Clinch River Valley Initiative
General Meeting Summary
Thursday, February 9th, 2017 – 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm
Sugar Hill Brewing Company- St. Paul, VA

Introduction

The Clinch River Valley Initiative (CRVI) held its first quarterly meeting of 2017 at the Sugar Hill Brewing Company in St. Paul, Virginia on Thursday, February 9th, 2017. The general meeting was held from 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm, following a Steering Committee meeting. Included below is a summary of the meeting highlights, and a list of meeting participants is at the end of the summary.

Special thanks to Sugar Hill Brewing Company for providing the meeting space and to Caroline Leggett of Radford for the Clinch River Oral History presentation! Key updates and decisions are listed below, followed by additional details from the meeting.

Executive Summary and Action Items

- Two annual Environmental Education events are in the planning process for 2017. The Environmental Education Symposium will be Saturday, May 13th, 2017 and the Youth Summit will be on March 11, 2017.
- Partners in ‘Round the Mountain, Crooked Road, and the Town of St. Paul, among others, will be holding the “Feastival” for Mountains of Music on June 17th, 2017 in St. Paul. Travis Milton will be cooking for the event, which will help raise money for Round’ the Mountain and local artisans, while showcasing Southwest Virginia.

Action Group Updates

- **Downtown Revitalization**- Four communities are working towards designation for the Hometowns of the Clinch program, including Dante, Tazewell, Lebanon, and Honaker. Currently, each community has completed different parts of the designation process: Dante is almost finished with their thresholds, Tazewell has completed the Rally program, Lebanon is working
towards the Rally program, and Honaker will begin the Rally process in the upcoming two weeks. The action group hopes to have four communities designated by May 2017, with a celebration in Honaker, which will take place in conjunction with Heritage Day. The Action Group is also working with Richlands and Nicklesville to discuss the designation process in the future. They have contacted Richlands and are waiting for word back. They are currently adding Lebanon to Hometowns on the Clinch.

*Taste of the Clinch* is moving forward with a focus on a total of 53 local restaurants in the region. Brochures have been made that includes these restaurants and maps to access points. The team has almost completed visits to each restaurant, taken pictures, and conducted informal interviews. The team asked each owner, “What are you known for?” The goal of these informal interviews is to eventually tell a story of each restaurant to showcase its history and individuality. A new restaurant recently opened in Tazewell called “Seven” and will now be featured in the *Taste of the Clinch*. The initial steps in the marketing campaign for the *Taste of the Clinch* include a section in the Visitor’s Guide on Heart of Appalachia.

A tear-off map is being developed that will include the locations of each of the restaurants featured in the program; the Action Group is still working on the logo and tagline for the map. Third, the Action Group has signed a contract with *Blue Ridge Outdoors* for advertising and an article about Taste of the Clinch will be featured in their spring edition of the magazine. Finally, the Heart of Appalachia website has created a landing page, which will feature *Taste of the Clinch* and will provide information about the program.

• **Access Points** - The Artrip access point is currently under construction, but has not been able to move forward due to weather and material delays. Once the site is complete, the Action Group will move forward with the Old Castlewood site, which is currently undergoing a permitting process. The Action Group hopes to have both sites completed by Spring 2017.

Randy Short, new co-chair of the Action Group, has been tracking down landowners and identifying potential sites. Steve Lindeman recently spoke with Larry Johnson, who is on the Town Council in Richlands, and he identified the first site as Crittersville Park. The landowner is willing to donate that site. They thought of another site near the Raven Elementary School as well. Richlands has initiated a deal with Tazewell County for moving forward with the construction process. Richlands will provide the appropriate crew members needed to develop the site, if Tazewell County will provide the funds. Brad Kreps is currently working on a proposal with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) to acquire additional funding. The goal is to finish each of these sites using these funds, specifically Miller’s Yard, which is currently under an easement.
• **Environmental Education**- The 5th Annual Environmental Symposium is scheduled for Saturday May 13th, 2017 at St. Paul Elementary School. The event is focused on working with educators and training them on content relevant to the VA SOL including ecosystems, wildlife and public lands. This event will have laptop door prizes thanks to sponsors. A local chef, Travis Milton, will be presenting on farm to table eating, as well as catering the event. The Youth Summit is coming up on Saturday March 11th at the Russell County Public Library. Attendance comes mostly from high schools but some middle school students will be attending. These students will compete for funding to do their own project at their school.

