

Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC)



July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011

Annual Report

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Message from the Chairman



Once again, this has been a year of extraordinary challenges for this region and its local governments. Like so many entities and organizations within this region, the Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC) has continued to hold its own during the current economic downturn. Many steps were taken this past year to help continue to position the organization to get through these tough times. The organization has continued to perform essential services for our members that are aimed at one purpose – to make the region a better place for all who live and work here.

In the past fiscal year due to the lack of economic development program funding, the CRC had to reduce its initiatives geared toward marketing and economic development. However, the Council strived to continue to market and promote the region as the budgetary limitations allowed.

The Council's Planning Operation continued to perform vital services for member localities. Planning Staff have continued to be a resource for the region and its members by providing services such as grant writing and grant/project administration, development of Comprehensive Plans, regional planning initiatives or any of the other services as requested. This past year, CRC staff assisted members with grant writing services on 14 grant applications. As of June 30, 2011, approximately \$1.2 million in grant funds had been awarded, with \$2.3 million still pending. One noteworthy regional service provided by the Council during FY 10-11 was GIS Redistricting Mapping services to all interested localities within the region, free of charge (see Highlight #2 within this Annual Report).

With FY 10-11 being my last term as Chairman of the CRC, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all member Representatives of the Council for their commitment and continued service. I would also like to thank staff for their dedication and continued professionalism. Members are extremely supportive of the current staff and their abilities to provide professional services to the region served by the Council. To our FY 10-11 partners; Counties of Amelia, Buckingham, Charlotte, Lunenburg and Prince Edward, I want to thank you for your assistance, cooperation and support in FY 10-11 and look forward to the return of Cumberland County in FY 11-12.

Sincerely,



Gary Walker, Chairman (Charlotte County CRC Representative)

Council Leadership

The Commonwealth Regional Council is one of twenty-one regional Planning District Commissions serving all Virginia regions. The purpose of Planning District Commissions, as set out in the Code of Virginia, Section 15.2-4207, is to encourage and facilitate local government cooperation and state-local cooperation in addressing, on a regional basis, problems of greater than local significance. In addition to planning, the Council also markets the region for economic development, assists companies looking to locate or expand their businesses in the region, and promotes recreational, cultural, and historical tourism in the region (as budgetary limitations allow).

During FY 10-11, the Commonwealth Regional Council served the Counties of Amelia, Buckingham, Charlotte, Lunenburg, and Prince Edward. The Council is comprised of an appointed Elected Representatives from the governing board of each participating locality. That Representative represents the interest of the member locality in all business brought before the Council. Therefore, that Representative has a vote as to the annual work program/policies of the organization.

	<u>Representative</u>	<u>Alternate</u>
Amelia County	Ellsworth J. Bennett <i>(Secretary)</i>	Ralph Whitaker, Jr.
Buckingham County	F.D. “Danny” LeSueur	VACANT
Charlotte County	Gary Walker <i>(Chairman/Treasurer)</i>	Haywood Hamlet
Lunenburg County	David Wingold	T. Wayne Hoover
Prince Edward County	William G. Fore, Jr. <i>(Vice-Chairman)</i>	Don Gantt

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

**The counties of Amelia | Buckingham | Charlotte | Lunenburg |
Prince Edward |**

**Statement of Revenues and Expenditures
Year Ended June 30, 2011**

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>
<u>REVENUES:</u>		
Local Member Investment (5 Counties)	\$ 78,500	\$ 78,500
Project Funding	\$195,600	\$165,275
Other Funding	\$ 63,000	\$ 79,539
TOTAL REVENUES	\$337,100	\$323,314
<u>EXPENSES:</u>		
Office Operations	\$ 65,005	\$ 57,295
Office Equipment	\$ 4,600	\$ 0
Auto/Staff Travel	\$ 4,000	\$ 4,423
Meetings/Memberships	\$ 8,400	\$ 5,002
Collateral Materials	\$ 1,000	\$ 254
Personnel Costs	\$314,180	\$248,843
Marketing	\$ 0	\$ 0
Local Relations	\$ 2,100	\$ 3,502
Other Program Costs	\$ 0	\$ 999
Depreciation	\$ 0	\$ 8,572
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$399,285	\$328,890
 BEGINNING CASH RESERVES 7/1/10 (FY 09-10 Audit)		 \$463,506
 ENDING CASH RESERVES 6/30/11 (FY 10-11 Audit)		 \$466,375

