

NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION
Minutes of the Commission Meeting
held on
April 22, 2021
6:00 p.m.— Hybrid Meeting via Zoom/In-person

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Maslaney, Chair, called the meeting to order.

PRESENT (in-person): Mr. M. Maslaney, Floyd County, Chair; Mr. H. Johnson, Vice-Chair, Town of Christiansburg; Mr. L. Law, Giles County, Treasurer; Ms. A. Covey, New River Community College; Ms. L. DeVito Kuchenbuch, Floyd County; Mr. S. Fijalkowski, Montgomery County; Mr. M. Harvey, Montgomery County and Mr. M. Patton, Town of Floyd.

PRESENT (zoom): Ms. S. Anderson, Town of Blacksburg; Mr. J Ballard, Town of Pearisburg; Mr. C. Bopp, Pulaski County; Mr. D. Breslau, Town of Blacksburg; Mr. D. Horton, City of Radford; Dr. A. Joyner, Radford University; Mr. J. Martin, City of Radford; Ms. L. Morris, Virginia Tech; Ms. C. Potter, Virginia Tech; Ms. M. Sachs, Town of Christiansburg and Dr. D. Warren, Pulaski County.

ABSENT: Mr. L. Clevinger, Town of Pulaski; Mr. J. Coleman, Floyd County; Mr. T. Clontz, Town of Pulaski; Mr. William Kantsios, Town of Rich Creek; Mr. R. Lawson, Town of Pembroke; Mr. R. McCoy, Giles County; and Ms. S. Thwaites, Town of Narrows.

Staff Attendees: Kevin Byrd, Julie Phillips, Elijah Sharp and Christy Straight.

Other Attendees: Jim Drader

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. Patton moved for the approval of the policy. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

III. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes for March

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

Motion: Mr. Bopp moved for the approval of the minutes. Ms. Anderson seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Treasurer’s Report for March

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

Motion: Mr. Johnson moved for the approval of the Treasurer’s Reports. Ms. Covey seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

IV. COMMONWEALTH INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

A. Projects (Signed-off by the staff)

None

B. Regular Project Review

None

C. Environmental Project Review

None

V. PUBLIC ADDRESS

None

VI. CHAIR’S REPORT

Mr. Maslaney reported the I-81 committee is scheduled to meet Wednesday, April 28th. Evaluations for the Executive Director will be emailed out on Friday, April 23rd. Please fill out and return to Mr. Maslaney by May 14th.

VII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Mr. Byrd provided a summary report in the Commission agenda packet. Federal guidance for use of American Rescue Plan funding is anticipated to be released on April 26th. Funding should be dispersed to counties, cities and towns with federal entitlement status on or about May 11th through a federal online portal. Non-entitlement towns will likely receive funding a few weeks later because it will move through the Commonwealth.

The Valley to Valley Trail planning project is scheduled to release a public survey in May. The VDOT contractor is currently working with the Salem District office on the survey content.

The New River Watershed Roundtable met on April 21st in a hybrid format for the first time in over a year at the NRV Business Center. Nicole Hersch was successful in securing grant funding for a Plant Southwest Virginia Natives plant program. The project will involve a partnership with the nonprofit Live, Work, Eat, Grow, Inc to establish a plant propagation area at a community garden managed by the organization. A guidebook on native plants will be developed and produced for distribution in the region.

The Business Continuity Team (BCT) continues to schedule vaccine appointments on behalf of the New River Health District. The automated vaccine appointment scheduling system has been

utilized extensively over the past month to help schedule clinics hosted by the Task Force and local pharmacy partners.

A press release was issued promoting completion of the Regional + Local Housing Study. A regional Zoom presentation on the study, available to anyone to participate, is being hosted by the NRV Livability Initiative partnership with the Community Foundation of the NRV. The meeting is scheduled for April 27th at 9:00am.

