West Piedmont Welcomes New Executive Director

On November 4th, the West Piedmont Planning District Commission welcomed its new Executive Director, Mr. David Hoback. Mr. Hoback succeeds Aaron Burdick, who left the Commission in May.

Mr. Hoback brings many years of public service experience to the organization. From 1985 to 1988, he served as Special Projects Director for Patrick County, and from 1988 to 2004, he served as the Patrick County Administrator. Following his service as County Administrator, Mr. Hoback served as Human Resources Manager for RotoMetrics, located in Meadows of Dan, until accepting the position as Executive Director at the West Piedmont PDC.

Mr. Hoback is involved in civic activities in the Town of Stuart, the community in which he resides with his wife Deborah and two children. He is a member of the Town of Stuart Board of Zoning Appeals and serves on the Board of Directors for the Charles Powell Education Foundation. He is also active with the Stuart Presbyterian Church, where he serves as an elder/session member and Finance Committee Chairman. In the past, Mr. Hoback served as treasurer for Safetyrope, Inc.; as a member and officer of the Stuart Lions Club; and on the Board of Directors of the American Cancer Society.

Again, the West Piedmont PDC extends a warm welcome to Mr. Hoback.

Recent Projects a Boost to Local Economies

Two recent projects in the West Piedmont Planning District are yielding substantial dividends to the communities in which they were constructed. The Philpott Marina, which opened in April, generated revenue of $86,000 between May and September, which exceeded expectations for this period. The marina also resulted in a tourism influx to the lake among out of state residents and locals alike, as word of the new facility spread. The marina offers 40 boat slips, which were all leased during the summer. The group campground, located nearby to the marina and recently completed, experienced impressive occupancy rates as well.

The other recent project is the Harvester Performance Center in Rocky Mount. The Harvester opened in April and during its first three months of operation, accommodated more than 7,000 attendees, which exceeded estimates for this time period. About 90 percent of attendees were from outside of Franklin County—a testament to the venue’s ability to generate tourism dollars locally. The opening of the Harvester has resulted in spin-off businesses, as Bootleggers Café recently opened across the street from the venue; The Grove Bed & Breakfast will open soon on Floyd Avenue; and there are plans to convert the former Morris Furniture building, located at the corner of Franklin and Claiborne streets, into a restaurant and microbrewery. The Harvester was an impetus for the conception of these businesses. Additionally, the music venue has generated 62 full- and part-time jobs in the hospitality, service, and retail sectors.

David Hoback
Executive Director
DHoback@WPPDC.ORG

Photo by Richard Boyd
15 Magical Miles Project Advances

A vision and “brand” has been created to advance the 15 Magical Miles project, an initiative intended to revitalize the communities of Bassett, Fieldale, Stanleytown, and Koehler. Improvements are planned for streetscape and façade upgrades; the creation and enhancement of public space; the introduction of cultural amenities such as music venues; the construction of a trail linking the communities; and the facilitation of greater access to the Smith River to promote fishing, kayaking, and canoeing.

The 15 Magical Miles initiative began in 2012 when Henry County, in collaboration with the Smith River Small Towns Collaborative, drafted a planning grant to obtain funding from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). This would assist with the creation of a master plan to serve as a blueprint for revitalization of the towns through various enhancements intended to promote tourism. In early 2014, the DHCD announced that a $35,000 planning grant had been awarded, resulting in the Collaborative hiring Hill Studios of Roanoke in conjunction with Arnett Muldrow & Associates to craft a master plan for the area.

The process is generating a plan for the communities which will enhance their public space assets, capitalize on historic resources and promote cultural attractions, and facilitate opportunities for active recreation.

In addition to upgrading the physical aspects of the communities within the project area, the consultants are working to generate a brand statement for the 15 Magical Miles initiative which will underscore the communities’ manufacturing heritage, small-town values, and their transition into the new economy.

Following the creation of the master plan for the area, the Collaborative plans to seek additional funding for a full-fledged project grant to enable the project to move forward and the 15 Magical Miles initiative to become reality.

Staff members of the West Piedmont Planning District Commission have served as a partner in the project in the capacities of conducting building inventories in Bassett and Fieldale, providing mapping and technical assistance, and providing input into the plans.

