

JOINT INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Minutes of Meeting
August 27, 2026
and reconvened on September 14, 2026

The Joint Industrial Development Authority of Wythe County, Wytheville, and Rural Retreat held its regular meeting on Thursday, August 27, 2026, at 3:00 PM, in the Council Room of the Wytheville Municipal Building at 150 East Monroe Street, Wytheville, Virginia.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jeff Lucas, Chairman
Sherri Case, Vice Chairman
Mark Bloomfield, Treasurer
Dennis Manuel
Bobby Angles

MEMBERS ABSENT

Michael Cole
Aaron Robinson

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Stephen Bear, County Administrator, Wythe County

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Chris Slemper, Interim Town Manager, Town of Wytheville
Jason Childers, Town Manager, Town of Rural Retreat

JOINT IDA STAFF PRESENT

John Matthews, Interim Executive Director
Jessica DeHart, Administrative Assistant

JOINT IDA STAFF ABSENT

None.

DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Chairman Lucas called the meeting to order and determined a quorum to be present. He then offered an invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

CITIZENS' TIME

Chairman Lucas welcomed Stephen Bear, County Administrator, Wythe County and Cathy Pattison, Council Member, Town of Wytheville, and asked if anyone would like to address the board during citizens' time. Mr. Bear informed the Joint IDA Board that the Joint Governing Bodies meeting will be Monday, August 31, 2026, at 6:00 PM at the Wytheville Meeting Center, a zoning input session is being held by the Wythe County Board of Supervisors Thursday, September 3 at 6:00 PM, 2026 at Scott Memorial Middle School, and lastly the joint meeting between the Joint IDA Board of Directors and the Wythe County Board of Supervisors is on September 14, 2026, at 5:00 PM at the county administration building. Chairman Lucas thanked Mr. Bear for addressing the board.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. DeHart mentioned there were some changes to the minutes after they were emailed to the board including the addition of John Matthews' resignation letter and a typo. Ms. Case made the motion to approve the amended minutes as presented, which was seconded by Mr. Manuel. With no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

FINANCIAL REPORTS AND APPROVAL OF INVOICES

Chairman Lucas asked if there were any questions about the financial statements from July 24, 2026, to August 27, 2026. Ms. DeHart mentioned the Joint IDA had not yet received the July salaries and benefits invoice from the Town of Wytheville, so there should be two larger invoices next board meeting.

Joint IDA of Wythe County Check Register July 24, 2026 – August 27, 2026

Type	Date	Payee	Amount
EFT	08/27/2026	Verizon	\$88.01
EFT	08/27/2026	Appalachian Power Company	\$129.56
EFT	08/27/2026	Xerox Corporation	\$63.25
EFT	08/27/2026	New Peoples Bank-Wytheville	\$1,253.13
EFT	08/27/2026	Town of Wytheville	\$38.49
EFT	08/27/2026	First Bank-MasterCard	\$947.05
EFT	08/27/2026	Brightspeed	\$155.99
EFT	08/27/2026	Brightspeed	\$152.97
8397	08/27/2026	Joshua Neal-Brook Hill Lawncare	\$125.00
8398	08/27/2026	New River/Mt Rogers Workforce Dev. Board	\$1,168.43

8399	08/27/2026	John Matthews-Reimbursement	\$268.25
8400	08/27/2026	Cowan Perry PC	\$500.00
Total			\$4,890.13

STAFF REPORT

Mr. Matthews commented that Ms. DeHart did a fantastic job preparing for the audit. The auditors commented that they had most everything they needed before they arrived. He wanted to commend Ms. DeHart on her due diligence concerning the audit.

Mr. Matthews reported that Cowan Perry, legal counsel for the Joint IDA, is preparing a standard letter requesting the return of any Joint IDA-owned devices, records, and data in the possession of former staff members. A letter will be provided to Mr. Matthews upon his departure as well.

Mr. Matthews reported that he recently met with representatives of RWE Americas and received an update on their battery storage project, which was not previously under his direct oversight. The project, located near the Jackson Ferry Substation, involves a battery storage facility on approximately 14 acres and is currently underway. Representatives indicated that they are continuing to engage with the community and remain available to answer questions regarding the project.

Mr. Matthews said that Joint IDA staff met with Shanna Williams of Solace Hospice and executed documents to turn their line of credit into a term loan through the Revolving Loan Fund program.

