

NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION
Minutes of the Commission Meeting
held on
January 22, 2026
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. S. Anderson, Town of Blacksburg, Vice-Chair; Mr. L. Law, Giles County, Treasurer; Mr. L. Clevinger, Town of Pulaski; Mr. B. Dawson, Town of Pulaski; Mr. W. Griffin, Town of Floyd; Ms. T. Hockett, Town of Christiansburg; Dr. A. Joyner, Radford University; Ms. L. DeVito Kuchenbuch, Floyd County; Mr. D. Horton, City of Radford; Mr. M. Mann, Town of Rich Creek; Mr. M. Maslaney, Floyd County; Ms. L. Morris, Virginia Tech; Mr. J. Reeves, Pulaski County; Mr. W. Seagle, Town of Dublin; Mx. E. Shawish, Town of Blacksburg; Mr. K. Smith, Virginia Tech Foundation; Mr. T. Spangler, Town of Narrows and Mr. B. Wheeler, Montgomery County

ABSENT: Vacant, Pulaski County; Dr. R. Brandon, New River Community College; Ms. A. Davis, Town of Pearisburg; Mr. A. Graftsky, Montgomery County; Mr. R. Lawson, Town of Pembroke; Mr. R. McCoy, Giles County; Mr. J. Martin, City of Radford and Mr. P. Martin, Giles County.

Staff Attendees: Kevin Byrd, Emma Carroll, Julie Phillips, and Christy Straight.

Other Attendees: Tim Colley and Sarah Lyon-Hill

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes for November

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

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

Action: Motion carried.

B. Approval of Treasurer's Reports for November

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

Motion: Mr. Horton moved for approval of the Treasurer's Reports. Mr. Maslaney seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried.

III. COMMONWEALTH INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

A. Projects (Signed-off by the staff)

1. NRVCS Vehicle Purchase

B. Regular Project Review

1. New River Valley Airport (PSK) Pulaski County, VA-Scoping Comments

IV. PUBLIC ADDRESS

None

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

Mr. Johnson welcomed the new member from the Town of Rich Creek, Mr. Mann. He also thanked Ken Smith with Virginia Tech Foundation for his service to the board. Mr. Smith is retiring and his board seat will be filled by Richard Gibson with the Virginia Tech Foundation. Mr. Johnson reported the executive committee reviewed the bids submitted for the office construction project and recommend the Commission execute a contract with the lowest bidder, Kesler Construction.

Motion: Mr. Horton moved to approve accepting the lowest bid from Kesler Construction. Mr. Maslaney seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Byrd provided a summary report in the Regional Commission agenda packet. The AM2 Tech Hub submitted a statewide competitive GO Virginia grant recently in partnership with neighboring GO Virginia Region 3. The state board for GO Virginia will hold a pitch call on February 24th as its review gets underway. The AM2 Tech Hub is working on a sizeable grant application to the US Economic Development Administration due in March in pursuit of Disaster Recovery funds for consortium-based projects. In November, the AM2 Tech Hub received the Chairman's Award for Visionary Leadership and Commitment to Southern Virginia presented by the Southern Piedmont Technology Council.

The Blue Ridge Innovation Corridor (BRIC), a coalition of business leaders supporting economic development in an emerging megaregion that extends from Danville to the New River Valley and includes Roanoke Valley, is kicking off a planning process called Vision 2050. The project is funded in part by GO Virginia. BRIC reached out this week inviting steering committee members to participate in the process.

Governor-Elect Spanberger selected Carrie Chenery to serve as the Secretary of Commerce and Trade. The Department of Housing and Community Development falls within this secretariat position. Ms. Chenery served as a Deputy Secretary for Agriculture and Forestry in the Northam Administration and was the executive director of the Shenandoah Valley Partnership, the equivalent of Onward NRV. While she was finishing up her studies at Virginia Tech, Ms. Chenery was an intern at the Regional Commission. She helped develop the first Water Supply Plan for the region.

The Pulaski County broadband project is making quick construction progress now that make-ready is nearly complete. Some limited areas are already able to subscribe and connect. The county will be working with All Points Broadband to market the service through a PSA mailer soon. The Montgomery/Bland County VATI 2022 is approximately 90% complete with fiber construction. The 10% remaining includes splicing of fiber to reach homes and businesses. Numerous connections are already established throughout the project area with more subscribers being

added regularly. Both projects are expected to extend their timelines to be complete by June 30, 2026.

