

Minutes of the Crater Planning District Commission meeting held on Thursday, February 25, 2021, at the Eastside Community Enhancement Center in Dinwiddie County with members participating virtually and in-person.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mark Moore, Dinwiddie County; Melissa Rollins, Surry County; March Altman, Hopewell; Sam Parham, Petersburg; Kevin Carroll, Jim Ingle, Art Warren, Chesterfield County; John Wood, Doug Smith, Colonial Heights; Woodrow Harris, William Johnson, Emporia; James Brown, Linwood Pope, Greenville County; Marlene Waymack, Steve McDonough, Prince George County.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Lewis Black, Michelle Johnson, Charles City County; Chris Winslow, Chesterfield County; Kevin Massengill, Calvin Cunningham, Dinwiddie County; Patience Bennett, Johnny Partin, Hopewell; Floyd Brown, Prince George County; Michael Drewry, Surry County; Eric Fly, Richard Douglas, Sussex County; Kenneth Miller, Bernard Howard, Petersburg.

STAFF PRESENT: Alec Brebner, Denny Morris, Martha Burton, Erin Slaughter, Judith Smith

The meeting was called to order by the chairman, Dr. Moore, who thanked those attending in person and those attending virtually.

MINUTES

Upon motion of Mr. Wood, seconded by Mr. Harris and carried, the minutes of the Commission meeting held on October 8, 2020, were approved as presented.

AFFIRMING ACTIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Upon motion of Mr. Wood, seconded by Mr. Parham and carried, the Commission affirmed all actions of the Executive Committee taken at its meeting on January 14, 2021.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Dr. Moore reported on the following three projects that have been approved by the GO Virginia Region 4 board and pending before the State board:

- 1) Virginia Restaurant & Hotel Workforce Recovery & Upskilling Program – This involves a grant of \$132,500, which is being matched with \$132,500. Dr. Moore pointed out that Chesterfield County contributed \$40,000 toward the match. He explained that there will be a centralized board where restaurant/hospitality jobs will be posted in addition to skills training and training to assist these workers to advance in the industry.
- 2) Region IV Strategic Site Development – Dr. Moore explained that this is a project from Virginia's Gateway Region and is the next step after the assessment of available sites in the region. He said 17 sites have been identified that need work in order to move them from a Tier II status to Tier IV and it is a \$1.9 million project.

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- 3) Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (FAME) - involves collaboration between Richard Bland College and the Commonwealth Center for Advanced Manufacturing. He said this project requested \$613,000, to be matched by \$353,000, and will begin to impact students from eighth grade through college in order to get more prospects into the advanced manufacturing pipeline.

Dr. Moore reiterated that this region continues to benefit from GO Virginia.

OLD BUSINESS

Request to the U. S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) to Release its Federal Interest in the Crater Commission's Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Program Award

– Mr. Brebner explained that in light of recent federal action- The Reinvigorating Lending for the Future Act, EDA is authorized to release its federal interest in certain RLF awards operated satisfactorily for seven years beyond disbursement of grant funds. He said this action will reduce the Commission's administrative burden and will allow the award funds to be used for broader economic development purposes.

Upon motion of Mr. Harris, seconded by Mr. McDonough and carried, the Commission directed staff to submit a written request and documentation to EDA to release its interest in the Commission's RLF Program.

NEW BUSINESS

Virginia Community Development Block Grant Regional Priorities – Mr. Brebner reported that staff sent surveys re: regional priorities to Virginia CDBG-eligible localities, an annual action, and four were returned. The Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development uses these in rating applications requesting Community Improvement Grants and if an application addresses a regional priority, additional points are awarded in the proposal review process. Mr. Brebner reported that the Towns of McKenney, Jarratt and Stony Creek are considering submitting applications.

Upon motion of Mr. Parham, seconded by Mr. Carroll and carried, the 2021 Crater Regional Priorities were approved as presented for submittal to the Department of Housing & Community Development.

Chesapeake Bay Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan Grant – Mr. Brebner recalled for members that the Commission is going to be working on the Chesapeake Bay Phase III Watershed Improvement Implementation planning process through 2025. He said tonight's proposed action is an annual contract renewal with a similar scope of work. He said that support on this effort is being provided by the Berkeley Group and that firm will assist in development of the Tool Box. He said the grant amount is \$58,000 and requires a 25 percent in-kind match.

Upon motion of Mr. Harris, seconded by Mr. James Brown and carried, the Commission approved the contract renewal to continue the Commission's work on the Chesapeake Bay

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Phase III Watershed Implementation planning process for \$58,000, to be matched by a 25 percent in-kind match.

