

NC STEP Committee Meeting
Ned Delamar Center, Pamlico Community College
February 18, 2010 @ 5:30PM

Joseph Himbry, welcoming everyone, called the meeting to order at 5:45pm. Refreshments were served prior to calling the meeting to order.

Chilton Rogers, STEP Coach from the NC Rural Center, took the floor and again welcomed everyone. She then had everyone quickly introduce themselves. Ms. Rogers stated that the committee had a lot to cover and need to get started as quickly as possible, as several members had to leave early due to prior commitments. There were several items that needed to be addressed and Ms. Rogers wanted to go over where things were going and how quickly they must to proceed.

Ms. Rogers stated that the project development evaluations needed to be completed by the next STEP meeting. The committee needed to have project templates completed and fleshed out in which it is listed exactly what it will take to carry out the project, with firm dollar amount estimates and no guessing. She also stated that we will be breaking down the subcommittees and assigning individuals to various projects. This is a great opportunity to bring more people into the committee to help with the projects. The project templates needed to have all the information outlined, as this is what will be presented to the NC Rural Center for contract consideration.

Per Ms. Rogers, this transition to implementation of projects is where we are phasing out the planning and coaching part and going into the actual execution part. The committee will be discussing the prioritizing of projects, such as which projects are the most important to address immediately and in what order. Also, they will be discussing the allocation of STEP funds and project assignments, such as who is organizing, leading, and working on which project. Finally, the committee will be deciding who will be assigned to organize and facilitate the monthly meetings, keeping notes, and tracking the progress of the Implementation Team. The committee needs to be thinking about who will fill which position, to be discussed at the next meeting.

Ms. Rogers stated that the STEP Grant that Bayboro is receiving is really not that much in the way of money, but what the Rural Center is hoping mainly to leave Pamlico County with is an established group of citizen leaders that will carry Pamlico County forward. Ms. Rogers will be moving on to coach a new phase of STEP recipients.

Ms. Rogers referred to the project evaluation forms and each committee head was asked to give an update with regards to their individual project template. Ms. Rogers stated that as we get to each project, the people who are assigned to head them will give an update as to what else needs to be done and then the committee will assign people together to work on it. Ms. Rogers will take all the information and put together a strategic plan which she then will present to the Town of Bayboro Town Council. It will be a working strategic plan, listing the steps the committee took to reach the final plan, and not a wordy document. Ms. Rogers wants the plan to be a working plan to be used as a reference guide.

Regarding the Business Development Subcommittee, there are three project templates submitted to the STEP Committee. The first project template is to identify and validate three core business capabilities. Candy Roberts and Dee Sage have been assigned to head this project. They gave a brief update, in that due to stumbling blocks; the project may have to go in a different direction than originally planned. The Business Subcommittee has scheduled a meeting for the following Thursday and they will be working with the Business Development Center; Joe Himbry; Jayne Robb, Pamlico County Planner, and the Economic Development Commission of Pamlico County. Ms. Sage stated that there are several initiatives in Pamlico County working on similar projects that would fit into what the subcommittee is trying to do, but they are having difficulty in getting all the ideas together and thereby becoming more cohesive.

Ms. Rogers responded that what there is in the STEP planning is broader than just using the STEP monies, so the subcommittee can be as inclusive as they want to. Because there are various initiatives working on similar projects, Ms. Rogers suggested breaking down the steps of the project into more manageable portions. This will allow quicker and more visible results. A big project may need to be broken down into three or four smaller projects. Ms. Rogers encouraged the subcommittee to work with other initiatives in that they may have funding available that might fit into the subcommittee's project templates.

Mr. Himbry stated that projects are going to be ever changing and that we need to be aware that there may be some overlap. People that are working on individual projects when these overlaps occur will find themselves working with people from other projects and that this is to be expected.

