



WYTHE Economic Development News

**JOINT INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
OF WYTHE COUNTY, WYTHEVILLE, AND RURAL RETREAT**

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Note from the Executive Director

It was with mixed emotions that I recently informed the Joint IDA board of my intentions to retire at the end of March. For nearly 15 years, the Joint IDA has provided me an opportunity to use my skills and abilities to positively impact the community that means so much to me. As I sought to improve the opportunities and quality of life for my fellow citizens, I was honored to follow

in the footsteps of ancestors going back to the founding decade of Wythe County. I have also enjoyed working with the many board members (especially board chairs, who were so supportive of me) and other individuals who helped make Wythe County a recognized economic development success story during this time. However, I now look forward to having more time to engage in other activities. I am confident that the future holds many additional economic development successes for Wythe County, Wytheville, and Rural Retreat.

Alan Hawthorne

workers from sectors with decreasing employment to sectors with increasing employment. Workforce development partners will use these results to develop implementation plans.

Preliminary results for the Wythe-Bland area were presented to the Wythe Manufacturing Council at its quarterly meeting on November 19. As expected, while showing some workforce characteristics in common with other WIB jurisdictions, Wythe County has some distinct characteristics. A couple of notable points are that the manufacturing sector has grown significantly during the past decade, while it has decreased in many other areas, and that two areas of especially high concentration are beverage production and distribution and rubber and plastics manufacturing.

Virginia Tech Team Completes Analysis of Area Workforce

The Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development has just completed a Skills Gap Analysis for the New River/Mt. Rogers Workforce Investment Area. The study looks closely at the workforce needs of employers as well as occupational skills of current and potential workers. In addition to area-wide data and analysis for the 13-jurisdiction area, data specific to each jurisdiction will be provided. Study results will be formally presented to the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and the elected-officials consortium on December 11.

By identifying occupations with relatively similar underlying skills requirements, opportunities to transfer skills efficiently from one sector to another are identified. Results of the study will allow training resources to be targeted to provide skills training where relatively small training efforts are required to address skills-gap deficiencies, thus making it easier to transfer

Joint IDA Updates Strategic Plan

The Joint IDA board, in collaboration with its member jurisdictions and other key partners, is in the process of updating its strategic plan. The draft plan reaffirms the key opportunity and strategic match that advanced manufacturing will play in the intermediate time period. However, the plan seeks to broaden the role played by the Joint IDA in supporting and growing other sectors of the local economy. The importance of a skilled and productive workforce to support both expanding and recruited businesses is also reaffirmed. As the board begins recruitment of a new executive director, the draft strategic plan helps both local stakeholders and potential candidates capture a vision of where the board is heading and how it plans to get there.

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Longwood Elastomers Changes Ownership

In September, Longwood Industries, Inc., the parent company of Longwood Elastomers, was acquired by Wabtec Corporation.

Wabtec Corporation is a global provider of value-added products and services primarily to the rail and transit industry. When talking about the acquisition, Wabtec's chairman and CEO Albert Neupaver said "With its diverse end markets and technical expertise, Longwood will be a strategic complement to our existing rubber products businesses. We will benefit from Longwood's capabilities and market position in the oil and gas sector."

Longwood is a manufacturer of specialty rubber products for the transportation, oil and gas, and industrial markets. The company has two locations in Wytheville's Fairview Industrial Park.

Smith-Packett Plans Nursing/Rehab Facility

One of the region's largest developers of skilled nursing and rehabilitation projects plans to construct a 120 bed facility in Rural Retreat. The project is expected to invest more than \$12 M and employ over 100. Operations are projected to begin in 2015.

Old Dominion Freight Moves to New Facility

Old Dominion Freight Line has relocated its Wytheville Service Center to a larger facility. The service center, which employs 12, provides less-than-truckload and logistics services to Virginia, North Carolina, and West Virginia. The facility also serves as an important turn-point location for the company's linehaul operations.

"We're thrilled to expand in Wythe County, an area that continues to demonstrate incredible economic potential," said Trent Yates, manager of the Wytheville facility. "The additional space will increase our productivity and enable future growth in the region."

Industry Recognition Award Presented

The Joint IDA presented its Special Recognition Award to Wythe Stone and Sand during the Wytheville-Wythe-Bland Chamber of Commerce annual dinner held on November 14 at the Wytheville Meeting Center. The award recognizes community contributions made by Wythe Stone and Sand.



Joint IDA Chair DiYorio presents 2013 Special Recognition Award to Wythe Stone and Sand.

Wythe Stone and Sand, a division of Salem Stone Corp., began operating in Wythe County in 1987. They currently operate four facilities in the county with approximately 60 employees. Also, the company has permitted another quarry site and plans to build a new plant at their Sand Mountain sand site within the next two years. Examples of their commitment to the community include donation of materials to local churches, clubs, and schools and the sponsorship of multiple Eagle Scout projects.

Over the past several years, Wythe Stone and Sand has received awards throughout Virginia for their efforts in Wythe County. They received the 2011 Community Excellence Award from the Virginia Transportation Construction Alliance as well as a Certificate for Achievement in Safety in 2012. The company was recognized earlier this year with an award for the Best Quarry Reclamation and Best Overall Reclamation for their restoration efforts of an unused quarry pit on Sand Mountain.

Regional Unemployment Rates

Location	Jul-12	Jul-13	Aug-12	Aug-13	Sept-12	Sept-13
Wythe	7.0%	7.0%	6.7%	6.4%	6.5%	6.2%
Bland	6.2%	6.1%	5.9%	5.8%	5.8%	5.6%
Smyth	9.0%	8.7%	8.8%	8.2%	8.4%	7.8%
Carroll	8.7%	7.7%	8.6%	7.3%	8.2%	7.1%
Grayson	8.5%	9.8%	9.1%	9.4%	8.1%	8.5%
Pulaski	7.6%	7.0%	7.3%	6.5%	6.5%	6.1%
Galax	8.8%	16.2%	8.6%	8.5%	7.4%	7.8%
Region*	8.0%	8.1%	7.9%	7.3%	7.3%	6.9%
Virginia	6.2%	5.8%	6.0%	5.6%	5.7%	5.3%
US	8.6%	7.7%	8.2%	7.3%	7.6%	7.0%

*Overall regional rate includes Wythe County and the contiguous counties of Bland, Smyth, Carroll, Grayson, and Pulaski, and the City of Galax.

Presentations Available

If your civic or other community group would like to have a presentation on Progress Park or on Wythe County economic development in general, please contact the Joint IDA office to schedule a presentation for your organization.

Wythe Economic Development News is published quarterly by the Joint Industrial Development Authority of Wythe County to inform interested parties of industrial development activities in the county and its incorporated towns. If you are not on the distribution list and would like to be added, please let us know at JointIDA@wytheville.org or call (276) 223-3370.