

Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Crater Planning District Commission held on Thursday evening, April 8, 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; Sam Parham, Petersburg; Michelle, Johnson, Charles City County.

MEMBERS PRESENT via Zoom: Kevin Carroll, Chesterfield County; Woodrow Harris, Emporia; Patience Bennett, Hopewell; James Brown, Greensville County; Eric Fly, Sussex County.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Michael Drewry, Surry County.

STAFF PRESENT: Alec Brebner, Judy Smith.

The meeting was called to order by the chairman, Dr. Moore.

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

MINUTES

Upon motion of Mayor Parham, seconded by Mr. Floyd Brown and carried, the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on March 11, 2021, were approved as presented.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Dr. Moore reported on the most recent GO Virginia Region 4 activity. He said Mr. Jeff Gallagher, who is with VCU, presented a final report on the Planning Grant funded by GO Virginia to build an advanced pharmaceutical manufacturing cluster in the region. Mr. Gallagher has worked closely with Dr. Frank Gupton at VCU who created the "Medicines for All" program at VCU using funding from the Gates Foundation to create medicines via a continuous flow operation. This process reduces waste and cost and produces medicines in a more timely manner. A second project that came before the Region 4 Council was submitted by Virginia's Gateway Region, a request for a Planning Grant to evaluate options for water access to make Sussex County's Mega-Site more attractive to potential businesses. The grant would enable an analysis by an engineering firm that would not only look at Sussex, but also water resources in the entire area to include: the Counties of Prince George, Isle of Wight and Surry. The Region 4 Council recommended this project for funding.

Dr. Moore then asked Mayor Parham to give the committee an update on the AMPAC/Phlow project.

Mayor Parham reported that the General Assembly approved \$10 million for infrastructure upgrades. Additionally, the city is applying for grant money from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality in order to accomplish the necessary upgrades at the Poor Creek Wastewater facility. He said that Virginia's Gateway Region has been a big help to the city as this pharmaceutical cluster develops. He explained that the development of this cluster

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currently involves three companies: AMPAC, which is located in the former BI Chemical plant in the city's industrial park off of Wagner Road; and CivicaRX and Phlow, both of which will build new facilities there. At completion it is expected that there will be 800 jobs in this cluster.

Dr. Moore pointed out that this development will be major for the region and all of the localities will be impacted. There has been an award of \$354 million for four years, in the next four years the project is slated to receive \$450 million. He said VCU is a part of this also. Also, the Commonwealth Center for Advanced Manufacturing will be involved in workforce development/preparation, and John Tyler Community College is pursuing dollars to expand its pharmaceutical technician program. He said "this is the first inning of a long game" with a huge impact.

OLD BUSINESS

Fort Lee "Museum Enclave" Memorandum of Understanding – Mr. Brebner recalled for members that this project's aim is to re-open Fort Lee's 19th Street Gate off of Route 36, which would allow visitors/tour buses to directly access the Fort Lee museums without the necessity of going through security gates, while ensuring that the adjacent Fort Lee buildings remain secure, to be accomplished with fencing. Mr. Brebner said staff is looking at the Defense Communities Infrastructure Program for potential support, and he said he has discussed the possibility for a Congressional earmark with Congressman McEachin's staff.

Dr. Moore said he will be at Fort Lee on May 6 to represent the Commission and sign the Memorandum of Understanding. The other parties to the MOU are Fort Lee and the U. S. Army Center of Military History. Dr. Moore explained that this project began about a year and a half ago and he said General Fogg had seen a similar configuration at Fort Hood. He added that General Fogg wants to make this museum enclave happen.

Mayor Bennett said she wanted those present to know that she is currently an employee of Fort Lee.

Upon motion of Mr. Floyd Brown, seconded by Mayor Parham and carried, the Executive Committee approved the Commission being a party to the Memorandum of Understanding for the development of the Museum Enclave at Fort Lee.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Congressional Earmarks – Mr. Brebner said that Congressman McEachin's staff reached out to the MPO for transportation projects in the region that could be supported via Congressional earmarks. He said three have "come to the top", the Fort Lee "Museum Enclave" Project; the Fall Line Trailhead Project, which was originally the subject of two SmartScale proposals; and the I-85/I-95 Interchange Improvements project. He said staff is waiting for the Congressman's staff to send the application. He said that earlier today the MPO voted on this list.

Mayor Parham said a few months ago he met with Martha Burton who researched and provided background information on Petersburg's Appomattox River Dredging Project, and he said the

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City will be submitting that project to the Congressman tomorrow.

