

NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION
Minutes of the Commission Meeting
held on
August 28, 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. R. Brandon, New River Community College; Mr. L. Clevinger, Town of Pulaski; Mr. B. Dawson, Town of Pulaski; Ms. T. Hockett, Town of Christiansburg; Mr. D. Horton, City of Radford; Dr. A. Joyner, Radford University; Mr. R. McCoy, Giles County; Mr. W. Seagle, Town of Dublin; Mr. J. Reeves, Pulaski County; Mx. E. Shawish, Town of Blacksburg, Mr. K. Smith, Virginia Tech Foundation; Mr. T. Spangler, Town of Narrows and Mr. B. Wheeler, Montgomery County.

VIRTUAL ATTENDEES: Ms. L. DeVito Kuchenbuch, Floyd County, remote from Bethpage, NY; Mr. A. Grafsky, Montgomery County, remote from Orlando, FL; Ms. L. Morris, Virginia Tech, remote from Blacksburg, VA.

ABSENT: Ms. S. Anderson, Town of Blacksburg, Vice-Chair; Ms. A. Chambers, Town of Rich Creek; Ms. A. Davis, Town of Pearisburg; Mr. W. Griffin, Town of Floyd; Mr. B. Jaunarena, Pulaski County; Mr. R. Lawson, Town of Pembroke; Mr. M. Maslaney, Floyd County; Mr. J. Martin, City of Radford, and Mr. P. Martin, Giles County.

Staff Attendees: Kevin Byrd, Anna Champion, Aphi Fancon, Julie Phillips, Leo Priddy, Will Shelburne, and Erika Slagel-Perry.

Other Attendees: Katie Boswell

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: Mr. Horton moved for the approval of the minutes. Ms. Hockett seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried.

III. COMMONWEALTH INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

A. Projects (Signed-off by the staff)

1. Radford University Utilities Infrastructure Improvements
2. Mountain Lake Lodge Sanitary Sewer Improvement Project

B. Regular Project Review

1. Project Introduction Mountain Valley Pipeline Boost Project

Discussion: Staff will share comments pertaining to concern for elevated noise during project operation, access to the project by local natural gas providers, and concern for degradation of pipe that has been exposed to outdoor elements for later use in project operations.

IV. PUBLIC ADDRESS

None

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

Mr. Johnson welcomed everyone back after a break in July.

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Byrd provided a summary report in the Regional Commission agenda packet. The US Economic Development Administration released a Notice of Funding Opportunity for Hurricane Helene Disaster Supplemental in June. Regional Commission staff is supporting the development of grant applications for several projects in the region. Currently, each of the projects are focused on water/waste water improvements for economic development needs.

The NRV Recovery Ecosystem recently coordinated a trip to Harrisonburg to visit their Navigation Center, a year-round overnight shelter with wrap-around services. 17 people from the NRV met with leaders in Harrisonburg to discuss their decade-plus long effort to establish the center. The NRV Recovery Ecosystem will continue to bring information to the region about how other communities in Virginia are tackling similar challenges.

The AM2 Tech Hub will be holding a conference on September 15th at the Inn at Virginia Tech from 9:00am-4:00pm. This will be in conjunction with the Future of Manufacturing Workforce Workshop that starts on the afternoon of the 15th through the 17th. Scheduling the two events adjacent to each other will help leverage registration and lab tours. The targeted audience includes industry, federal partners, faculty, and economic developers.

All Points Broadband, the internet service provider building the Pulaski County broadband project, recently came to an agreement with Appalachian Power to complete the Make-Ready phase of work. As a result, make-ready will be complete by April 2026 with network construction starting as early as September 2025.

The Montgomery County VATI 2021 project focused in the eastern portion of the county officially closed its grant funding. Customer connections are continuing to be made in the project area. The larger VATI 2022 project spanning the rest of Montgomery County and Bland County continues to make construction progress.

The NRV Passenger Rail Station Authority met on August 28th. The focus of this meeting was receiving a site construction update from the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority along with securing input from the Station Authority on the station building concept plans.