WPPDC Commissioners

**Franklin County**
- Brian Hamilton
- Bobby Thompson
- Leland Mitchell

**Henry County**
- Tommy Slaughter
- Jim L. Adams
- Wesley E. George, III

**Patrick County**
- Roger T. Hayden
- Danny Foley
- Jerry Adams

**Pittsylvania County**
- Edward Hairston
- James H. Snead
- Jessie L. Barksdale

**City of Danville**
- Bryce Simmons
- Albert K. Rawley, Jr.
- John B. Gilstrap

**City of Martinsville**
- Sharon Brooks Hodge
- Kathy C. Lawson
- Kim Adkins

**Town of Rocky Mount**
- Jon W. Snead
- Ralph A. Casey
- Gregory B. Walker
The table above, entitled 2007 & 2012 USDA Census of Agriculture for the West Piedmont Planning District, shows trends in agriculture from 2007 to 2012—the years in which the two most recent Censuses of Agriculture were conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Census of Agriculture provides a wealth of information about various aspects of the industry including the number and acreage of land in farms; cropland acreage; the quantity of animals such as pigs, cattle, and other animals commonly associated with agriculture. The table reveals that every locality in the West Piedmont Planning District exhibited a decline in the number of farms from 2007 to 2012, with Henry County experiencing the greatest loss, at 14.7 percent; concurrently, every locality in the region, with the exception of Pittsylvania County, exhibited a loss of farm land. What is interesting to note is that, while the number of farms in the region have been on the decline, the average farm size in most localities, and for the region, has generally increased, with the average farm size in Patrick County increasing most, at nearly 7 percent. One possible reason for the decline in the number of farms and the increase in the average farm size across the region may be attributed to farmland consolidation. Another interesting observation to note is the increase in the market value of agricultural products sold over the two time periods. In all communities for which data is available as well as for the region and the state, the market value of products has increased, with the value of products sold in Pittsylvania County increasing most, at nearly 40 percent. The increase is likely due to various factors including the general rising cost of goods as well as land conversion from lower-yielding to higher-yielding products.

Agriculture is part of our region’s heritage and a growing segment of tourism. As a component of economic development in our region, our localities should make it a priority to preserve farmland to promote local food production and agritourism—two very important and growing sectors of our local economies.
Attainment of Work Ready Community Goals for the Dan River Region Collaborative

The table above, entitled *Attainment of Work Readiness Goals for the Dan River Region Collaborative, January 1, 2012—October 31, 2014*, relates to current goals attained by each locality in the Dan River Region Collaborative footprint, with regard to becoming an ACT Certified Work Ready Community. Attainment of ACT Certified Work Ready status is important to the region because it certifies that a minimum number of the region’s residents are able to perform certain jobs. For instance, bronze certification, the lowest certification level, ensures that an individual can perform 16 percent of jobs; and platinum, the highest, ensures that an individual can perform 99 percent of jobs. The exam one would take to determine work ability evaluates skills in applied mathematics, reading for information, locating information, and “soft skills.” The table shows goals set for each locality in the region as they pertain to accomplishment of work readiness certification status as well as the progress achieved for attaining those goals, expressed in both absolute numbers and percentages. Under the heading “Workforce Type,” Emerging workforce refers to high school juniors and seniors, college students, and recent graduates; the Current workforce refers to those individuals currently employed in either the public or private sector; the Transitioning workforce refers to those who are unemployed, are participating in an adult education or GED program, or have recently completed such a program; and Employers Supporting refers to businesses that have chosen to recognize, recommend, or prefer the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) in supporting their locality to become a certified work ready community.

Based on the most current data, Henry County is the closest of the localities to attaining ACT Certified Work Ready status, at 79.0%, and Martinsville is just behind, at 70.9%. The Summer 2014 edition of the *West Piedmont Planning Dispatch* also contained work readiness goals achieved up to July 31, and since that time, progress toward the goals has been modest, with the exception of Halifax County, whose total goals increased from 36.3 percent to 66.8 percent over this period.

Within two years, the region will become a Certified Work Ready Community if 2,300 residents earn ACT Work Ready Certification. The Dan River Region Collaborative is serving as a pilot for this program in Virginia, as it is the first region in the Commonwealth to implement it.

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### Table 1: Attainment of Work Readiness Goals for the Dan River Region Collaborative, January 1, 2012—October 31, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workforce Type</th>
<th>Workforce Type</th>
<th>Actual NCRC</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Workforce Type</th>
<th>Actual NCRC</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Workforce Type</th>
<th>Actual NCRC</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Henry County</td>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>87.6</td>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patrick County</td>
<td>Actual NCRC</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Actual NCRC</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>Actual NCRC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pittsylvania County</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>33.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emerging</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>12*</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current</td>
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<td>331</td>
<td>71.3</td>
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<td>134</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>Transitioning</td>
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<td>55</td>
<td>90.9</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>20*</td>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employers Supporting</td>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>19*</td>
<td></td>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>17*</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actual NCRC</td>
<td>19*</td>
<td></td>
<td>Actual NCRC</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Actual NCRC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>582</td>
<td>79.0</td>
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<td>231</td>
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<tr>
<td>Danville City</td>
<td>Goals</td>
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<td>Goals</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martinsville City</td>
<td>Actual NCRC</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Actual NCRC</td>
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<td>Actual NCRC</td>
<td>122*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Halifax County</td>
<td>Percent</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>18*</td>
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<td>Percent</td>
<td>18*</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>37.9</td>
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<td>37.9</td>
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<td>Employers Supporting</td>
<td>Goals</td>
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<td>Goals</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>12*</td>
<td>Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actual NCRC</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
<td>Actual NCRC</td>
<td>39*</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Actual NCRC</td>
<td>46*</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>509</td>
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<td>282</td>
<td>70.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>400</td>
<td>66.8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Indicates that the Actual NCRC has surpassed the goal. In this case, the locality is not given additional credit for surpassing the goal, so the Actual NCRC figure only reflects the maximum for which a locality can take credit.