vice Chair  
Susie Gambill, Secretary  
Bob Woodward  
Bobby Davis  
Bobby Evans

Colette Nester  
David Gambill  
Dustin Phipps  
Jimmy Joines  
Marshall Hash  
Virginia Van Hampton

### **Ex-officio Members:**

Aaron Ray Tompkins, Extension  
Bobby Irwin, Commissioner  
Linda Hash, Soil & Water  
Russell Choate, Forest Service

Following were Priorities identified in the Farmland Preservation Plan that the Agricultural Committee focused on this year:

1. Endorse Alleghany County Farmland Preservation Plan as a tool to guide county programs and policies related to agriculture. Accomplished/Ongoing---The FPP is reviewed by local government and other agencies each year during planning process and at other times as opportunity arises. Plan should be revised/updated as new opportunities present.
2. Advocate for Alleghany County and rural North Carolina in efforts related to agriculture and forestry at all legislative levels. Ongoing-Individuals as well as Ag related agency members advocate for forestry and agriculture on all levels. (Brant, Chair and Johnny, Vice-chair serve as advocates to represent the AAAB when legislators need to be contacted.) Will continue to seek cost share assistance/incentives and grants for promotion of agriculture and forestry conservation practices.
3. Expand participation in the Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) program and explore an Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District Program. Ongoing-Board members encourage their neighbors to participate in the VAD program and will partner with the VAD board as needed to expand the program.



4. **Develop a Prioritization Plan for Preservation.** VAD Board will be meeting in Jan. with invited speakers to discuss Farmland Preservation ordinance updates and pros/cons of adopting the Enhanced Voluntary Ag District Program (EVAD). The AAAB will be invited to attend and offer recommendations. If the EVAD is adopted, the AAAB will partner as needed with the VAD/EVAD board to develop a ranking system for funding conservation easements and encourage participation in the program.
5. **Increase the number of acres that are under an active forest management plan.** Russell Choate, local Forester gave recommendations to increase acres under active Forest Management Plans-increase awareness of benefits of Present Use Value, increased value of white pine and environmental benefits of planting on steep slopes and along streams to decrease erosion and available assistance through NC Forest Service, Alleghany Soil and Water Conservation District and Cooperative Extension Service for Forest Management planning.
6. **Develop a mentor program for beginning farmers; educate young people about agriculture and farming as a career; and organize a Young Farmer Association.** Underway- Aaron Ray working with subcommittee (Marshall Hash and Dustin Phipps) to organize-one event was held this year. Next meeting planned the first of 2016
7. **Support a "Buy Local" promotion campaign.** 3 Grants were submitted to the Golden Leaf Foundation and to USDA. Although the Golden Leaf Foundation and the USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program grants were not awarded, Alleghany County has been awarded \$40,000 through the USDA Local Foods Promotion Program. Over the next two years these funds will be used to employ a local foods coordinator, to rent a refrigerated truck for deliveries and to purchase a walk-in cooler. More focus will be on a "Buy Local" campaign in 2016.
8. **Support funding for the US Highway 21 and other major road improvements.** Accomplished/ongoing ---US Hwy 21 project under construction but will need to continue to encourage support of funding for other major road improvements.
9. **Offer continuing education programs for farmers and agribusiness owners.** Ongoing-through Soil & Water, Cooperative Extension, Forest Service and NRCS as requested (pesticide certification training, waste management training and certified operator training, etc. Planning for an Ag Event at Fairgrounds next year.

10. Advocate for back taxes collected from farms losing Present Use status to be set aside to help with farmland preservation programs. With the adoption of the FPP, the County may entertain specific requests from the Agricultural Advisory Board to assist in farmland preservation.
  
11. Develop an Agricultural Advisory Board comprised of representatives of farmers, all agricultural related boards, agribusinesses, lenders, county government and agencies who work with agriculture. Accomplished-board members appointed to rotate in 3 year staggered terms. Efforts are made to encourage representation of all agriculture and forestry commodities and ag. related organizations.

As you see we met several of the goals or priorities listed. Some are ongoing and we will need to build upon those this year. Our next meeting is scheduled for Jan. 20, 2016.