The NRV Passenger Rail Station Authority met on January 22nd and received updated architectural plans from the consultant team. The Authority appointed an Architecture Committee at its meeting in November. The committee met twice over the past two months to offer guidance to the consultants on material selection (ie-flooring, windows, wall color) and their progress will be shared at the January meeting. The Authority will also review content for a historical marker to be placed at the building.

The update to the Regional + Local Housing Study is still on target for a fourth quarter kick-off. A portion of match funds will come from the NRV Regional Commission's Recovery Ecosystem budget that will allow for information to be gathered on the unhoused population, which was not included in the previous regional housing study.

The New River Watershed Roundtable will meet on January 27th at 9:30am. Beth Lohman with VA Dept of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Office of Pollution Response & Emergency Preparedness will speak to the group about DEQ's role in water quality, particularly around emergency situations. The Roundtable will be meeting quarterly on the 4th Tuesday in 2026.

There are staff transitions underway in the Community Health team. Holly Lesko retired last week and Anna Champion was promoted to Program Administrator. Mikhala Stafford served as an intern the past six months and recently increased duties into a part-time role while she finishes her graduate degree at Virginia Tech. There is also a position currently being advertised for Grant Management & Network Facilitator which is available on the Regional Commission website.

Mr. Byrd will be facilitating the Blacksburg Town Council retreat February 12th with a focus on goal setting with the new council. He will also be attending VAPDC and VACO meetings next week in Richmond.

VII. REVIEW OF MUTUAL CONCERNS AND COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Mr. Horton reported that the Polar Plunge to support Special Olympics will be held February 14th at Dudley's Landing at Bisset Park in Radford.

Ms. Morris reported that Virginia Tech recently announced a new Provost, Dr. Julie Ross.

Dr. Joyner reported that Radford University is back in session. Its fall to spring retention rate has improved. Radford University will be introducing a new strategic plan at the Covington Center on January 23rd.

Ms. Anderson reported the Town of Blacksburg has a new Mayor, Michael Sutphin. They also have two open council positions which they will vote to appoint on Tuesday with a special election to be held in November.

Mr. Johnson reported the Town of Christiansburg has completed renovation to the high school. They also have a new town manager, Dr. Kim Eagle.

Mr. Law reported that PemTel completed their broadband project in the Craig Creek area and is three months out from completion in the Poplar Hill area.

Mr. Spangler reported he attended a public official's seminar by Sands Anderson and encouraged everyone to attend this in the future.

Mr. Reeves reported that Pulaski County has active broadband in three of their five districts.

Mr. Johnson reported the Livability Information Exchange will be held March 25th at the German Club in Blacksburg and encouraged everyone to attend.

Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch reported concerns associated with data centers and suggested the region begin discussing impacts.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. AM2 Tech Hub Program Updates

Ms. Carroll presented information about Virginia's Additive Manufacturing and Advanced Materials (AM2) Hub. She explained that the AM2 Hub is a consortium of over 50 industry, higher education, local government, and organization partners, supporting advanced manufacturing through the growth and adoption of additive manufacturing and advanced materials (AM2) technologies in the Southwestern and Southern regions of Virginia.

Over the past two years, the AM2 Hub leadership team conducted a strategic development process. The process directly engaged business leaders and researchers to identify strategies and opportunities for establishing the region as a hub for additive manufacturing and advanced materials technologies. Based on these discussions and industry market research, the team developed a 10-year strategic roadmap. The primary strategies focus on business and technical assistance as well as workforce development.

Looking forward, the AM2 Hub has identified two funding opportunities to support the implementation of these strategies: (1) the Virginia Growth and Opportunity Fund (GO Virginia) Competitive Grant Program, and (2) the Economic Development Administration (EDA) FY 2025 Disaster Supplemental Grant Program. The AM2 Hub has applied to the GO Virginia opportunity, with the project slated for final review by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development in late March. The EDA funding application is due March 3rd with review later in the year.

B. Ride Solutions Program Overview and Operating Grant Resolution

Ms. Straight explained RIDE Solutions NRV serves the region with transportation demand management services for commuters and employers and is part of a larger brand serving central and southwest Virginia. Partners in this brand include the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission, Central Virginia Planning District Commission, and West Piedmont

Planning District Commission. The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) provides operating funding to commuter assistance programs across the Commonwealth. The agency provides funding at an 80% match for project costs, with local investment at 20% of costs.

Motion: Mr. Horton moved to approve the FY27 Ride Solutions and Operating Grant Application to DRPT. Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Johnson called to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 pm.

H. Johnson, Chair
New River Valley Regional Commission