

NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION
Minutes of the Commission Meeting
held on
January 28, 2021
6:00 p.m.— Zoom Meeting

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Maslaney called the meeting to order.

PRESENT (zoom): Mr. M. Maslaney, Floyd County, Chair; Mr. H. Johnson, Vice-Chair, Town of Christiansburg; Mr. L. Law, Giles County, Treasurer; Ms. S. Anderson, Town of Blacksburg; Mr. C. Bopp, Pulaski County; Mr. D. Breslau, Town of Blacksburg; Mr. L. Clevinger, Town of Pulaski; Mr. T. Clontz, Town of Pulaski; Ms. A. Covey, New River Community College; Ms. L. DeVito Kuchenbuch, Floyd County; Mr. S. Fijalkowski, Montgomery County; Ms. S. Thwaites, Town of Narrows; Mr. M. Harvey, Montgomery County; Mr. D. Horton, City of Radford; Dr. A. Joyner, Radford University; Mr. R. McCoy, Giles County; Mr. J. Martin, City of Radford; Ms. L. Morris, Virginia Tech and Ms. M. Sachs, Town of Christiansburg.

ABSENT: Mr. J Ballard, Town of Pearisburg; Mr. J. Coleman, Floyd County; Mr. W. Kantsios, Town of Rich Creek; Mr. R. Lawson, Town of Pembroke; Mr. M. Patton, Town of Floyd; Ms. C. Potter, Virginia Tech and Dr. D. Warren, Pulaski County.

Staff Attendees: Kevin Byrd, Summer Bork, Aphi Fancon, Julie Phillips and Christy Straight.
Other Attendees: Joel Herbein

II. ELECTRONIC MEETING PARTICIPATION – Commission Action

Mr. Maslaney called for approval of the electronic meeting participation policy. Section 2.2-3708.2 of the Virginia State Code, 1950, as amended, Section 3. Any public body may meet by electronic communication means without a quorum of the public body physically assembled at one location when the Governor has declared a state of emergency in accordance with § 44-146.17,

Motion: Mr. Horton moved for the approval of the policy. Ms. Sachs seconded the motion.
Action: Motion carried unanimously.

III. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes for November

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

Motion: Mr. Harvey moved for the approval of the minutes. Ms. Anderson seconded the motion.
Action: Motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Treasurer’s Report for November and December

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

Motion: Mr. Law moved for the approval of the Treasurer's Reports. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

IV. COMMONWEALTH INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

- A. Projects (Signed-off by the staff)
 - 1. Giles Health & Family funding assistance
 - 2. NRV Community Services funding assistance
- B. Regular Project Review
 - None
- C. Environmental Project Review
 - None

V. PUBLIC ADDRESS

None

VI. CHAIR'S REPORT

Mr. Maslaney shared there was an opinion article in the Roanoke Times regarding NRV vaccine distribution success. He then welcomed new Commissioners, Ms. Morris, representing Virginia Tech, and Ms. Thwaites, representing Narrows.

VII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Byrd provided a summary report in the Commission agenda packet. Staff is in the process of transferring administration of the regional Revolving Loan Fund from the NRV Development Corporation to the Regional Commission. The Economic Recovery program is underway. Sub-award contracts were executed with Onward NRV and the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board to assist with primary data collection via their industry partners. Staff is working on data collection and building an economic recovery chapter for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy update. He introduced Summer Bork, who was hired in November as the Economic Recovery Planner.

NRV Passenger Rail has two points of focus this month. First, advocate for the passage of the NRV Passenger Rail Station Authority legislation being considered by the General Assembly. House Bill 1893 Patron-Hurst, Co-Patron-Rush; Senate Bill 1212 Patron-Edwards. It passed the House this week with a vote of 93-7 in favor. A Senate committee will review the bill next week. The second point of focus is advocating for the Governor's budget amendment to include \$50M for NRV Passenger Rail expansion, part of a \$300M statewide rail initiative budget amendment.

