

Enterprise designation could bring millions

By Cathy Casper

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An informational meeting discussing the Enterprise Community designation for this area and how to apply for grants through the enterprise community was held last week in New Tazewell.

The meeting was led by Lindy Turner, Coordinator for the Clinch-Powell Resource Conservation and Development Council, the lead entity working with the Enterprise Community.

Turner said in welcoming those that attended, “We want every organization, every person to get the most benefit out of the Enterprise Community designation as possible.”

Last year, five counties; Claiborne, Grainger, Hancock, Union and Hawkins Counties banded together to apply for an Empowerment Zone designation from the Federal Government. The designation could have brought approximately 20 to 40 million dollars to our area over the next ten years.

The area, though not awarded the Enterprise Zone designation, was designation as an Empowerment Zone. A designation which will result in 2.75 million dollars coming into the area over the next ten years along with countless dollars in grants that will be awarded because of the designation.

Turner explained that because the area was not awarded the Empowerment Zone designation and therefore will receive less money, the strategic plan originally sent to Washington will now have to be revised to reflect the change in funding levels. “There will also have to be a revisit to the priority areas for funding,” she said.

According to Tom Mottern, Chairman of the Enterprise Community, the 2.75 million dollars will be administered by the Enterprise Community board and the amount of other funding that could come to the area as a result of this designation is phenomenal.

“All of the funding that is available from the United States Department of Agriculture and elsewhere, millions of dollars that can be made available to us on application in a competitive world for this Enterprise Community; it is enormous the amount of Federal Benefit from these sources,” he said.

Grants are typically judged on a 100 point scale and organizations applying for grants may earn as many as 2 to 25 extra points because of the designation.

Any grants applied for have to result from items that are part of the strategic plan developed for the area. The plan contains but is not limited to such items as sustainable economic development, tourism, education and the arts and infrastructure to name a few.

In speaking of funds that would be available from the 2.75 million dollars as well as other grant monies, Turner said, “All funding through the Enterprise Community, all support for activities through other grants in the Enterprise Community have to be for items in the strategic plan.”

An organization applying for grant money must be a 501C3 Tax exempt organization, a government agency, or be applying through one of those organizations.

Some of the steps in applying for funds are contact with an Enterprise Board member to discuss the project, working with the Enterprise Community to develop the

proposal, preparing a preliminary project proposal and submitting further information as requested. The proposal is then reviewed by the appropriate committee and will be subject to a full review, approval or rejection by the Enterprise Community Board.

Some of the criteria for ranking the proposals are: How does the project fit in with the strategic plan, how and to what extent will leveraging be involved, is the project sustainable, will the project serve the region or only benefit one community, how many people will be impacted and what are the economic, environmental and social impacts?

Turner said, “We will be looking for projects where there are multiple partners involved and we want to put things in the community that are going to have benefit beyond one or two years’ time.

Joe Woody of the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development spoke to the group about earmarked funds.

“2.75 million is probably not that much when you really think about it, but when you think about earmarked funds where you can go through our agency and other federal agencies, that is where the money and partners come into play,” he said.

It has been said that other communities designated as Empowerment Zones have received as much as sixty million dollars in the form of various grants.

During the afternoon session the group spoke to local business and industry about advantages they would be entitled to with the designation.