

NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION
Minutes of the Commission Meeting
held on
November 21, 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; Ms. S. Anderson, Town of Blacksburg; Mr. L. Clevinger, Town of Pulaski; Mr. A. Graftsky, Montgomery County; Ms. T. Hockett, Town of Christiansburg; Mr. D. Horton, City of Radford; Dr. A. Joyner, Radford University; Ms. L. DeVito Kuchenbuch, Floyd County; J. Martin, City of Radford; Ms. L. Morris, Virginia Tech; Mx. E. Shawish, Town of Blacksburg and Mr. T. Spangler, Town of Narrows; Mr. M. Maslaney, Floyd County (participated via Zoom from his home location in Floyd, Virginia due to illness)

ABSENT: Mr. L. Law, Giles County, Treasurer; Ms. A. Covey, New River Community College, Vice-Chair; Vacant, Pulaski County; Ms. A. Davis, Town of Pearisburg; Mr. W. Griffin, Town of Floyd; Mr. R. Jones, Town of Rich Creek; Mr. R. Lawson, Town of Pembroke; Mr. R. McCoy, Giles County; Mr. Mr. P. Martin, Giles County; Mr. M. Reis, Town of Pulaski; Mr. J. Reeves, Pulaski County; Ms. M. Trigiani, Virginia Tech Foundation and Mr. B. Wheeler, Montgomery County.

Staff Attendees: Jessica Barrett, Kevin Byrd, and Leo Priddy

II. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes for September

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. Hockett seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried

B. Approval of Treasurer's Reports for September and October

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. Spangler seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried.

III. COMMONWEALTH INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

A. Projects (Signed-off by the staff)

1. Radford University Combined Heating and Power Cogeneration Facility
2. State Corporation Commission- Hecate Energy Bella Terra Solar

3. Virginia Tech New Business Building

B. Regular Project Review

1. New River Valley – Cambria Station & Radford Layover Facility

IV. PUBLIC ADDRESS

None

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

None

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Byrd provided a summary report in the Regional Commission agenda packet. He began his report by introducing a new staff member, Emma Carroll, Regional Innovation Officer.

The Regional Commission was successful in securing BEAD Digital Opportunity Planning Funds which will go toward each county/city establishing a plan for use of broadband in their communities. The project will kick-off in January and will establish strategies for each community. Identifying projects such as increased training for residents to access telehealth and breaking down barriers to e-commerce through this process will set communities up to apply for BEAD implementation funding.

The Montgomery/Bland VATI project for 2021 in Eastern Montgomery County is largely built-out with the exception of railroad crossings. Portions of the 2022 project adjacent to the 2021 service area have been built-out while construction was staged in the area.

The Virginia AM2 Tech Hub is holding an all-hands in-person meeting on 11/15 and will be hosted by Virginia Tech. Partners will tour three labs: Future of Manufacturing Lab, Learning Factory, and the Materials Characterization Lab. Following the tours there will be a group discussion on advancing the Tech Hub and its competitiveness in the global market. To keep up with the program, visit the website hosted by OnwardNRV www.am2virginia.org

NRV Passenger Rail hosted a regional meeting on November 14th to brief the larger stakeholder group on progress made to-date. Representatives from the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority delivered remarks on the new Cambria station location while the Regional Commission provided an update on activities of the NRV Passenger Rail Station Authority. A groundbreaking ceremony is being planned for mid-March. Notices will be distributed widely.

Local governments all received notice recently from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) regarding ammended Water Supply Plan Regulations. The Regional Commission received notice as a partner to local governments in this work. One principal change in the regulation was designation of Regional Planning Areas (RPU) which follows watershed boundaries. The regulation requires the local governments to identify contact information for a RPU representative, alternatively if a PDC assumes the RPU role, then contact for the PDC should be submitted. Contact information is required by December 8, 20204 and kick-off

meetings are required by April 7, 2025. Contact information can be sent to Kevin Byrd for local governments wanting to participate in the regional plan.

The Regional Commission is supporting communities impacted by Hurricane Helene. The role of the agency will be focused on helping to administer mid and long-term recovery projects along with facilitating discussion on resiliency initiatives such as interconnecting water/waste water systems. The Appalachian Regional Commission allocated urgent funding for the agency to provide staffing assistance for project applications. The Governor's office has been in contact requesting damage information that will be packaged into a substantial federal disaster request.

Regional Commission staff has been in communication with the Town of Dublin regarding their interest in joining as a member of the agency. A membership invitation memo and the Charter Agreement were shared this week for their Town Council to consider at their meeting on November 21st.

Thanks to everyone who attended the Annual Dinner event and celebrated the award recipients in Floyd. A press release with a photo of the award recipients was issued following the event and ran in several papers.

The Regional Commission office project is scheduled to close on financing November 19th with proceeds available the day following. The real estate closing is scheduled for December 13th. Colley Architects and their professional services team is already working on construction drawings. Once the drawings are complete and the project moves to bid, a timeline for moving will be established.

The Regional Commission is excited to welcome two new employees. Kelley Akers is the new Graphic Designer and Community Engagement Specialist and Zach Kanka started this month as the GIS Planner.

