

NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION
Minutes of the Commission Meeting
held on
August 26, 2021
6:00 p.m.— Pulaski County Innovation Center, Fairlawn

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. S. Anderson, Town of Blacksburg; Mr. J. Ballard, Town of Pearisburg; Mr. C. Bopp, Pulaski County; Mr. D. Breslau, Town of Blacksburg; Mr. L. Clevinger, Town of Pulaski; Mr. M. Harvey, Montgomery County; Mr. D. Horton, City of Radford; Ms. L. DeVito Kuchenbuch, Floyd County; Mr. R. McCoy, Giles County; Mr. J. Martin, City of Radford; Ms. L. Morris, Virginia Tech; Mr. M. Patton, Town of Floyd and Ms. M. Sachs, Town of Christiansburg.

ABSENT: Mr. T. Clontz, Town of Pulaski; Mr. J. Coleman, Floyd County; Ms. A. Covey, New River Community College; Mr. S. Fijalkowski, Montgomery County; Mr. T. Franklin, Radford University; Mr. William Kantsios, Town of Rich Creek; Mr. R. Lawson, Town of Pembroke; Ms. C. Potter, Virginia Tech and Ms. S. Thwaites, Town of Narrows and Dr. D. Warren, Pulaski County.

Staff Attendees: Ashley Briggs, Summer Bork, Kevin Byrd, Julie Phillips, Elijah Sharp, and Jennifer Wilsie.

Other Attendees: Jim Drader.

III. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes for June

Mr. Maslaney 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. Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

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

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

Motion: Mr. Horton moved for the approval of the Treasurer's Reports. Ms. Sachs seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

IV. COMMONWEALTH INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

A. Projects (Signed-off by the staff)

1. VADEQ- 2021 Section 319h Non Point Implementation Projects- Initial Request
2. FY 2019 – FY2022 Performance Partnership Grant
3. Tools for Improving protection of Wetland Resources in Virginia

B. Regular Project Review

None

C. Environmental Project Review

1. Appalachian Power Company Claytor Project No. 739 2021 Claytor Lake Drawdown Plan
2. Mountain Valley Pipeline Amendment Project
Discussion: The Commission will resubmit a previous comments to address close coordination with the Department of Environmental Quality on a daily basis during the project.

V. PUBLIC ADDRESS

None

VI. CHAIR'S REPORT

Mr. Maslaney welcomed the board back to an all in-person meeting. He reported the Commission is working on many projects during this fiscal year as is captured in the annual Program of Work later in the agenda. The mayors and chairs group met earlier in the day and discussed the New River Valley Passenger Rail Station Authority project and America Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

VII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Byrd provided a summary report in the Commission agenda packet. The US Economic Development Administration (EDA) recently released notices of funding opportunities with \$3 Billion worth of investments for communities through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The program is divided into six program areas. The Regional Commission is working with partners on two project concepts that would fall into two different funding categories. One would be in the Good Jobs Challenge to help develop a construction trades career pathway and employment market place. The other is in the Build Back Better program area and it is a focus on the automation/autonomous sectors.

Alejandra Castillo, the recently sworn in US Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development attended the NADO Summer Board Meeting. It was a great opportunity to explain the impact of EDA programs on the ground while advocating for continued investment in the economic recovery program so regions can pursue ARPA implementation funds.

The NRV Passenger Rail Station Authority organization documents were recently prepared and reviewed by legal counsel. The documents were distributed to local governments and higher education members for review. An initial discussion of the documents took place at the Mayors and Chairs regional meeting. The documents are planned to be on local government's agendas in October/November for consideration.

The ReNew the New annual fall clean-up event will take place this Saturday, August 28th.

Patrick O'Brien left his position focused on economic development at the end of July. Interviews for that position will begin next week. The Commission will begin advertising two additional positions next week for Grant Management and a Finance Technician. Both will be supporting additional work coming to the Commission largely attributed to members asking for support with their ARPA funds.

The Regional Commission annual dinner event will be held on October 28th at 6:00pm at Moon Hollow Brewing at the Old Prices Fork Elementary School. Mobile workshops will take place in the afternoon. Invitations will go out in the coming weeks.