The Business Continuity Team (BCT) changed gears rapidly at the end of December to support the New River Health District vaccine distribution initiative as it transitioned into Phase 1b. BCT staff has done a remarkable job getting all K-12 teachers/childcare workers signed up and vaccinated by

1/20. Many large employers and local government employees have been scheduled. First vaccine priority is on people aged 75+. BCT staff is currently working to improve the process for those wanting to get vaccinated to include pre-registration, scheduling and communicating appointments. In two working days Commission staff helped launch the regional vaccine call center 540-838-8222 (VACC). The call center is located at the NRV Business Center with 10 phone lines and space for 15 volunteers. Operations started on January 11th with hours from 9:00am-6:00pm seven days a week. It is staffed by volunteers with many coming through the Medical Reserve Corps. Currently, it is the only vaccine call center in the state. As a result, the NRV call center receives calls from Virginia Beach to Lee County and recently had to expand capacity to handle 100 calls per minute in-bound. As of January 18th, the call center scheduled over 3,000 vaccinations for people aged 75+.

The Business Continuity Team staff has been busy working to assist businesses, local governments and schools navigate the current COVID-19 environment to include operations advisement and vaccination efforts. The majority of school employees received their first dose of the vaccine. 92 businesses, including childcare facilities, have been vaccinated or have appointments for their employees to be vaccinated. Over 200 businesses pre-registered for the vaccine. The BCT is expanding to include an IT/database consultant and a Volunteer Coordinator. Both positions are advertised on the Commission's website.

Staff completed the procurement process for an online public engagement tool and selected the vendor, Bang the Table. This platform will be instrumental for community development projects enabling public input and communicating the status of project deliverables. It is currently being used for projects in the City of Radford and the Town of Pulaski. Staff will be posting three requests for proposals soon for the following, NRVRC Website Redesign, Photography/Videography Services, and a Wage/Compensation Study update. Mr. Byrd will be facilitating the Montgomery County Board of Supervisor's extended work session this coming Saturday.

VIII. REVIEW OF MUTUAL CONCERNS AND COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Ms. Sachs reported Delegate Rush has put language into a bill to change the way merchant sales tax is computed.

Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch reported Floyd County has located a site for their vaccine POD once vaccine supply is available to host local events. Floyd County is also in the process of upgrading their first responder communication system to digital.

Mr. Horton reported the NRV Polar Plunge will be held virtually this year.

Mr. Horton shared concern for a proposed fee at all boat launches managed by the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR).

Motion: Mr. Horton moved Mr. Byrd reach out to state elected officials to express the Commission's concern and objection to these fees.

Ms. Anderson seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Anderson reported the Town of Blacksburg recently passed their capital improvement plan.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

None

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. NRVRC SolSmart Bronze Designation and Residential Solar Presentation

Ms. Fancon provided a presentation on the Commission's efforts to secure the SolSmart Bronze designation for the agency. She shared how the initiative helped local governments receive training on inspecting solar installations and provided education on solar policies. Joel Herbein, a former Commissioner who transitioned off the board recently, shared information about his experience adding residential solar to his home.

B. NRV Revolving Loan Fund Transition Overview

Mr. Byrd explained the Executive Committee discussed committee composition and is recommending the Revolving Loan Fund committee be comprised of seven individuals with one from each county and the city along with an at-large member and the Commission Vice-Chair. County/city representatives should be either a current economic development staff person or an experienced lender in commercial banking. The at-large position could be filled by an organization partner such as the Small Business Development Center. Commissioners can send names for consideration to Mr. Byrd by February 16th.

In order to begin making new loans through the program, the Commission will need to appoint committee members at the February meeting, then staff can organize a RLF committee kick-off meeting. At this meeting the committee will review and recommend lending protocols for the Commission board to adopt. Once those protocols are in place, the RLF committee will be in position to begin making loans.

C. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee Composition

Mr. Byrd explained the proposed CEDS Committee list for 2020-21 was included in the packet.

Mr. Maslaney called for approval of the CEDS Committee list for 2020-21.

Motion: Ms. Anderson moved to approve the CEDS Committee list for 2020-21. Mr. Martin seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

D. Regional Commission Awards- Review Criteria and Process

Mr. Byrd explained the award categories, criteria and previous award recipients were included in the packet. With there being no modifications to the awards program proposed, staff will begin soliciting award nominations in February.

E. Next Meeting February 25, 2021

Mr. Maslaney called to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 pm.

M. Maslaney, Chair
New River Valley Regional Commission