

NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION
Minutes of the Commission Meeting
held on
August 22, 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. A. Covey, New River Community College, Vice-Chair; Mr. L. Law, Giles County, Treasurer; Ms. S. Anderson, Town of Blacksburg; Mr. L. Clevinger, Town of Pulaski; Ms. A. Davis, Town of Pearisburg; Mr. A. Grafsky, Montgomery County; Ms. T. Hockett, Town of Christiansburg; Mr. D. Horton, City of Radford; Ms. L. DeVito Kuchenbuch, Floyd County; Mr. R. McCoy, Giles County; Mr. M. Maslaney, Floyd County; Mr. M. Reis, Town of Pulaski; Mr. J. Reeves, Pulaski County; Mx. E. Shawish, Town of Blacksburg; Mr. T. Spangler, Town of Narrows and Mr. B. Wheeler, Montgomery County.

ABSENT: Vacant, Giles County; Vacant, Pulaski County; Mr. W. Griffin, Town of Floyd; Mr. R. Jones, Town of Rich Creek; Dr. A. Joyner, Radford University; Mr. R. Lawson, Town of Pembroke; Mr. J. Martin, City of Radford; Ms. L. Morris, Virginia Tech and Ms. M. Trigiani, Virginia Tech Foundation.

Staff Attendees: Kathleen Armstrong, Kevin Byrd, Anna Champion, Aphi Fancon, Julie Fox, Holly Lesko, Walter Midkiff, Chris Owens, Julie Phillips, Elijah Sharp, Christy Straight, Jennifer Wilsie, and Kinsey Weaver

Other Attendees: Charlie Jewel, Radford University

II. 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. Anderson moved for the approval of the minutes. Mr. Spangler seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried; one abstention, Mr. Horton.

B. Approval of Treasurer's Reports for June and July

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

Motion: Mr. Spangler moved for approval of the Treasurer's Reports. Mr. Maslaney seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried.

III. COMMONWEALTH INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

A. Projects (Signed-off by the staff)

1. Certain electrical facilities associated with a small renewable (solar) energy

B. Regular Project Review

None

IV. PUBLIC ADDRESS

None

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

Mr. Johnson thanked the board for helping to promote the nominations for the annual awards.

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Byrd provided a summary report in the Regional Commission agenda packet. He began his report by welcoming Mx. Shawish a new representative from the Town of Blacksburg to the board.

The NRV Recovery Ecosystem was recently highlighted in the Roanoke Times with a story that covered the second year of program investment from the Virginia Opioid Abatement Authority and a recent two-day training session. Congratulations to the Community Health team and several NRVRC staff members contributing to the NRV Recovery Ecosystem for receiving the 2024 Robert DeVoursney Best Practices Award from the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions! The Regional Commission has received this award for three different projects in the past six award cycles.

Congratulations to Giles County for securing approximately \$4.2M in VATI funds for broadband deployment in the Rt. 100/Rt. 42 corridors. This project will be matched with \$700,000 from the Appalachian Regional Commission. Chris Owens worked closely with PemTel to develop application materials.

The NRV/Southern VA Tech Hub Consortium held a site visit on August 13th in Danville at the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR). The facility is home to additive manufacturing training for the submarine industrial base. The tour highlighted an impressive workforce training initiative that takes workers through an eight-week/eight-hour day training module that results in immediate job placement upon completion. The Regional Innovation Officer position was recently filled by Emma Carroll. Emma will be starting September 1st.

The Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA) board is scheduled to meet on 8/26 to review the agreement with Norfolk Southern that will ultimately deliver the NRV passenger rail service to Cambria. The NRV Passenger Rail Station Authority will be meeting on 8/29 to receive a briefing

from VPRA staff on the agreement which will inform next steps of station design for the local authority.

The Regional Housing Trust Fund received a commitment of financial participation from Virginia Tech, the first non-local government partner to contribute. Other non-local government requests are under review and anticipate additional contributions in the coming months.

A planning grant was submitted at the end of May to the Appalachian Regional Commission ARISE program for funds to plan the water trail expansion from the headwaters in North Carolina through Virginia into West Virginia. Since submittal, several items of additional information were requested which bodes well for a future award. This project partners with three PDCs along the river in NC, VA, and WV.

