

MEMORANDUM

Date: March 31, 2017

To: [March 8th Mini-Town Hall Participants](#) (see end for list of participants)

From: [NCSU Engagement Team](#)

Re: A Summary of the Findings from the March 8th Polk/Rutherford Town Hall Meeting

Again, we want to thank everyone for their participation. Please see below for an *abbreviated* summary of some of the key takeaways from the meeting. Your comments are welcomed and should be sent directly to Dr. Brookins, the NCSU lead contact at craig_brookins@ncsu.edu.

Background:

- Polk and Rutherford counties have an equine history and culture that dates back at least 65 years. From this foundation, local community leaders envision an equine-based economy that would fuel regional development and direct regional growth. Integral to this vision is the establishment of a local equine research and education center.
- The establishment of the privately owned [Tryon International Equestrian Center \(TIEC\)](#) increases the appeal of this vision.
- To further the vision, Isothermal Community College applied for and received a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission and invited North Carolina State University (NCSU) as a subcontractor to determine feasibility and physical development plans that will best accommodate the needs of the surrounding communities.
- Representatives from ICC, NCSU, and the local community met on March 8th to kickoff the community engagement component of the project with a mini-town hall meeting focused on each of the areas listed below. This session helped to gain a preliminary sense of different perspectives on this opportunity and determine the steps moving forward. A summary of responses based on five questions posed to the group are provided below:

Group Question: How can the equine-based economy fuel more equitable and sustainable prosperity in the area?

- Capitalize on the rural character and key location of the area as a major economic *triangle* that extends from Charlotte to Asheville and into South Carolina.
- Capitalize on the popularity and economic impact of the 2018 World Equestrian Games.
- Provide an additional resource for animal science and the veterinary school at NC State.
- Promote Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) with high school students.
- Create a college bridge for students from ICC and other CCs
- Complement recently developed ICC equine program and courses
- Provide further support for the equine industry in the area.
- Be a driver of responsible local private and public economic development.
- The Equine Research & Education Center (EREC) would be developed to complement local equine industry.
- Support a year-round equine-based economy.
- Support efforts to minimize job and people emigration.
- Support and provide an example for other non-equine economic opportunities including tourism,

hospitality, agriculture, textiles, construction, waste, etc.

- Provide collaborative opportunities for ICC and various colleges and departments within NCSU, including Outreach & Engagement, the vet school, the waste research center, Cooperative Extension, etc.
- Models of Equine Research and Education centers around the country should be examined to identify sustainable and revenue generating strategies. These could include the Clemson University International Center for Automotive Research, the Conditioning Center in Wellington, Florida, and research centers in Kannapolis, Arlington, and Cornell.

Group Question: *Let's dream a little and create a list of Tweets (< 140 Characters) focused on " what would you like to write 5 years from now bragging to the public about the success of this project? (Direct quotes from participants are provided below)*

I. Community development

- A. *Growing all aspects of the community, through the horse*
- B. *We created a job for everyone in the equine service area*
- C. *We leveraged growth in such a way that it was accepted and appreciated by the whole community!*
- D. *Vibrant communities connected throughout the region as popular go-to places for live, work, and play.*
- E. *The area is known for its rural quality life, with rapid economic growth and employment.*
- F. *Thankful for all who shaped, fostered, and implemented the vision that revitalized our community.*

II. Pride

- a. *The best equestrian destination in the world!*
- b. *My hometown is the equestrian capital of the world!*
- c. *We used our "Horsepower" to change our communities and lives for the better*
- d. *Created hope [emphasis in the original] in new opportunities for students/families/business.*
 - i. *Define pathways: education to jobs*
 - ii. *We become the standard for equine studies/research.*
- e. *World class equine community exceeds all expectations! World's friendliest horse community.*
- f. *The Tryon Triangle is the equine capital of the world and the Equine Ed & Research center is its beating heart. #EQUINEEDUCATION #TRYONTRIANGLE*
- g. *#Polk County High School Equestrian Team wins equestrian nationals supported by FFA Agriculture Science Team honors in Bovine Production increases...*
- h. *The region will be defined as a "destination" rather than an area that people "pass through".*

III. Education and skills for workforce

- a. *An international multi-state research and development educational facility with educational components as well as incubation and business development capabilities including creative financing options (SBA/DIDS(sp?)/State). In construction. With systems and programs operational,*
- b. *A community that reflects enhanced [emphasis in the original] skills and attitudes of rural/western NC:*
- c. *People skills for relating and serving, working together toward common goals*

- d. *Technical skills for getting things done and wedding value to work*
- e. *Optimism, innovation, and entrepreneurship in new and existing industries and community quality of life*
- f. *Through education we helped grow the equestrian community/industry by providing access to better horses, better care givers and owners.*
- g. *We maximized the opportunity that TIEC presents to impact the lives and businesses of this region through education and job creation.*

Group Question: *What additional groups or individuals should be brought into the local conversation.*

- A long list was generated of possible individuals and organizations to connect with in the local and regional community, suggesting there could be many resources to help sustain the project once it has been implemented.

Group Question: What would be the best name for the project?

- **Consensus! Southeast Research and Education Partnership (SEREP)**



Mini-Town Hall Participants

First Name	Last Name	Title	Organization
Norman	McGlohon	Retired Community Member	Agriculture and Agribusiness
Dennis	Lanahan	President, Board of Directors	Foothills Equestrian and Nature Center (FENCE)
Thad	Harrill	Vice President	Isothermal Community College
Kim	Alexander	Dean of Business Sciences	Isothermal Community College
Sarah	Morse	Coordinator of Grants	Isothermal Community College
Walter	Dalton	President	Isothermal Community College
Scott	Dadson	Director	Isothermal Planning and Development Commission
Ben	Silliman	Prof & Extension Specialist, Dept. of Agricultural and Human Sciences	NCSU
Bruno	Ferreira	Doctoral Student, College of Natural Resources	NCSU
Leslie	Boney	Director, Institute for Emerging Issues	NCSU
Becky	Bowen	Program Manager, Cooperative Extension	NCSU
Craig	Brookins	Assoc Professor of Applied Social and Community Psychology	NCSU
Celen	Pasalar	Assistant Dean for Research and Extension, Asst Prof, Landscape Architecture, College of Design	NCSU
Tyler	Kuss	Graduate Student, College of Design	NCSU
Scott	Welborn	Director, Polk County Cooperative Extension	NCSU
Alice	Warren	Vice Provost for Continuing Education	NCSU
Ann	Scheunemann	Graduate Student, Applied Social and Community Psychology	NCSU
Duarte	Morais	Assoc Professor of Equitable and Sustainable Tourism; Specialist, NC Tourism Extension	NCSU
Samantha	Graham	Office of Outreach and Engagement	NCSU
Shannon	Pratt-Phillips	Assoc Professor, Department of Animal Science	NCSU
Aaron	Greene	Superintendent	Polk County Schools
Bill	Miller	Retired Community Member	Polk County Schools
Marche	Pittman	County Manager	Polk County, NC
Janet	Mason	Superintendent	Rutherford County Schools
Steve	Garrison	County Manager	Rutherford County, NC
Craig	Hilton	Executive Director	T. C. Hilton Foundation
Rich	Metcalfe	Doctor of Veterinary Medicine	Tryon Equine Hospital
Libbie	Johnson	Director (longtime horse enthusiast)	Tryon Horse Country, Horse Country Promotions
Molly	Oakman	Operations	TIEC
Kent	Holden	Member, Board of Directors	Tryon Riding and Hunt Club

Kathryn	McMahon	Executive Director	Tryon Riding and Hunt Club
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