

**NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION**  
**Minutes of the Commission Meeting**  
**held on**  
**February 22, 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; 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. Graftsky, Montgomery County; Mr. W. Griffin, Town of Floyd; Ms. T. Hockett, Town of Christiansburg; 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. J. Reeves, Pulaski County; Mr. T. Spangler, Town of Narrows; Ms. M. Trigiani, Virginia Tech Foundation; and Mr. B. Wheeler, Montgomery County.

**ABSENT:** Ms. A. Covey, New River Community College, Vice-Chair; Mr. C. Bond, Town of Floyd; Mr. D. Breslau, Town of Blacksburg; Mr. R. Jones, Town of Rich Creek; Mr. R. Lawson, Town of Pembroke; Mr. R. McCoy, Giles County; Mr. J. Martin, City of Radford; and Dr. D. Warren, Pulaski County.

Staff Attendees: Kevin Byrd, Chris Owens, Julie Phillips, and Jennifer Wilsie.

**II. CONSENT AGENDA**

**A. Approval of Minutes for January**

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. Ms. Morris seconded the motion.  
Action: Motion carried.

**B. Approval of Treasurer's Reports for January**

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

Motion: Dr. Joyner moved for approval of the Treasurer's Reports. Ms. Davis 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 reported that staff is doing an excellent job assisting the Town of Christiansburg with an update to the comprehensive plan.

#### **VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Mr. Byrd provided a summary report in the Regional Commission agenda packet. The NRV Recovery Ecosystem Program is setting up technical teams to support program development and serve in an advisory capacity during implementation. They also formed an executive team with representation from the Regional Commission, New River Valley Community Services, and the New River Health District.

The Montgomery/Bland and Pulaski counties broadband projects are nearing completion of the engineering required for make-ready (pole attachments) which has identified over 1,000 utility poles that need to be addressed for a variety of reasons. Appalachian Power and the internet service providers are establishing sequencing strategies for the poles that align with the build-out process.

The NRV/Danville Tech Hubs project will hold interviews this month for the Regional Innovation Officer position. A two-part consortium meeting is being planned for April which will be an industry panel explaining their technology (to be held on Zoom), followed by a site visit at a partner firm so everyone can observe the technology first-hand.

The Regional Economic Strategy (RES) committee held their second meeting of the year. The group reviewed updated data with a focus on equity. The data will be shared with the Regional Commission at the March meeting. Draft strategies and projects will come to the board for review at the May meeting with a RES update at the June meeting.

The New River Conservancy will be hosting the New River Symposium on April 11-12 at Radford University. A diverse range of partners from the entire watershed attend and present at the symposium. The theme for the event is Rivers<sup>3</sup>: Reconnect; Restore; Recreate. Anyone interested is welcome to attend. Kathleen Armstrong will be a plenary presenter discussing the New River Water Trail Expansion project.

The NRV Livability Exchange co-hosted by the Regional Commission and the Community Foundation of the NRV is scheduled for March 21<sup>st</sup> 8:30am-1:00pm with lunch included at the German Club in Blacksburg. This marks the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the annual event. It is a fast-paced and fun way to learn about projects taking place across the region with networking opportunities built into the agenda.

The Regional Commission team enjoyed a group outing at the Virginia Tech Women's Basketball game on 2/15. The next team event on our schedule is the annual Soup-r-Salad Bowl with a gaudy trophy on the line for the winning soup maker!

## **VII. REVIEW OF MUTUAL CONCERNS AND COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS**

Mr. Horton reported the City of Radford hosted the Polar Plunge to support the Special Olympics on 2/17 at Dudley's Landing in Bisset Park.

Ms. Morris reported Virginia Tech held their annual giving day and raised \$13 Million. ESPN's College Game Day will be on campus prior to the women's basketball game on 2/26.

Mr. Spangler reported the Town of Narrows will hold their Kid's Fishing Day event on May 4<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch reported Floyd County Lady Buffaloes basketball team will be competing at Roanoke College in the regional tournament. County administration offices recently moved into the Skyline Bank building adjacent to the County Courthouse.

Mr. Griffin reported the Town of Floyd also moved their administration offices to a separate property owned by Skyline Bank and they are leasing to purchase. The Town was awarded a grant to restore a blighted property and Regional Commission staff are assisting in identifying planning and implementation funds for the project.

Mr. Reis reported the Town of Pulaski recently purchased a 155-acre property and is looking into development options.

## **VIII. OLD BUSINESS**

None

## **IX. NEW BUSINESS**

- A. New River Valley Housing Trust Fund- Program Update  
Ms. Wilsie presented an update on the Regional Housing Trust Fund. She explained after the release of the Regional + Local Housing Study in 2021, the final report recommended seven regional strategies, one of which was the creation of a regional housing trust fund. A \$2M housing development grant from Virginia Housing enabled the Regional Commission to pilot this concept. Since the fall of 2022, the Regional Commission has worked closely with a regional stakeholder group to create program guidelines and solicit funding applications, ultimately awarding \$1.8M in housing development funds for the construction of 106 units in the region.

Beyond the initial funding, the NRV Housing Trust Fund Oversight Board considered three annual funding scenarios to operate the fund long-term and chose the most conservative at \$600,000/year. This annual target is intended to be shared 50/50 between local governments and non-government entities. The \$300,000 in local government investment was calculated at a per-capita rate of \$1.75. An additional \$300,000 is being sought from the region's

universities, healthcare providers, and other major employers. Investment is being sought on an annual basis, but funding commitments for a five-year cycle are vital for regional equity. To maximize funding potential and administrative oversight, the NRV Housing Trust Fund will coordinate with the existing NRV HOME Consortium. As a means of providing long-term organizational structure for the Regional Housing Trust Fund, the Regional Commission is pursuing the creation of a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

**B. New River Valley Passenger Rail Update**

Mr. Byrd provided an update on the New River Valley passenger rail project. He presented the details of Option A, which is a station location at Cinnabar Road just east of US 460 Bypass.

Mr. Byrd explained there is a public information session scheduled for April 18<sup>th</sup> at the Montgomery County Government Center.

Mr. Johnson called to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 pm.

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H. Johnson, Chair  
New River Valley Regional Commission