VII. REVIEW OF MUTUAL CONCERNS AND COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Mr. Graftsky reported he joined the Virginia Small Business Development Center as a dedicated Business Advisor for the New River Valley and is available if anyone needs assistance.

Ms. Hockett reported the Town of Christiansburg hired Miles Campbell as their Small Business Solutions Manager and Scott Shipley as their Assistant Town Manager.

Mr. Horton reported Craig Meadows will be the interim City Manager. There will be a tree lighting ceremony on December 3rd, a holiday Farmers Market at Glencoe Museum on December 7th, and a holiday parade on December 10th.

Mr. Spangler reported that DEQ Brownfields funding was recently utilized to remove tanks at a former service station in the Town of Narrows. He also shared the Wohlfahrt Haus Dinner Theater was sold to a Wythe County family and will remain open.

Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch reported that the C-4 small business program in Floyd County wrapped up their eleventh year.

Dr. Joyner reported that Radford University signed the Tartan Transfer agreement with several community college partners. The university established a testing center that will open in December at the HUB and a co-working space will open at the HUB in January.

Mx. Shawish reported that the Blacksburg Public Library will host a foraging event on November 23rd and they will be the primary speaker on the topic.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Appointing Regional Economic Strategy (RES) Committee Members
Mr. Priddy explained the proposed RES Committee list was included in the packet with new names for positions that transitioned in the past year.

Mr. Johnson called for approval of the recommended RES Committee members.

Motion: Ms. Anderson moved to approve the RES Committee list. Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

- B. Set FY26 Per Capita Assessment
Mr. Byrd explained the current FY25 assessment rate is \$1.32 per capita based on Weldon Cooper Center Population Projections. The Commission uses the annual population estimates from the Weldon Cooper Center since it provides for minor adjustments rather than more drastic adjustments with a decennial census. The Executive Committee is recommending keeping with the existing rate of \$1.32. The Commission typically adjusts the rate every two years, and this would be the fourth year of a level rate, although the second year of using Weldon Cooper data.

Mr. Johnson called for approval of the FY26 Per Capita Assessment Rate to be set at \$1.32.

Motion: Mr. Horton moved for the approval of the FY26 rate at \$1.32. Ms. Hockett seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

- C. Charter amendment for Office Space
Mr. Byrd explained the Regional Commission is continuing to move through the process to purchase property for a new office location at 2950 Market Street in Christiansburg. The financing package with the Virginia Resources Authority closed on November 19th with proceeds available the following day. The real estate closing is scheduled for December 13th.

Prior to the agency relocating from Pulaski County to Christiansburg the Charter Agreement must be amended.

The Charter Agreement states, ARTICLE I, Name, Location, Authority; Purpose, Section 2. "The principal office of the COMMISSION shall be in Pulaski County, Virginia. The location of the principal office may be changed by the concurrent of three-fourths of the COMMISSION members present at the regular meeting, provided that the clerk of the governing body of each member governmental subdivision has been notified of the contemplated relocation in writing at least thirty days before such meeting."

All the Regional Commission members were provided with notice of the contemplated relocation on October 11th via a memo from the Executive Director which meets the thirty-day notice requirement in the Charter Agreement. To amend the Charter Agreement, three-fourths of the members present must concur.

Motion: Ms. Hockett moved to amend the Charter Agreement to reflect the change in office location. Mr. Grafsky seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried.

D. Resolution Approving Purchase of Real Estate

Mr. Byrd explained at the June 27th Regional Commission meeting the board approved a motion authorizing the Executive Director to execute a purchase agreement for real estate at 2950 Market Street in Christiansburg for the purpose of a new office location. Since that meeting, the Regional Commission has executed due diligence on the property to include a Property Condition Assessment, secured an environmental report conducted by the previous property owner in 2023, and had a site survey performed. Further, the financing package with Virginia Resources Authority will close on November 19th and the real estate transaction is scheduled for December 13th.

Motion: Mr. Horton moved to adopt the Resolution Approving the Purchase of Real Estate which enables the Executive Director to execute documents on behalf of the agency. Ms. Hockett seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken:

Susan Anderson- aye

Larry Clevinger- aye

Anthony Grafsky- aye

Linda DeVito Kuchenbuch- aye

Tanya Hockett- aye

David Horton- aye

Hil Johnson- aye

Angela Joyner- aye

Jeff Martin- aye

Michael Maslaney-aye

Liza Morris-aye

Em Shawish- aye

Tom Spangler- aye

Action: Motion carried.

E. New Office Space Considerations

Mr. Byrd explained staff has started the conversation about the new office building regarding needs for the meeting rooms and the overall facility internally and this is an appropriate time to receive board input while the project advances through the architecture and engineering phase. Items for consideration may include aspects of meeting rooms that work well for those using the space (ie-location and size of video screens) and facility considerations such as electric vehicle charging. This is an opportunity to be strategic about the space and to think big. All ideas may not be able to be incorporated initially; however, it is important to have a list of needs and wants for the new office location to help ensure it is well utilized by the region.

Mr. Johnson called to adjourn the meeting at 7:01 pm.

H. Johnson, Chair
New River Valley Regional Commission