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LENOWISCO Planning District Commission

October 2009 Newsletter



LENOWISCO's Mission Statement

To assist the local governments of the counties of Lee, Scott, Wise and the City of Norton, Virginia with planning and implementation of community development activities while promoting regional solutions to identified needs.

Introduction from our Executive Director



Glen "Skip" Skinner

We apologize for not being current, but with all the technology available such as web pages, blogs, newsgroups, Blackberry, Facebook, Twitter, etc., we are all bombarded with information 24/7. Additionally, we get so busy doing the "work of the Commission" we sometimes forget to look back and review and celebrate what we have accomplished. One of my goals when I became Executive Director was to reactivate the newsletter. We hope you like what you see! Furthermore, if you have any comments or if there is something of which you would like to see more, please let us know.

LENOWISCO will soon be embarking upon a regional strategic planning initiative to take a look both externally and internally at the needs of the region and positioning our organization to best respond to those challenges. Mr. Cian Robinson of Robinson Ventures has been retained to assist with this endeavor. Please look for additional details in the coming months.

The LENOWISCO PDC service area, as we all know, has many challenges before it, but with those challenges also come opportunities. Please challenge us!

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CROOKED ROAD TECHNOLOGY CENTER NEW LENOWISCO OFFICES



On June 22, 2009, the LENOWISCO Planning District Commission formally concluded lease negotiations with the Scott County Economic Development Authority to become an "anchor tenant" and occupy 8,548 sq. ft. of rental space in the new Crooked Road Technology Center located in the Scott County Business & Technology Park in Duffield. In order to facilitate the location of the new Holston Medical Group and OnePartner complex in Duffield, the Board of Directors of LENOWISCO agreed in the spring of 2007 to sell their long-time Duffield headquarters.

The new Crooked Road Technology Center is designed to host state-of-the-art technology businesses to take advantage of the high-speed, redundant connectivity the region has to offer. LENOWISCO is grateful to the Board and Staff of the Scott County EDA who made a long-term lease available to the Commission. The LENOWISCO offices are outfitted with high-speed connectivity as well as video conferencing capabilities which will be made available to our partner organizations just as our former office building has been over the years. The physical address for our new office is 372 Technology Trail Lane, Suite 101. The access road to this facility is expected to be paved and complete by Christmas 2009.

Project Planning & Development



As we move into the fall season it is time to start preparing for the next round of funding offered by many of the State and Federal funding agencies we work with. As has always been our role, LENOWISCO is here to assist with the development and completion of funding packages for water,

wastewater and other community development projects. The first step in this process is the initial request or contact from one of our localities. So if you know of any possible project(s) your locality is considering, please contact us to set up a planning meeting.

Project Management



LENOWISCO offers our local towns and counties assistance with project management following their receipt of grant or loan funding. Our staff works with the grantees, engineers, funding agencies, regulatory agencies and contractors to complete projects. The mission is to complete projects "on time and within budget" for the maximum benefit to the cities and towns affected.

One tool used to do this is a series of facilitated monthly Project Management Team meetings which include representatives from the aforementioned groups. Tasks are identified in the Project Management Plan with the responsible person being designated the responsibility and a date assigned for completion. Each month the individuals assigned ownership of each task report back to the group on their progress. Coordination of required tasks is critical to a project being completed on time.

Economic Development



The Commission provides its localities, its

industrial/economic development authorities and other economic and community development entities with ongoing support across a broad spectrum of activities.

In the LENOWISCO District, these range from broadband deployment to recruitment of industrial and technology-based companies to business district revitalization, from regional tourism initiatives to entrepreneurial support to environmentally-conscious sustainable development. LENOWISCO offers guidance and technical assistance as needed, assistance in the development of funding packages for projects, and direct assistance with recruitment activities, and also serves as an affiliate state data center. Individual activities across the District will be highlighted in more detail in future issues.

Transportation



LENOWISCO continues to serve in a planning and technical assistance role for our localities as it relates to transportation planning and management. Our transportation planner serves on the Kingsport Metropolitan Planning Organization which oversees federally funded transportation related projects in the Gate City and Weber City areas of Scott County.

Recently our staff has been involved with the Virginia Department of Transportation's Rural Long Range planning effort. Data collection will begin in the fall of 2009 as VDOT's consultant prepares short- and long-term improvement recommendations to the region's safety and congestion areas of concern. The public will have the opportunity to comment on this long range plan at several public meetings throughout the process. The first such meeting was held at Natural Tunnel State Park's Cove Ridge Center on July 20, 2009.

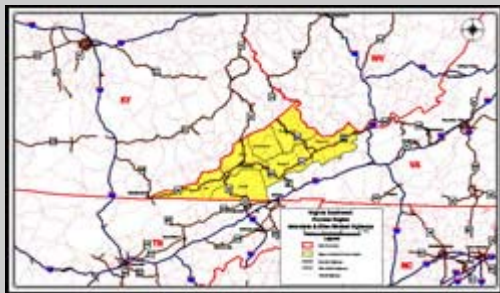
Broadband



One of the most ambitious projects the Commission has ever undertaken is the regional broadband network, called LENOWISCO RAN (Rural Area Network). The network is designed to provide redundant, high-speed connectivity to and throughout the planning district, providing necessary infrastructure for economic development. The project, which started in 2002, now has 321 miles of fiber, serving nearly 800 customers in 21 communities. Utilizing an "open-network" concept, LENOWISCO is partnering with Sunset Digital Communications to administer the network.

Other service providers are encouraged to investigate services that can be made available to support additional economic opportunities for the region's businesses and citizens. Current service providers on the network include OnePartner, Bristol Virginia Utilities Board, Bristol Tennessee Essential Services, UVA-Wise, Wellmont Health System, Mountain States Health Alliance, Lee County Public Schools, Wise County Public Schools, Norton City Schools and others.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS)



The LENOWISCO Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Department maintains and utilizes geographic datasets (layers) for Lee, Scott, and Wise Counties and the City of Norton. These datasets consist of but are not limited to the following: Tax Map Information, USGS Topography, FEMA Flood Maps, Aerial Photography, Hydrology, Zoning, Roads, Railroads, and Public Infrastructure.

We are happy to work with our localities to best utilize our

powerful mapping systems to assist with planning and project management activities. Please contact us if you have specific mapping or GIS needs.

Other Items of Interest

Smart Growth Conference

On April 30, 2009, LENOWISCO, along with the Cumberland Plateau and Mount Rogers PDCs and a host of other sponsors including the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, The Nature Conservancy, Virginia Tech, Cooperative Extension Service and the Southeast Watershed Forum, hosted the Southwest Virginia Regional Growth Readiness Conference, which was attended by over 80 planners and local officials from throughout Southwest Virginia. This regional conference was a follow-up to individual conferences held in Tazewell and Wise Counties. Outcomes and benefits seen elsewhere from Growth Management strategies include:

- Money saved, reduced operating costs
- Increased property values
- Water quality and Phase II Storm water requirements/standards met or exceeded
- Increased tax revenues
- Consensus building for land use
- Interest of community leaders captured
- Best management practices highlighted minimizing polluted runoff
- Economic benefits and regulatory drivers defined
- Effectiveness of current practices to protect quality of life in the face of sprawl assessed
- Consensus-based community approach to achieving better land use achieved

For further information on how your community can take advantage of some of these opportunities, please contact the LENOWISCO office or Kelly Miller of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation at 276-676-5529 or kelly.miller@dcr.virginia.gov.

Photos by Ron Flanary and Chris Starnes, LENOWISCO PDC

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