

**NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION**  
**Minutes of the Commission Meeting**  
**held on**  
**March 23, 2023**  
**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. S. Fijalkowski, Montgomery County, Vice-Chair; Mr. L. Law, Giles County, Treasurer; Ms. S. Anderson, Town of Blacksburg; Ms. A. Covey, New River Community College; Mr. L. Clevinger, Town of Pulaski; Mr. M. Harvey, Montgomery County; Mr. D. Horton, City of Radford; Mr. R. McCoy, Giles County; Mr. J. Martin, City of Radford; Mr. M. Maslaney, Floyd County; Mr. M. Reis, Town of Pulaski; Mr. T. Spangler, Town of Narrows and Ms. M. Trigiani, Virginia Tech Foundation.

**ABSENT:** Mr. D. Breslau, Town of Blacksburg; Ms. C. Clark, Town of Pearisburg; Ms. L. DeVito Kuchenbuch, Floyd County; Mr. W. Griffin, Town of Floyd; Mr. R. Jones, Town of Rich Creek; Dr. A. Joyner, Radford University; Mr. R. Lawson, Town of Pembroke; Ms. L. Morris, Virginia Tech; Mr. M. Patton, Town of Floyd; Mr. J. Reeves, Pulaski County; Dr. D. Warren, Pulaski County and Mr. T Wilson, Town of Christiansburg.

Staff Attendees: Kevin Byrd, Holly Lesko, Hannah Palko, and Julie Phillips.

Other Attendees: Dr. Noelle Bissell

**II. CONSENT AGENDA**

**A. Approval of Minutes for February**

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. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried.

**B. Approval of Treasurer's Reports for February**

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

Motion: Mr. Wilson moved for approval of the Treasurer's Reports. Mr. Martin seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried.

**III. COMMONWEALTH INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS**

**A. Projects (Signed-off by the staff)**

None

**B. Regular Project Review**

None

#### **IV. PUBLIC ADDRESS**

None

#### **V. CHAIR'S REPORT**

Mr. Johnson reported the Livability in Action event held at the German Club on March 16<sup>th</sup> was a success with approximately 150 people in attendance. He asked the Board members present at the event to share take aways with the group.

#### **VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Mr. Byrd provided a summary report in the Regional Commission agenda packet. The VATI 2022 Pulaski County project is looking to schedule a public event to announce the project and drive sign-ups ahead of construction getting underway. The Montgomery/Bland project contract will be fully executed late March. Construction is still on schedule to start in the Eastern Montgomery area in the spring.

The two VATI 2023 Giles County projects should find out soon whether they were selected. Announcements may be closely linked to the state budget resolution.

Commission staff were asked to coordinate a regional Opioid Abatement Authority statewide competitive grant application on behalf of the New River Valley. Applications are due May 5<sup>th</sup> and will include region-wide program expansions along with community-specific strategies to allow for specialized programming based on community interests.

The NRV Passenger Rail Station Authority met in February and elected the following officers: Craig Meadows, Montgomery County, Chair; Michael Barber, Christiansburg, Vice-Chair; Lynsay Belshe, Virginia Tech, Secretary; and Darlene Burcham, Pulaski Town, Treasurer. The board agreed to submit a planning grant request to the Appalachian Regional Commission to support the architectural/engineering services aspect of the project. The Virginia Passenger Rail Station Authority (VPRA) also provided a project update. Engineering analysis for the 28-mile track from Roanoke to Christiansburg is being prepared currently. VPRA is planning a public update meeting in late April.

The New River Water Trail Expansion project held a contract negotiation meeting with the Dept. of Housing and Community Development (on behalf of the Appalachian Regional Commission) the first week of March. From this meeting there are several items to prepare for the funder before the project is under contract and can begin external work in earnest.

Chris Owens, the Regional Commission's newest employee, took home the Souper Bowl Championship trophy with a delicious Asian bok choy soup. She now has bragging rights until the 2024 event!

Jessica Barrett, Director of Finance, is celebrating her 5-year anniversary of combined part-time and full-time work with the Regional Commission.

The Regional Commission and Beans & Rice (local nonprofit) recently executed an agreement to transfer equipment purchased by B&R through a US Dept of Agriculture Rural Development project to support operations at Millstone Kitchen to the Regional Commission. This became a complex multi-year effort and it is now considered complete. Thanks to Jennifer Wilsie, Lee Spiegel with B&R, and Craig Barbrow with USDA-RD on navigating this protracted process.

The New River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization held a public input meeting on March 22<sup>nd</sup> for comments on a Viscoe Road study. Approximately 40 people attended the meeting held at the Pulaski County Innovation Center.

A Planning Commissioner's training event will be held April 20<sup>th</sup> at the Montgomery County Government Center. The session will focus on large-scale solar permitting and running through mock scenarios Planning Commissions may experience.

## **VII. REVIEW OF MUTUAL CONCERNS AND COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS**

Ms. Covey reported the Southwest Virginia Governor's School will relocate to the New River Community College in the fall. The Virginia Community College system has a new Chancellor, Dr. David Doré, who will visit New River Community College in early April.

Mr. Wilson reported the Christiansburg Volunteer Fire Department won a chili cookoff hosted by WFXR News on Super Bowl weekend. The winning chili will be featured at Bull & Bones in Christiansburg with proceeds from all sales going to the fire department.

Mr. Reis reported the Town of Pulaski will hold a groundbreaking ceremony for a new Food City on April 5<sup>th</sup>. There are 250-350 new housing units in varying development stages that will be located within the town. Also, two schools are undergoing renovations to be redeveloped as housing, and there will be approximately 50 new apartments in the downtown area. The Calfee School and Cultural Center will go out for construction bids in the coming weeks. The project has increased in cost to approximately \$4.5 million which caused some challenges securing funding, but all funds have been identified.

Ms. Anderson reported the Town of Blacksburg will hold a public hearing in May for a proposed housing project off Glade Road in town.

## **VIII. OLD BUSINESS**

None

## **IX. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. NRV Public Health Task Force After Action Report**

Ms. Lesko gave a presentation on the NRV Public Health Task Force After Action Report. The report was completed as an effort to capture many of the critical elements of the regional response. It is important to document how the region managed processes and funding, along with the progress that became institutionalized during the response to COVID-19. The Task Force completed this document, and in particular the timeline, to communicate the breadth

and depth of work conducted to address the pandemic which ultimately strengthened partnerships across the entire New River Valley.

B. New River Health District Update

Dr. Bissell provided an update on activities underway at the New River Health District. This included discussion on a partnership the Regional Commission and Health District are continuing through an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funded program. The project funding will serve to expand partnerships with organizations across the New River Valley which are working to support well-being in the region. This is a two-year program that includes work with the Community Foundation of the New River Valley to support the Healthy Roots Network and with Virginia Tech which will provide an evaluation of the program.

In conjunction with the ARPA funding, the Regional Commission has been asked by our local governments to facilitate a regional application for statewide competitive funds from the Opioid Abatement Authority. Ms. Lesko provided a presentation detailing the focus of this funding on opioid misuse to include prevention & education, treatment & recovery, and harm reduction. It is well documented that opioid misuse is a symptom of underlying social determinants of health and leveraging this work within the ARPA program is an opportunity to remain focused on the overarching goal of community well-being while addressing the crisis of opioid misuse.

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

---

H. Johnson, Chair  
New River Valley Regional Commission