**Commonwealth Regional Council
Planning Activities
July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011**

**Providing Regional Governmental Services – Grant Writing Services
(Construction/Planning)**

- **Town of Kenbridge USDA Application – Sanitary Collection System Rehabilitation & Replacement**
Total Budget - \$2,523,426
CRC Staff assisted the Town of Kenbridge in the completion of an United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) application requesting funds to undertake rehabilitation and replacement construction activities for the Town’s sanitary collection system.

- **Buckingham County Rescue Squad RSAF Application**
Total Budget - \$30,127.92
CRC Staff assisted the Buckingham County Volunteer Rescue Squad in applying for an e-grant from the Rescue Squad Assistance Grant Fund (RSAF) to purchase 8 Panasonic Toughbooks (laptops) and 8 Backboards. The Toughbooks will be used to submit electronic call sheets in the field.

- **Crossroads “Smart Beginnings” Grant Application**
Total Budget - \$167,500
CRC Staff assisted Crossroads with writing a grant application to the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) for a Smart Beginnings 1 program to serve Planning District 14. This project would provide early learning programs for children between the ages of 0-5 years.

- **Town of Victoria FY 11 VDOT Enhancement Application (Streetscape-Phase IB)**
Total Budget - \$702,730
CRC Staff assisted the Town of Victoria in the completion of a FY 11 VDOT Enhancement Application to continue streetscapes improvements in the downtown area. Improvements include sidewalks, crosswalks, curb and gutter upgrades, landscaping, benches and traffic calming measures. This application was for funds to complete Phase IB construction.

- **Buckingham County FY 11 VDOT Enhancement Application (Streetscape-Phase II)**
Total Budget - \$413,895
CRC Staff assisted Buckingham County in the completion of a FY 11 VDOT Enhancement Application to continue streetscapes improvements in the Buckingham County Courthouse Village. Improvements include sidewalks, crosswalks, curb and

gutter upgrades, landscaping, benches and traffic calming measures. This application was for funds to complete Phase II construction.

- **Robert Russa Moton Museum FY 11 VDOT Enhancement Application (Parking Lot With Bus Pull-Off)**
Total Budget - \$247,173
CRC Staff assisted the Robert Russa Moton Museum in the completion of a FY 11 VDOT Enhancement Application to construct an approximately 100,000 SF parking lot on-site at the Robert Russa Moton Museum located in the Town of Farmville. The Parking Lot would also include an area designated for buses.
- **Town of Dillwyn FY 11 VDOT Enhancement Application (Streetscape – Phase IV)**
Total Budget - \$114,452
CRC Staff assisted the Town of Dillwyn in the completion of a FY 11 VDOT Enhancement Application to undertake streetscape improvements in the downtown area. Improvements include sidewalks, crosswalks, curb and gutter upgrades, landscaping, benches, and traffic calming measures. This application was for funds to complete Phase IV construction.
- **Town of Victoria FY 11 DCR Recreational Trails Grant Application**
Total Budget - \$69,000
CRC Staff assisted the Town of Victoria in the completion of a FY 11 Department of Conservation (DCR) Recreational Trails Grant Application to construct a recreational trail just outside the Town. The trail would run from Twin Cemetery Road at a point just east of the airport, and connect to a recently completed trail at Twin Cemetery Road into the Victoria Railroad Park.
- **Charlotte County Rescue Squad RSAF Application**
Total Budget - \$507,132
CRC Staff assisted the Charlotte County Volunteer Rescue Squad in applying for an e-grant from the Rescue Squad Assistance Fund (RSAF) to purchase 9 AED 12-Leads and 2 Rescue Squad Ambulances.
- **Prince Edward County CDBG Construction Application – Granite Falls Workforce Training Center Project**
Total Budget - \$2,700,000
CRC Staff assisted Prince Edward County in applying for grant funds for construction activities and purchase of equipment for a Workforce Training Center (with the proposed Granite Falls Hotel and Conference Center). Once constructed, the Workforce Training Center through the direction of Southside Virginia Community College (SVCC) would provide training for approximately 756 persons annually from Prince Edward County and the surrounding communities.

