

**ALBEMARLE COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY MINUTES
July 21, 2026
Room 241, 4:00 p.m.**

Directors present: Don Long, Chair; Steve Hood, Vice-chair; Andrea Johnson, Secretary
Treasurer; David Storm; Frank Friedman; Bill Mechnick; Andrew Cox

Directors absent: None

Staff present: Emily Kilroy, Director of Economic Development; Ashley Hernandorena, Business Development Manager; Avery Thompson, Management Analyst III; Lauren Bodhan, Senior Assistant County Attorney; Gabe Boisvert, Senior Assistant County Attorney; Bea LaPisto-Kirtley, Board of Supervisors Liaison to the Economic Development Authority (EDA), Rivanna District; Trevor Henry, Deputy County Executive

Staff absent: None

1. Call to Order and Establish Quorum

Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

2. Matters from the Public

There were none.

3. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Ms. Johnson and seconded by Mr. Hood.

MOTION: The motion carried unanimously.

4. Financial Report

Avery Thompson, Management Analyst III, provided the financial report.

Chair Long added that he and Ms. Kilroy met with the interim executive director of the Lewis and Clark Exploratory Center regarding some recent transitions. He said that the center would provide a report to the EDA in the fall regarding plans moving forward and loan repayment.

5. For Action

a. Monticello Wine Trail - Simonit & Sirch Pruning School Training Event Funding Request

Ashley Hernandorena, Business Development Manager, noted that the inclement weather at the beginning of the year had caused significant damage to vineyards in the region. She said that due to the weather, this pruning season was critical for long-term vine health. She said that Tracey Love, Executive Director of Monticello Wine Trail, and Corry Craighill, Winemaker at Septenary Winery Monticello Wine Trail, had prepared a presentation.

Tracey Love, Executive Director of Monticello Wine Trail, said that this request was intended to help build long-term resilience in the regional wine industry.

Corry Craighill, Winemaker at Septenary Winery Monticello Wine Trail, said that the Monticello Wine Trail was requesting \$20,000 to hire Simonit & Sirch Pruning School to provide vine pruning training.

Chair Long asked if they could provide a sense of what the losses were due to the frost event.

Ms. Craighill said that Septenary Winery lost 100% of its crop, and in some parts of the vineyard, they lost 30% of the permanent structure due to the freeze. She said that other vineyards had indicated similar levels of loss, and vineyards below an elevation of 880 experienced extreme loss.

Ms. Love added that the Virginia Vineyards Association sent out a survey statewide to calculate exact loss numbers, and she offered to share the data. She mentioned that this is the first year they were seeing second growth ripening at a different rate statewide, and winemakers and growers were unsure how to handle this.

Ms. Love said that about 75% of 39 wineries had expressed interest in the pruning class. She mentioned that wineries wanted the class to be as affordable as possible for the offseason, indicating a desired price-point of \$200 per winery. She said that the class cost about \$1,000 per person. She noted that the wineries would not be able to cover the price difference, which is why they requested funds from the EDA. She said that the plan was to have one participant per interested winery, with a limit of 32 slots for the two sessions.

Mr. Mechnick asked if the class came with a certification, or if there were continuing education opportunities.

Ms. Craighill said there was no certification, but there were opportunities for continuing education.

Mr. Cox asked whether wineries would be able to make claims against the governor's disaster declaration for the pruning classes.

Ms. Love said that the disaster declaration was specifically for crop loss or structural loss, and it could not be used for the pruning classes.

Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley asked if any vineyards had gone or would go out of business due to the frost.

Ms. Love said she had seen vineyards go out of business in Northern Virginia, specifically three had recently announced closing, including Pearmund Cellars.

Mr. Storm asked if they had approached the EDAs of the other localities where wineries were located for funding. He suggested also approaching Charlottesville Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau (CACVB).

Emily Kilroy, Director of Economic Development, explained that they reached out to some neighboring counties. She said that it was often more challenging for EDAs to find off-cycle funding, especially in smaller counties with smaller budgets. They reached out to see if other counties could contribute, but because it was not a grant match, it would likely fall into a different funding category for those localities, and the timeline was too difficult to meet. She said that the CACVB did not typically have available funds for this type of support.

Ms. Johnson said that the per-business cost was about \$625, which seemed like a very reasonable request when the impact would be spread across 32 businesses.

Chair Long opened the floor for a motion.

