

NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION
Minutes of the Commission Meeting
held on
March 27, 2025
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. L. Law, Giles County, Treasurer; Ms. A. Covey, New River Community College, Vice-Chair; Ms. S. Anderson, Town of Blacksburg; Ms. A. Chambers, Town of Rich Creek; Mr. L. Clevinger, Town of Pulaski; Ms. T. Hockett, Town of Christiansburg; Mr. D. Horton, City of Radford; Dr. A. Joyner, Radford University; Ms. L. DeVito Kuchenbuch, Floyd County; Ms. L. Morris, Virginia Tech; Mr. P. Martin, Giles County; Mr. J. Reeves, Pulaski County; Mr. W. Seagle, Town of Dublin; 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: Ms. A. Davis, Town of Pearisburg; Mr. B. Dawson, Town of Pulaski; Mr. A. Grafsky, Montgomery County; Mr. W. Griffin, Town of Floyd; Mr. B. Jaunarena, Pulaski County; Mr. R. Lawson, Town of Pembroke; Mr. R. McCoy, Giles County; Mr. J. Martin, City of Radford, and Mr. M. Maslaney, Floyd County.

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

II. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes for February

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. Ms. Anderson seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried.

B. Approval of Treasurer's Reports for February

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. Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried.

III. COMMONWEALTH INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

A. Projects (Signed-off by the staff)

None

B. Regular Project Review

1. Radford University Softball Field Turf and Scoreboard Replacement Project

IV. PUBLIC ADDRESS

None

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

Mr. Johnson reported the Livability in Action Exchange took place on March 26th and was well attended. He listed several of the regional projects that were highlighted at the event.

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Byrd provided a summary report in the Regional Commission agenda packet. The NRV Recovery Ecosystem facilitated two input meetings this month with partner organizations and local government leadership in crafting the FY26 proposal to the Opioid Abatement Authority. There are 11 partner organizations identified to deliver services in the proposal with focus on expanded transportation services, implementation of peer recovery centers, additional prevention and treatment programming, and resources for emergency housing assistance.

The Montgomery/Bland County VATI projects resumed regular construction in late February/early March after the winter weather passed. All Points Broadband in Pulaski County is working hard with AEP to get the make-ready work completed; however, AEP may need to bring on another vendor to support the workflow in order to get enough poles released to construction. All Points Broadband has submitted permits for two railroad crossings and cabinet leasing with a back-haul provider is complete.

The Virginia Passenger Rail Authority groundbreaking event for the New River Valley project in Cambria was rescheduled from 3/20 to April 24th at 10:30am due to the Governor being available to attend. The NRV Passenger Rail Station Authority will not meet as a full board in March. The board will have an abbreviated meeting in Christiansburg following the ground breaking event.

Following the Water Supply Planning kick-off meetings held in February, two counties submitted requests to the VA Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to change their respective Regional Planning Unit geography. Floyd County requested to be moved into New River 1 to join Montgomery, Pulaski, and Giles counties and the City of Radford. Bland County requested to be moved from New River 1 and into New River 2 which contains the counties of their planning district geography in the Mount Rogers area. A grant to support the development of the Water Supply Plan is due to DEQ by 3/31 and will be submitted by the Regional Commission.

The 2025 Ramps 'n Roads volunteer clean-up event for the New River along shorelines and boat launches in Giles County will take place on April 5th at 8:30am.

The Regional Commission continues to support communities impacted by Hurricane Helene. The Commonwealth recently announced two Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) opportunities for communities impacted by the storm. One program is under the Urgent Need category and has \$5.0M available for impacted communities. Several NRV communities are holding the required public hearings so they will be able to submit smaller-scale projects. The second program is part of the federal disaster appropriation which is \$47M in CDBG funds through the Disaster Recovery program. Of this amount, 80% must be spent within Washington and Giles counties due to an evaluation of impacts. A public input meeting was held on 3/19 in Giles County

to discuss the program and eligible projects. The Regional Commission will support Giles County in developing projects to implement the funding as well as assisting other communities in accessing the 20% not reserved for Washington and Giles counties.

