

NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION
Minutes of the Commission Meeting
held on
February 25, 2016
6:00 p.m. – New River Valley Business Center, Fairlawn

I. CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT: Mr. K. Sullivan, Chair, Virginia Tech; 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; Dr. H. Harvey, City of Radford; Mr. M. Harvey, Montgomery County; Ms. S. Journell, Town of Pearisburg; Mr. W. Kantsios, Town of Rich Creek; 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. M. Turk, City of Radford, and Dr. D. Warren, Pulaski County.

ABSENT: Mr. J. Carpenter, Radford University, Vice-Chair; Mr. L. Law, Giles County, Treasurer; Ms. E. Janney, Floyd County; Mr. H. Showalter, Town of Christiansburg; Mr. M. Sutphin, Town of Blacksburg and Mr. S. Weaver, Town of Christiansburg.

Staff Attendees: Kevin Byrd, Janet McNew, Patrick O'Brien, Christy Straight and Julie Phillips.

II. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes for January

Mr. Sullivan called for approval of the consent agenda item if there were no questions or changes. Mr. Garrett noted item II.B. should be changed to "approval of the Treasurer's Report".

Motion: Ms. Lesko moved for the approval of the minutes with the correction. Mr. Patton seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried; two abstentions, Mr. Harvey and Mr. Kantsios

B. Approval of Treasurer's Report for January

Mr. Sullivan called for approval of the consent agenda item if there were no questions or changes.

Motion: Mr. Bopp moved for the approval of the Treasurer's Report. Mr. Gerald seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

III. COMMONWEALTH INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

A. Projects (Signed-off by the staff)

None.

B. Regular Project Review

None.

C. Environmental Project Review

None.

IV. PUBLIC ADDRESS

None.

V. REVIEW OF MUTUAL CONCERNS AND COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Mr. Patton asked the more recent appointees to the Commission (Mr. Turk, Mr. Harvey, Mr. McCoy) to briefly introduce themselves. Mr. East reported the Jackson Park Inn is open and doing well in downtown Pulaski. He also noted Calfee Park is undergoing further renovations and looking into moving into the Class A-Advanced League. Lastly, Mr. East shared the Town is exploring ways to encourage business to move into Main Street. Ms. Newcomb reported Blacksburg Town Council has a day-long retreat scheduled for March 10th, which Mr. Byrd will be facilitating. She also noted downtown Blacksburg will soon have a pharmacy and a new restaurant. Mr. Soileau explained Virginia Tech is currently undergoing many construction and renovation projects. Mr. Garrett reported Right Turn Clyde Brewery in Narrows is open and doing well. Mr. Gerald shared Floyd County held a meeting recently to discuss future water supply issues. Mr. Patton added the Floyd County Board of Supervisors, the Floyd Town Council, and the Floyd County School Board will be meeting jointly to discuss the future of Floyd. Mr. Patton also noted Floyd was ranked 18th on the Southern Living list of the 20 best small towns in America for 2016. Mr. Harvey reported the Commission has done a great job convening the region on the LEAD project to expand Renew the New, Giles County's river cleanup program.

VI. CHAIR'S REPORT

Mr. Sullivan reported the Annual Dinner will be held May 11th at the Draper Mercantile. He reminded the Commissioners the award nominations are due March 15th and encouraged the Commissioners to make nominations.

VII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Byrd provided a summary report in the Commission agenda packet. Mr. Byrd explained the Tech Hire grant the Commission is working with the Roanoke region to submit will be due March 11th. Mr. Byrd explained the Commission is working with partners to consider expanding Giles County's Renew the New program throughout the entire watershed. The steering committee identified three sub-committees to include, event logistics, organizational structure, and civic forum planning. Mr. Byrd explained there will be a 'Livability in Action' meeting at the Event Center in Christiansburg on February 29th. There will be 12 five-minute lightning round presentations to quickly introduce attendees to projects in communities across the region and how they address goals of the Livability Initiative. Lastly, Mr. Byrd explained the Commission received notice of the availability of Watershed Roundtable funds from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality which will be used to start the conversation of reconstituting the New River Watershed Roundtable.

