

Central Virginia Planning District Commission

Minutes

January 20, 2022



Members Present:

Wynter Benda, City of Lynchburg (attendance via Zoom)
Sara Carter, Amherst Town (attendance via Zoom)
Roxanne Casto, Appomattox Town
Robert Hiss, Bedford County
Bruce Johannessen, Bedford Town (attendance via Zoom)
Megan Lucas, Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance (attendance via Zoom)
Dean Rodgers, Amherst County
Frank Rogers, Campbell County
Gary Shanaberger, Appomattox Town
John Sharp, Bedford County
John Spencer, Appomattox County, proxy for Susan Adams
Mayor Dwayne Tuggle, Amherst Town
Chair Treney Tweedy, Lynchburg City

Members Absent:

Jimmy Ayers, Amherst County
Richard Conner, Appomattox Town
Trevor Hipps, Appomattox County
Wayne Mitchell, Altavista Town
Mark Peake, State Senate
Russell Thurston, Brookneal Town
Bart Warner, Bedford Town
Charlie Watts, Campbell County

Staff and Others Present:

Traci Blido, Virginia Career Works
Gary Christie, CVPDC
Robin Craig, CVPDC
Ted Cole, Davenport
Jesse Bausch, Sands Anderson (attendance via Zoom)
Tonya Hengeli, CVPDC (attendance via Zoom)
Kelly Hitchcock, CVPDC (attendance via Zoom)
Ada Hunsberger, CVPDC
Rosalie Majerus, CVPDC (attendance via Zoom)
Dan Siegel, Sands Anderson (attendance via Zoom)
Drew Wade, Amherst County

Welcome

Chair Treney Tweedy called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Members and others in attendance introduced themselves. Chair Tweedy recognized the passing of Mayor Champ Nowlin, Brookneal, CVPDC Commission member since 2019. She also welcomed Gary Shanaberger, Town Manager of Altavista, Roxanne Casto, Interim Town Manager of Appomattox, and Drew Wade from the Amherst County Board of Supervisors.

Resolution of Appreciation for Rosalie H. Majerus, Deputy Director of Finance

Chair Tweedy presented the resolution and thanked Rosalie for her service. Gary Shanaberger made a motion, which was seconded by John Sharp, to pass the resolution. The vote passed unanimously. Frank Rogers thanked her for her service and said it has been a pleasure to work with her. She has been steadfast, calm, cool and collected and had a great handle on the numbers. She was always diligent in her research and quick in her response. Rosalie thanked the Commission and said she has enjoyed her time with the CVPDC. Gary Christie said they will miss Rosalie who has led the financial program for over 20 years and been a wonderful advisor.

Consideration of Any Requests for Electronic Meeting Participation

Frank Rogers made a motion, which was seconded by Gary Shanaberger, to allow Wynter Benda, Sara Carter, Bruce Johannessen and Megan Lucas to participate electronically. The motion passed unanimously.

Minutes of October 21, 2021

Upon a motion by Dean Rodgers, seconded by Sara Carter, the minutes of the October 21, 2021, meeting were approved with one abstention from John Sharp and one correction noted by Gary Christie. The spelling of John Spencer's name will be corrected in the attendance section.

Financial Report through December 31, 2021

CVPDC Deputy Director Rosalie Majerus reviewed the year-to-date financial report with the Commission. She noted that they are at 43% spent on operating expenses halfway through the year which is partially attributable to being down a planner and lower traveling expenses due to COVID. She noted that under direct project expenses, it might look like they are over budget; however, that is because she has not billed the localities for these expenses yet. She also pointed out the \$29,233 paid to CVCC CTE as a match for a Go Virginia grant. There were no questions or comments.

Discussion of CVPDC Dues for 2022-2023

Gary Christie explained that staff is recommending an increase from \$0.585 to \$0.61 per capita for counties and the city. The towns' dues would go up a flat \$55. A town's per capita cost is paid by the county. It would be an additional \$8,960 in the budget. He said it is an important revenue stream because they are not restricted on how they can spend the money. He indicated that a decision needs to be made today so the jurisdictions can set their budgets for the upcoming fiscal year.

