

NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION
Minutes of the Commission Meeting
held on
November 20, 2025
4:00 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, Vice-Chair; Mr. L. Law, Giles County, Treasurer; Dr. R. Brandon, New River Community College; Mr. L. Clevinger, Town of Pulaski; Ms. A. Davis, Town of Pearisburg; Ms. E. Gibson, Virginia Tech; Ms. L. DeVito Kuchenbuch, Floyd County; Mr. A. Grafsky, Montgomery County; Mr. D. Horton, City of Radford; Mr. M. Maslaney, Floyd County; Mr. W. Seagle, Town of Dublin; Mr. K. Smith, Virginia Tech Foundation and Mr. T. Spangler, Town of Narrows.

ABSENT: Vacant, Town of Rich Creek; Mr. B. Dawson, Town of Pulaski; Mr. W. Griffin, Town of Floyd; Ms. T. Hockett, Town of Christiansburg; Dr. A. Joyner, Radford University; Mr. B. Juanarena, Pulaski County; Mr. R. Lawson, Town of Pembroke; Mr. R. McCoy, Giles County; Mr. J. Martin, City of Radford; Mr. P. Martin, Giles County; Mr. J. Reeves, Pulaski County; Mx. E. Shawish, Town of Blacksburg and Mr. B. Wheeler, Montgomery County

Staff Attendees: Kevin Byrd, Anna Champion, Patrick Ford, Zoe Hunter, Holly Lesko, Chris Owens, Julie Phillips, Christy Straight and Jennifer Wilsie.

Other Attendees: Dr. Noelle Bissell

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. Anderson 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: Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch moved for approval of the Treasurer's Reports. Mr. Horton seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried

III. COMMONWEALTH INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

A. Projects (Signed-off by the staff)

1. Virginia Tech- Proposed Unmanned Aircraft Systems Testing and Research Center

B. Regular Project Review
None

IV. PUBLIC ADDRESS
None

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

Mr. Johnson reported there will be an I-81 committee meeting on December 2nd. He will share updates at the next meeting.

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Byrd provided a summary report in the Regional Commission agenda packet. The AM2 Tech Hub is working on a statewide competitive GO Virginia grant due in December and a sizeable grant application to the US Economic Development Administration in March in pursuit of Disaster Recovery funds for consortium-based projects. The AM2 Tech Hub received a significant recognition from Southern Piedmont Technology Council by being presented with the Chair's Award for visionary leadership and commitment to the region.

The Interstate 81 Corridor Improvement Plan is being updated. Public input recently closed on November 9th. Additional projects were identified in the corridor. The most significant project for the New River Valley is the addition of a truck climbing lane north bound and south bound at the New River.

The Price's Fork Redevelopment Project received the Best Multi Family Project Award at the Governor's Housing Conference in Roanoke.

The Regional Commission continues to support communities impacted by Hurricane Helene. Patrick Ford was hired in mid-October to fill the Community Resilience Coordinator role supporting the Virginia Disaster Assistance Fund (VDAF) program. The VDAF program is open for applications. Community meetings are being coordinated for Pulaski and Montgomery counties.

The Regional Commission will have two upcoming staffing transitions in the Community Health team. Holly Lesko will be retiring in the new year following a unique tenure with the agency. Holly worked as a regional planner for numerous years and after she left the organization she served as a citizen representative for the Town of Blacksburg on the Regional Commission board having served as Chair. Over five years ago, she returned to the organization as an employee and helped establish the Community Health program at the agency. The Community Health team was critical during the region's response to COVID and now playing an instrumental role administering the NRV Recovery Ecosystem. Kinsey Weaver recently shared she will be leaving the organization in December for a position near Wilmington, NC. She will be continuing her work in substance use recovery and will be the first employee at Brunswick County helping to launch their opioid abatement program. Anna Champion was recently promoted to Program Administrator for the Community Health team. Staffing needs are being discussed given the changes in the program.

The Regional Commission staff held our annual retreat on October 30th. Sharon Scott, former CEO at the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, facilitated the session and it was focused on the 6 Types of Working Genius, an assessment and tool created by Patrick Lencioni. The entire team enjoyed learning about their working geniuses and those of their colleagues. The new language we learned that day has already taken root in our daily interactions in the agency.

VII. REVIEW OF MUTUAL CONCERNS AND COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

None

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Unhoused Population in the Region

Ms. Wilsie and Ms. Champion presented information about the unhoused population in the region. Their presentation covered data on the number of unhoused people, organizations in the region working to support this population, existing programs, and recent lessons learned from other regions. The Regional Commission intends on holding a future Mayors and Chairs meeting on this issue.

B. Set FY27 Per Capita Assessment (Dues)

The current FY26 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 adjusting the rate \$.02 to \$1.34. The Commission typically adjusts the rate every two years; however, the rate has not been adjusted for over five years.

Mr. Johnson called for approval of the FY27 Per Capita Assessment Rate to be set at \$1.34.

Motion: Mr. Horton moved for the approval of the FY27 rate at \$1.34. Mr. Maslaney seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

C. Greetings from the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions

David Blount, Executive Director of the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions (VAPDC), provided brief remarks about VAPDC. He addressed recent activities of the association and the role VAPDC plays when there is a change in administration in the Commonwealth.

D. Consider Local Legislative Agenda Support for VAPDC Funding Request to General Assembly

Mr. Byrd explained this upcoming General Assembly session the VAPDC is working to increase the state appropriation for planning districts in Virginia. The Regional Commission may choose to ask local governments to support the VAPDC General Assembly budget request in their local legislative priorities.

Currently, the New River Valley Regional Commission receives \$114,000 of unrestricted funds from the Commonwealth to assist with projects and programs in partnership with the state. The request being made by VAPDC is for \$250,000, an increase of \$136,000. This is critical

funding for the Regional Commission operations particularly for cash flow purposes. Over 90% of the funds in the budget are restricted for project deliverables. Frequently, funds for projects require 30-45 days turnaround, or projects may be delayed, therefore the agency must carry the operating cost until funds are on hand. A recent example is the agency stepping up to administer the Virginia Disaster Assistance Fund in partnership with the Commonwealth. To do this, the agency needed to hire a staff member and the agency is carrying the additional cost until reimbursement can be received, which new programs often takes three to four months, or longer. The additional resources will have an immediate impact on the scalability of the organization and provide increased responsiveness to state and local needs.

Mr. Johnson called for approval of Local Legislative Agenda Support for VAPDC Funding Request to General Assembly.

Motion: Mr. Horton moved for the approval of Local Legislative Agenda Support for VAPDC Funding Request to the General Assembly. Mr. Grafsky seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Johnson called to adjourn the meeting at 5:15 pm.

H. Johnson, Chair
New River Valley Regional Commission