Mr. Bear expressed appreciation to Mr. Matthews for his assistance and cooperation during the transition period.

An update was provided regarding the Blue Star NBR facility and the associated performance agreement with a performance date at the end of March of the following year. It was reported that the project has not demonstrated forward progress, particularly with respect to Lot 24A. Discussions have been initiated with legal counsel to review the performance agreement and consider available options, including potential claw back procedures related to 24A and whether any action may be appropriate prior to the performance date. The importance of preserving future opportunities for the site was noted. It was also mentioned that Lot 24B, on which the NBR facility has been constructed, presents additional considerations due to the investment made by the company. Based on the current interpretation of the performance agreement, the activities associated with Lots 24A and 24B can be addressed separately. The Joint IDA is awaiting further guidance from legal counsel following their review.

PROJECT UPDATE

PROGRESS PARK SITE DEVELOPMENT-LOT 10

Mr. Matthews provided an update on the Lot 10 Site Development Project. He noted that he had hoped to have the Phase II agreement with Virginia Business Ready Sites Program (VBRSP) executed before his departure; however, it does not appear that this will occur.

The Joint IDA has met twice with VEDP to gain a better understanding of the project as a whole and to discuss questions regarding the reimbursement process and how it can be structured. Wythe County has agreed to assist with project expenses during the reimbursement process. The Wythe County Board of Supervisors amended and appropriated \$6 million from its reserve fund to assist with the project. These funds may be used to pay the contractor directly or through the Joint IDA to the contractor. Mr. Bear indicated that an MOU between Wythe County and the Joint IDA will be needed to establish the process for reimbursement of these funds to the County.

It was clarified that there is currently no company or specific project associated with Lot 10. The current project at this time is strictly for site development and upgrades to Lot 10.

The Joint IDA is also awaiting an updated scope of work and timeline from Dewberry, the engineering firm engaged to manage the bidding process and construction for Lot 10. Once this information is received, it can be provided to VEDP so that the parties may move forward with execution of the Phase II performance agreement.

Once the necessary agreement is finalized, Dewberry will be able to prepare the bid package, publish it, and begin the process for soliciting bids for the project.

140 S 1ST STREET

Mr. Matthews gave an update regarding the 140 South 1st Street redevelopment project. Joint IDA staff met with Jimmy Moss, Director of Housing Development with Mount Rogers Planning District Commission and conducted a walkthrough of the building. Also participating in the walkthrough were Mark Zammit of Building and Design, a potential contractor for the project, and Mr. Bloomfield, the Joint IDA Treasurer.

The purpose of the walkthrough was to review the current condition of the building and determine whether the construction proposal previously provided by Mr. Zammit remains accurate. The meeting also provided an opportunity to discuss whether Mount Rogers Planning District Commission could provide assistance with construction management and grant administration for the project.

Mr. Moss indicated during the tour that Mount Rogers PDC has experience working with the applicable grant funding agencies and managing similar projects for other communities. Mount Rogers PDC is currently reviewing the grant agreements and project requirements and meeting with relevant partners to determine what role they may be able to play in assisting the Joint IDA with the project.

It was discussed that Mount Rogers PDC may present a proposal to the Joint IDA Board at a future meeting outlining potential services for construction management and grant administration. Compensation for these services may potentially be covered through administrative fees already included in the grant funding.

Should the Joint IDA proceed with engaging Mount Rogers PDC, an MOU will be needed to outline the roles, responsibilities, and terms of the arrangement.

OTHER

Mr. Matthews informed the Board of a CRIFA project. Although the project does not directly affect the Joint IDA Board, the Joint IDA manages CRIFA, which serves Bland County, the Town of Wytheville, and Wythe County.

Mr. Matthews reported he had drafted a MOU for the CRIFA Board to execute. The MOU will be circulated and presented to the elected bodies in the near future.

The project has been under consideration for a little over two years, and Mr. Matthews expressed his appreciation that it is moving forward.

Ms. Case inquired about the Joint IDA website and whether any updates or improvements were needed. Mr. Matthews recommended that, if funding is available within the budget, the Joint IDA might want to consider incorporating an interactive map of the industrial park and/or the county as a whole. The map could provide users with information regarding available utilities, zoning, and other relevant site information.

Additional recommendations included making the website more user-friendly and incorporating more visual elements to better showcase available properties, assets, and other information.

