

Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Crater Planning District Commission held on Thursday evening, March 11, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT at the Commission office: Mark Moore, Dinwiddie County; John Wood, Colonial Heights; Floyd Brown, Prince George County.

MEMBERS PRESENT via Zoom: Kevin Carroll, Chesterfield County; Woodrow Harris, Emporia; Patience Bennett, Hopewell; Sam Parham, Petersburg; Michael Drewry, Surry County.

MEMBERS PRESENT by Telephone: James Brown, Greensville County.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Michelle Johnson, Charles City County; Eric Fly, Sussex County.

STAFF PRESENT: Alec Brebner, Denny Morris, Jay Ruffa, Martha Burton, Judy Smith.

The meeting was called to order by the chairman, Dr. Moore, who extended a warm welcome and the Commission's best wishes to Floyd Brown, who has been away for health reasons.

Upon motion of Mr. Wood, seconded by Mr. James Brown and carried, the Executive Committee approved holding the meeting via Zoom.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**Letter to the Governor RE: Equitable Vaccine Distribution** – Mr. Brebner explained that he had been in conversation with two county administrators, a city manager, and Dr. Moore, and all expressed concern about the pace in getting vaccinations in the region, the amount of vaccine that has been allocated to this region, the fact that this region has experienced high infection rates, and the differences in how the health districts are organizing the vaccinations. He said the region had previously communicated with the Governor seeking authorization for emergency medical technicians to administer the vaccines.

Mr. Parham shared that today there were 700 vaccinations administered at Tabernacle Baptist Church in Petersburg; however, he still felt the letter should be sent as time is of the essence.

Mr. Carroll said that there will be a very large vaccination event in the next few days at Virginia State University. He said he would agree that the letter should be sent.

Mr. Harris said that since the last meeting, a large clinic was held at the Golden Leaf Commons in Greensville County that was organized by Wal-Mart and run for four days (Wednesday-Saturday) and 2,000 shots were administered. He added that he learned today that CVS in Emporia will be scheduling vaccinations next week. He also agreed that the letter should go to the Governor.

Mr. James Brown said that on Saturday there were no-shows and more people were called to come and get the vaccine.

Dr. Moore said earlier today there was a clinic in Dinwiddie and 250 doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine were administered. He also said that the Dinwiddie Board of Supervisors sent a letter to the Governor a couple of weeks ago.

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**March 11, 2021**

**Page Two**

Upon motion of Mr. Parham, seconded by Mr. Carroll and carried, the members agreed to have Mr. Brebner send the letter he had drafted to Governor Northam on behalf of the Commission asking that the rate of vaccinations in the region be increased. A copy of the letter is to be sent to each executive committee member on Friday, March 12.

### **2021-2022 Crater PDC Budget Planning: Employee Salary Increases**

Upon motion of Mr. Harris, seconded by Mr. Wood and carried unanimously, pursuant to Section 2.2-3711A.1 of the Code of Virginia, the executive committee voted to hold a closed session for the purpose of discussing salaries of Commission employees.

Upon motion of Mr. Wood, seconded by Mr. Carroll, with every member voting aye, the executive committee members certified that only salaries of Commission employees were discussed during the closed session.

Upon motion of Mr. Harris, seconded by Mr. Parham and carried, the executive committee recommended approval of a three percent salary increase for Commission employees in fiscal year 2021-2022, to be incorporated in the Commission budget that Mr. Brebner will propose at the May meeting.

Mr. Wood asked Mr. Brebner to convey the Commission's continuing appreciation to the staff for their work through the Pandemic and for their many years of service to the member localities.

Mr. Brebner presented a budget planning timeline that included:

<b><u>February</u></b>	<b>- Commission action on local member contributions for 2021-2022</b>
<b><u>March</u></b>	<b>- Executive Committee recommendation re: employee salary increases</b>
<b><u>May</u></b>	<b>- Executive Committee recommends Budget &amp; Work Program to Commission for adoption</b>
<b><u>June</u></b>	<b>- Commission adoption of the 2021-2022 Budget &amp; Work Program</b>

### **Facilities Modernization**

Dr. Moore recalled that he had promised Ms. Jaeckle, upon her departure from the Commission, that he would push to make improvements to this work space.

Mr. Brebner pointed out that the Commission has been in this building for approximately 30 years, and he would hope to address this effort in order to make it safer, more hospitable, and to address the technology challenges, adding that he thinks members may want to continue the option of hybrid meetings.

He then said he would hope to address the appearance and safety of the entry way, making it more hospitable for clients and a more secure space for Ms. Smith with her being able to see the door.

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**March 11, 2021**

**Page Three**

He said there is a second, smaller conference room off of his office, which needs an aesthetic boost.

