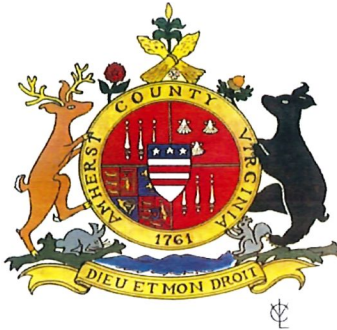


Board of Supervisors

Claudia D. Tucker, Chair
District 2
L. J. Ayers III, Vice-Chair
District 3
David W. Pugh, Jr., Supervisor
District 4
Kenneth M. Campbell, Supervisor
District 1
Jennifer R. Moore, Supervisor
District 5



County Administrator
Dean C. Rodgers

County Attorney
Michael W. S. Lockaby

AMHERST COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

AGENDA

August 10, 2018
Florence Elston Inn and Conference Center
Sweet Briar Amherst, Virginia 24595
Meeting Convened – 9:00 a.m.

- I. **Call to Order**
- II. **Purpose for Gathering and Ground rules**
- III. **Review Past, Present, and Near Future**
- IV. **Establishing Short-Term Priorities**
- V. **Review Opportunities and Weaknesses**
 - A. Metrics Table
- VI. **Identify Results Sought**
- VII. **Review Organizational Responsibilities**
- VIII. **Establish Next Steps**
- IX. **Adjournment**

MINUTES

At a Special Meeting of the Amherst County Board of Supervisors and held at the Florence Elston Inn and Conference Center, Sweet Briar, Virginia, thereof on Friday, the 10th day of August, 2018, at 9:00 a.m., the following members were present:

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

PRESENT:	Claudia D. Tucker, Chair (arrived at 9:30 a.m.)	ABSENT: None
	L. J. Ayers, III, Vice-Chair	
	David W. Pugh, Jr., Supervisor	
	Kenneth M. Campbell, Supervisor	
	Jennifer R. Moore, Supervisor	
STAFF PRESENT:	County Administrator Dean C. Rodgers, Deputy County Administrator	

David R. Proffitt; County Attorney Michael W. S. Lockaby

I. Call to Order

Vice-Chair Ayers called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m.

II. Purpose for Gathering and Ground rules

The Workshop was conducted by facilitator Dr. John Thomas, Managing Partner with DecideSmart.

The Board agreed on three major goals for the upcoming year: 1) promote agriculture; 2) promote business growth; and 3) promote a sense of community.

Dr. Thomas produced a report on those items that the Board discussed. (See Attachment 1)

III. Review Past, Present, and Near Future

IV. Establishing Short-Term Priorities

V. Review Opportunities and Weaknesses

A. Metrics Table

VI. Identify Results Sought

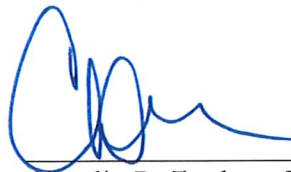
VII. Review Organizational Responsibilities

VIII. Establish Next Steps

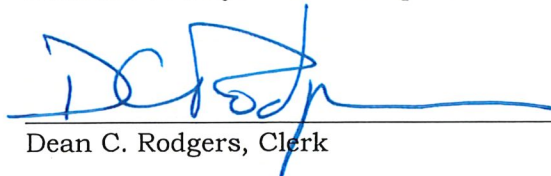
IX. Adjournment

By motion of Chair Tucker and with the following vote, the Board adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

AYE:	Mrs. Tucker, Mr. Ayers, Mr. Pugh, Mr. Campbell and Ms. Moore
NAY:	None
ABSTAIN:	None



Claudia D. Tucker, Chair
Amherst County Board of Supervisors



Dean C. Rodgers, Clerk

Strategic Priority Setting Session
Amherst County Board of Supervisors

Sweet Briar College
August 10, 2018 — 9:00 - 4:30

Prepared by: John Thomas, Managing Partner

August 28, 2018

DecideSmart

3200 Norfolk St. Richmond, Va. 23230

Engagement

As a Partner of DecideSmart LLC I would like to express my appreciation to Amherst County officials for the opportunity to assist in the process of determining near-term priorities as a supplement to the County's Strategic Plan. Everyone involved was most helpful, forthcoming, and engaged throughout the process.

Without a doubt, Amherst County is one of the most beautiful areas of the Commonwealth. This natural beauty, combined with available resources, engaged and enthusiastic officials, and an articulate Strategic Plan, is certainly a recipe for long-term success. While working on this project, I quickly observed a strong sense of pride and commitment from all officials involved—elected, appointed, and staff. This is a positive testament to the County and its leadership.

The following is a summary of the process and products used. It includes my observations, thoughts, and considerations for moving forward.

Initial Meeting

It was my pleasure to meet with, and come to know, County Administrator Dean Rodgers. Our first meeting was organized, informative, and forthright. The established course of direction was for me to: review relevant materials; conduct interviews; facilitate a day-long planning session including members of the Board of Supervisors, County Administrator Rodgers, the Assistant Administrator, the County Attorney, and, finally, to prepare a summary Report.