NEW BUSINESS

CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL OF AMENDMENT TO PERFORMANCE AGREEMENT

The board was previously provided information regarding the performance agreement with Solis Arx. Since that time, Solis Arx, acquired by FluidStack has undergone a name change to Archipelago DCCo LLC. Documentation regarding the name change, as well as the company's formal request to amend the performance agreement, was included in the meeting packet.

The requested amendment would update the company name to Archipelago and revise the performance date for the Certificate of Occupancy. The current performance date is September 1, 2026, and the company requested the date be amended to that of March 31, 2028. The capital investment requirements and associated investment milestones of \$250 million and \$500 million remain unchanged.

It was noted that the Wythe County Board of Supervisors took action at its meeting on Tuesday to approve the same amendment to the performance agreement.

The motion was presented to approve the Solix Arx/Archipelago performance agreement amendment, updating the company name to Archipelago and revising the performance date for the Certificate of Occupancy from September 1, 2026, to March 31, 2028. No changes were made to the capital investment requirements or the \$250 million and \$500 million investment milestones. Mr. Bloomfield made the motion, which was seconded by Ms. Case.

Roll Call Vote:

Yea – Dennis Manuel
Mark Bloomfield
Sherri Case

Jeff Lucas
Bobby Angles

Nay – None

Absent during vote: Aaron Robinson
Michael Cole

OTHER

Mr. Matthews wanted to remind the board that in-person FOIA training will be available to the board on September 14, 2026, at 3:00 PM at the Joint IDA office prior to the joint meeting with the Wythe County Board of Supervisors at 5:00 PM at the County Administration building.

He also mentioned the next regularly scheduled board meeting was initially moved from Thursday to Tuesday as there was a scheduling conflict. The September board meeting will take place on Tuesday, September 22, 2026, at 3:00 PM at the Town of Wytheville Municipal Building council chambers.

CLOSED SESSION

Ms. Case moved that the Joint IDA Board of Directors enter closed session as permitted by Code of Virginia sections:

- §2.2-3711(A)(1): Personnel
- §2.2-3711(A)(29): Discussion of contracting with public funds

The motion was seconded by Mr. Bloomfield.

Roll Call Vote:

Yea – Dennis Manuel
Mark Bloomfield
Sherri Case
Jeff Lucas
Bobby Angles

Nay – None

Absent during vote: Aaron Robinson
Michael Cole

The board entered a closed session discussion at 3:30 PM.

At 4:06 PM, Ms. Case then moved the Board of Directors of the Joint IDA of Wythe County return to open session pursuant to the previously announced exceptions of Virginia's open meeting law and further would certify that only identified matters were discussed in closed session.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Manuel.

Roll Call Vote:

Yea – Dennis Manuel
Mark Bloomfield
Sherri Case
Jeff Lucas
Bobby Angles

Nay – None

Absent during vote: Aaron Robinson
Michael Cole

OTHER

Ms. Case made the motion that the Joint IDA request the Town of Wytheville to calculate and pay John Matthews' accrued vacation as it has accrued and his sick time capped at \$5,000, and all accruals to be measured as of the end of day on August 28, 2026. The motion was seconded by Mr. Manuel. With no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Roll Call Vote:

Yea – Dennis Manuel
Mark Bloomfield
Sherri Case
Jeff Lucas
Bobby Angles

Nay – None

Absent during vote: Aaron Robinson
Michael Cole

Ms. Case made a motion that the Joint IDA accept the agreement provided by David Denny, LLC for advisory services with the establishment of an hourly rate for additional services. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bloomfield.

Roll Call Vote:

Yea – Dennis Manuel
Mark Bloomfield
Sherri Case
Jeff Lucas
Bobby Angles

Nay – None

Absent during vote: Aaron Robinson
Michael Cole

Ms. Case made the motion that the Joint IDA accepts and approves the job description for the Joint IDA Executive Director position which was provided at this meeting along with the advertisement and request and authorize the Town of Wytheville to publish the posting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Manuel.

Roll Call Vote:

Yea – Dennis Manuel
Mark Bloomfield
Sherri Case
Jeff Lucas
Bobby Angles

Nay – None

Absent during vote: Aaron Robinson
Michael Cole

Ms. Case made the motion to accept the following resolution honoring John Matthews' service to the Joint IDA as read by Chairman Lucas. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bloomfield, and passed unanimously.