The second project template for the Business Development Subcommittee is the creation of a support network to provide direct, customized assistance to entrepreneurs as they develop their business. Project Coordinator Brian Dodds reported that he was currently having difficulty in connecting with the SCORE organization as they only meet once a month. He also reported that he has received information from Ms. Rogers regarding a new organization called EntreDot that looks promising. Mr. Dodds stated that as both organizations are low or no cost endeavors, the committee may not need the \$20,000 they initially thought to need.

Ms. Rogers reminded the subcommittee that to get a support network up and running is a pretty labor extensive job. It takes a lot to get a network going in that you need to pull the people together, organize the meetings, identify the businesses, etc. and that the money was originally thought to be used to hire the necessary personal to accomplish this.

Mr. Dodds also reported that he was looking into the revitalization of a peer network coordinated through the Pamlico Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Rogers responded that the Chamber may want to look into obtaining Junior Chamber Members to help with this. There was some discussion regarding getting help for the Chamber Executive Director as this is fairly extensive and she would be needing help. This could be labeled as a partnership between the Chamber and the Small Business Association. Funding could be set aside to hire personnel to help with this project. The members helping Mr. Dodds with this project are Jerry Prescott and Selva Staub, the new director of the SBC.

Regarding a third project submission, Dr. Coon stated that at the conclusion of last month's STEP Committee meeting which featured a presentation of the contingent that went to the Educational Forum in Virginia, it was suggested that a project template proposing to incorporate the NC Real Curriculum into the Pamlico County Educational Curriculum be presented to the NC STEP Committee. The strategies for implementation of this project are as follows:

The economic future of Pamlico County and its towns is dependent on the nurturing of existing businesses and the creation and growth of new business.

We need to build on the strengths of the talent pool within the community, our location, the existing recreational opportunities, a friendly and courteous business environment for small businesses, and the excellent quality of life through opportunities to:

- create entrepreneurial spirit at all levels
- capitalize on our people resources
- develop a highly qualified workforce
- utilize the resources of the military alliance and the SMART Growth Plan

We need to overcome the critical weaknesses of the infrastructure deficiencies, absent core business capability, the exodus of families and children, the need for local government vision and support, and a small population. We are threatened by:

- an environment that encourages out of county shopping, both physically and on-line
- waning participation and a growing apathy within the communities
- static or declining population
- competition from Carteret and Craven counties
- the persistent economic downturn

Dr. Coon and Ms. Rice have submitted this project template and informed the committee that they also have applied for scholarships to help with the monetary cost of the project. They are currently awaiting the results of the scholarship applications. If all goes according to plan, the training will be in Blowing Rock, North Carolina.

Ms. Rogers stated that the proper channels have been followed in that project template was submitted to the subcommittee first and then the STEP committee. And because the Educational Forum Contingent already has a history with the STEP Committee, in the receipt of \$1,600.00 to attend the Forum, it is a matter of whether or not the STEP Committee wishes to include it in the Economic Development Strategic Plan. This would open the door for the request of funding should the need arise. Dr. Coon responded that they were currently putting the matter before the Pamlico County School Board and looking for different avenues of funding.

Ms. Rogers stated that the funding should be negotiated between the School System and the STEP Committee. Mr. Himbry responded that the STEP Committee will never have enough money to fund all the projects, but that the first step is to get the project approved. The funding for the projects could be found through other avenues. Ms. Rogers concurred with Mr. Himbry

and stated that the money is out there, we just have to figure out what project we are going to do and then chase the money. Various ways to obtain funding was discussed.

Regarding the Tourism Subcommittee Projects, Mr. Himbry stated that the Flea Mall Incubator/Farmer's Market project has morphed into a Business Growth Development Facility project and is working with the SBC, Bayboro Development Center, and the STEP Committee. He has also submitted a proposal to the Economic Innovation Grant Program to obtain funding for this project. If the grant application is approved, the STEP Committee will not be the lead of this project, but will be informed of the developments.

Mr. Himbry informed the STEP Committee that he was not leaving them out of the loop, but that as there were deadlines pertaining to applying for the Economic Innovation Grant Program, he had hurry in order to meet the deadline. He will be keeping the Committee informed as to the progress of the grant application.

