

NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION
Minutes of the Commission Meeting
held on
June 22, 2023
6:00 p.m.— Pulaski County Innovation Center, Fairlawn

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Fijalkowski, Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order.

PRESENT: Mr. S. Fijalkowski, Montgomery County, Vice-Chair; Mr. L. Law, Giles County, Treasurer; Ms. A. Covey, New River Community College; Mr. L. Clevinger, Town of Pulaski; Ms. L. DeVito Kuchenbuch, Floyd County; Mr. M. Harvey, Montgomery County; Mr. D. Horton, City of Radford; Mr. J. Martin, City of Radford; Mr. M. Maslaney, Floyd County; Mr. M. Patton, Town of Floyd; Mr. J. Reeves, Pulaski County; Mr. M. Reis, Town of Pulaski; Mr. T. Spangler, Town of Narrows; Ms. M. Trigiani, Virginia Tech Foundation and Mr. T. Wilson, Town of Christiansburg.

ABSENT: Mr. H. Johnson, Town of Christiansburg, Chair; Ms. S. Anderson, Town of Blacksburg; Mr. D. Breslau, Town of Blacksburg; Ms. C. Clark, Town of Pearisburg; Mr. W. Griffin, Town of Floyd; Mr. R. Jones, Town of Rich Creek; Dr. A. Joyner, Radford University; Mr. R. Lawson, Town of Pembroke; Mr. R. McCoy, Giles County; Ms. L. Morris, Virginia Tech and Dr. D. Warren, Pulaski County.

Staff Attendees: Kathleen Armstrong, Kevin Byrd, Hannah Schelthoff, Chris Owens, Bethany Peters, and Julie Phillips.

Other Attendees: Bill Curtis, Paul Robinson, and Chase Schelthoff.

II. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes for May

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

Motion: Mr. Horton moved for the approval of the minutes. Mr. Reis seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried.

B. Approval of Treasurer's Reports for May

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

Motion: Mr. Wilson moved for approval of the Treasurer's Reports. Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried.

III. COMMONWEALTH INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

A. Projects (Signed-off by the staff)

None

B. Regular Project Review

None

IV. PUBLIC ADDRESS

None

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

Mr. Fijalkowski announced this would be Mr. Harvey's last meeting. Mr. Byrd presented him with a plaque and thanked him for his service to the Commission. Mr. Harvey shared reflections on his time of service and the impact the Regional Commission has made serving the region.

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Byrd provided a summary report in the Regional Commission agenda packet. The Opioid Abatement Authority (OAA) grants committee met on 6/9 and recommended full funding for the New River Valley application. The grant request is for \$2.1M with \$1.2M in match from all four counties/city. The OAA board is scheduled to meet on 6/23 and will take action on the grants. The NRV application was one of the highest dollar amounts in the regional program and was the only one with 100% of eligible match from partnering local governments. When compared to the 40+ regional applications, this is a strong reflection of the regional collaboration in the New River Valley.

The Regional Commission continues to support the US EDA Tech Hubs project concept discussions in the region. Currently, firms are being engaged to discuss their interest in participating and how the program aligns with their businesses. Applications are due August 15th. Weekly progress meetings are taking place as the concepts evolve.

The NRV Passenger Rail Station Authority met on 6/22 to receive an update on the architecture/engineering firm selection process. A top candidate firm will be shared with the board by the interview committee. The agenda will also include revisions to the draft logo prepared by the Commission team along with general project updates.

On June 1st the Regional Housing Trust Fund began soliciting its first round of funding proposals. The goal of the program is to provide a flexible source of funding for affordable housing development in the region. The program guidelines and application materials can be found here <https://nrvc.org/nrv-housing-trust-fund> Applications are due July 30th and awards will be made by the end of August.

Congratulations to Christy Straight, Director of Environmental Resources, on 15 years of service to the Regional Commission! During her tenure, Christy has managed the Ride Solutions program, served as staff lead for the regional Hazard Mitigation Plan, and has written/administered countless economic development grants for water, sewer, broadband, roads and industrial parks.

The Regional Commission held our monthly staff meeting for June at the new Christiansburg Huckleberry Park. Everyone was thoroughly impressed by the facility including the all-inclusive playground features, turf fields, playground technology, dog park, and easy to access panoramic views, among so many other features. Thank you to Randy Wingfield, town manager, and Andrew Warren, deputy town manager, for allowing us access and providing a tour!