A Resolution Honoring John Matthews

WHEREAS, John Matthews joined the Joint Industrial Development Authority of Wythe County, Wytheville, and Rural Retreat as Associate Director on January 22, 2015, later became Deputy Director in January 2020, and served as Interim Executive Director from July 1, 2026, through August 28, 2026; and

WHEREAS, during more than eleven years of service, Mr. Matthews advanced economic development throughout Wythe County and the Towns of Wytheville and Rural Retreat by supporting local businesses, encouraging investment, and strengthening the regional economy; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Matthews played an important role in business retention and expansion efforts, the Revolving Loan Fund program, small business recovery assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic, and numerous economic development projects and initiatives that benefited the Wythe County businesses and citizens; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Matthews envisioned and helped secure **\$1,866,157 in grant funding** to support the redevelopment of the 140 South First Street property, to transform a blighted property into an opportunity for community and economic development; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Matthews organized a successful regional housing summit that convened developers, builders, investors, local governments, and property owners to develop solutions to Southwest Virginia’s housing needs; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Matthews developed strong relationships with local governments, elected officials, businesses, and community partners, while representing the Joint IDA with distinction at local, regional, and statewide events and initiatives; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Matthews demonstrated professional leadership through his service with the Virginia Economic Developers Association and other professional organizations, completion of the Virginia Rural Leadership Institute, and recognition as one of *Virginia Business Magazine*’s Forty Under 40; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Matthews willingly accepted the responsibility of serving as Interim Executive Director during a period of transition, providing leadership and continuity to the Joint Industrial Development Authority and its staff until the conclusion of his service on August 28, 2026; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by Board of Directors of the Joint Industrial Development Authority of Wythe County, Wytheville, and Rural Retreat, hereby recognizes and honors **John Matthews** for his more than eleven years of dedicated service and significant contributions to the economic vitality of our community and the Joint IDA, and that we extend to him our sincere appreciation and best wishes for continued success, health, and happiness in all his future endeavors.

Adopted this 27th day of August 2026.

Jeff Lucas, Chairman

Chairman Lucas thanked Mr. Matthews for his dedicated service to the Joint IDA. Mr. Matthews said it has been an honor representing the Joint IDA and being able to serve the communities here in Wythe County over the last eleven and a half years. He commented that he is very proud of the work the Joint IDA has done together and appreciates the time spent together and the friendship.

RECESSED

At 4:14 PM, Chairman Lucas recessed the meeting until the combined Joint IDA Board and Wythe County Board of Supervisors meeting on Monday, September 14, 2026, located at 360 South Sixth Street, Wytheville, VA, 24382 at 5:00 PM.

Reconvened Meeting: September 14, 2026

The Joint Industrial Development Authority of Wythe County, Wytheville, and Rural Retreat reconvened its recessed August 27, 2026, meeting on Monday, September 14, 2026, at 5:00 PM, in the EOC conference

room, lower level, of the Wythe County Office Building at 290 South Sixth Street, Wytheville, Virginia jointly with the Wythe County Board of Supervisors.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jeff Lucas, Chairman
Sherri Case, Vice Chairman
Michael Cole
Dennis Manuel
Aaron Robinson

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mark Bloomfield, Treasurer
Bobby Angles

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Stephen Bear, County Administrator, Wythe County

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Chris Slep, Interim Town Manager, Town of Wytheville
Jason Childers, Town Manager, Town of Rural Retreat

JOINT IDA STAFF PRESENT

Jessica DeHart, Administrative Assistant

JOINT IDA STAFF ABSENT

None.

CALL TO ORDER OF RECONVENED MEETING AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Chairman Lucas called the Joint IDA meeting to order and determined a quorum to be present with five board members present.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

A. LOT 35-ARCHIPELAGO SITE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Wythe County Administrator Stephen Bear updated the Joint IDA board on Lot 35 to keep the Joint IDA Board apprised of ongoing site activity. He reported that Lot 35 was sold to Solis Arx and subsequently conveyed to FluidStack under the name Archipelago. The Joint IDA previously approved the name change and amendment to the performance agreement. The performance agreement has been amended to extend the Certificate of Occupancy date to early 2028, with no other changes to the agreement.

Mr. Bear presented slides prepared by engineer Johnny Kinser depicting the approximately 99-acre site, including the roadway, inland port area, ongoing site work, and sediment control measures. He noted that significant site disturbance is currently occurring along the south and east portions of the property. DEQ has conducted site visits to ensure compliance with approved plans, with no major issues reported.