The Report would include the process used, identification of priorities from among the County's existing goals, as well as potential ideas and objectives that could be further refined to include additional strategies and measurements. The staff communications and information were clear and comprehensive. Several conversations were held to ensure complete understanding.

Material Review

I especially appreciated the opportunity to review and analyze several reports and documents resulting from prior County initiatives. Included were the results of development of the County's Strategic Plan, a draft of Mr. Rodgers first effort to capture measureable progress on elements of the Plan, as well as previous presentations by staff, site information, information from websites, and a review of the County website.

Board of Supervisors Interviews

I appreciated the opportunity to conduct interviews with each member of the Board of Supervisors. Schedule conflicts did negate the possibility of one interview. Each hour-long interview focused on six key questions to assure consistency, focus, and breadth. The purpose was to determine how each member felt, on a scale of 1 - 5, about the several key issues. All participants were engaged and freely provided their viewpoints on the questions and follow-on conversations. Discussions were confidential; therefore, information was aggregated into collective key findings.

It is important, and positive, that the interviews revealed a number of commonly held perspectives. There were minor variances but none were dramatic.

Conclusions drawn from the conversations are:

The Board could benefit from a clearer understanding of the County's short and long term needs,

Plans for meeting future needs are in place but not clearly understood,

The County maintains a safe, healthy environment but is not known as a leader in doing so,

County employees feel valued,

The County is not generally recognized as a regional leader in sustained economic development,

The County could use a more effective method for comprehensive understanding and quantifying the public's needs and desires.

County Officials Priority Setting Session

A. Review of purpose

Dr. Thomas began the session by reviewing his understanding of the reasons why the Board had decided to hold this day-long event. The snapshot summary included four ingredients. The County has already adopted a Strategic Plan, County Administrator Rodgers had prepared a metrics-based analysis of progress to date, the previous Plan had not included participation by all members of the current Board, and there had not yet been an opportunity to establish priorities among the many goals of the Plan.

The agenda for the day was structured to address each of the above elements. Mr. Thomas made it clear that there would be no official actions taken during this session. The objectives for the day were to: review, explain, explore, create, consider, and establish a proposed order of priority among the many Plan goals and objectives.

As a means to assure that the purposes could be met, "Ground Rules" were set for the conversation. They were:

- Everyone participates fully
- Stay focused on the topic rather than personalities
- Remain with each topic until every member has a clear understanding, and
- Another reminder was given that this is not the day for final decisions or advocacy.

B. Exploration of Board Member Values and Appreciation

One method for Board members to more clearly understand each other's interests and gain a sense of shared perspectives about Amherst County is to share some of their personal values. In order to accommodate the discussion each member was given a few moments to write reactions to the following question: What do you value/appreciate most about Amherst County?

The exercise produced the following reflections many of which were reported by more than one person:

- Good people: sense of family, kindness, small town culture/atmosphere, friendly, neighborly, accepting, sense of community, rural culture, self-reliance, independence .
- Our home: raised my children here
- Natural beauty: forests, rivers, lakes, farmland, outdoor/recreational activities
- Constant physical change/seasons
- Positive pace of life
- Located off the beaten track, remote specialness yet central to major features/locations
- Opportunity & potential are prevalent here
- Hidden Gem: proximity to DC, RVA, the Beach
- Public safety entities work well with each other and surrounding localities, including First Responders
- Potential for high quality education (quality is good; need to manage perception); including effective concentration on trades .
- Good neighborhoods and potential for more
- A history of limited community conflict
- Madison Heights: has historic value, an "attitude," and pride.
- Gratitude and appreciation of the "come-inners"

Participants were asked to reflect upon the question: among these positive values, how much is accidental and how much is the result of deliberate action by their predecessors?

It was pointed out that going forward it is the current Supervisors who are the "deciders." What do you want to keep, enhance, and grow? Keeping

what you value requires vigilant attention. That mentality is a driving consideration behind the necessity to establish priorities. As a reminder, priorities considered today do not remove/replace any existing goal—objective. The purpose is to arrange an order of focus, resources, and timing.

C. Status review of the current Strategic Plan with related metrics

In order to begin from a shared context for setting priorities it is necessary to understand the ingredients of the existing Plan. County Administrator Rodgers and his team have been developing and tracking metrics for each element of the Plan. He led the Board through a review of the goals, objectives, and metrics bring captured to date.

A clarifying conversation followed assuring that each member understood the described tasks and the meaning of attached metrics. In several cases improvements were suggested to enhance the definitions and measures.

In a broad overview the Strategic Plan includes goals and objectives that address the following themes:

- Promote business growth: (including broadband availability)
- Promote county and community pride
- Maintain strong public safety
- Education excellence: enhance and manage perception
- Promote tourism and recreation that protects the County from landscape/community damage
- Increase public involvement in County policies and activities
- Maintain BOS diversity while promoting unity and projection of positive messages
- Community development/placemaking
- Workforce; employer needs

D. Priority Setting Exercise

At this point in the agenda the participants had become immersed in the perceptions, attitudes and data regarding Amherst County. They had engaged in value statements and clarification, learned of their shared

perceptions of half-dozen key elements of the County's responsibilities, and become immersed in the goals and metrics of the current Plan.

