

Discussion notes from Pearisburg meeting, March 31, 2009
Taken by Mel Jones

What to do NOW

People:

- Parents need to be more involved in student education. Teachers should invite parents to be involved since many parents have not been through the school system and do not know how to offensively get involved in their children's education. Additionally, this is a cheap, effective strategy to encourage community develop.
- Giles country needs a good middle school. The move from seventh grade to high school is socially and educationally disruptive.
- We need to promote the performing arts through both schools and private teachers. Our children need the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities other than sports.
- Giles County is the only county that does not have a county library. We should get funding from the country for a library.

Employment/Business/Industry:

- We need more local support for small businesses. Business owners and entrepreneurs should not have to go across the mountain to information, training and assistance.
- Our community and region needs to provide more support and encouragement for local business.
- The region needs to shift its industry to bring people back to the area who left because there are no opportunities for professionals in their field.
- We cannot focus economic development solely on retail and restaurants we need to focus on industry that can employ a variety and high number of people.
- Pearisburg has found a niche in tourism, but if we only put emphasis on ecotourism we will not be as attractive and may be risking our livelihood. In order to diversify we need to promote a positive view of change.
- We need more outfitting businesses.
- Parking and walking accessibility to business make those businesses more attractive. We should therefore put an emphasis on compact development.

Community and Resources:

- The Great East Trail runs parallel to the Appalachian Trail project. If we connected that trail to the Appalachian Trail project, it would run through Giles country and make Pearisburg the only trial town in the region.
- Involving children in cultural grants, environmental conservation, energy efficiency initiatives, etc is a great way to encourage adults to get involved as well. We should use this strategy to get promote region wide awareness and activism.

- The DTEA project is shovel ready and just waiting for approval. We need move this project along.
- Pearisburg is near many natural resources such as the cascades, rivers and trails. The town has come a long way promoting these resources as tourist attractions, but it still has much progress to make.
- The chamber commerce has held small business workshops in the past, but they should hold more comprehensive workshops more often. We need to make sure entrepreneurs and business owners know how to open, keep up and eventually close a business. We need more entrepreneurial experts!

Energy/Infrastructure:

- We should promote the research, development and use of clean coal technology.
- We help people to educate themselves about what it takes to “go green.”
- Through tax incentives we can promote people to build homes that are more energy efficient (using geothermal and solar technology).
- Road improvements have diminished. For example, we need to continue to four-lane route 100. This project has been on the table for a long time and needs to be completed since the development impact would be great.
- We could use a regional industrial park.
- Everyone in the region should have sewer and water facilities. Sewer is available to all of the residents in town and should be at least be available to those living in the near vicinity of the town.

What to do Today for the FUTURE

People:

- In order to foster pride in our community, we need to give youth more service opportunities.

Business and Industry:

- We need to focus on getting goods and services regionally.

Community Resources/ Culture:

- We need loop trails to encourage day and week hikes.
- We should support and take advantage of the Around the Mountain development.
- We should restore and reopen the Paris Theater.
- By supporting the Heartwood project we will support tourism development throughout southwest Virginia.
- We already cannot eat the fish out of the New River because of heavy pollution. We need to clean up and protect the New river.
- We should advocate the reorganization of counties into the state. We should have 27 counties that are the same as the 27 planning districts.

Energy/Infrastructure:

- We should encourage all businesses to “go green.”
- Through recycling and methane energy we can save tremendous amounts of energy.
- We need to begin to make the transition from coal as a source of energy.
- We should encourage Virginia Tech to invest time and energy in clean coal technology
- We should facilitate area wide broadband access.