Mr. Bear explained that current site access is primarily from Kents Lane, with a future primary entrance planned from the lower portion of Kents Lane. An emergency access point is also planned at the northern end, and they are working with VDOT regarding the access improvements.

He further discussed the county's approximately 75-acre Lot 32, which has been leased to FluidStack with a six-month option to purchase. The site will be used for stockpiling and placement of excess material generated from the Lot 35 development. He estimated that several hundred thousand cubic yard of material will be needed to bring Lot 32 to a rail-served site, while approximately 400,000 to 700,000 cubic yard of material may ultimately be placed on the site, with final quantities still being determined.

Mr. Bear also reported that the inland port, Lot 30, has been leased under a similar six-month option to purchase. Due to floodplain considerations, the inland port area is anticipated to be used primarily for offices, laydown, and storage. The pad area is approximately 11-12 acres.

Mr. Bear answered all questions from members of the Joint IDA Board and Board of Supervisors regarding the project and ongoing site development.

B. SVC MANUFACTURING (BLUE RIDGE GATORADE) EXPANSION/ENTRANCE UPDATE

Mr. Bear provided an update regarding the Gatorade facility and presented a slide prepared by engineer Johnny Kinser showing E. Lee Trinkle Drive with Lot 24 on the right in the image, where the Gatorade facility is located. Mr. Bear reported that, in coordination with VDOT, Blue Ridge Gatorade is constructing a new primary entrance for truck traffic, entering and exiting the facility. The new entrance will accommodate all truck traffic and provide additional queuing capacity, addressing previous truck backups experienced at the Gator Lane entrance.

He noted that a new 911 address was established for the facility in connection with the new entrance. He also reported that Gatorade has completed an approximately 50,000 square foot building addition, with breakroom and other facility improvements.

C. PROGRESS PARK CONNECTOR ROAD UPDATE

Mr. Bear presented a slide showing the progress of the new connector road. He noted that a tour of the project area was conducted in June and that the group traveled to the end of the completed pavement. Due to weather conditions, they were unable to travel the remaining unpaved portion of the route.

Mr. Bear reported that the current anticipated completion date for the connector road, including the remaining roadway work and improvements at the interstate exit, remains late 2027. He answered questions from the Boards regarding the project.

D. LOT 10 BUSINESS READY SITE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Mr. Bear asked Ms. DeHart whether the Joint IDA had received the requested information from Dewberry Engineers. Ms. DeHart confirmed that the information has not yet been received.

Mr. Bear provided an update on the Lot 10 Business Ready Site Development project. He stated that he, Ms. DeHart, and Mr. Bloomfield spoke with Dewberry Engineers the previous week and requested the outstanding scope of work and project timeline needed to move the project forward. Mr. Bear also expressed concern regarding whether the current bid prices remain within the anticipated range, particularly given potential increases in fuel costs.

Mr. Bear stated that the requested information from Dewberry is needed to finalize the agreement with VEDP and to proceed with bidding the project. He noted the goal of beginning grading prior to winter, or otherwise being prepared to begin as soon as the necessary steps are completed.

In response to a question from Joint IDA Chairman Lucas regarding a potential grant extension, Ms. DeHart explained that there are two grants associated with the Lot 10 site improvements: a GO Virginia grant administered by UVA Wise and the VEDP Business Ready Sites Program grant. She stated that, once the updated scope of work and timeline are received from Dewberry, the Joint IDA can submit the requested extension for the GO Virginia grant and amend the Phase II scope of work and timeline under the VEDP grant accordingly.

Wythe County Board of Supervisors Chairman Smith asked whether there were any concerns regarding the extension requests from the funding agencies. Ms. DeHart indicated that, based on current communications, there did not appear to be any significant concerns. Mr. Bear agreed.

Mr. Bear expressed dissatisfaction with the delay in receiving the requested information from Dewberry, noting that the delay was not typical of the firm. He stated that the purpose of the call with Dewberry the previous week was to obtain the necessary information and keep the project moving forward. Mr. Bear stated that he hoped the outstanding information would be received this week.

E. TAC DATA CENTER UPDATE

Mr. Bear provided an update regarding the TAC data center project and noted that the project is now working with DECA. He reported that the company recently conducted presentations and informational sessions for interested parties, which were well received and considered informative.

Mr. Bear stated that efforts are underway to arrange community meetings regarding the project and its development process. The meetings may be held in locations convenient to residents in the vicinity of the project location, such as a local church or other community facility, to provide updates and opportunities for community members to learn more about the project.