Motion to adopt the Resolution approving a grant to the Monticello Wine Trail contract with Simonit & Sirch Pruning School for pruning training for wineries in the Monticello American Viticultural Area, Attachment 4B was made by Mr. Cox and seconded by Mr. Hood.

MOTION: The motion carried unanimously.

6. For Information (no vote necessary)

a. Catalytic Project Ideas Discussion (cont.)

Emily Kilroy, Director of Economic Development, said they had prepared six idea areas. She said the goal for the discussion was to prioritize the idea areas.

Ashley Hernandorena, Business Development Manager, said the first catalytic project discussed was supporting agribusiness and food processing customers. She mentioned the Beacon Kitchen facility and the cold-link sharing project from Bellair Farms as previous examples of such projects. She noted other commercial kitchen incubators in the region.

Mr. Storm suggested reaching out to state representatives to support the agricultural aspects. He said that a commercial kitchen was being considered for the Southwood development, which may serve as an opportunity for the EDA to support.

Mr. Friedman asked if there was an agribusiness roundtable of leaders in the economic sector who were looking out for initiatives and plans to move the sector.

Ms. Hernandorena said she was not aware of anything that existed.

Mr. Friedman said that it was probably the wrong strategy for the County to assume what the industry needed from simple outside observations. He said they should convene the industry leadership on behalf of the EDA to get feedback about how the County could help.

Ms. Hernandorena said that in May, they convened farmers, producers, and food processors from across the region, and staff invited the Small Business Development Center, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and the EDD. The meeting provided feedback from producers in the area regarding the challenges they experienced that were creating gaps in the market.

Mr. Friedman suggested that if they were looking for catalytic projects, they could convene a group and find out what they need directly from them.

Ms. Kilroy said the purpose of the discussion was to share more about the idea and determine if the EDA had direction to move any of these forward. She said that any of these initiatives would require several implementation steps before funding an actual project.

Avery Thompson, Management Analyst III, said that the next topic was a no or low-interest loan fund, similar to grant match agreements. He reached out to CIC and CVSVC to see if they would be interested in assisting with the administrative portion, as that would be the main focus. Applications would still come before the Board, but they would administer the reporting and money handling.

Mr. Thompson said they were receptive, and their immediate question was about the amount and recipients. He noted that he did not have enough information to provide specifics, but he noted they would be smaller loan amounts.

Ms. Kilroy said that the next topic was Mr. Cox's idea. She said it was to identify property that could be a strong candidate for future development needing fill. The partnership opportunity would be to operate a clean fill receiving site.

Ms. Kilroy said that early conversations with permitting staff indicated that many details need to be worked out, but there was a regulatory path forward. The benefit was that many sites in the County needed fill removal, and deposit sites were farther away, incurring significant expense and a carbon footprint from trucking fill.

Ms. Kilroy said that having a site in the County to bring fill could be a net benefit from several perspectives. The net benefit to the EDA could be that if an appropriate site with future development potential was established, fill can be deposited there, raising the site to a level surface, allowing it to be marketed for development.

Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley asked if this would involve multiple sites throughout the County.

Ms. Kilroy said the idea was that there would be one site established as the fill receiving site, with construction projects bringing fill to that site from all over.

Chair Long noted there was likely more overhead to the project, but if they could identify land for fill, it would probably be beneficial.

Mr. Storm asked if staff would be tasked with identifying sites.

Ms. Kilroy said that if the EDA wanted to move forward, that would be the next round of work. She said they would probably request outside services to identify sites.

Ms. Kilroy said they had discussed site identification and characterization last meeting. She said that this analysis was initiated a couple of weeks ago at the staff level because it was part of the strategic plan. She said they hoped it would be completed by the end of the calendar year. She said the analysis would return eight to ten good opportunities, some of which might not be immediate.

Ms. Kilroy said that after identifying opportunities, they can move to site characterization, which involved selecting one or more sites to build a roadmap for achieving a more advanced tier readiness within the state system. She said the EDA could be a helpful partner in this, both by helping them think through which sites to put forward for characterization and by serving as a funding partner through state grant programs to support those opportunities.

Mr. Mechnick said that if they did this correctly, there could be a lot of usefulness in this study in terms of the metrics of impacts.

Mr. Friedman asked if they had already hired a consultant.

Ms. Kilroy said that the consultant for site identification had been hired and was still gathering data at this point. She said it was the Timmons Group.