The New River Valley Housing Fund made its first investment of the program by committing local funds to the next phase of housing development at the Prices Fork School project. The availability of local funds enabled the developer to secure over \$900K in low interest loans through the recently established Governor's Workforce Housing Development program. As a result, 28 townhouses will be constructed on the rear portion of the property for families making 80% to

120% of the average median income. This project could not have occurred without the region committing to investing in the NRV Housing Fund.

ReNew the New will be held on September 6th. The Regional Commission continues to purchase gloves for all volunteers and coordinates trash bag distribution in partnership with VDOT. The Regional Commission continues to support communities impacted by Hurricane Helene. Funds currently available include Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) for Urgent Needs; GO Virginia Hurricane Helene Business Recovery program; CDBG for Disaster Recovery; and the 2025 General Assembly appropriation for Hurricane Helene/Winter Storm 2025. The Regional Commission will serve in an administrative capacity to support the General Assembly funds in partnership with VA Dept of Housing and Community Development. This approach will take administrative tasks off of each impacted county/city. As a result, the Regional Commission will be hiring a Disaster Recovery Coordinator position.

The Regional Commission welcomed two new employees. Will Shelbourne was hired to fill the position of Community Designer/Facilitation Specialist. He comes to the agency with experience in private sector engineering consulting and landscape design. Erika Slagel-Perry was hired to fill the position of Education & Training Coordinator largely supporting the NRV Recovery Ecosystem. She comes to the agency with experience in nursing and school-based health care programs.

Perhaps one of the most common questions these days is, "When will the Regional Commission move to its new location?" The building plans went through two rounds of review and nearing final approval by the Town of Christiansburg. Once approved, a RFP for construction will be issued. Through the RFP process a timeline for construction will be established and we will be able to better answer the move question.

The NRVRC Annual Dinner will be held on October 23rd at the Highlander Hotel in Radford 6:00-8:00pm. Radford University will be the host and a mobile workshop will be available in the afternoon before the dinner event.

VII. REVIEW OF MUTUAL CONCERNS AND COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Mr. Reeves reported the Pulaski Lofts housing project has opened with 20 of the 100 units already leased.

Mr. Horton reported Radford University and the City of Radford hosted Radford Community Fest which was a success with over 1,000 attendees. Dr. Joyner added that the event helps to connect Radford University students with the community.

Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch commended Radford University and Virginia Tech for seamless move-ins and start to classes.

Dr. Joyner reported that enrollment at Radford University is trending ahead of last year. It was recently announced that Radford University will host the New River Valley Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities, scheduled to open in the fall of 2026. The co-working space at the HUB is nearly full; only one office remains. Radford University faculty and students will float the New River at Bisset Park on Sunday, August 31st at 11:00am; all are welcome to join.

Mr. Law reported that the 90th annual Newport Agricultural Fair was held August 22-23.

Mr. Spangler reported that the Iron Skillet restaurant has reopened following damage sustained from Hurricane Helene.

Dr. Brandon reported that New River Community College's attendance is trending ahead of last year. The college has begun partnerships with all the school systems in the NRV to offer dual enrollment with a general studies certificate of 30 hours that can transfer to any Virginia public university. The college will be hosting a tour of campus on September 8th. The event is co-hosted by the Roanoke Blacksburg Innovation Alliance.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Onward NRV Overview

Katie Boswell, Onward NRV Executive Director, provided an overview of Onward NRV and the organization's initiatives. Onward New River Valley is the regional economic development organization that serves Virginia's New River Valley. The organization's mission is to attract and retain world-class jobs, investment, and talent in the region. Onward NRV works in close collaboration with local economic developers from the localities across the NRV, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), and other regional organizations contributing to economic development such as the Regional Commission.

Onward partners frequently with the Regional Commission on economic development initiatives. Recent examples include serving on the committee to update the Regional Economic Strategy (RES), supporting the growth of Virginia's AM² (Additive Manufacturing and Advanced Materials) Tech Hub, and collaborating on the NRV Site Advancement Strategy planning grant recently approved by GO Virginia.

B. Regional Economic Strategy Committee for FY26

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 three 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. DeVito Kuchenbuch moved to approve the 2025 Regional Economic Strategy Members. Ms. Hockett seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

C. Regional Commission Awards for 2025

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