

UNITY Community Listening Session

2/23/23 (Start time: @5:30pm End time: @7:15pm)

Number of Participants: 5

UNITY Leaders: Emma Kelly, Terran, Jess Mullins, Jay Tyler

Participants: Mary Darcy, David Rouse, Robert Bloomer, the Mullers from Anomaly Gardens

I. Starting Point

1. Robert Bloomer

1. On BSG Town Council

1. Importance of Grant Writing

1. More grants need to be applied for on behalf of the town

1. Mary Darcy offered to write grants for the town

2. Terran offered for the organizations (namely, VO) to partner with the town on grant writing

3. TCTAC

4. Get on the agenda and offer to write grants for the area

1. There's a need for a coordinated group for grant writing

1. Needs a group of 4-5 people total, typically

i. Research

i. Cross-county coordination

i. Sourcing Grants

i. Writing

2. Core Issues

1. Homelessness

2. Housing

3. Substance Abuse

II. Strengths of the County

1. Outdoors

1. Beautiful county

2. Lots of wildlife

3. Animals

2. Strong workers

1. People in BSG want the area to do well, and work hard to achieve this

III. Weaknesses of the County

1. Community Perspective

1. Members of the community view the cost of living as unnecessary

2. View grant money improperly

1. Complain about town expenses without knowing it is grant money

2. If it is grant money, view it as a way to get out of town funds/charges

3. Old schools have better structures than the new ones

2. Water

1. There's a water shortage
 1. Mary Darcy was told 30 years ago that there was no way to store the water here
2. 60% of the water put out every month is lost
 1. Lots of big leaks
 2. The leaks need to be found, but it's very expensive
 1. Need grant money for water/sewage
3. Exodus
 1. People are leaving the area and housing is intent on being more expensive
 1. Proposed housing valued at 250k
 1. Wanting to bring people in but unable to keep people here
 2. Litter is everywhere
 1. Relied on inmates and inmate labor
 1. Were unable to pay for trash pickup
 2. Devalues our communities
 3. People do not have curbside trash pickup
 1. Potentially from people having to take their own trash to the dump
 4. **We need responsible land management**
 5. **Lack of Community and Respect for Each Other**
 3. Loss of Physicians in Ballad
 1. Makes healthcare more difficult here
 2. Difficult to get proper coverage and EMS is lacking funding

IV. Where do you see Big Stone Gap/Appalachia in 15 years?

V. What can we as organizations do for Big Stone Gap/Appalachia?

VI. Root Cause: Lack of Funding for the Area

VII. Final Notes/Additional Comments

1. What UNITY will do:

1. Work on grant writing for the area.

1. Grants with the most funding to secure often apply to multiple counties
 1. Wise and Scott would likely be able to be applied for together
 2. The grant would have to be for a specific project
2. Travis Anderson is the grant writer for Appalachia
 1. Terran will try to pull him into this conversation
3. Garret is another great grant writer
 1. We will try to see if he can participate
4. Sharon Fisher would be a great person to invite
5. Adam would be a great person to invite

2. Hold a grant writing workshop (???)

1. **Sit down with the localities to see what grant writing opportunities there are**
2. **Look to the people who are model grant writers as mentors for grant writing process**
3. **Seek to hold grant writing workshop to get local people involved in the process**
4. **Make sure people know project management and capacity is a necessary aspect to the grant process**
5. **"Leadership Development Investment"**

1. It's a benefit to everyone, can appeal to UVA Wise and MECC

3. Grant ideas

1. **Recycling Program**
 1. **Farmer's Markets would be a good testing range for recycling**
 1. **Recycle egg and milk containers**
 2. **Trash pickup**
 1. **Terran will see about getting community buy in for localities**
 2. **Emma will see about grant information on it**
 1. **Would help if there's a perception of incentive**
 2. **START IN APPALACHIA and then apply it to other areas**
 3. **Tie recent growth to the need for better land and trash management**
 4. **Healthcare Funding**
 5. **Local business funding**
4. **Mary Darcy wants to write a letter to the editor regarding the trash problem**
 5. **Anita Muller wants to support a community garden**
 1. **More craftsmen in the area (quilts, woodworking, etc.)**