Mr. Bear further reported that, under DECA's name, the company has submitted its application for an erosion and sediment control permit. The plans are expected to be submitted by the end of the week for review and should correspond with the information previously presented regarding the project's first phase.

He also reported that the company has met with the Planning Commission director regarding compliance with the subdivision ordinance. A group from the Blacksburg area is assisting with the subdivision of the property.

Joint IDA Chairman Lucas thanked Mr. Bear for the opportunity to participate in the company's presentation and stated that he found it to be extremely informative.

F. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SEARCH

Mr. Bear distributed copies of the Joint IDA Executive Director job description and asked for an update regarding the search process.

Joint IDA Chairman Lucas reported that applications are being received. Ms. DeHart stated that seven applications had been received as of the meeting.

Chairman Lucas discussed recent FOIA training and changes to Virginia's FOIA requirements that took effect in July of this year. He noted that committees must now formally announce all meetings of three or more members and that informal committee meetings could create FOIA concerns. He noted the Board will now need to determine the appropriate process and timing to formally notice a meeting.

Chairman Lucas noted that the number of applications received does not necessarily indicate the number of qualified candidates. He stated that applications are available for Board members to review at the Joint IDA office. He further noted that the Board is considering both overall experience and, specifically, experience in Virginia.

Board of Supervisors Chairman Smith asked about the interview process and participants requesting that Town Managers and the County Administrator be involved. Chairman Lucas stated that the Board had not yet determined the process. He indicated that, following the initial application review, the Board would narrow the candidates to a select group and then determine the interview process and participants.

Mr. Bear offered the use of the Board room, meeting room, and other Wythe County facilities for interviews, if needed.

Chairman Lucas stated that the goal is to have the new Executive Director onboard by January 1, 2027, noting that it may be difficult to complete the process sooner.

Regarding the job posting, Ms. DeHart stated that most postings are for 90 days. She noted that she had confirmed with Joint IDA counsel, Cowan Perry PC, that the Board could formally end the posting before the 90-day period if it wished to have a candidate in place sooner, provided formal Board action is taken.

Mr. Bear expressed concern that Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) appeared to have received limited emphasis on the job description and requested that BRE be considered as part of the interview and selection process.

Mr. Bear distributed a handout titled "JIDA Focus Areas," outlining areas of focus for the Joint IDA, including:

- Business retention and expansion
- Industrial contacts
- Business and commercial contacts
- Progress Park knowledge and familiarity
- Management of performance agreements, contracts, MOUs, Tobacco agreements, and related commitments,
- Coordination with partner agencies
- County/Town relations
- Increasing public knowledge of what JIDA does and what local companies do
- Development of short-term and long-term goals for the Joint IDA

Mr. Bear also distributed information provided by VEDA indicating that existing businesses expansions account for approximately 73.3% of announcements, 62.2% of jobs created, and 56.6% of capital investment. He emphasized the importance of maintaining a strong focus on business retention and expansion moving forward.

Chairman Lucas stated that it would be beneficial for newly appointed Board members to receive some type of orientation or training regarding the responsibilities and expectations of serving on the Joint IDA Board.

Mr. Bear stated that he and Ms. DeHart could work to develop an orientation/training process, which could include a tour of Progress Park and other relevant facilities and businesses as well as providing additional background on the Joint IDA's work, vision, and processes.

Chairman Lucas encouraged members of the Board of Supervisors to attend Joint IDA Board meetings when possible and stated that their participation and input would be beneficial to the Joint IDA Board.

Mr. Bear further stated that, once an Executive Director is selected, he would be willing to spend significant time assisting with the individual's onboarding and transition, depending on the selected candidate's level of familiarity. He emphasized that he did not want to overstep the Board's role but wanted to be available to help the new Executive Director become familiar with current projects, priorities, relationships, and areas of focus.

Supervisor Burnett asked about the visibility and reach of the advertising for the position.

Ms. DeHart reported that the position has received broad visibility through several economic development and employment channels, including the Southeastern Economic Development Council (SEDC), the Virginia Economic Developers Association (VEDA), the Town of Wytheville employment site, and Indeed. She also asked about posting the position through the Virginia Association of Counties (VACo).

Mr. Hankins recommended that the position also be posted through the Virginia Municipal League (VML). Administrative Assistant Martha Collins stated that she would provide the necessary posting information to Ms. DeHart for distribution through VML and VACo.

