

NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION
Minutes of the Commission Meeting
held on
March 28, 2024
6:00 p.m.— Pulaski County Innovation Center, Fairlawn

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Johnson, Chair, called the meeting to order.

PRESENT: Mr. H. Johnson, Town of Christiansburg, Chair; Ms. A. Covey, New River Community College, Vice-Chair; Mr. L. Law, Giles County, Treasurer; Ms. S. Anderson, Town of Blacksburg; Mr. L. Clevinger, Town of Pulaski; Ms. A. Davis, Town of Pearisburg; Ms. L. DeVito Kuchenbuch, Floyd County; Mr. A. Grafsky, Montgomery County; Ms. T. Hockett, Town of Christiansburg; Mr. D. Horton, City of Radford; Mr. J. Martin, City of Radford; Ms. L. Morris, Virginia Tech; Mr. M. Reis, Town of Pulaski; Mr. J. Reeves, Pulaski County; Mr. T. Spangler, Town of Narrows; Ms. M. Trigiani, Virginia Tech Foundation; and Mr. B. Wheeler, Montgomery County.

ABSENT: Mr. C. Bond, Town of Floyd; Mr. D. Breslau, Town of Blacksburg; 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. M. Maslaney, Floyd County; Mr. R. McCoy, Giles County; and Dr. D. Warren, Pulaski County.

Staff Attendees: Kevin Byrd, Aphi Fancon, Kyle Knight, Julie Phillips, and Leo Priddy.

II. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes for February

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

Motion: Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch moved for the approval of the minutes. Mr. Reis seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried.

B. Approval of Treasurer's Reports for February

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

Motion: Ms. Davis moved for approval of the Treasurer's Reports. Mr. Spangler seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried.

III. COMMONWEALTH INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

A. Projects (Signed-off by the staff)

1. EDA Public Works Planning Grant- Giles County

B. Regular Project Review

1. Reissuance of VPDES Permit No. VA0080837 Glen Creek WWTP, Glen Lyn, VA

IV. PUBLIC ADDRESS

None

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

Mr. Johnson reported he attended the Livability Exchange. This year was the 10th year the event was held and 175 people had registered.

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Byrd provided a summary report in the Regional Commission agenda packet. The NRV Recovery Ecosystem Program is working diligently with project partners to develop the FY25 grant proposal to the Virginia Opioid Abatement Authority. Proposals are due on April 1st. The team is focused on making the process transparent and engaging for all partners. To coordinate this complex proposal, there is an interactive google spreadsheet that allows everyone to review the proposed activities as projects are entered and amended. The leadership team met this week to receive brief project overviews, then next week there will be in-person workshops and virtual input opportunities on the proposal.

The Montgomery/Bland and Pulaski County broadband projects submitted updated project timelines that more accurately reflect the new construction schedules because of the extended make-ready process. Construction is underway in the Eastern Montgomery area and equipment has been ordered for both projects.

The NRV/Danville Tech Hubs project will hold a two-part consortium meeting in April. On April 23rd the consortium will hold an industry panel webinar with partners explaining their technology. On April 25th there will be a consortium visit to MELD in Christiansburg so everyone can observe the technology. Kyle Knight has been hired as the Regional Innovation Officer to support the program.

The NRV Passenger Rail Station Authority will not be meeting in March; however, activity continues on the project. A draft Term Sheet which is a roles and responsibilities document between Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA) and the Station Authority was shared with legal counsel this month. VPRA will hold another public input meeting on the project April 18th at the Montgomery County Government Center 4:30pm-7:30pm with two presentations anticipated. Content will be similar to the Blacksburg meeting held in late January. Another public survey will be released in April and information will be distributed ahead of time to promote the survey. VPRA will be meeting with the three transit providers in the region on May 2nd to begin discussions on connections to the proposed station.

Jennifer Wilsie is making the rounds with local governments and non-government partners discussing the Regional Housing Trust Fund and forthcoming FY25 budget requests. Many partners are including the program in their budget for the coming year. Regional Commission staff is working with legal counsel on finalizing organizational documents to establish the non-profit that will administer the program under the Regional Commission organization.

Regional Commission staff held the annual Soup-r-Salad Bowl this month and Eli Sharp was awarded the trophy for best soup!

Plans are taking shape for a Regional Commission staff retreat this spring to be facilitated by Shelley Fortier.

VII. REVIEW OF MUTUAL CONCERNS AND COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Ms. Morris reported the Duck Pond will be going through a restoration process without completely emptying the pond so the wildlife will not be disturbed.

Mr. Horton reported the City of Radford will hold an Easter egg hunt on March 30th at Bissett Park. They are in the process of scheduling the summer concert series. The New River Conservancy is holding their watershed symposium at Radford University April 11-12th.

Mr. Reeves reported Appalachian Electric Power recently introduced a plan to increase rates. The Pulaski County Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution to keep the rates at current level and submitted the resolution to the State Corporation Commission.

Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch reported Floyd County was awarded a \$2.7 million grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration to make improvements on the road leading to the Commerce Park.

Mr. Johnson reported the Town Center project along Peppers Ferry Road is starting soon and Christiansburg High School is undergoing renovation. Town staff presented on the Huckleberry Park at the Livability Exchange and shared recent visitor numbers.

Mr. Spangler reported that a recent Homelessness Study was released and shows an increase in all of our communities.

Mr. Reis reported the Town of Pulaski will hold an Easter egg hunt on March 30th and they are accepting vendors for the Music & Merchants festival.

Ms. Hockett reported the Town of Christiansburg will hold an Adult Easter egg hunt on March 29th at Huckleberry Park.

Ms. Covey reported New River Community College will host Atlanta Rhythm Section on April 19th.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Crab Creek Watershed Beautification Project Overview
Ms. Fancon presented an update on the Crab Creek Watershed Beautification Project. The Crab Creek project is an effort to connect the Christiansburg community to the watershed through landscape improvements on private property. The watershed is identified as an impaired waterway and is eligible for improvement funds from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The Regional Commission received a grant from DEQ that provided cost-share reimbursement for qualified projects conducted by property owners that directly contribute water quality improvements. Qualified projects must be Best Management Practices (BMPs) as defined by DEQ which include rain gardens, pet waste disposal stations, rainwater harvesting and planters, impervious surface removal, and conservation landscaping. As part of the grant deliverables, the Regional Commission developed a website to share information about the watershed and the private property owner water quality improvement program.
- B. Regional Economic Strategy Update – Goals and Strategies
Mr. Priddy explained the New River Valley Regional Commission reviews and updates the region’s Regional Economic Strategy (RES) annually. The purpose of the RES is to continue federal and local partnerships to address economic development in the region. The RES also documents the planning efforts to identify economic development needs in the region and the creation of the strategy document.

The RES process reviews economic conditions for New River Valley jurisdictions as the committee prioritizes economic development projects the region can undertake to address community needs. The US Economic Development Administration recently introduced new guidelines recommending an equity focus in developing the RES. The RES committee has used these data insights to review content, develop updated strategies, and assess top projects in the region for the annual update. In May, the board will review the updated top projects and priorities. A request for approval of the final report will be brought before the board in June.

Mr. Johnson called to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 pm.

H. Johnson, Chair
New River Valley Regional Commission