Kathleen Armstrong was recently hired as a Regional Planner II and will start on May 17th. She has an undergraduate degree in education from Appalachian State and a masters degree in landscape architecture from North Carolina State University with a background in experiential education focused on the natural environment.

The Berkley Group, LLC was contracted last month to prepare a Wage and Compensation Study update for Commission employees. They will be joining the May Executive Committee meeting via Zoom to give a presentation on their findings.

The Commission is in the final steps of procuring Next Gen Media to update the Commission's website.

Next month, Joe McKinney and Mirielle Burgoyne from the National Association of Development Organizations will join the board meeting to discuss federal programs.

VIII. REVIEW OF MUTUAL CONCERNS AND COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Mr. Fijalkowski reported the Office of Management and Budget is considering new definitions for Metropolitan Statistical Areas and Urbanized Areas. These changes could have impacts on federal programs, although the details are not clear at this point.

Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch reported the Floyd County golf team won the 2A state golf championship. The Pharmhouse pharmacy in Floyd County has vaccinated 1,300 people to date and the Floyd Eco Village provided space for the vaccination clinics.

Mr. Harvey reported this year's ReNew the New river clean-up event is scheduled for August 28th. The Scouts in Floyd County are organizing a clean-up on the Little River.

Mr. Horton reported Radford University's commencement exercises will take place April 29th through May 2nd and requested the Business Continuity Team offer guidance to businesses with the anticipated increase in people throughout the New River Valley.

Dr. Warren asked if there is an anticipated completion date for the I-81 bridge replacement project at Exit 105. Mr. Byrd will inquire with VDOT and follow up with information as it is available.

Dr. Joyner reported Radford University commencement will be for both the classes of 2020 and 2021 with a live stream event for remote viewing. Demolition has begun for the Highlander Hotel

with an anticipated completion date of Fall 2022. Exit COVID testing will occur for all students and faculty at the end of the semester.

Ms. Anderson reported the Town of Blacksburg will vote on their Comprehensive Plan and FY22 budget at their next meeting.

Ms. Morris reported Virginia Tech will hold 15 separate commencements at Lane Stadium from May 10th through May 16th.

Ms. Covey reported New River Community College will hold three commencements May 12th through May 14th with live streaming for remote viewing.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

None

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. FY22 VDOT Rural Transportation Work Program

Mr. Sharp explained the Virginia Department of Transportation allocates funding each year to the Regional Commission to deliver transportation planning assistance for non-urbanized areas outside the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) geography. Mr. Sharp provided a brief presentation overviewing the proposed work program.

Motion: Ms. Anderson moved to approve the Rural Transportation Work Program for FY22. Mr. Horton seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

B. Engage NRV, An online public engagement tool for projects

Ms. Straight gave a presentation on the Commission's new virtual community engagement platform, Engage NRV. With social and physical distancing in mind, the Commission developed an online collaboration tool allowing communities to interact with projects that mean the most to them. The platform offers more than simple surveys and comment submission forms. Through the variety of feedback and dialogue tools available for each project, it allows diverse community voices to engage in the decision-making process. The platform will certainly add value to the services provided to member governments.

C. FY21 Budget Amendment

Mr. Byrd explained after a deeper look into the budget with staff an amendment is not necessary at this time. The budget will be reviewed each month and if an amendment is needed it will be brought forward at a future meeting.

D. Appointment of FY22 Nominating Committee

Per the Regional Commission bylaws, the nominating committee is comprised of the Chair, Treasurer and a member at-large. Mr. Maslaney appointed Ms. Anderson to serve on the committee as the at-large member.

- E. Implementing Commonwealth of Virginia 457 Deferred Compensation Plan
Mr. Byrd explained the Virginia 457 plan will be an added benefit to employees without any additional cost to the Commission. He added that the Executive Committee unanimously supports the Commission enrolling in the program.

Motion: Mr. Patton moved to approve the Virginia 457 Deferred Compensation Plan. Mr. Harvey seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Maslaney called to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 pm.

M. Maslaney, Chair
New River Valley Regional Commission