The annual local government Planning Commissioner Training event will be held April 16th at the Montgomery County Government Center.

VII. REVIEW OF MUTUAL CONCERNS AND COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Dr. Joyner reported that Radford University was nominated for top adventure school by the Blue Ridge Outdoor magazine. Onward NRV recently held a Talent Summit at the Artis Center on campus. Radford University will host an IT forum on April 12. Radford University was awarded a GO Virginia grant for Talent Connect focused on IT and computer science students connecting with industry leaders. Radford University is partnering with the City of Radford and Taylor Hollow Construction to host a senior showcase featuring student designed storefronts on Main Street. Enrollment is increasing and Radford University will host a housing fair for students in the spring.

Mr. Spangler reported the Giles County Christian Service Mission was awarded the Community Leader Award from the United Way. The Town of Narrows recently closed on a 100-acre parcel which will be used for nature trails and community use.

Ms. Morris reported that Virginia Tech is beginning the process of updating their Mobility Master Plan.

Mr. Reeves reported that Pulaski County will hold an event to announce their new Sportsplex facility on March 30.

Mr. Horton reported that a native tree planting community project was held at Bisset Park. The Radford Redbud festival will be held at Longway Brewery on April 11 & 12.

Ms. Hockett reported that the fair recently opened at Uptown Christiansburg and will run until April 4.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Economic Development Program Update

Mr. Priddy provided an overview on the Economic Development Program. Each year, the U.S. Economic Development Administration provides support to the Regional Commission to advance economic development initiatives across the region. Two areas supported by EDA funding are the Regional Economic Strategy and the Revolving Loan Fund. These programs allow the Regional Commission to collaborate with localities, economic development organizations, and business leaders to enhance economic opportunities in the region.

The Regional Commission is responsible for preparing and maintaining the Regional Economic Strategy. This planning document informs economic development activities in the region by analyzing economic trends, setting goals and objectives, and identifying priority projects submitted by local governments. Each year, the document is updated with significant input from a committee of public and private sector representatives.

The Revolving Loan Fund continues to be an important financing tool for local small businesses seeking capital for startup costs, expansions, and capital purchases. The program provides low-interest loans, typically ranging from \$10,000 to \$25,000, to businesses that may not have access to traditional financing. The Regional Commission actively seeks new applicants so that funds are utilized to support business retention and growth.

Economic Development Administration funding enables the Regional Commission to pursue strategic initiatives and respond to special requests that improve the economic development landscape in the New River Valley. This includes collaboration with regional partners, industry stakeholders, and local governments to advance economic priorities.

B. Tech Hubs Program Update

Ms. Carroll explained Virginia's Additive Manufacturing and Advanced Materials (AM2) Tech Hub is a consortium of over 50 industry, higher education, local government, and nongovernmental organizations. The Tech Hub supports the growth and adoption of additive manufacturing and advanced materials technologies in the New River Valley-Danville region through lab-to-market commercialization, business scale-up, and talent development.

The leadership team has engaged in direct discussions with business leaders and researchers to pinpoint strategies and opportunities to align their technologies with emerging product markets. The Tech Hub has launched a website to promote its mission and objectives. It also supported a GO Virginia Region 2 grant application for GO TEC, a middle school career and technical education program, and is currently formulating a 10-year strategic roadmap for initiatives to further establish this region as a center for additive manufacturing and advanced materials technologies.

Looking ahead, the AM2 Tech Hub is organizing an Additive Manufacturing and Advanced Materials conference for the fall. The conference aims to showcase the region's manufacturing capabilities, connect manufacturers and entrepreneurs with regional resources in talent development, business scale-up, technology adoption, and lab-to-market commercialization, and highlight the 10-year roadmap and future steps for the manufacturing ecosystem.

Mr. Johnson called to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 pm.

H. Johnson, Chair
New River Valley Regional Commission