

NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION
Minutes of the Commission Meeting
held on
August 27, 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. C.B. Andrews, Town of Pembroke; Dr. R. Brandon, New River Community College; Mr. L. Clevinger, Town of Pulaski; Mr. B. Dawson, Town of Pulaski; Ms. A. Davis, Town of Pearisburg; Ms. L. DeVito Kuchenbuch, Floyd County; Mr. A. Graftsky, Montgomery County; Mr. M. Harvey, Town of Blacksburg; Ms. T. Hockett, Town of Christiansburg; Mr. D. Horton, City of Radford; Dr. A. Joyner, Radford University; Mr. M. Mann, Town of Rich Creek; Ms. L. Morris, Virginia Tech; Mr. W. Seagle, Town of Dublin; Mr. T. Spangler, Town of Narrows and Mr. B. Wheeler, Montgomery County; Mr. R. Gibson, Virginia Tech Foundation; Mr. R. McCoy, Giles County.

ABSENT: Mr. L. Law, Giles County, Treasurer; Mr. W. Griffin, Town of Floyd; Mr. M. Maslaney, Floyd County; Mr. J. Martin, City of Radford; Ms. L. Ramsey, Pulaski County and Mr. J. Reeves, Pulaski County.

Staff Attendees: Kevin Byrd and Julie Phillips.

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes for June

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

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

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

III. COMMONWEALTH INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

A. Projects (Signed-off by the staff)

None

B. Regular Project Review

1. FERC Mountain Valley Pipeline Boost Project, DEQ 26-110F

Discussion: Mr. Graftsky reported Montgomery County's comments for this project included a request to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement instead of the less robust Environmental Assessment. The County also noted the need to address extended road closures at railroad crossings due to trains queuing which potentially causes delays for emergency responses.

Motion: Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch moved to include Montgomery County's comments in the response from the Commission. Mr. Graftsky seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

IV. PUBLIC ADDRESS

None

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

Mr. Johnson reported the Commission will be voting on the annual awards later in the meeting.

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Byrd provided a summary report in the Regional Commission agenda packet. The AM2 Tech Hub \$40M application to the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) is still under review. EDA sent a request for budget details three weeks ago which hopefully indicates continued consideration of the project.

The AM2 Tech Hub GO Virginia project (\$4.2M) is nearing contract execution. It remains under review by the legal department at Virginia Tech.

AM2 is holding an All Hands meeting on September 3rd in Martinsville at Patrick & Henry Community College's Manufacturing, Engineering, and Technology Complex, The MET.

PemTel will be hosting Senator Warner on 8/28 in Pembroke to showcase federal investments in rural broadband deployment. The Regional Commission has assisted PemTel with grant applications and grant administration for several projects that will be highlighted at the event.

The NRV Passenger Rail Station Authority met to receive an update on the project and discuss building construction funds pertaining to Amtrak Design Review and the previously awarded CRISI grant. It was announced earlier the same day that the Appalachian Regional Commission awarded \$1M for construction of the station building.

The New River Valley Housing Fund is developing policy to allow funds to be used for property acquisition because a community has an opportunity to make a strategic real estate purchase. The acquisition would enable future capital investment for an affordable housing development project. This new policy aligns with the intent of the NRV Housing Fund to provide access to discretionary funds to address specific local needs and opportunities.

The VA Dept of Housing and Community Development sent planning grant awards in response to Hurricane Helene Disaster Recovery to the counties of Giles, Pulaski, Montgomery and the City of Radford. \$155K will be made available to each community for disaster recovery planning work. The Regional Commission will prepare a regional Disaster Recovery Plan along with chapters for each community. The local governments have until September 7th to respond to DHCD with its intended approach and the Commission is assisting with the responses.

The Regional + Local Housing study received funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission that will help cover NRVRC staff time to develop the update.

The NRV Recovery Ecosystem is currently distributing ONEboxes to locations across the region. ONEboxes are essentially an overdose emergency kit containing one dose of naloxone, CPR breathing masks, and rubber gloves. The boxes contain a LCD screen that shows a video on how to administer the medicine. Approximately 150 boxes have been delivered and installed in restaurants, retailers, hotels, gas stations, and many other businesses. If you know of a location

that would like a ONEbox, please contact Anna Champion. A press release will be issued on the ONEbox program to help inform the public and identify more locations.

The Annual Awards Reception will be held on October 22nd at The Farmhouse in Christiansburg. A mobile workshop will take place 4:30-5:45 and the reception will run from 6:00-8:00. Invitations will go out soon after the meeting on Thursday following the selection of the award recipients.

