

NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION
Minutes of the Commission Meeting
held on
April 27, 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; Ms. L. DeVito Kuchenbuch, Floyd County; Mr. M. Harvey, Montgomery County; Mr. D. Horton, City of Radford; Ms. L. Morris, Virginia Tech; Mr. J. Reeves, Pulaski County; Mr. M. Reis, Town of Pulaski and Mr. T Wilson, Town of Christiansburg.

ABSENT: Mr. D. Breslau, Town of Blacksburg; Ms. C. Clark, Town of Pearisburg; Mr. W. Griffin, Town of Floyd; Mr. R. Jones, Town of Rich Creek; Dr. A. Joyner, Radford University; Mr. R. Lawson, Town of Pembroke; Mr. R. McCoy, Giles County; Mr. J. Martin, City of Radford; Mr. M. Maslaney, Floyd County; Mr. M. Patton, Town of Floyd; Mr. T. Spangler, Town of Narrows and Ms. M. Trigiani, Virginia Tech Foundation and Dr. D. Warren, Pulaski County.

Staff Attendees: Kevin Byrd, Julie Phillips, and Elijah Sharp

II. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes for March

Mr. Johnson 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. Mr. Horton seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried, one abstention Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch.

B. Approval of Treasurer's Reports for March

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. Reis 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 Regional Commission helped coordinate a training event for local government planning commissioners. It was held April 20th with over 60 people in attendance. The Blue Ridge PBS show, Conversations with Dr. Bob Denton featuring Mr. Byrd, can be viewed at www.blueridgepbs.org. The Chandlerie, a current revolving loan recipient, will open in downtown Christiansburg on May 2nd.

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Byrd provided a summary report in the Regional Commission agenda packet. The VATI 2022 Pulaski County project held a broadband check presentation event on April 13th. This was an opportunity for media to run stories about the investment forthcoming in Pulaski County from the state, All Points Broadband, and the county. The project continues forward in the final engineering phase. The Montgomery/Bland contract was executed and is also in the final engineering phase. The Montgomery VATI 2021 project in the eastern portion of the county is anticipated to be under construction soon. Administratively, Commission staff is working through the first grant draw process and establishing the protocol to follow for future draws.

Commission staff is preparing a regional Opioid Abatement Authority statewide competitive grant application. Staff coordinated a series of seven focused conversations with local governments and service delivery partners to identify programs to include in the application. Program areas include transportation, housing, prevention/education, drug testing, and drug courts. Applications are due May 5th.

The regularly scheduled monthly NRV Passenger Rail Station Authority meeting on April 27th was used as an informational meeting for the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA) to provide a project update to community stakeholders. The NRV Station Authority also had a brief update for the community.

VDOT will be holding a public input meeting on May 16th at the Salem Civic Center starting at 4:00pm. NRV comments will focus on appreciation for passenger rail service extension and requesting a third lane on I-81 southbound between mile markers 143 and 128 since this is the only section of I-81 that the improvement plan did not include a third lane.

The most recent New River Watershed Roundtable meeting took place on April 26th at the Pulaski County Innovation Center. Meetings are open to the public and a wide range of stakeholders participate regularly.

The New River Water Trail Expansion project held a project management team kick-off meeting earlier this week. The purpose of this step is to ensure all project partners understand roles and timelines. The next steps will involve environmental review for the four boat launch sites.

The Regional Commission coordinated with local governments to host a Planning Commissioner's Training event on April 20th. The event was held at the Montgomery County Government Center and had the highest level of attendance of any previous annual training with over 60 registrants. The training focused on solar farm deployments with guest speakers from Louisa County. The group also covered process oriented content such as Roberts Rules of Order and handling public comment portions of meetings.

Summer Bork's last day with the Regional Commission will be at the end of April. Summer came on board during the pandemic as an economic recovery coordinator. Her technical expertise with data and her willingness to always lend assistance regardless of the task will be missed.

A regional conversation on the forthcoming US Economic Development Administration program on Tech Hubs will be coordinated by the Regional Commission and Onward NRV to be held Friday May 5th at the Pulaski County Innovation Center.

Annual performance evaluations for the Executive Director will be emailed out following the meeting. Completed forms should be emailed directly to Chair Johnson by May 15th.

VII. REVIEW OF MUTUAL CONCERNS AND COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Mr. Harvey reported ReNew the New will be held on August 26th and this year's event will go further down the river into West Virginia. Botetourt County is using the ReNew the New model to clean up the James River. There are grants available for the Crab Creek Beautification Project in Christiansburg. 12 applications have already been received from homeowners and are currently under review before accepting any additional applications. There are four new water quality monitors who will assist the New River Conservancy Water Watchers program. Friends of Peak Creek is celebrating 10 years and recently hired their first executive director. Friends of Claytor Lake is working to restore Miss Pulaski, a barge that is used in clean up activities.

Ms. Covey reported the Giles County Access to Community College Education (ACCE) program held an event at Walker Creek Farms to recognize students and donors.

Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch reported that Floyd Fest has been cancelled for 2023. The community will hold a children's event at the Recreation Center July 28-29.

Mr. Wilson reported Christiansburg will hold their annual Food Truck Rodeo May 6th.

Mr. Law reported the Newport Agricultural Fair will be held August 12-13 and it is the longest running agricultural fair in the state.

Mr. Horton reported the City of Radford will purchase the Foundry Site. The property will be used to recruit industrial development and expansion of the river front trail.

Mr. Reis reported the Town of Pulaski will hold the Music and Merchants Festival on May 20th. He also shared the infrastructure projects in downtown are nearly complete which includes

transitioning roads from one-way to two-way, removing traffic signals, and resurfacing due to waterline improvements.

Ms. Morris reported Virginia Tech will hold commencement on May 12th. They will be resubmitting a VDOT Smart Scale application for Perry Street upgrades.

Mr. Reeves reported Pulaski County has a strong preference to focus on education and prevention for their role in the Opioid Abatement Authority grant program.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

None

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Resolution in support of funding Interstate-81 southbound lane widening between Exits 143 and 128.

Mr. Byrd explained the resolution in support of funding Interstate-81 southbound lane widening between Exits 143 and 128 will go to the Commonwealth Transportation Board for their consideration to amend the I-81 Corridor Improvement Program.

Motion: Mr. Horton moved to approve the resolution of support. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

- B. FY24 VDOT Rural Transportation Work Program & Resolution

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 included in the meeting packet.

Motion: Mr. Horton moved to approve the Rural Transportation Work Program for FY24. Ms. Anderson seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

- C. Setting Community Development Block Grant Priorities for 2023

Mr. Byrd explained each year the Regional Commission is asked by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development to submit a list of anticipated local projects for Community Development Block Grant competitive grants within the region. The suggested 2023 priorities are based on projects listed in the packet with input from local governments across the region.

Motion: Ms. DeVito Kuchenbuch moved for the approval of the Community Development Block Grant Priorities. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion.

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Johnson called to adjourn the meeting at 7:05 pm.

H. Johnson, Chair
New River Valley Regional Commission