DRAFT Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Work Program – Mr. Brebner said what he is presenting at this meeting would be better described as work program “highlights”. He said for each work element he included staff resources allocated, amount of operating revenue, which is identified as outside revenue or local revenue, and any match required. He said PDCs are always working toward bringing in dollars to the region. He said that our expense is primarily labor. He said he would like to get feedback from executive committee members regarding how the Commission can better serve the localities, what is the Commission not doing that it needs to do, or is there something the Commission is not doing that it should be doing. He then cited, as an example, a discussion he had with Ms. Johnson and she suggested that perhaps there are plans on a shelf that just need to be moved forward. He then reviewed the work elements.

Regional Planning – this is the area to which the baseline state funds are allocated. He noted that the Legislature approved an additional \$14,000 for each PDC for fy 2021-2022.

Census Data Management – the 2020 Census data will be released. He pointed out that Mr. Ruffa is very good at mapping and this work element includes GIS support also. He also said that the Commission budget includes an additional planner position.

Civilian/Military Planning – He said interaction with and support to the region’s military installations will continue.

Solid Waste Management – He said this is a reporting function to the State that the PDC handles on behalf of its member localities. He said a complement to this effort will be marine debris management.

Resilience Planning – Mr. Brebner pointed out that he sits on a couple of steering committees related to the Commonwealth’s Coastal Resilience Master Plan development. He said Commission localities will be well-positioned to benefit from funding through the Community Flood Preparedness Fund.

Hazard Mitigation Planning – Mr. Brebner noted that the region only recently experienced a weather event, the ice storm. He reminded members that this every 5-year effort is a Richmond Regional-Crater joint effort.

Transportation – He said the Commission currently has a staff of one dedicated to transportation planning and reported that development of the Long-Range Transportation Plan is underway. He said that there is an Innovative Safety Measures Program and this PDC will get assistance after Richmond Regional. Regarding transit planning funding, this PDC will get less than any other urban area in Virginia, and we need to know how we can obtain more funding. He said urban transportation planning is the “driver” of funding, but, the Commission also handles rural transportation planning.

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Economic Development Planning – Mr. Brebner recalled that the planning district, with the exception of Chesterfield County, is a designated Economic Development District and the annual grant of \$70,000 is the seed money to develop programs and projects. Additionally, the PDC's Revolving Loan Fund is an EDA initiative and there is currently \$800,000 available to lend. He also said Petersburg Area Regional Tourism (PART) is partially funded through EDA. Regarding PART, Mr. Brebner pointed out that in the 2008-2009 timeframe PART's budget was significantly higher; however, it is currently \$173,000. He said he recently came across a tool that he believes would streamline the operation, and coincidentally, staff at the Hopewell-Prince George Chamber was also looking at it.

Procurement Technical Assistance Program – Mr. Brebner said that this initiative is funded by the U. S. Defense Logistics Agency and it assists local businesses in qualifying to compete for government contracts.

Mayor Bennett asked how this program is communicated to the small businesses in the region.

Mr. Brebner replied that he presented information about it recently at a Virginia State University workshop.

Ms. Johnson said that Ellen Templeton of the Longwood University Small Business Development Center comes to Charles City periodically and works with the economic development office to assist local businesses. She said that the SBDC works with the Procurement Center to support businesses through counseling, classes.

Dr. Moore suggested to Mayor Bennett that if she would like to have staff available in Hopewell, contact Mr. Brebner.

Special Projects-COVID-19 Economic Recovery & Resiliency Plan - this project is being funded using 2020 CARES Act funding and this planning effort is underway through consultants working through the Economic Development District's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) Committee.

Mr. Brebner then said he placed the Legislative effort and Local Assistance for Planning & Implementation under Technical Assistance. Also, he said he listed the partner organizations supported in some way by the PDC: Commonwealth Center for Advanced Logistics Systems (CCALS), Crater Regional Workforce Investment Board, Crater Small Business Development Center, Friends of the Lower Appomattox River (FOLAR), and Virginia's Gateway Region.

Mayor Parham expressed continuing concern among the region's localities about the Crater Regional Workforce Investment Board. He said there is a \$1.2 million budget and the region still is not getting the needed support. He said a forensic audit was conducted, staff changes have occurred and the Virginia Community College System has no oversight responsibility.

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He said now the region's localities are being told that they owe a reimbursement to the state because of a non-certified contractor.

Mr. Fly said that local officials met earlier in the day and there is frustration about the dysfunction, lack of state guidance, and he recommends taking the concerns directly to Governor Northam. Several localities are expressing that they will not agree to the reimbursement.

It was pointed out that the Commission manages the payroll for staff but the Workforce Investment Board is in charge and there is currently no staff.

Mr. Fly said at the meeting earlier today a letter will go back to the State asking additional questions, answering questions and requesting an audience with the Governor.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion of Mayor Parham, seconded by Mr. Floyd Brown and carried, the meeting was adjourned at 7:03 p.m.