Robert Hiss thought he remembered a multi-year plan to increase dues being proposed. Gary Christie explained that localities set their budgets once a year and this is a request for the upcoming fiscal year only. In answer to a question, he explained that it would not drop back to \$0.585 after a year though. It would be a permanent increase. In answer to a question as to how the money would be used, Gary said it is likely to go into the general cost of doing business.

Frank Rogers asked if the decision would still have to be taken to the localities and Gary Christie said that is correct. Frank asked what happens if some localities approve it and some do not. Gary said he would recommend they come back to the table and find the number on which they can all agree. There is a provision in the charter or the bylaws that if a locality does not pay its dues, it can lose services, but we do not want it to get to that point.

Frank said he thinks that an agency should always put before the elected bodies the requests that meet its needs and governing body has to weigh the merits of the request. In his line of work, he encourages elected officials to take “little bites” over time rather than incur “big bites” infrequently.

Sara Carter made a motion, which was seconded by Frank Rogers, to accept the rate change. John Sharp feels that if he votes in favor that it has the implication that he supports the rate. He pointed out that the dues naturally increase as the population increases. Bedford County is about to pass the City of Lynchburg as the largest locality in this region. They will present the request to the board and let them decide. Wynter Benda agrees that a vote implies that he endorses the proposed increase. He would like to take the request to City Council as part of its FY23 budget.

Bruce Johannessen said it seems like it is taking from two places if a town’s dues are paid by the county and the town also pays the town’s annual dues payment.

John Spencer pointed out that the PDC’s fund balance is over \$700,000 and asked if there is a mechanism to use the fund balance if needed rather than doing something permanent like increasing the dues. Gary Christie said that is the purpose of the fund balance. It is not used to build the budget; it is used at the end of the year to make up any deficit. It is an approach to not raise the dues and just use the fund balance if needed.

Sara Carter commented that she does not want to see them punishing the PDC for being good stewards of its money. We have talked about adding staff and there not being adequate operating funds to do so. Then when the PDC asks for more money, we point to the fund balance. She also pointed out that inflation was 7.4 percent last year, which is much more than the percentage of this dues increase request. If we want the PDC to do more, they must ensure they are funding its long-term financial health.

The vote passed as follows:

Ayes:	Carter, Casto, Hiss, Lucas, Rodgers, Rogers, Shanaberger, Tuggle and Tweedy	9
Noes:	Benda, Johannessen, Sharp and Spencer	4

Discussion of refinancing the 2012 bond for the Central Virginia Radio Communication Board

Gary Christie explained that the PDC holds one bond for the Radio Board, which is a committee and not a standalone organization. It borrowed \$12 million from Bank of America in 2012 and with interest

rates as they are, it is the advice of Dan Siegel with Sands Anderson and Ted Cole with Davenport to refinance. The Radio Board could save over \$225,000 over the next five years on the \$6 million balance. Ted Cole gave a presentation to the Commission noting that the loan is due to be paid off in May 2027 and is at a current fixed rate of 3.04%. Bank of America is willing to modify the fixed rate to 1.37%. It would need to close by February 11th. The loan was originally issued and would be reissued through the IDA of the Town of Amherst, and they are prepared to have a meeting on February 7th.

Ted Cole presented the body with two scenarios. The first scenario would require \$55,000 in issuance costs to be paid up front at closing. The net savings is estimated to be \$226,514 with that scenario. The second scenario would add in the \$55,000 in issuance costs and would have an estimated net savings of \$224,773. Mr. Cole clarified that the rate is locked until February 11th. He mentioned that the IDA is willing to meet on February 9th if for some reason like weather it is unable to meet on February 7th.

Dean Rodgers asked for clarification that the savings for paying \$55,000 up front will only be around \$2,000 and Mr. Cole said that is correct. Mr. Christie said the small savings difference is the reason staff is making the recommendation for the second scenario. He clarified that the three jurisdictions that would have to pay the \$55,000 are Amherst County, Bedford County and the City of Lynchburg. It was the consensus of the Commission members that scenario two which rolls the up-front costs into the principle was the best option. Frank Rogers made a motion to accept scenario two and adopt the amended resolution as presented. The motion was seconded by John Sharp, and it passed by the following vote. (A roll call vote was taken.)

