

NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION
Minutes of the Commission Meeting
held on
January 28, 2016
6:00 p.m. – New River Valley Business Center, Fairlawn

I. CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT: Mr. K. Sullivan, Chair, Virginia Tech; Mr. J. Carpenter, Radford University, Vice-Chair; Mr. L. Law, Giles County, Treasurer; Mr. C. Bopp, Pulaski County; Mr. L. Clevinger, Town of Pulaski; Mr. G. East, Town of Pulaski; Mr. T. Garrett, Town of Narrows; Mr. F. Gerald, Floyd County; Ms. H. Lesko, Town of Blacksburg; Mr. R. McCoy, Giles County; Ms. C. Newcomb, Town of Blacksburg; Mr. M. Patton, Town of Floyd; Ms. A. Perkins, Montgomery County; Mr. J. Soileau, Virginia Tech; Mr. H. Showalter, Town of Christiansburg; Mr. M. Sutphin, Town of Blacksburg; Mr. M. Turk, City of Radford, and Dr. D. Warren, Pulaski County.

ABSENT: Dr. H. Harvey, City of Radford; Mr. M. Harvey, Montgomery County; Ms. E. Janney, Floyd County; Ms. S. Journell, Town of Pearisburg; Mr. W. Kantsios, Town of Rich Creek and Mr. S. Weaver, Town of Christiansburg.

Staff Attendees: Kevin Byrd, Janet McNew, Patrick Burton, Elijah Sharp, Jennifer Wilsie, and Julie Phillips.

II. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes for November
Mr. Sullivan called for approval of the consent agenda item if there were no questions or changes.

Motion: Ms. Lesko moved for the approval of the minutes. Mr. Bopp seconded the motion.
Action: Motion carried; one abstention, Mr. Garrett.

- B. Approval of Treasurer's Report for November and December
Mr. Sullivan called for approval of the consent agenda item if there were no questions or changes.

Motion: Mr. Patton moved for the approval of the minutes. Mr. Soileau seconded the motion.
Action: Motion carried unanimously.

III. COMMONWEALTH INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

- A. Projects (Signed-off by the staff)
1. NRV Senior Services Vehicle Purchase VA160106-01200400400
 2. Muse Hall Safety System Renovation DEQ #15-205S
 3. NRV Community Services Vehicle Purchase VA160111-01300400400
 4. Giles County Health & Family Center Vehicle Purchase VA160113-01400400071
- B. Regular Project Review

None.

C. Environmental Project Review

None.

IV. PUBLIC ADDRESS

None.

V. REVIEW OF MUTUAL CONCERNS AND COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Mr. Gerald reported Floyd County is looking into their water supply. He explained the school board, the planning commission, the PSA board and the Town of Floyd joined the County in a meeting discussing the possibility of extending a waterline from Riner and/or building a water treatment plant near the Little River. Mr. Byrd noted that the Commission is available to assist the County and has completed studies on how to move water throughout the region. He also noted USDA-Rural Development may have funds available to assist with planning and engineering work.

VI. CHAIR'S REPORT

Mr. Sullivan reported the Executive Committee met in December and held a conference called in January due to the snow storm.

VII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Byrd provided a summary report in the Commission agenda packet. Mr. Byrd explained a financial disclosure form was placed at each of the citizen representative's seats to be filled out. He explained a change in state code in late 2015 now requires the Commission to file disclosure statements with the local clerk of court and noted the elected official representatives would have already filled one out for their locality. Mr. Byrd reported the Go Virginia economic development program was introduced as legislation in the current General Assembly session. He overviewed the program and funding proposed. He also explained the intention of the program is for private sector investment to stimulate economic development within Virginia. He reported there will be \$50 million in new funding in the FY16 Federal Omnibus Bill for coal-impacted communities through the Appalachian Regional Commission POWER program. Mr. Byrd explained Giles County was approved for a POWER grant, which was the first round from FY15, to complete a study on how to connect the communities to the New River much like communities are connected to cycling trails. He explained the New River Valley and southwest Virginia PDCs are working together to identify priorities for the POWER program and noted they are discussing how to support the growing unmanned systems industry. Mr. Byrd reported the transportation projects for House Bill 2 were recently released and noted the region has four projects recommended by VDOT staff. Mr. Byrd explained the Commission is facilitating a discussion regarding the expansion of Renew the New, a Giles County river clean up, to the entire region. He also noted the Commission applied to VA Dept. of Environmental Quality for Watershed Roundtable funding to support staff time involved with Renew the New expansion coordination. Mr. Sullivan stated the program has been going on in Giles County for over 14 years and noted its importance to tourism and use of the river as a blueway. Mr. Byrd explained the Southwest Virginia Outdoor Expo will be held in the New River Valley in the spring of 2017. Mr. Byrd reported the Commission is working with the Roanoke Valley region on a grant application called Tech Hire which would be a four year project working with 400+ people training for technology jobs. The main focus of the grant would be

underemployed 17-29 year olds. Lastly, he explained a Livability in Action meeting will be held February 29th at 2:30pm in the Event Center in Christiansburg and all Commissioners are invited to attend.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