The next step was to identify the member's feeling about the most important issues facing the County for the short-term. The Nominal Group Technique (NGT) was used as a method to capture the strength of those feelings. The first step was to identify priority topics from each member.

During the exercise each item was posted on flip charts.

Once all of the ideas had been captured Members were given "voting dots" to express their preferences and strength of feeling among the options. The following list presents the topics in rank order according to the "votes" received.

Promote Business Growth [22]

Agriculture: value and criticality to the County. Need to promote and protect. [18]

Achieve Education Excellence [11] and promote workforce education [7]

Maintain Strong Public Safety Reputation [13]

Promote Community Pride [12]

Promote Tourism and Recreation: while protecting County beauty, landscape, etc. [11]

"Placemaking": trails, parks, public facilities, etc. [11]

Community Development: appearance, pride, etc. [10]

Board of Supervisors: image/perception, focus on substantive issues [7]

As a reminder, this exercise did not remove any items from the County Strategic Plan. Rather, the ten key elements of the Plan were rearranged in order of preference for the immediate future. The three highest rated issues were ranked well above the others. They are: Business Growth, Agriculture, and the aggregation of four closely related "Community" issues.

E. Small Group Discussions re: Opportunities and Deficiencies in each of the three priority areas

Once the three priorities were developed the participants were divided into two groups. The assignment was to identify all of their potential ideas as a means to address opportunities to be pursued as well as deficiencies.

The following statements represent the possibilities once compiled. The clear "take-away" from this exercise is that there do exist a wide variety of possible methods to address the priorities. The ideas listed here are not arranged in any particular order. It is simply the manner in which the group "recorders" presented them.

I. AGRICULTURE

Group I

Not aware of existing opportunities: wineries, orchards

Need better promotion of festivals

Preserve open space

More farmer's market to Depot Move to Saturday (add animals, products, food coop)

Consider Agricultural Pavilion

Revise the Fair to a more agricultural event: (corn maze, pumpkin)

Support 4 H clubs

Activate the Agriculture Committee

Promote organic farming; workshops, training, etc.

Farmhouse B & B s

Lack of Agri-labor

Help to Agriculture Extension

Could schools buy local?

Re-establish FFA

Tax incentives

School kids to visit farms, orchards

City folks to visit rural areas: farm vacations

Ag person appointed to the EDA

Group II

Lack of adequate labor

Only one USDA-certified person in the area, ability to harvest improves a great deal

Ag Extension helps — but perhaps BOS can help [and some 4 H]

Sell local agricultural products to the schools

Are there tax credit incentives? What is land use categorization?

The Fair, get more Agricultural Participation.

Get Agricultural interests to take leadership

Make available corn mazes and “agri-tourism” activities.
Lack of staff and lack of marketing
Bring kids to the country

II. BUSINESS GROWTH (economic development)

Group I

Building appearance — tax incentives
Fix historic negative business reputation
No one is stepping up to fix problems
First impressions entering Madison Heights crucial — currently negative
Need county entryway zone (incentives v. penalties)
Special business commission on beautification: storefront appearance, signage, landscaping
Consider an "Entrance Corridor Commission"

Group II

Lack of "community," need upgraded landscaping, etc.
Clean up business corridors. Take down old and/or negative signs
Medians with out-of-control planting — looks bad.
How many check cashing places, hookahs, and junk shops do we need?
Can we require the clean up of a business corridor?
EDA incentives such as free advertising for businesses that improve appearance?
Amherst logo on the water tower!

III. COMMUNITY

Group I

Promote! For example: Snowden, Panther Falls, Staten Creek Falls, Big Hole on Piney River
Mill Creek Lake swimming
Letters to the editor re: positive messaging
James River whitewater development
Festivals and community events
Publicizing brand and signage

Keep public places presentable Madison Heights promotion

Group II

Festivals and community events

Safety walk across

Publicize the new logo [water tower]

Keep all public spaces looking nice

More Amherst County signage

Sidewalks, lights, wheel chair lanes

Mill Creek fishing derby 09-05-18

E. Next Steps

Once the priorities were determined, Board Members expressed a desire to move forward. It was agreed that the following actions would occur:

Facilitator Thomas will prepare a summary of the deliberations including details captured regarding the Three Priority areas and possible options.

Upon receipt and review of the Draft Report County Administrator Rodgers and his leadership team will consider each of the suggestions. It is expected that the team will develop a suggested action plan for each of the three priorities. The plans would include the basic goals, objectives, and strategies/tasks to be undertaken. The latter section would include time schedules, required resources, and metrics to track progress.

Before any action would get underway the Board would have the opportunity to review, discuss, and officially act upon any elements not already included in the County's operations.