Ayes:	Spencer, Rodgers, Shanaberger, Tuggle, Rogers, Hiss, Sharp, Lucas, Casto, Carter, Johannessen, Benda, Tweedy	13
Noes:		0

Rural Transportation Work Program

Gary Christie explained that VDOT provides state money for transportation projects in rural areas. That area is outside of the MPO area. The PDC is asked to match that money and each year we give VDOT a work plan.

Ada Hunsberger gave a presentation to the Commission. She gave an overview of a requested amendment to the current rural work plan. The PDC has been offered a technical assistance program by the University of Virginia through the Virginia Local Technical Program. It would help identify countermeasures for low-cost safety improvements, which could be signage and back plates for lights. UVA would hire a consultant at no cost to the localities. She mentioned that the urbanized areas will not be left out; however, they are here to talk about the rural work plan today.

Ada explained that currently there is a rural flood impact study as part of the rural work plan. It was a proposed project to work with localities, Department of Emergency Management and VDOT to evaluate potential need for emergency vehicle rerouting and consideration of mitigation projects in the future. Since the PDC has been down a planner, they have not been able to start this project. Staff is proposing to replace this project with the rural countermeasure project. She showed the Commission the current budget and the proposed budget and further commented that if this change is not made, it will be difficult for staff to expend these funds by the end of the fiscal year. These funds are not allowed to be rolled over and if not used will be lost. Staff believes this is a meaningful project.

Dean Rodgers asked what the deliverable would be at the end of the project. Ada said they would get a recommendation list of low-cost improvements. John Sharp mentioned that he could support this amendment but would like to know if this program could help VDOT identify areas where passing lanes could be put closed in front of working farms. At the least, he would like to see signage installed. There was a fatality in Bedford County recently and yesterday a farmer almost had a very serious accident. Ada speculated that those type of improvements would fall under access management, but staff could coordinate with Bedford County to investigate the issue. Ada commented that the Transportation Technical Committee has recommended the adoption of this amendment.

Dean Rodgers wanted to know if VDOT had weighed in on this and Ada said the Local Technical Assistance Program is funded by VDOT and that VDOT representatives have also helped staff develop the rural work program. Frank Rogers made a motion to amend the 2021-2022 rural work program. The motion was seconded by Robert Hiss and passed unanimously.

The discussion moved to the FY23 rural work program. Gary Christie mentioned that this program gets sent in at the end of the March. Ada explained that it would stay the same except for adding back in the rural flood impact program. The deliverable for the rural flood impact study would be recommendations for improvements to vulnerable roads. She said the roads that flood easily are not well identified on a regional scale. Dean Rodgers said the emergency response teams know where those low-lying areas and how to avoid them better than someone they are going to pay. Ada said there would be coordination between emergency managers and planners and there is not currently a good overlap between those organizations on a regional level. He asked if VDOT has asked for this information. Ada said it has not, but this is building off the current hazard mitigation plan. Kelly Hitchcock explained although areas may know where their flooding issues are, some of the areas have culvert under sizing. This would be a way to identify those areas and find other funding sources other than those highly competitive VDOT maintenance dollars. Frank Rogers made a motion to approve the FY23 rural work program as presented. The motion was seconded by Robert Hiss and passed unanimously.

2022 Regional Legislative Priorities

Gary Christie suggested to Chair Tweedy that they move on to the presentation by Traci Blido and there was no objection.

Update on Regional Workforce Development

Gary Christie explained that the topic of workforce development came up at the Executive Committee and Traci Blido is here to make a presentation regarding what is going on with the Workforce Board. She is relatively new and has brought a new energy and perspective.

Traci gave them an overview of the Workforce Board, which is charged with overseeing and implementing workforce development initiatives and activities throughout the Virginia Career Works – Central Region. The Central Virginia Workforce Development Board (WDB) is the designated regional convener and administrative entity that coordinates workforce training and career services through federal funding from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Dean Rodgers mentioned that Drew Wade will definitely replace Jennifer Moore as the elected official representing Amherst County on the Workforce Development Council.

Traci explained that all of their partner organizations can be found at their location on Odd Fellows Road. She also mentioned that they work with over 50 local businesses. There is a Business Services Team that meets monthly and is made up of several WIOA agency representatives. The team works on

both short-term and long-term solutions to issues businesses are having with employment. She remarked that she will be working with each locality's economic developers about opportunities to co-brand in order to spotlight the locality's businesses.