The office construction project continues to make good progress following the project schedule. We are continuing to anticipate moving locations by the end of the calendar year, provided the timeline holds up. Drywall has been installed, a first coat of paint has been applied, carpet and glass storefront for the upstairs meeting room will go in soon. On the outside, stonework was recently completed around the addition and brick is being placed this week. Windows should be on site soon. The furniture order was placed recently and we are working on internet pricing, IT networking, and audio visual details for the meeting rooms.

We are looking forward to holding a Field Day lunch event for staff on September 18th at Noon at Randolph Park in Pulaski County. Board members are invited to join us as we will be recognizing staff members for their years of service to the organization.

VII. REVIEW OF MUTUAL CONCERNS AND COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Ms. Hockett reported that the Town of Christiansburg voted to end their contract with Flock Safety.

Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch reported Floyd County ended their contract with Flock Safety and the cameras will be turned off on August 31st. AEP is upgrading their 412-power line and is trying to utilize as much of its right of way as possible. The Town of Floyd's final small town summer concert was held 8/27. Floyd Fest 2026 was a success.

Dr. Joyner reported that Radford University and the City of Radford held the 3rd annual Community Fest and it was considered a success with 3,000-5,000 attendees, 140 vendors, four bands, and seven food trucks. Radford University will host a Regional Economy Summit Luncheon on September 10th. Mr. Byrd will speak on the panel alongside the Virginia Secretary of Commerce and Trade, and Katie Boswell with Onward NRV. On September 8-9th Radford University will host its Inaugural Adventure Works Summit.

Mr. Horton reported that the Literacy Volunteers will hold its Once Upon a Race 5k in Bissett Park 8/29. ReNew the New will take place 8/29 in Bissett Park, along with clean-ups in Giles County and Montgomery County.

Dr. Brandon reported New River Community College is expanding its health technology program. A second cohort of the EMT program will be added at the Christiansburg campus. A Respiratory Therapy Program will also be added at the Christiansburg campus.

Mr. Dawson reported the Town of Pulaski citizens will vote in November on allowing pari-mutuel betting that would ultimately allow the development of a Rosies Gaming Emporium in the Town. The Town will co-host the Mountain X event, a gravel biking competition, on September 26th with Pulaski County.

Mr. Graftsky reported that Montgomery County received the results on its Fire and EMS Study and the county is working with the Towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg on implementing the recommendations.

Mr. Spangler reported the Town of Narrows will hold the Wolf Creek Runs Wild 5k & 10K on October 24th.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Regional Commission Policies:

Mr. Byrd explained this item on the agenda includes three policies for review and consideration.

a. Bylaws Update

Discussion: Mr. Harvey noted there was not a definition of what would cause a member to not be in good standing. Ms. Anderson explained the definition was included on page 4 and a reference to that definition could be added.

Motion: Mr. Horton moved to approve the Bylaws update with the addition of the reference to the definition on page 4. Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

b. Letters of Support for Non-Member Organizations

Motion: Dr. Joyner moved to approve the Letters of Support for Non-Member Organizations. Mr. Harvey seconded the motion.

Action: Motion Withdrawn

Discussion: Mr. Graftsky noted there is not a definition of "substantially complete" on page 2 and explained the word "substantially" should be removed.

Motion: Dr. Brandon moved to approve the Letters of Support for Non-Member Organizations with the removal of "substantially complete" on page 2. Ms. Hockett seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

c. Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy

Discussion: Dr. Brandon noted the definition of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in this policy is limited to generative AI and that should be added to the definition of AI on page 1.

Motion: Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch moved to approve the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy with the amended definition of AI on page 1. Dr. Brandon seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

B. Regional Economic Strategy Committee for FY27

Mr. Byrd explained each year the New River Valley Regional Commission reviews and updates the region's Regional Economic Strategy (RES). Over time, adjustments to the RES Committee reflect leadership transitions and evolving representation across the region. Staff recommends two appointments to support a well-rounded committee with experience across key areas of regional economic development. These recommendations were included in the packet.

Motion: Ms. Hockett moved to approve the FY27 Regional Economic Strategy committee members. Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

C. Regional Commission Awards for 2026

Mr. Byrd explained the nominee information was included in the packet and then he overviewed the award voting process. The Commission proceeded to vote by secret ballot for the award recipients. Mr. Byrd will be contacting the award recipients to notify them that they will be recognized for their contributions to the region.

Mr. Johnson called to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 pm.

H. Johnson, Chair
New River Valley Regional Commission