

NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION
Minutes of the Commission Meeting
held on
September 28, 2023
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; Mr. S. Fijalkowski, Montgomery County, Vice-Chair; Mr. L. Law, Giles County, Treasurer; Ms. S. Anderson, Town of Blacksburg; Mr. D. Breslau, Town of Blacksburg; Mr. L. Clevinger, Town of Pulaski; Ms. L. DeVito Kuchenbuch, Floyd County; Mr. D. Horton, City of Radford; Dr. A. Joyner, Radford University; Mr. M. Maslaney, Floyd County; Ms. L. Morris, Virginia Tech; Mr. M. Reis, Town of Pulaski; Mr. T. Spangler, Town of Narrows; Dr. D. Warren, Pulaski County; Mr. B. Wheeler, Montgomery County and Mr. T Wilson, Town of Christiansburg.

ABSENT: Ms. C. Clark, Town of Pearisburg; Ms. A. Covey, New River Community College; Mr. W. Griffin, Town of Floyd; Mr. R. Jones, Town of Rich Creek; Mr. R. Lawson, Town of Pembroke; Mr. R. McCoy, Giles County; Mr. J. Martin, City of Radford; Mr. M. Patton, Town of Floyd; Mr. J. Reeves, Pulaski County and Ms. M. Trigiani, Virginia Tech Foundation.

Staff Attendees: Jessica Barrett, Kevin Byrd, Holly Lesko, Julie Phillips and Christy Straight.

II. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes for August

Mr. Johnson 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. Wilson seconded the motion.
Action: Motion carried.

B. Approval of Treasurer's Reports for July and August

Mr. Johnson 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. Mr. Fijalkowski 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. Johnson reminded the board to register for the annual dinner which will be held October 19th at Volvo in Dublin. He reported that he and Mr. Byrd will attend an I-81 Advisory Committee meeting in Lexington on October 2nd.

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Byrd provided a summary report in the Regional Commission agenda packet. The NRV Recovery Ecosystem Program is in the process of getting under contract with the Opioid Abatement Authority (OAA). Local resolutions have been adopted recently which enable the OAA to send out their first round of grant agreements. Work is beginning on the regional program to include hiring for two positions, both of which are posted on the Regional Commission website.

Montgomery County hosted a project kick-off event for the VATI 2021 award focusing on eastern Montgomery County earlier this month. Construction is underway with fiber being pulled and connections to houses/businesses will take place soon. For the VATI 2022 Montgomery/Bland counties project, a lot of the equipment has been delivered with rolls of fiber on-site. For the Pulaski County project, All Points Broadband is working through the pole attachment process and final engineering.

The NRV Tech Hubs proposal for Additive Materials and Advanced Manufacturing was submitted in mid-August; however, work supporting the application has continued with congressional briefings taking place the past several weeks. The team has met with US Senators Warner, Kaine, and Cardin (MD), along with Representatives Griffith and Whitman. The delegation has been impressed by the proposal and decided to submit a joint letter to the US Economic Development Administration which communicates strong bi-partisan support.

A GO Virginia grant request for their capacity building program will be submitted by the end of the day on Friday. The purpose of the project is to pair with the Tech Hubs proposal that would enable further build out of the additive manufacturing cluster. If the Tech Hubs proposal is not selected, then hopefully GO Virginia remains a pathway to continue this important work for the regional economy.

The NRV Passenger Rail Station Authority will meet in September to receive a report from the nominating committee to fill the Chair role since Craig Meadows will be retiring at the end of October. The authority will also discuss legislative briefing opportunities before the upcoming General Assembly session in January.

The Plant Southwest Virginia Natives program recently completed the final draft of the Native Plant Guide for the region. Guides are being printed and will be delivered in October with distribution soon thereafter.

The NRV Housing Trust Fund (HTF), having selected projects in Pulaski and Blacksburg last month, will be issuing a press release soon with the intention of drawing attention to the investments along with the new trust fund entity.

The Regional Commission Annual Dinner is scheduled for October 19th at the Volvo Customer Experience Center in Dublin. A mobile tour will take place 4:30-5:45 and the dinner will be 6:00-8:00. An invitation with registration information was sent out in late August.

The banking services RFP for the broadband projects and passenger rail station authority has closed and a selection is forthcoming.

The Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions is advocating for an increase in General Assembly funding for each PDC in the upcoming biennium budget. The request is to increase from \$89,000 to \$150,000 to reflect the level of support PDCs provide in delivering and executing many state programs.

VII. REVIEW OF MUTUAL CONCERNS AND COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Mr. Fijalkowski reported Montgomery County hired a Deputy County Administrator, Mr. Chris Lawrence. Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch added she appreciated Montgomery County including the Floyd County Administrator in their search committee.

Mr. Horton reported Radford University will hold the Highlander Festival on October 14th, the City of Radford will also hold a haunted history tour on October 14th, and Craft and Draft Festival will be held at Glencoe Museum on October 21st. He also reported the Crisis Stabilization Unit is now open at New River Valley Community Services in Radford.

Mr. Spangler reported Narrows will hold their fall festival on September 30th.

Mr. Reis reported September 30th is Count Pulaski Day and they will have festivities in town.

Mr. Law reported that the National Forest is raising parking rates at the Cascades Day Use Area from \$3 to \$8. Also, PemTel recently completed two more community hookups for broadband service with more in progress, but they are awaiting approval from Norfolk Southern to cross the rail line.

Mr. Wilson reported Christiansburg's Huckleberry Park is now open to the public. Academy Sports will open in the Market Place shopping center before the end of the year.

Dr. Joyner reported Radford University will hold homecoming on October 20th, the Hub at Radford will hold a ribbon cutting on October 17th, and Radford University will be celebrating their five-year strategic plan update along with a branding unveiling on October 20th.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. **New River Land Trust: Partnering on Recreation Asset Development**
Mr. Eustis, Executive Director of the New River Land Trust (NRLT), provided a presentation about the Land Trust and their role in partnering to develop recreation assets. The NRLT works to conserve farmland, forests, open spaces, and historic places in the New River Valley region of Southwest Virginia. The organization works with landowners and a range of public/private conservation partners to conserve and/or restore land and associated natural/cultural resources. The past few years the NRLT has been working with the Town of Blacksburg in the acquisition, development, and management planning for three key properties along Brush Mountain. Two of the three properties have trails developed and open to the public. Additional trails will be established soon that connect all three properties along with Heritage Park and the Huckleberry Trail.
- B. **NRV Recovery Ecosystem: Anti-Stigma Campaign**
Regional Commission staff is working on an anti-stigma campaign as the first communications initiative of the NRV Recovery Ecosystem program. Ms. Lesko presented the campaign strategy and explained this is one of several campaigns that will be launching to address the multi-faceted issues that are connected to Substance Use Disorder (SUD) in the region. This campaign focuses on dispelling the myths and misconceptions of SUD as well as providing community members with tools and strategies to talk to friends and family about substance use and recovery.
- C. **Distribution of the FY23 Annual Report**
The FY23 Annual Report was distributed to all board members in attendance. Copies will be mailed out to elected officials and partners next week.
- D. **October Commission Meeting and November Commission Meeting.**

Motion: Mr. Horton moved for the approval of canceling the October Meeting due to the Annual Dinner taking place a week prior to the normal board meeting.

Ms. Anderson seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

Motion: Mr. Horton moved for the approval of moving the November meeting to November 30th to avoid a conflict with the Thanksgiving holiday.

Mr. Wilson seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Johnson called to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 pm.

H. Johnson, Chair
New River Valley Regional Commission