APPOINTMENT OF A NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Dr. Moore appointed Kevin Massengill to chair the Nominating Committee and named the following commissioners to the Committee: Michelle Johnson, Art Warren, Doug Smith, Woodrow Harris, Lin Pope, Johnny Partin, Bernard Howard, Marlene Waymack, Melissa Rollins, Eric Fly. He said that the report of the committee will be on the Commission's June 24th agenda, and added that he has enjoyed his service as Commission Chair.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. Brebner referred members to the Financial Report for the period July 1, 2020-December 31, 2020. Referring to Page 2, he pointed out that Petersburg Area Regional Tourism received some additional funding from Colonial Heights, Dinwiddie, Hopewell and Prince George for specific television and social media advertising using CARES Act funds. He also pointed out that the Commission has had savings in several overhead categories such as travel, meeting expenses. He pointed out that pages 5 and 6 present a half-year report on the PDC's partner organizations. Referring to page 7, he said the cash balance as of December 31 was \$453,694.56. Additionally, the cash balance in the Revolving Loan Fund on December 31 was \$813,411.92.

Dr. Moore emphasized the cash balance and thanked the staff for their management of the budget. He said that the Commission has had some major costs this year, yet we have still been able to grow that number.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Brebner's full Staff Report was included under Agenda Brief Materials.

EDA Grant

Mr. Brebner informed members of a virtual meeting of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee meeting on Friday, February 26 at 10:00 a.m. He said that the Committee will hear initial reports from the consultants working on the EDA-funded COVID-19 Recovery & Economic Resiliency grant, including an economic analysis of COVID impacts on the region's economy, an overview of responses from one-on-one interviews with the region's business and community leaders, and some analysis and thinking about the region's logistics sector. From this, the project will be moving into the planning stage.

Transportation

Regarding the recent competition for transportation funding through VDOT's Smart Scale process, Mr. Brebner reported that of 13 projects submitted, no project in this planning district was funded. He discussed how this region and rural areas are disadvantaged in the project rating process. He explained how a land use classification helps other areas in the state. He specifically pointed out a crosswalk project in Emporia that was zeroed out. He said that

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the Commonwealth Transportation Board approved the VTRANS Interim Needs Assessment in January. He also highlighted the Fall Line Trail, a major trail project impacting both The RVA and Crater regions that received significant publicity when the Governor announced the alignment this fall and it was zeroed out as well.

Mr. Wood, MPO chair, reported that Mr. Svejksky had briefed the MPO this afternoon and staff will be exploring benefits and detriments associated with attempting to shift from one category to another and whether we can qualify under the land use qualification. He said that we need to be nimble if the environment at VDOT is changing.

Hazard Mitigation Plan

Mr. Brebner announced that there will be a public input session on the Hazard Mitigation Plan Update during a virtual meeting on March 9 from 5:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m. He said work has commenced on this RVA-Crater project to update the 2017 plan. He explained that there must be a current plan in place in order for localities to be eligible for pre-disaster and disaster mitigation funding.

Coastal Resilience Master Planning Process

Mr. Brebner said he serves on the steering committee for the Commonwealth's Coastal Resilience Master Planning process. He said that resilience projects will be identified through community engagement and a survey process. He said this effort is complementary to the hazard mitigation plan update work.

Proclamation – 50 Years of Service

Mr. Brebner reported that the proclamation marking the Commission's 50th Anniversary was introduced at the General Assembly by Senator Frank Ruff and Delegate Roslyn Tyler and has been approved.

COVID Vaccination Rates

Mr. Brebner said a letter had been written to Governor Northam requesting that emergency management technicians be allowed to administer the COVID-19 vaccine. He then said there has been concern about the rate of vaccinations in the Crater Health District and a letter will be sent to the Governor.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Ms. Burton reported that the Budget Conference Committee had released their report/ amendments to the 2020-2022 State Budget at 5:00 p.m. today and she said commissioners will get a report in a couple of days.

PETERSBURG AREA REGIONAL TOURISM

Ms. Burton said that in recent months much effort has gone into the development of content, principally videos that have been used both on television and on PART's Facebook page. She said staff is seeing very strong response from these, with strong increases in Facebook "friends"

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as well as in numbers of people being driven to PART's website. She added that hotel occupancy rates in the PART region are higher than Virginia's and higher than every region in Virginia except one.

OTHER COMMENTS

Mr. Harris thanked Dinwiddie County on behalf of Emporia for the assistance via the County's Call Center.

Dr. Moore said he would pass along that message. He then thanked Mr. Altman and Mr. Massengill for their work with the Crater Health District and keeping the region informed.

Ms. Waymack said that Prince George, Surry and Sussex have been working together on a call center, which she said will help vaccinations increase.

Mr. Carroll reported that there will be another large vaccination event this weekend at the Richmond Raceway. He said that vaccinations for all of Chesterfield's police and fire employees are almost done. He added that the vaccine is going to be at CVS and Walgreen's locations in the county.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.