The Regional Commission has been asked to be the grant applicant for a significant broadband project with fiber deployment from AEP to cover Bland, Montgomery and Pulaski counties. If it is funded, the Commission will serve as grant administrator for implementation. The project would include fiber to the home for all residents in those counties outside of town limits where existing internet service providers deliver at a minimum 25mbs download/3 mbs upload. The new project will be capable of providing gigabit service to customers.

VIII. REVIEW OF MUTUAL CONCERNS AND COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Mr. Maslaney reported the Town of Floyd hosted their last concert in the park for this season.

Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch reported Senator Kaine attended a groundbreaking for Habitat for Humanity and visited the Innovation Center in Floyd County.

Ms. Morris reported classes started at Virginia Tech on Monday, August 23rd and the campus is busy. There is some congestion around the ongoing capital improvement projects. Virginia Tech currently has an indoor mask mandate, and all staff are required to be vaccinated by October 1. The state has not yet issued a call for capital budget requests, which usually happens in July.

Ms. Anderson reported Senator Warner hosted an informative zoom meeting through the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions. The Montgomery County Dialogue on Race will be held Saturday, August 28th in Christiansburg.

Mr. Horton reported the City of Radford is looking forward to receiving the East Main planning report from the Regional Commission. There was a concert held at Glencoe Museum and plans for another September 18th. The literacy volunteers are hosting the Potter in the Park on Saturday, August 28th in Bissett Park.

Ms. Sachs reported Christiansburg is bringing back their Rocking Main Street series, which will be the day after Virginia Tech football games to encourage visitors to stay and explore the community for the entire weekend. The new park off Peppers Ferry Road is moving forward with a lot of grading underway currently. There is a time lapse video available to watch construction progress. Many stores and restaurants in the Market Place are opening. The town anticipates \$300K in annual tax revenue from the development. Mr. Johnson added the farmer's market has been successful in the new location at the Christiansburg Recreation Center.

Mr. Harvey thanked the Town of Christiansburg for donating wood from the new park project to the Wood Chucks who will cut it and deliver it to those in need.

Mr. Byrd reported Senator Kaine will visit the region again on Wednesday, September 1st. There will be a workforce roundtable, passenger rail discussion and a visit to the Price's Fork school project.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

None

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. Business Continuity Team Update

Ms. Briggs provided an update on the Business Continuity Team (BCT). The BCT has been supporting the public schools as they returned to full in-person instruction, the BCT continues to support them by coordinating a weekly call with school district administrators, providing N95 mask fit testing for employees, and scheduling vaccination clinics. The BCT continues vaccination efforts by visiting business in-person to offer vaccination education events and workplace vaccination clinics. The BCT has started a workshop series focused on making businesses resilient beyond COVID-19. The first two events last week focused on cybersecurity and crisis communication. In FY21, the BCT served 480 unique businesses and impacted over 57,000 jobs. This included coordinating and aiding in the full vaccination of approximately 30,000 employees.

B. Virginia Housing Grant Award to the Regional Commission

Mr. Wilsie provided an overview of the funding. The funding was targeted to Planning District Commissions throughout the state in an effort to focus on regional housing needs and production. With the completion of the Regional + Local Housing Study earlier this year, the region is well positioned to move forward on several regional strategies identified in the study. The Regional Commission plans to dedicate the first 18 months of the grant period to holding conversations regarding the creation of a Regional Housing Trust Fund (HTF).

C. FY22 Program of Work

Mr. Sharp provided an overview of the FY22 Work Program. He noted there are currently over 40 projects and more may be added during the year. He highlighted the process utilized by staff to keep everyone on track with project progress and project billing.

Motion: Mr. Horton moved to approve the FY22 Program of Work for the Regional Commission. Ms. Sachs seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

D. Rotating Elected Official Seat, Adding all Towns

Mr. Byrd explained the current rotation does not include all members. Currently, the rotation includes the counties of Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski, the City of Radford and towns of Blacksburg, Christiansburg and Pulaski. The recommendation is to add the towns of Floyd, Narrows, Pearisburg, Pembroke, Narrows and Rich Creek to the rotation.

Ms. Sachs moved to add all towns to the rotating elected official seat as presented. Mr. Horton seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

E. Next Commission Meeting- September 23rd

Mr. Maslaney called to adjourn the meeting at 7:35 pm.

M. Maslaney, Chair
New River Valley Regional Commission