Mr. Bear noted that if budget constraints become a factor in the timing of hiring an Executive Director- particularly due to the Joint IDA's obligation to pay accrued leave and sick leave associated with recent staff resignations-he believed the Board should consider whether additional funding may be needed. Mr. Bear stated that, if necessary, the Joint IDA Board could request additional funding from the Wythe County Board of Supervisors to avoid delaying the hiring process or the onboarding of a qualified candidate. Ms. DeHart indicated that Mr. Bloomfield has been reviewing the budget, projected salary expenses, and anticipated leave payouts associated with the recent staff transitions, as well as determining the timeline to onboard a new executive director within the approved salary range.

The Board of Supervisors indicated that they would be willing to discuss the matter further if the need for additional funding arises.

G. GENERAL DISCUSSION OF INDUSTRIAL RECRUITMENT, TARGET INDUSTRIAL SECTORS, LOCAL BUSINESSES, ETC.

Mr. Bear added these topics for general discussion and noted that Wythe County is currently developing its Capital Improvement Plan over the next two to three months, with the plan reviewed and updated annually in coordination with department heads.

Mr. Bear stated that he wanted the Joint IDA Board to consider potential economic development needs and priorities that could be incorporated in the plan, particularly opportunities for future site development and improvements. Mr. Bear noted that Progress Park has vacant sites available but emphasized the need to consider the long-term availability and development of larger industrial sites. He stated that Progress Park has been in existence for nearly 30 years. He further noted that there is not a current available site in Progress Park larger than approximately 80-90 acres, which may not satisfy some of the requests for information (RFIs) being received. He stated that the region is increasingly receiving inquiries for sites of several hundred acres and encouraged the Joint IDA Board to consider its vision for industrial site development over the next 10 to 20 years.

Mr. Bear asked whether Jim Cowan had contacted the Joint IDA regarding his review of the Blue Star performance agreement and the protection available to the County concerning Lots 24A and 24B. Ms. DeHart indicated that Mr. Cowan had not yet provided any information on his review.

Mr. Bear requested that a meeting be scheduled with Mr. Cowan to follow up on the matter. He expressed concern about the possibility of the property being sold to another party and emphasized the need to review the performance agreement to determine what protections are currently in place for the County and the Joint IDA. The discussion also noted that federal funding does not currently appear likely to be available for the project. If funding does become available, there may not be sufficient time for Blue Star to satisfy all requirements and timelines contained in the existing performance agreement. Mr. Bear answered all questions from both boards about the performance agreement and Lot 24.

Mr. Bear recommended that the Joint IDA Board review and clearly define its target industrial sectors as part of the development or update of its strategic plan and in preparation for the incoming Executive Director.

Mr. Bear referenced a recent presentation by the Mount Rogers Regional Partnership that included discussion of economic development and target markets. He noted that distribution has historically been identified as a target sector for the area but questioned whether it should continue to be considered a primary target sector given the limited success in attracting major distribution operations to the area. He acknowledged the area's location at the intersection of two interstate highways but noted that the area's population base and surrounding market should also be considered when evaluating the viability of distribution-related recruitment.

Mr. Bear emphasized the importance of maintaining a continued focus on working with local businesses as part of Joint IDA's economic development efforts. He noted that industrial recruitment and engagement with the area's existing larger industries should remain important areas of focus, while ensuring that smaller and other local businesses are not overlooked.

Mr. Bear noted that the 1% local sales tax was not directly related to the Joint IDA but offered to answer questions from the Joint IDA Board regarding the proposal. He clarified that he and staff could provide factual information and answer questions but could not advocate for or against the measure.

Mr. Bear further discussed education as a factor in industrial recruitment. He reported that Mr. Russell Street had identified the condition and attractiveness of Spiller Elementary as a potential concern when recruiting businesses and executives to the area.

Mr. Bear stated that he had no additional items for discussion and did not believe there was a need to schedule another joint meeting in the near future. Mr. Bear suggested allowing the Joint IDA to complete the Executive Director search and onboarding before scheduling the next joint meeting to be considered for the first part of 2027.

Both the Board of Supervisors and the Joint IDA Board indicated that they had no additional matters they wished to bring forward for discussion.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Lucas adjourned the meeting at 6:05 PM.

Jeff Lucas, Chairman

Attest:

Jessica E. DeHart, Secretary