The United Way of the NRV recently announced an upcoming merger with the United Way of Southwest Virginia. A transition team is being established that will help connect the new leadership with resources and partners in the region.

The Regional Commission Annual Awards nominations are open until 8/15. Commissioners are encouraged to nominate worthy candidates.

VII. REVIEW OF MUTUAL CONCERNS AND COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Mr. Fijalkowski reported Montgomery County promoted Angie Hill to the County Administrator position effective when Craig Meadows retires in November.

Mr. Wilson reported the Christiansburg Huckleberry Park opening date has been delayed but will open soon. There will be a 4th of July celebration in downtown Christiansburg.

Mr. Horton reported there will be a 4th of July celebration and fireworks in Radford's Bisset Park.

Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch reported there will be fireworks in Floyd on July 1st and the Summer Concert Series will start on Thursday.

Mr. Reeves reported there will be an SRX race at the Pulaski County Motor Sports Park in Fairlawn on 7/26. It will be broadcast by ESPN.

Mr. Reis reported the Town of Pulaski will have a parade on the 4th of July and the season has started for the River Turtles at Calfee Park.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. RISE Resiliency Innovations Program Overview
Paul Robinson Ph.D., provided a presentation on the RISE Resiliency Innovations organization. RISE had an initial focus on addressing the impact of climate change on coastal communities of Virginia and is supported in-part by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). More recently, DHCD has asked RISE to engage communities in southwest Virginia, particularly those that have natural hazard vulnerabilities in lower income areas. Their organization has a unique approach to delivering solutions for communities. The process starts by identifying the challenge with community input. The New River Valley focus is likely riverine flooding attributed to significant rain events such as what has been observed in rural communities in further southwest Virginia. Following identification of the challenge, RISE sources solutions through their network of private businesses, then funds the development of solutions.

B. New River Valley Bike, Ped, Paddle Plan Presentation

Ms. Armstrong and Dr. Schelthoff provided a presentation on the 2023 Bike-Ped-Paddle Plan. The last Bike-Ped-Paddle Plan, known as the Bikeway, Walkway, Blueway Plan, was completed in 2011. This region-wide planning process helps localities select and prioritize alternative transportation infrastructure improvements needed in their communities. Additionally, localities and stakeholders were asked to identify trail connectivity projects that would have regional significance, as well as local impact. Stakeholders were urged to consider alternative transportation as one way to benefit community health and wellbeing, accessibility, and connectivity.

The output of the 2023 process includes a story mapping tool that enables communities to communicate their unique characteristics, align their alternative transportation and trails projects with VDOT roadway improvements/construction, and provide a future vision. Localities can leverage priority projects outlined in the 2023 Bike-Ped-Paddle Plan for grant funding and VDOT resources.

A key change in the Plan update includes the transition from a static plan to a digital story mapping tool. The transition to a digital interface helps the plan's legibility, approachability, adaptability, and sustainability. By utilizing ARC GIS Story Map, the Commission, with support from the NRV communities, can maintain up-to-date trail data and integrate local plans and resources within the web map. Another significant change is the emphasis on regional projects that support local goals in developing more comprehensive outdoor experiences for trail users.

C. Personnel Policy Update

Mr. Byrd overviewed the changes proposed in the personnel manual which was included in the packet.

Motion: Mr. Horton moved to approve the personnel manual update. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

D. Commission Officers for FY24

Mr. Fijalkowski shared the nominating committee report on behalf of Hil Johnson. The slate presented is below.

The nominations include:

Chair: Hil Johnson, Town of Christiansburg

Vice-Chair: Steve Fijalkowski, Montgomery County

Treasurer: Leon Law, Giles County

At-Large: Angie Covey, New River Community College

At-Large: David Horton, City of Radford

Past Chair: Mike Maslaney, Floyd County

Mr. Patton moved to elect the slate of officers as presented. Mr. Spangler seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

- E. July Commission Meeting (Historically it is cancelled)
Motion: Mr. Horton moved to cancel the July meeting. Ms. Covey seconded the motion.
Action: Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Fijalkowski called to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 pm.

H. Johnson, Chair
New River Valley Regional Commission