

NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION
Minutes of the Commission Meeting
held on
January 26, 2023
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. S. Fijalkowski, Montgomery County, Vice-Chair; Mr. L. Law, Giles County, Treasurer; Ms. S. Anderson, Town of Blacksburg; Mr. D. Breslau, Town of Blacksburg; Ms. A. Covey, New River Community College; Mr. L. Clevinger, Town of Pulaski; Mr. W. Griffin, Town of Floyd; Mr. M. Harvey, Montgomery County; Mr. D. Horton, City of Radford; Mr. R. Jones, Town of Rich Creek; Mr. R. McCoy, Giles County; Mr. J. Martin, City of Radford; Mr. M. Maslaney, Floyd County; Ms. L. Morris, Virginia Tech Mr. M. Patton, Town of Floyd; Mr. M. Reis, Town of Pulaski; Mr. J. Reeves, Pulaski County; Mr. T. Spangler, Town of Narrows; Dr. D. Warren, Pulaski County and Mr. T Wilson, Town of Christiansburg.

ABSENT: Ms. C. Clark, Town of Pearisburg; Ms. L. DeVito Kuchenbuch, Floyd County; Dr. A. Joyner, Radford University; Mr. R. Lawson, Town of Pembroke, and Ms. M. Trigiani, Virginia Tech Foundation.

Staff Attendees: Jessica Barrett, Kevin Byrd, Holly Lesko, Chris Owens, Julie Phillips, Christy Straight and Jennifer Wilsie.

II. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes for November

Mr. Johnson 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. Mr. Horton seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried.

B. Approval of Treasurer's Reports for November and December

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

Motion: Mr. Wilson moved for approval of the Treasurer's Reports. Ms. Anderson seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried.

IV. COMMONWEALTH INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

- A. Projects (Signed-off by the staff)
 - 1. New River Community College Solar Farm
 - 2. NRV Community Services Vehicle Purchase
 - 3. NRV Senior Services Vehicle Purchase
- B. Regular Project Review
 - None

V. PUBLIC ADDRESS

None

VI. CHAIR'S REPORT

Mr. Johnson reported the Executive Committee meets every month, and they met in December even though the full board did not meet.

VII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Byrd provided a summary report in the Regional Commission agenda packet. For the VATI 2022 broadband implementation projects, the Pulaski County project is officially under contract as of December. As a result, the project is moving toward final engineering design. The Montgomery/Bland portion of the project received final approval from the State Corporation Commission in December. A contract is anticipated in February.

Commission staff attended an Opioid Settlement Training Workshop in Richmond to learn more about how the agency can support communities in accessing statewide funds for projects.

The NRV Passenger Rail Station Authority held a meeting on January 26th at the Pulaski County Innovation Center. The agenda focused on budgeting for staffing and legal services in FY24, finalizing bylaws, establishing a nominating committee for officers, and the process for issuing an RFQ for architectural/engineering services.

VDOT recently released scoring for SMART Scale projects. Three projects in the region are recommended by VDOT to the Commonwealth Transportation Board for funding.

The New River Water Trail Expansion project funded by the Appalachian Regional Commission has a contract negotiation meeting forthcoming that will enable the Commission to kick-off the project.

The New River Conservancy is in the early stages of coordinating a grant application to ARC for planning funds that will evaluate the potential to expand the New River Water Trail from the headwaters in North Carolina through Virginia into West Virginia.

The General Assembly recently considered companion bills that would expand public meeting laws to allow for increased remote meeting participation. The Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions and NRVRC are continuing to support these bills based on feedback received from Commissioners at previous meetings in order to increase our local participation.

Chris Owens was hired in December for the Project Manager-Infrastructure role. Chris is supporting the broadband program and the NRV Passenger Rail Station Authority, among other projects. She has a lot of complementary experience with six years at the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development and six years at Mount Rogers Planning District Commission.

The Commission was disappointed to say goodbye to Joy Rumley, the Director of Economic Development. Joy will be starting a new position close to her home in Abingdon at the end of January. Over the past 16 months she led the revamp of the Revolving Loan Fund program and the Regional Economic Strategy document, not to mention a lot of one-on-one project development with communities in the region.

In January, the Commission staff held our monthly staff meeting at the Montgomery Museum in downtown Christiansburg. This was an opportunity for everyone to see the asset first-hand and learn more about the goals of the nonprofit. Planning staff had a successful and engaging day-long training on meeting facilitation led by one of the best in the business, Doug Jackson with the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. Staff also had a fun team outing to the Virginia Tech's Women's Basketball game on January 12th.

The Commission recently received notice the Appalachian Regional Commission Office of the Inspector General will be conducting an audit on grant funds expended for the Millstone Kitchen portion of the larger redevelopment project at the Prices Fork Elementary School. Currently, staff is gathering grant documents for the process which will take place iteratively over the next three months.

VIII. REVIEW OF MUTUAL CONCERNS AND COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Ms. Anderson reported the Dialogue on Race will be held January 28th at 9:00am at Christiansburg Middle School.

Mr. Horton reported the Glencoe Museum will open a new exhibit, Slavery in Appalachia, with a panel discussion and opening reception on Friday, January 27th. He also announced the Special Olympics will be hosting their Polar Plunge fundraising event on February 25th.

Mr. Wilson reported Academy Sports will be a new tenant at the Marketplace in Christiansburg. The shopping center will also be welcoming several new restaurants soon.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

None

X. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Virginia Tech Local Government Liaison Program for the New River Valley
Ms. Gibson introduced herself and her work to the Commission. She currently serves as Virginia Tech's Director of Local Government and Community Relations in the New River Valley. The university created this role to serve as a point of contact for local governments and

community members in the New River Valley. During Ms. Gibson's first year in the position, she's provided support to her Virginia Tech colleagues serving on local boards and commissions, listened to perceptions of the community of the university (and vice versa), and explored existing partnerships. In this new role she also helps coordinate campus visits for local, state, and federal elected officials. She will reach out in the future to host Regional Commission board members and other local governments in the region on campus.

B. FY24 Ride Solutions Program Overview and Operating Grant Resolution

Ms. Straight explained RIDE Solutions NRV serves the region with transportation demand management services for commuters and employers and is part of a larger brand serving central and southwest Virginia. Partners in this brand include the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission, Central Virginia Planning District Commission, and West Piedmont Planning District Commission. The Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) provides operating funding to commuter assistance programs across Virginia. The agency provides funding at an 80% match of project costs, with local investment at 20% of costs, through the Commuter Assistance Program (CAP) Operating Assistance. The goal of the CAP Operating Assistance grant program is to mitigate traffic congestion through the elimination of single occupant vehicle (SOV) auto trips by shifting SOV trips to carpool, vanpool, and transit.

Motion: Ms. Anderson moved for the approval of the resolution in support of the FY24 Ride Solutions NRV CAP Grant Application to DRPT. Mr. Patton seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Johnson called to adjourn the meeting at 6:50 pm.

H. Johnson, Chair
New River Valley Regional Commission