ReNew the New is scheduled to take place on Saturday September 14th. More information is available at www.renewthenew.org.

Virginia Tech is kicking-off their collaborative community visioning process in September. Mr. Byrd was asked to serve on the executive committee for the project alongside the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors chair, the mayors of Blacksburg and Christiansburg, and the president of Virginia Tech. This process will work to identify collaborative projects beyond traditional infrastructure initiatives the partners have participated on for several decades.

Plans are being set for the Regional Commission Annual Dinner to be held October 9th at the Floyd Center for the Arts. A mobile workshop will be held late afternoon with the dinner event scheduled for 6:00-8:00. Registration information will be distributed soon!

The Regional Commission executed a purchase agreement for new office space at 2950 Market Street in Christiansburg and the project is currently in the due diligence phase. Davenport and Associates were brought on board to serve as financial advisors. Two pathways are currently being explored, Virginia Resource Authority Pooled Financing, and a RFP to private banks. A decision on the preferring financing option will likely come to the Regional Commission at the meeting in September. Aside from financing, the building improvements process for architectural drawings and construction is being established. A grant to the US Economic Development Administration to assist with funding the pre-development costs will be submitted in the coming days.

The Regional Commission team is saying farewell to two excellent contributors, Kim Bonner and Hannah Schelthoff. Kim recently accepted a position at Virginia Tech that will enable her to focus on design services. She truly left her mark with several projects including logo development for the NRV Passenger Rail Station Authority and the NRV Recovery Ecosystem along with the region's first Commuter Assistance Strategic Plan. Hannah is expecting the arrival of her first child in September and is excited to be a full-time parent. She delivered countless high-quality maps and analytical products for our projects and led our internal Wellness Committee. The GIS position is currently advertised, and the Planner/Communications Specialist position will be advertised next week.

VII. REVIEW OF MUTUAL CONCERNS AND COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch reported Floyd Fest in the new venue was a success!

Mr. Horton reported the Literacy Volunteers on the NRV will be hosting Potter in the Park on Saturday, August 24th at Bisset Park. The City and Radford University will jointly host the Radford Community Fest on East Main Street on Saturday, August 24th.

Ms. Hockett reported the Town of Christiansburg will host Heritage Days Festival on Saturday, August 24th. They will also host the Better Together Rockin Food Truck Rodeo on Saturday, September 14th.

Ms. Covey reported New River Community College will host the five candidates for the president's position. There will be presentations the last two weeks in September and the first week of October. She will pass along details as they are finalized.

Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch reported WUVT will hold a congressional debate for the 9th District that will be available on the radio as well as online on Wednesday, August 28th.

Mr. Spangler reported the Town of Narrows will hold a bridge dedication ceremony on Saturday, August 24th.

Ms. Anderson reported the Dialogue on Race will host an event at Huckleberry Park on Saturday, August 24th.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Regional Commission FY25 Program of Work

Mr. Sharp provided an overview of the FY25 Program of Work. Mr. Sharp noted there are currently over 60 projects and more may be added during the year. He explained the process utilized by staff to keep everyone on track with project progress and project billing. Ms. Armstrong, Ms. Fancon, Ms. Owens, Ms. Straight and Ms. Wilse each highlighted several key projects included in the FY25 Program of Work.

Motion: Mr. Horton moved to approve the FY25 Program of Work for the Regional Commission. Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

B. NRV Recovery Ecosystem Update

The Regional Commission's Community Health Program continues to support and advance the work of the NRV Recovery Ecosystem. There are seven technical teams guiding the programmatic elements in close coordination with service agencies and partners. The Regional Commission supported a successful renewal proposal for FY25 funding of the NRV

Recovery Ecosystem program. Through the FY25 renewal funding, four additional service agency partners were added to support programmatic goals for the region.

Over the past year, the NRV Recovery Ecosystem successfully launched the anti-stigma campaign with postcard mailers, social media posts, blogs and website content. Training and educational outreach is also well underway with multiple small and large group trainings. Additionally, the Regional Commission recently hosted a two-day training event entitled, Demystifying Substance Use and Harm Reduction, with community participation from law enforcement, healthcare, governmental leadership, clergy, and service agency frontline staff.

C. Regional Commission Awards for 2024

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 7:57 pm.

H. Johnson, Chair
New River Valley Regional Commission