

**NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION**  
**Minutes of the Commission Meeting**  
**held on**  
**April 24, 2025**  
**6:00 p.m.— Pulaski County Innovation Center, Fairlawn**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Covey, Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order.

**PRESENT:** Mr. L. Law, Giles County, Treasurer; Ms. A. Covey, New River Community College, Vice-Chair; Ms. S. Anderson, Town of Blacksburg; Ms. A. Davis, Town of Pearisburg; Mr. B. Dawson, Town of Pulaski; Mr. A. Graftsky, Montgomery County; Mr. L. Clevinger, Town of Pulaski; Mr. D. Horton, City of Radford; Mr. B. Jaunarena, Pulaski County; Ms. L. DeVito Kuchenbuch, Floyd County; Ms. L. Morris, Virginia Tech; Mr. M. Maslaney, Floyd County; Mr. W. Seagle, Town of Dublin; Mx. E. Shawish, Town of Blacksburg; Mr. K. Smith, Virginia Tech Foundation and Mr. T. Spangler, Town of Narrows.

**ABSENT:** Mr. H. Johnson, Town of Christiansburg, Chair; Ms. A. Chambers, Town of Rich Creek; Mr. W. Griffin, Town of Floyd; Ms. T. Hockett, Town of Christiansburg; Dr. A. Joyner, Radford University; Mr. R. Lawson, Town of Pembroke; Mr. R. McCoy, Giles County; Mr. P. Martin, Giles County; Mr. J. Martin, City of Radford; Mr. J. Reeves, Pulaski County, and Mr. B. Wheeler, Montgomery County.

Staff Attendees: Kevin Byrd, Julie Fox, Holly Lesko, Julie Phillips, and Elijah Sharp

**II. CONSENT AGENDA**

**A. Approval of Minutes for March**

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

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

Action: Motion carried, one abstention-Mr. Graftsky

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

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

Motion: Mr. Law moved for approval of the Treasurer's Reports. Mr. Horton 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**

Ms. Covey reported that Chair Johnson established the nominating committee to present a slate of officers for FY26. Per the Regional Commission bylaws, the Chair and Treasurer serve on the committee and the Chair appoints an additional commissioner to the committee. Chair Johnson appointed Mr. Clevinger and the committee will meet in May to present a slate to the board at their next meeting. Ms. Covey announced if a board member is interested in serving on the executive committee, they can contact one of the three nominating committee members. She also congratulated Mr. Byrd on running in the Boston Marathon.

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

Mr. Byrd provided a summary report in the Regional Commission agenda packet. The Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA) groundbreaking event for the New River Valley project was held on April 24<sup>th</sup> with over 200 people in attendance.

The Regional Commission is kicking-off the Digital Opportunities planning process to assist all four counties and the city in identifying strategies for residents and businesses to maximize the use of increased internet capacity. A regional meeting will be held later in the spring with a wide audience to discuss strategies and formulate an action plan. Once the plan is developed over the next seven to eight months, communities will be able to make applications for implementation funds through the BEAD program.

All Points Broadband in Pulaski County is continuing to navigate make-ready with Appalachian Power. An updated project timeline will be submitted to DHCD as a result of the extended time it has taken in this phase of the project.

The Town of Floyd had a Planning Grant kick-off meeting with DHCD for the mixed-use redevelopment of a former textile facility which allows the project to get underway. The first step will be holding a project management team meeting to review the upcoming tasks followed by executing project agreements between the town and DHCD along with the town and the Regional Commission.

The Regional Commission submitted a grant application to the VA Department of Environmental Quality to support a limited portion of the Water Supply Plan update. The proposed scope aligned with the funds available and included establishing a regional work team for the project, identifying data contacts for each water system, and collecting Existing Water Source Information which is the first chapter of the plan. The Water Supply Plan update is not due to the Commonwealth until 2029. This will allow for additional time to secure state funding resources to complete the plan updates.

The New River Watershed Roundtable held their quarterly meeting on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. Ramps and Roads was held in Giles County and had over 500 members from the Corps of Cadets at Virginia Tech and over 150 additional volunteers in attendance.

The Regional Commission continues to support communities impacted by Hurricane Helene. Funds currently available include Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) for Urgent Needs

and GO Virginia recently opened a special Hurricane Helene Business Recovery program. The Regional Commission is supporting the concept of a small business development collaborative among existing organizations to deliver assistance to businesses in the region for disaster readiness. Funds will become available through CDBG Disaster Recovery and other federal programs such as the US EDA are currently in program design. Many funders are in touch with the Regional Commission regarding needs as they are developing program designs, so it remains important to keep the Regional Commission apprised of needs.

