

**NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION**  
**Minutes of the Commission Meeting**  
**held on**  
**May 22, 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. A. Davis, Town of Pearisburg; Mr. B. Dawson, Town of Pulaski; Mr. A. Graftsky, Montgomery County; Ms. T. Hockett, Town of Christiansburg; Dr. A. Joyner, Radford University; Ms. L. DeVito Kuchenbuch, Floyd County; Mr. J. Martin, City of Radford; Ms. L. Morris, Virginia Tech; Mr. J. Reeves, Pulaski County; 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:** Mr. H. Johnson, Town of Christiansburg, Chair; Ms. S. Anderson, Town of Blacksburg; Ms. A. Chambers, Town of Rich Creek; Mr. L. Clevinger, Town of Pulaski; Mr. W. Griffin, Town of Floyd; Mr. D. Horton, City of Radford; Mr. B. Jaunarena, Pulaski County; Mr. R. Lawson, Town of Pembroke; Mr. R. McCoy, Giles County; Mr. P. Martin, Giles County; Mr. M. Maslaney, Floyd County, and Mr. W. Seagle, Town of Dublin.

Staff Attendees: Kevin Byrd, Julie Phillips, and Leo Priddy

Other Attendees: Jessica Wirgau

**II. CONSENT AGENDA**

**A. Approval of Minutes for April**

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

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

Action: Motion carried

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

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

Motion: Mr. Graftsky moved for approval of the Treasurer's Reports. Mr. Reeves seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried

**III. COMMONWEALTH INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS**

**A. Projects (Signed-off by the staff)**

None

**B. Regular Project Review**

1. Vivarium Research Building at Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center

**IV. PUBLIC ADDRESS**

None

**V. CHAIR'S REPORT**

Ms. Covey reported that Chair Johnson collected evaluations from the board for the annual evaluation of the executive director. The executive committee shared comments with Mr. Byrd, all of which were positive.

**VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Mr. Byrd provided a summary report in the Regional Commission agenda packet. The NRV Recovery Ecosystem submitted the FY26 proposal to the Opioid Abatement Authority (OAA) at the beginning of April. Grant decisions are anticipated within the next month. An extended internal project team meeting was held this week to discuss communication of the OAA program and the services delivered through the NRV Recovery Ecosystem.

The Virginia AM2 Tech Hub will host their next all-hands meeting on June 3rd at 1:00pm at IperionX in South Boston. The GO Virginia application for the GO TEC program was approved by the Regional Council and headed to the state office for administrative review. Planning is well underway for the AM2 Tech Hub conference to be held in the fall. Information will be distributed once registration is available.

The Montgomery/Bland County VATI project is making good construction progress. All Points Broadband in Pulaski County is at an impasse on make-ready with Appalachian Power. This resulted in All Points Broadband filing with the FCC to seek arbitration between the internet service provider and the utility company. A response from the FCC is anticipated within 60-days.

The NRV Passenger Rail Station Authority will meet on May 22<sup>nd</sup> to discuss the building layout with the architecture/engineering team. Norfolk Southern has an aggressive construction schedule underway working on the site seven days a week.

VDOT held their annual Six-Year Improvement Plan (SYIP) public input meeting on May 14<sup>th</sup> in Salem.

The Virginia Housing Planning District Commission competitive housing grant was submitted last month and received feedback recently that it was not selected for funding. There were 17 applicants out of 21 PDCs and seven will be awarded funding. A debrief meeting with Virginia Housing is being scheduled the first week of June.

The Regional Commission continues to support communities impacted by Hurricane Helene. Funds currently available include Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) for Urgent Needs; GO Virginia recently opened a special Hurricane Helene Business Recovery program; CDBG for Disaster Recovery will be available for applications soon; 2025 General Assembly appropriation for Hurricane Helene/Winter Storm 2025 will be available for applications soon as well. A NRV meeting on the General Assembly funding may be held next week. Once it is confirmed a meeting notice will be distributed to all local governments.

Mr. Byrd thanked all the Commissioners who provided feedback for the annual executive director review process.

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

Ms. Kuchenbuch reported that Senate Bill 974 will go into effect on July 1. She expressed concern for how this will affect local government planning commissions since the bill provides increased responsibilities for local government Subdivision Agents in the administrative process of land divisions.

Ms. Covey reported that New River Community College hosted its 2025 graduation ceremonies. They had over 900 degrees/diplomas/certificates conferred, and 59 nurses pinned.

## **VIII. OLD BUSINESS**

None

## **IX. NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Community Foundation of the New River Valley Overview  
Dr. Wirgau, Chief Executive Officer of the Community Foundation, provided an overview of the organization, programs delivered, and community impact. The Community Foundation was started in 1984 with an initial investment of \$8.88 and now has over \$20M in assets with approximately \$700,000 awarded in grant funds locally each year. She explained that the Community Foundation of the New River Valley and the Regional Commission have had a close working relationship that spans close to 15 years.
- B. New River Valley Regional Economic Strategy Update  
Mr. Priddy explained each year the New River Valley Regional Commission reviews and updates the region's Regional Economic Strategy (RES). 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.

Over the course of this year's update, four RES Committee meetings have been held or scheduled and have focused on reviewing the Local Projects List, updating priority strategies and SWOT analysis, and identifying relevant content updates based on recent federal guidance. In addition, the RES Committee is making revisions to reflect the updated U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) Content Guidelines, to support continued alignment with federal expectations and funding opportunities.

- C. Federal Program Impacts: Legislative Outreach/Communication  
Mr. Byrd explained the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), which the Regional Commission is a member and relies on for insight in federal programs, sent out an email informing members the White House released an initial abbreviated version of the President's FY26 Budget Request, commonly referred to as the "Skinny Budget". The President's

request proposes elimination of the US Economic Development Administration (EDA), Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), HUD HOME Investment Partnerships, and significant decreases to the Appalachian Regional Commission. Announced this week was the elimination of the Digital Equity portion of the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) program.

Given the substantive nature of these federal programs spurring private investment in the New River Valley economy, the Regional Commission may wish to send a letter to the congressional delegation along with representatives in the Virginia General Assembly to ensure each are aware of the impact these programs have within the region. It is important to note, previous presidential administrations have proposed similar budget initiatives such as elimination of EDA and HUD programs. However, Congress handles appropriations, and it is important to keep the members of Congress, and the Virginia General Assembly representatives apprised of potential impacts to the region.

Motion: Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch moved to approve sending a letter to the congressional delegation along with representatives in the Virginia General Assembly to ensure each are aware of the impact these programs have within the region. Mr. Martin seconded the motion. Action: Motion carried unanimously.

- D. Regional Commission Awards- Review Criteria and Process  
Mr. Byrd explained the award categories, criteria and previous award recipients were included in the packet. A call for nominations will go out next week.
- E. FY26 Nominating Committee Slate of Officers Presented  
Ms. Covey shared the nominating committee report. The slate presented is below.

Chair: Hil Johnson, Town of Christiansburg  
Vice-Chair: Susan Anderson, Town of Blacksburg  
Treasurer: Leon Law, Giles County  
At-Large: David Horton, City of Radford  
At-Large: Linda DeVito Kuchenbuch, Floyd County  
At-Large: Larry Clevinger, Town of Pulaski  
Past Chair: Mike Maslaney, Floyd County

Ms. Covey called to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 pm.

---

H. Johnson, Chair  
New River Valley Regional Commission