In order to avoid a conflict of interest, the Flea Mall/Farmer's Market project has become just a Farmer's Market project as the Flea Mall will be included in the Business Growth Development Facility in the way of an incubator business. There was some discussion regarding the implementation of a farmer's market and the distribution of produce to various buyers. Ms. Rogers also stated that there may be a way to introduce a farmer's market and seafood market together and work with neighboring towns. She stated that a project template needs to be submitted.

Regarding the project of amenities inventory, Mr. Himbry stated that he and Mr. Prescott had met with the Chamber and the SBC regarding this matter. The Coordinator Beth Bucksott gave a brief review of the progress being made to list the amenities that can be found in Pamlico County. She will be working with the Pamlico Chamber of Commerce and the Pamlico Community College to recruit Jr. Chamber Members and people power.

Regarding the Hotel Complex Feasibility Study, Mr. Himbry reported that he is currently pursuing bids for consultants and have identified several candidates, one of which has developed a hotel complex in Montgomery County. Mr. Himbry is entertaining the idea of a group of committee representatives traveling to Montgomery County to inspect the Complex. Among the representatives that will be inspecting the Complex will be Joe Himbry, Judy Tatum, Ann Holton, and a representative from Oriental.

Regarding the Waterfront Development Project Phase I, Mr. Himbry gave a brief review of the project. He stated that it has been submitted for a PARTF Grant and if successful, the cost of the grant application will be absorbed by the Town of Bayboro. Phase II will involve further development of the park area and the waterfront property owners.

Regarding the Retiree Subcommittee Projects, the community assessment information will be coming from the information gathered by the Pamlico Chamber of Commerce during their listing of amenities. The cost of \$6,500.00 will stay with this project template.

The marketing piece project has been done away with and the website project is a stand-alone project that will be coordinating with the Pamlico Chamber of Commerce's Website. As this project is more closely reflecting tourism, it will be moved to the responsibility of the Tourism Subcommittee to pursue rather than the Retirees Subcommittee. The Tourism Subcommittee will be working with the Business/E-Ship Subcommittee and the Pamlico Chamber of Commerce in this project. Beth Bucksott will be putting together a cost analysis for this project.

It was decided to enhance the Chamber's Website rather than create an individual website for this project with links to individual towns' websites. Thought was given to establishing a webpage for towns that do not have a website. It was decided not to use the Pamlico County website as it is more of a governmental website and would not really be suitable for the purpose of the website project.

There was some discussion regarding possible conflict of interest issues regarding having Brian Dodds working on the Chamber Website as well as the project website. Members to oversee this project are Beth Bucksott, Pamlico Chamber of Commerce, Jude Dodds, and Brian Dodds. It was decided that with regards to the receipt of bids for work done, the individual groups are responsible for initiating the bids, but the final decision will be the responsibility of the STEP Committee.

Regarding the Commuters Subcommittee project of beautification of the Hwy 55 business corridor for pedestrian and commuter traffic, the subcommittee is currently working on obtaining plants to provide a unified connection from one town to the next. These plants will be planted along the highway corridor. The issue of street lighting tabled for the time being.

The second project of unified and consistent town signs was tabled for future consideration.

The next STEP Committee Meeting will be March 18, 2010 from 5:30pm-7:30pm at the Ned Delamar Center. Meeting was adjourned at 7:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Baker, STEP Coordinator

In Attendance:

Chilton Rogers
Barbara Baker
Beth Bucksott
Carla Byrnes
James Coon
Cleve Cox
Clark Dimond
Brian Dodds
Jude Bloom/Dodds

Alice Garrison
Robert Harris
Joe Himbry
Vinnie Himbry
Ann Holton
Mark Howell
Jerry Prescott
Pat Prescott
Misty Rasmussen

Ruth Rice
Candy Roberts
Dee Sage
Kenya Servia
Joyce Swimm
Judy Thaanum
Barb Venturi