Ms. Lesko added the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board will be hosting sector strategy meetings. On March 16th and 17th the meetings will be held in the New River Room at the NRV Business Center. She encouraged all businesses, particularly manufacturing businesses, in the area to attend. Mr. East noted the Launch Something Pulaski program, an entrepreneurial

development strategy, received funding from the Department of Housing and Community Development to initiate a small business counseling and competition program. Mr. Byrd added the model DHCD is supporting in Pulaski has been successful at downtown economic restructuring in several communities. Mr. East also shared the Town is setting up a revolving roof fund to improve downtown buildings to attract business to Main Street and is observing a lot of collaboration toward revitalization.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

None.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Pulaski Grow – Non-profit Youth Training and Aquaponics Business

Presentation- Ms. Lee Spiegel

Ms. Spiegel gave a presentation on Pulaski Grow. Pulaski Grow is located in Draper and the building is a reuse of a portion of the old Draper school. She explained the youth training program is available for ages 14-18 and prepares them to be workforce ready. The youth learn resume writing, interviewing, marketing and customer service skills as well as gaining real work experiences in the Pulaski Grow aquaponics business. Lastly, Ms. Spiegel explained how Pulaski Grow utilizes an aquaponics process to grow vegetables that are sold locally.

Discussion: Dr. Harvey asked Ms. Spiegel about her background that led her to open Pulaski Grow. Ms. Spiegel's career has always involved youth development and she discovered a way to continue youth development through a hands-on business experience for participants. Dr. Warren asked if the cannery on the property is being used. Ms. Spiegel explained there is no canning equipment, but she would like to pursue opening a community cannery in the future. Mr. Sullivan asked where Pulaski Grow sells produce. Ms. Spiegel explained they sell at the Market Place which is downtown Pulaski's farmer's market and they offer a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, where citizens purchase shares of the crops.

B. Community Development Block Grant Priorities for 2016

Mr. Byrd explained the suggested Block Grant priorities for 2016 were included in the packet and asked for any questions or comments.

Mr. Sullivan called for approval of the 2016 Community Development Block Grant Priorities as presented.

Motion: Dr. Warren moved to approve the 2016 Community Development Block Grant Priorities. Ms. Lesko seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

C. Go Virginia Overview

Mr. Byrd gave an update on the GO Virginia program. He explained there are 21 planning districts in Virginia and the GO Virginia program will more than likely be establishing one-

half as many regions. Mr. Byrd asked for discussion on the multi-regional geographies for the purpose of making a recommendation to those shaping the GO Virginia program.

Discussion: Dr. Warren stated the NRV has ties to the Mt. Rogers region as well as the Roanoke region. Mr. Patton explained the region has two choices, either merge with the Roanoke and Lynchburg regions or merge with the far southwest region. Mr. Garrett noted that merging with the more rural regions would allow the NRV to be more competitive. Mr. Harvey stated that the Roanoke region seems to focus on the medical industry, the NRV on education and technology, and Lynchburg on aeronautics industries. Ms. Lesko noted that industry may be the drivers of the program since GO Virginia is supposed to be private-sector led. Mr. Byrd explained that industry leaders will be included on the Regional Councils based on literature currently available on the program. Mr. McCoy noted that in the past the NRV has aligned more with Southwest Virginia. Ms. Newcomb noted that it will be important to get a seat on the Regional Council Board. Mr. Byrd explained higher education, such as Virginia Tech and Radford University, will play a big part in the program. Dr. Harvey asked if the GO Virginia program is successful would there be a chance the current planning district boundaries would change to align with the GO Virginia boundaries. Mr. Byrd explained decisions on planning district boundaries reside with local governments that comprise the district and the question about geography will be an item to observe as GO Virginia evolves.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 pm.

Kevin Sullivan, Chair
New River Valley Regional Commission