Mr. Thompson the next topic was how to attract supplementary or complementary industries to the region. He said that at this time, they were already doing a lot of this work, so it did not make sense to carve out separate funding.

Ms. Hernandorena said that storytelling was the final topic for discussion. She said that the County had received feedback that it could do a better job with its narrative. She said the project would establish a campaign to more effectively tell the story of the County. She said the campaign would typically be professionally produced, and they would work with an agency to highlight community strengths and develop unified branding.

Ms. Kilroy noted that storytelling was identified in both the EDA strategic plan and the Innovation Corridor strategic roadmap.

Chair Long said that agribusiness, low-interest loan fund, and site identification should be the focus, and the fill site project should be considered if there was a readily available site. He said that storytelling fit well with the business attraction aspect.

Ms. Johnson asked what the timeline was for the projects they were considering.

Ms. Kilroy said it was up to the EDA. She said that this was in consideration with the five-year strategic plan and the EDA's available fund balance.

Mr. Friedman asked whether the Timmons Group would be reviewing sites in the development area or across the entire County.

Ms. Kilroy said the analysis would be based off of zoning and land use, so they will primarily be looking only in the development area. She said they may pull in the industrial properties on the border of the development area.

Mr. Friedman said that if the Timmons Group identified properties outside the development area, it may encourage and expedite the expansion of the boundary. He said that the Timmons Group should consider properties outside the development area, as it could help expedite projects or other development opportunities.

Ms. Johnson asked if site identification included redevelopment opportunities.

Ms. Kilroy said it did. She explained that they will be looking at a cost factor and economic potential of a redevelopment.

Ms. Kilroy said that Chair Long's suggestion seemed to be the primary focus of the EDA. She said that staff would scope out next steps.

Mr. Friedman asked if there were other localities that had implemented a similar fill program.

Mr. Cox said he was not aware of any other localities, but the Rivanna Solid Waste Authority had done a similar program to provide fill for the Ivy Transfer Station.

Ms. Kilroy suggested hosting Rivanna Solid Waste Authority (RSWA) staff to discuss their fill program.

Chair Long suggested establishing subcommittees to address some of these topics.

b. Staff Report

Ms. Kilroy recognized the Economic Development Office (EDO) interns who were present, Aoife Chow and Mann Patel. She said they were both University of Virginia graduate students. She commended them for their hard work over the summer.

Ms. Kilroy encouraged the directors to download the Central Virginia Innovation Corridor Roadmap, which presented regional opportunities. She said the planning was a robust textbook of the region's strategic advantages and near-term opportunities.

Ms. Kilroy said that staff had recently submitted Opportunity Zone rankings to the state. She explained that the federal government had made a request of the state. As a result, the state was conducting an engagement to rank the income-eligible census tracts statewide. She said that there would be an update on the rankings later in the calendar year.

Ms. Kilroy highlighted that site mobilization was underway at Rivanna Futures, executing the \$9.7 million Virginia Business Ready Sites grant. She said this enabled AstraZeneca to start site preparation. She also mentioned that representatives from County staff, state government, and federal government met with Senator Warner to brief him on the project.

Ms. Kilroy noted that the business retention and expansion numbers were high, covering two months of data, including the agribusiness and food processing round table, which resulted in higher numbers than usual due to participating county businesses.

Ms. Kilroy reported on the recent Chamber to Chamber visit to Chapel Hill, which included Mr. Long, Mr. Mechnick, Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley, and Neil Williamson. She said that a delegation from Chapel Hill would visit the County in September.

Ms. Kilroy announced that a Chamber Economic Forum was scheduled on August 5, featuring Steven Hartka from Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) as the keynote speaker. She said a lunch-and-learn would be hosted by the Central Virginia Regional Housing Partners next week, featuring Jarrod Elwell, Community

Development Regional Manager for the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond. She said the luncheon would be held virtually.

7. **Closed Session**

There was none.

8. **Other Matters**

Chair Long raised a point suggested by an intern, that the current public comment policy did not allow someone to speak about an issue unless they signed up in advance. He suggested that they should revise that policy.

9. **Adjourn**

Chair Long adjourned the meeting at 5:44 p.m. The next meeting is August 18, 2026 in Room 241.

Teste: _____
Don Long, Chair

Approved: _____
Emily Kilroy, Assistant Secretary