Kathleen Armstrong will be leaving the Regional Commission after four years of impactful work supporting numerous community and regional projects. Her creative touch is being left on each project. We are pleased she will be joining the New River Conservancy and will work alongside the Regional Commission in our collaborative ARC planning grant to expand the New River Water Trail from North Carolina through Virginia into West Virginia.

Commissioners will be receiving an email with the Executive Director's evaluation instrument. He asked that everyone please return it directly to Chair Johnson.

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

Ms. Morris reported that Virginia Tech will be closing campus at noon on May 7<sup>th</sup> prior to the Metallica concert and suggested that the area be avoided unless you are attending the concert.

Ms. Covey reported that Giles County hosted their annual ACCE event for students and donors at Mountain Lake Lodge with over 150 people in attendance.

## **VIII. OLD BUSINESS**

None

## **IX. NEW BUSINESS**

- A. New River Valley Recovery Ecosystem Program Update
- Ms. Lesko provided an overview on the New River Valley Recovery Ecosystem Program. The Regional Commission's Community Health Program supported the submission of the renewal for FY26 funding of the NRV Recovery Ecosystem program to the Virginia Opioid Abatement Authority. This program continues to integrate prevention, treatment, recovery, and harm reduction measures to address opioid abatement in the New River Valley. Some highlights for the FY26 program include completion of six bed expansion at New Life, an in-patient treatment center operated by NRVCS; development and staffing of Peer Recovery Center facilities in Floyd and Giles counties; expanded hours and drivers for on-demand transportation to support access to employment and treatment; and increased engagement and support of prevention and trauma education in public schools and communities.

Ms. Fox provided an overview of the Recovery Ecosystem in schools and specifically the "Just say Know" curriculum that is being utilized by schools in the New River Valley.

B. New River Valley Water Supply Plan Grant Funding Resolution

Mr. Byrd explained a resolution for the Regional Commission to consider adopting that enables the agency to apply for and receive grant funds to begin development of an update to the New River Valley Water Supply Plan was included in the packet. The Code of Virginia requires every local government to prepare and adopt a Water Supply Plan with updates on a five-year cycle. This will be the third five-year update for the New River Valley plan, and it is due to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) in 2029. The New River Valley Regional Commission prepared the previous plan for the region except for Montgomery County and the towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg due to the expansion of the New River Valley Water Authority at the time. This cycle will include all local governments in the region.

Grant funding is being made available to support plan development; however, the funding is limited, therefore the FY26 activities will focus on updating the Water Source Information chapter of the plan. To receive the grant funds, DEQ requires a resolution be adopted by the Regional Planning Unit (RPU), in this case the New River Valley Regional Commission, and for the RPU to notify the participating local governments the intent to secure funding to develop the plan. Should the Regional Commission adopt the resolution the local governments will be notified promptly.

Motion: Mr. Horton moved to approve the New River Valley Water Supply Plan Grant Funding Resolution. Mr. Law seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

C. FY26 VDOT Rural Transportation Work Program

Mr. Byrd overviewed the memo in the board packet prepared by Elijah Sharp, Deputy Executive Director. The Virginia Department of Transportation allocates funding each year to the Regional Commission to deliver transportation planning assistance for non-urbanized areas outside the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) geography. Numerous planning projects are prepared each year with this program and several projects in FY26 are being conducted in partnership with the MPO in order to maximize resources.

Motion: Mr. Horton moved to approve the Rural Transportation Work Program for FY26. Ms. Anderson seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

D. I-81 Corridor Improvement Survey Feedback

Mr. Byrd explained the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is conducting a survey to help inform an update to the I-81 Corridor Improvement Plan. The plan was initially developed in 2018 and resulted in \$3 billion worth of investment to improve the interstate. The plan update process is an opportunity to identify improvements that were not captured or could not be included in the final 2018 plan due to financial constraints. He shared two links, one where input can be submitted and another where the project updates can be followed. Board members recommended sharing the need for intersection improvements in Pulaski County and consideration of truck climbing lanes in Pulaski County at Peak Creek.

Ms. Covey called to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 pm.

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H. Johnson, Chair  
New River Valley Regional Commission