He then reported that he had discussed this with Ms. Slaughter, the finance officer, and it does not appear that current or anticipated revenue would cover the work necessary so they looked at the Commission's cash reserve, which at the end of December totalled \$453,000. He then suggested that he believed \$50,000 could be pulled from the cash reserve, leaving \$403,000, which would cover three months of Commission operations. He said he views \$50,000 as the maximum; it does not mean that \$50,000 would be spent.

Dr. Moore said he sees us at a conversation starting point. The Commission is in a good fiscal position. He said his thoughts have been the entrance way, upgrades for Ms. Smith's space, carpeting there and through to the conference room.

Mr. Wood said based on Mr. Brebner's presentation, his preference would be to focus on the technological upgrades first. Next would be security, noting that it is never a good idea to have a staff member with his or her back to the entrance in this day and time.

Dr. Moore added that he has been concerned about Ms. Smith having some sort of buffer, perhaps a more traditional counter. He said he would not be opposed to having a system through which visitors would buzz in.

Mr. Parham pointed out that Petersburg had used some of its CARES Act allocation for technology upgrades. It was pointed out that PDCs did not receive any direct allocations from the CARES Act, nor are they slated to receive funding directly from the new federal legislation. Mr. Parham suggested that staff look into grant funding, as it is easy to use up \$50,000 quickly. He said he can see a need for security and technology upgrades to give Ms. Smith a buffer.

Mr. Harris said he does not disagree with what has been said. He said that Emporia had received a large amount of CARES Act money and the city was also able to do some technology upgrades. He said that perhaps when this second round of federal funding is allocated via the American Rescue Plan, the Commission could request that the member localities consider making a one-time allocation for technology upgrades in the Commission office building. Mr. Harris added that he would be willing to ask his City Council and would hope that others would do the same, which would enable these improvements without using the fund balance.

Dr. Moore reiterated that he was just trying to start the process, adding that he would have no problem asking Dinwiddie County for a contribution for technology upgrades.

Mr. Wood said he would think that technology to strengthen the ability of working/meeting virtually would be an appropriate use of COVID dollars.

Mr. Parham said he would ask Petersburg to support use of the federal COVID funds for technology upgrades that would strengthen relationship-building in the planning district.

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**March 11, 2021**

**Page Four**

Mr. Brebner thanked members for their support and said he would look in to this opportunity.

Mr. Carroll asked Mr. Brebner to put together a letter with the information and numbers. He said if each executive committee member has a letter of request, then when the money is allocated to the localities, the PDC request can go into the pipeline.

Mr. Brebner responded that the next step would be to look into technology consultants, architects, interior design firms.

Upon motion of Mr. Harris, seconded by Mr. Parham and carried, Mr. Brebner was authorized to explore options and obtain costs associated with technology upgrades and compose a letter that will be used to solicit funding from the member localities for technology upgrades.

### **Executive Director's Report**

#### **Stakeholder Interviews**

Mr. Brebner said that when he was hired, he committed that he would spend the first six months meeting and talking to a broad range of stakeholders within the region. During this period, DecideSmart, working on the EDA Resiliency Project that Mr. Morris is overseeing, has also conducted a stakeholder interview process, so he has pulled together themes, thoughts from both. He presented slides that represent these broad themes.

He said his conversations included: Commission staff; partner organization leadership; local government staff, including all of the CAOs, adding that there was a meeting with town mayors; state agency staff; elected officials; community leaders, such as chambers of commerce; public works providers. He said the DecideSmart team talked to business leaders as well as public sector leaders, in conjunction with the EDA project that is underway.

On the topic of Regionalism, he said a question is “what is our region” as there is the Planning District, MPO region, tourism region, coastal zone planning region, economic development region. Then there is Central Virginia, citing as an example the partnership between Crater and Plan RVA working together on the update of the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Regarding the relationship with Richmond, many here do not feel a bond to Richmond, questioning, for example, why we are in Region 4 in the GO Virginia initiative.

He pointed to the Pandemic, Fort Lee and the Appomattox River among regional issues.

Regarding Economic Development, issues often identified include: transportation infrastructure, workforce development, utilities infrastructure, schools.

The big issue that comes up frequently is Broadband infrastructure. The PDC needs to look at what it can do to help with broadband.

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**March 11, 2021**

**Page Five**

Mr. Brebner said there is also “soft” economic development and he identified: housing inventory, cultural arts, local restaurants, food deserts. Then he mentioned the one super regional retail center at Exit 53 in Colonial Heights-Southpark. He asked is there more the PDC could do to attract investment by promoting the region’s quality of life?

He said that regarding economic recovery and resiliency, the consultants’ interviews brought comments re: internet access, identifying best practices, generating more regional focus on strengths and weaknesses, technical/planning assistance on substantial re-use/redevelopment. An example cited was the Route 301 corridor that travels through the region- Jeff Davis Highway through Chesterfield, the Boulevard through Colonial Heights, Crater Road through Petersburg, and through Prince George, Sussex, Emporia and Greensville.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

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