None.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Access to Community College for Education (ACCE) Program Presentation by Angie Covey and Erika Tolbert with New River Community College Education Foundation

Ms. Covey explained the ACCE Program is a public private partnership that allows Giles County Students to be eligible to earn an associate's degree from New River Community College (NRCC) tuition free. She explained the program uses the FAFSA to identify students to enroll in the program and noted the student must have at least a 2.5 GPA to be eligible. Ms. Covey explained there is no limit to how many students the program can support and noted all students that applied were accepted. Ms. Covey overviewed the guidelines of the program while Ms. Tolbert explained the community service work required.

Discussion: Ms. Newcomb asked how many students are currently in the program. Ms. Tolbert explained there are 36 ACCE students. Dr. Warren asked if there is a time limit to how long after graduating Giles County High School a student can enroll. Ms. Covey explained the program began in 2015 so students graduating before that time are not eligible. She also noted the student must be a resident of Giles County for a minimum of one year before they graduate to be eligible. Dr. Warren also noted the program should be encouraged throughout the region. Mr. East asked if this is a pilot program with Giles County that would expand to other localities within the region. Ms. Covey explained that they have talked to Floyd County about expanding. Mr. Law asked how much Giles County businesses contributed to the program. Mr. McCoy explained that half of the program is funded by businesses and private citizens while the other half is paid by Giles County. Dr. Warren asked if students who take dual enrollment are participating in the program. Ms. Covey explained there are students who have taken dual enrollment participating in the program and noted that taking dual enrollment in high school earns free college credits.

B. NRV Passenger Rail Project Overview and Resolution

Mr. Byrd overviewed the partners involved with the project. He also reviewed the project progress to date, the history of rail in the region, how the potential ridership was determined and where the highest demand falls within the New River Valley. Lastly, he overviewed the potential economic impact passenger rail would have. Mr. Sharp continued the presentation by discussing how the station locations were chosen and then narrowed down by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Technical Advisory Committee. Mr. Sharp explained that the two sites in Christiansburg were chosen by the MPO Policy Board based on data collected and will serve as the general area location for the New River Valley station. Lastly, Mr. Sharp discussed the next steps planned and explained an Intercity Passenger Rail

Operating and Capital (IPROC) application will be submitted Feb. 1, 2016 to potentially fund the next steps of the program which is a rail modeling study.

Discussion: Dr. Warren asked if the modeling study will determine if the New River Valley site will become a station. Mr. Byrd explained that the site piece was completed to identify a suitable site and build regional support. The modeling study will determine whether the busy freight corridor can accommodate passenger train service. Mr. Carpenter noted that this project moved forward quickly because of the work of the Commission staff. Mr. Garrett asked if there will be a limited number of stops in the rail service long term plan. Mr. Byrd noted the number of stops will be determined by the Department of Rail and Public Transit and it is likely stops will be spaced apart further than they were when the region had service in the 1960's. Mr. Sullivan noted that in addition to passengers going north it will bring tourism from the north into the region. Mr. Byrd added, if anyone would like to receive a presentation on the passenger rail project to let him know. Mr. Carpenter added that Mr. Byrd has been called upon by the NRV Rail 2020 group to brief the region on the project and noted this is a great representation of the high quality work being done at the Commission.

Mr. Sullivan called for approval of the resolution to support filing the joint application for IPROC funding.

Motion: Mr. Carpenter moved to approve the resolution. Mr. Patton seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

C. Regional Commission Awards – Review Criteria and Process

Mr. Byrd explained the annual dinner awards process and criteria was included in the packet. He noted allowing organizations to be nominated for the Citizen of the Valley award and the Friend of the Valley award was suggested following the event last year. Mr. Sullivan asked if there were any objections to allowing organizations to be nominated along with individuals. No objections were expressed, so organizations will be allowed to be nominated for these two awards.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 pm.

Kevin Sullivan, Chair
New River Valley Regional Commission