Traci also spotlighted the Jubilee STEM Center which has a mechatronics program at its center. Belvac and BWXT provided the machinery. There are volunteers to work with youth that might not otherwise know about these types of opportunities, and it is really a great success story.

She went over some statistics of the number of people served in 2019, 2020 and 2021. There has been a 50% decrease in the number of people coming to the center since 2021. However, they know there are still many people not working so they are working hard to get those people the services they need. She reminded them to send people their way that might need retraining to see if they qualify for the federal funding available. Frank Rogers asked what is meant by the term "residents served," and Traci said it is all types of career services.

She also highlighted that wages have gone up 5.1% over the last four quarters. She remarked that the cost of living here is still low compared to the national average and she would like them to tell that story as well. It is very attractive to businesses that they are trying to attract. She mentioned that it is great that manufacturing is in our top three industries, which cannot be said about every region. She closed by saying that they are working hard to identify youth and adults that need their help and are also working hard to help match businesses with employees.

Frank Rogers asked how they work with CVCC's CTE program. Traci said there are representatives from the WDB and CVCC on each other's boards and committees. She talks to Dr. Capps from CVCC almost every week either through email or on the phone. As far as the CTE program is concerned, they are having some trouble getting people to register even though the businesses are very plugged in and supportive. She said there are counselors in the high schools that tell the students about the program. There are also three VCW Career Navigators that are doing tremendous things.

Dean Rodgers mentioned that Amherst recently had a presentation from Randy Dunton at Legacy Education Center. Although it might be a worthwhile program, it is \$9,000 a student. Traci said they do similar things in terms of preparing students; however, he has the passion and they wanted to partner with him and not compete with him. They are helping by providing wraparound services, which in turn offsets the cost of the person attending the Legacy Education Center.

Robert Hiss asked how VCW helps support agricultural jobs, Traci said that the ones that are in Future Farmers of America are the ones that manufacturers want because they know how to use tools. She said traditional farming is not one of high demand fields that is on the list. Dean Rodgers would like her to contact him as they are looking at an agricultural complex. Traci acknowledged that there are probably parts of agriculture that are high paying and high tech and in high demand such as using heavy equipment. Robert Hiss pointed out that farms are really small businesses that provides an essential service to our way of life, and they need help filling jobs.

Traci mentioned that they are in need of mentors and the commitment is only one hour per month. She pointed out that VCW also has paid internships available, so possibly certain eligible youth could do their internship at a farm.

Frank Rogers asked Traci if they connect employers with potential employees. She said they do several things and gave a recent example of paying for an employee to go to training to learn how to use a particular piece of equipment so the business could get a contract. They also help with marketing and writing job descriptions as other examples. Chair Tweedy asked the members to describe what they are hearing from their local businesses. Robert Hiss said it has been drilled into a couple of generations of students at the high school level that they must go to a four-year college. Because of that, money has been diverted away from trade skills and now there is a dearth of young adults that have those types of skills.

Dean Rodgers mentioned that Amherst's new high school that was just approved will have a good deal of CTE space. They are partnering with Nelson County where there is a John Deere dealership and there will be an opportunity for students to learn how to work on hydraulics and other heavy equipment. Traci said that she is hearing that there is a high demand for students to get into program like auto mechanics to the point that they are having to turn people away, so that tells her that it is changing, and students are hearing that trade industries have good jobs available. Dean would suggest that the high school counselors should be shown the types of programs that are available now or will be available in the near future, so they can tell students about other opportunities other than four-year college degrees. Bruce Johannessen says that he has a good handle of what employers want and what they want are young people with really good vocational skills. Chair Tweedy commented that it is a matter of coordination and collaboration as the drive and motivation of the students. This table (the PDC) can drive the conversations that everyone is talking about here.

2022 Regional Legislative Priorities

John Sharp asked about the 2022 Regional Legislative Priorities. He pointed out that by the time they meet again, the General Assembly will be done. Gary Christie explained that what the Executive Committee recommended has been sent to the General Assembly. He further explained that the commission needs to ratify what they proposed, and members can add anything else they would like him to send to the General Assembly. Robert Hiss made a motion to ratify the 2022 Regional Legislative Priorities, which was seconded by Gary Shanaberger. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjourn

With no further business, Chair Tweedy adjourned the meeting at 6:30 p.m.