Teach the Clinch is a curriculum guide available to educators in the local communities. They assembled the curriculum by asking educators what they needed to teach properly. The lessons are available for download and books are available for purchase at the website [www.teachtheclinch.com](http://www.teachtheclinch.com). Lessons include overview, grade level and standards of learning, and include a timeframe for the amount of time it will take to complete. The Education Action Group tested the lessons. One session at the Symposium is on Teach the Clinch website.

The group is working to identify funding sources for the Ecological Center for renovations. The next meeting will be held on February 23rd. The current funding will take care of HVAC.

Robyn Goad asked if she could distribute these lessons at the schools she visits. They will get together and look into that further.

• **Water Quality**- The Water Quality Action Group has finished the Water Quality Rack card, which has been printed and is now being distributed locally. The Action Group printed 500 copies of the Rack Card, which features information about the Clinch and Powell Rivers. The card also features different types of measures that can be completed to help protect the river.

They are planning a Mothers Day Brunch and Basket Fundraiser. Baskets will be auctioned off to cover the mileage for the CRVI VISTA, Robyn Goad. They are accepting donations and gift baskets; potential auction ideas include local items, t-shirts, and promotional materials from within the region.

A user-friendly water quality report is in the works and should be on the CRVI website soon.

• **State Parks**- State park signage is underway that will give directions from the roads to the access points. They are currently locating properties. These are anchor properties, which include about three separate areas of land connected by access points. These properties are in Wise, Tazewell, Russell, and Scott Counties.
Sharon Ewing of DCR stated that the two access points, Artrip and Old Castlewood, would likely be the first two sites acquired by DCR. After these acquisitions have been secured, DCR will be able to market the sites and both sites will have DCR State Parks and CRVI signage featured on site.

**Oral History Presentation by Caroline Leggett**

Caroline Leggett is a student from Radford University. She presented an oral history that she and her colleagues in the Appalachian studies minor offered earlier in Washington DC. They partnered with CRVI to compile their information. Caroline and the rest of her team did a total of 13 interviews. The end product will be a book of river stories and audio clips available at kiosks. A few of those interviewed include those who were once coal miners; they shared their experiences of the decline of the coal industry. They recorded audio during these interviews and she offered an audio sample of one section for us to hear. This project will continue with the next cohort of students at Radford University.

**Presentation by Greg and Jennifer Bailey**

Greg and Jennifer Bailey are the owners of the Sugar Hill Brewing Company. Mrs. Bailey described the process that began their business. They owned a business in the same location as their current restaurant, but they decided that they weren't doing what they wanted to do. They also came to the conclusion that the town needed a restaurant, so they decided to open a brewery and restaurant. They changed their hardware store into a restaurant, even though they admit they didn't know what they were doing. She has been very excited to see individuals from far away places like Tri-Cities and Kentucky visit their business. There were a number of questions which follow here:

- You were willing to take a risk, but what do you think needs to happen on a regional level? Jennifer says they need people who will look at what is needed in the area and take a chance and do it. It may be hard, but the momentum needs to keep going.
- What specifically does St Paul need business-wise? They say would like to see more restaurants, businesses, and hotels. It doesn’t matter if it competes with their business because they know it will bring more people to the area.
- Is there any advice to anyone wanting to start a business? Just seeing something come together by your own hand was very rewarding. People encouraging them really kept them going. Jennifer says “we’ll figure it out” is her favorite phrase.

**CRVI’s Next Steps**

The next in-person meeting will be held mid-May in Dungannon.

**Meeting Participants**
1. Steve Lindeman
2. Bill Miller
3. Joe Wentz
4. Ron Baldwin
5. Monty Salyer
6. Sarah Salyer
7. Lou Wallace
8. Kathy Stewart
9. Robyn Goad
10. Carol Doss
11. Barbara White
12. Caroline Leggett
13. Terry Vencil
14. Bob Harrison
15. Suzy Harrison
16. Mayor Debra Horne
17. Wally Smith
18. Andrew Fontinos
19. Travis Stanley
20. Steve Lindeman
21. Gary Barker
22. Jeff Monsour
23. Frank Dukes (IEN)
24. Christine Gyovai (IEN; Dialogue + Design Associates)
25. Alexandria Sentilles (IEN Intern)
26. Brianna Matney (IEN Intern)