- **Town of Victoria Housing Rehabilitation CDBG Planning Grant Application**
 Total Budget - \$27,000
 CRC Staff assisted the Town of Victoria in applying for planning grant funds to identify needed housing improvements within the town.
- **Lunenburg County/STEPS CDBG Planning Grant Application**
 Total Budget - \$30,000
 CRC Staff assisted Lunenburg County in applying for planning grant funds to identify a feasible plan for the expansion of the STEPS Manufacturing Facility in the Town of Victoria. Options include the renovation and/or addition to the STEPS Facility in the Town of Victoria. The goal of STEPS is to serve the disabled of the region and provide employment, job training, and wages in a manufacturing setting.
- **Virginia's Retreat Tobacco Commission Special Projects Pre-Application – Virginia's Retreat Overall Strategic Plan and Organizational Expansion**
 Budget - \$343,000
 CRC Staff assisted Virginia's Retreat in putting together a pre-application for Tobacco Commission Special Project Grant funds. Virginia's Retreat requested funding for the development of an Overall Strategic Plan, the development of an Overall Marketing Plan focused on the period commemorating the Sesquicentennial of the Civil War, and start-up monies to hire an Executive Director to continue to create and oversee the region's tourism product.
- **Virginia's Retreat Tobacco Commission Special Projects Application – Virginia's Retreat Overall Strategic Plan and Organizational Expansion**
 Budget - \$569,500
 CRC Staff are currently assisting Virginia's Retreat in putting together a final e-application for Tobacco Commission Special Project Grant funds. Virginia's Retreat is requesting funding for the development of an Overall Strategic Plan, the development of an Overall Marketing Plan focused on the period commemorating the Sesquicentennial of the Civil War, and start-up monies to hire an Executive Director to continue to create and oversee the region's tourism product. The deadline for submission is July 15, 2011.

Providing Regional Governmental Services - Project Administration
(Construction Projects)

- **Buckingham County VDOT Enhancement Project – Courthouse Village Streetscape (Phase I)**
Budget - \$276,555
CRC Staff continued to assist the County of Buckingham in the implementation of Phase I of its VDOT Enhancement Project which is centered in the Courthouse Village. Construction activities include sidewalks, period street lighting, signage, and landscaping.
- **Town of Dillwyn VDOT Enhancement Project (Phase III)**
Total Budget - \$200,352
CRC Staff assisted the Town of Dillwyn with the completion of Phase III of its VDOT Enhancement Project. This project involved the following improvements within the downtown area U.S. Highway 15 between Route 1003 and Conner Street: decorative street lighting, new and replacement sidewalks, handicap ramps, railings in two locations, and trees.
- **Drakes Branch Southern Rivers Wastewater System Improvements Project**
Total Budget - \$502,538
CRC Staff continued to assist the Town with the administration of its Southern Rivers Grant funded project for improvements to its existing wastewater system. Activities include the installation of emergency pump connections at three pump stations; purchase of a portable trailer mounted generator and sewage pump; replacement of various manholes; replacement of existing sewer line; and purchase of sewer inspection equipment.
- **Town of Victoria VDOT Enhancement Streetscape Project (Phase IA)**
Total Budget - \$728,750
CRC Staff continued to assist the Town of Victoria in the implementation of this project VDOT Enhancement Streetscape Project. This project includes the following construction activities within a two-block area along Main Street in downtown Victoria: sidewalks, crosswalks, curb and gutter upgrades, landscaping, benches and traffic calming measures. The main objective is to connect downtown to the Victoria Railroad Park.
- **Town of Burkeville VDOT Enhancement Norfolk Southern Train Station Restoration (Phase IV)**
Total Budget - \$458,000
CRC Staff assisted the Town of Burkeville in the administrative close-out of Phase IV of this VDOT Enhancement funded project for the Train Station. The goal of the restoration was to preserve the Train Station for use as a railroad museum,

community center, bus stop, tourist rest stop, park & ride, and stop for bicyclists along US Route 1.

- **Robert Russa Moton Museum Tobacco Grant (Facility Renovations)**
Total Budget - \$116,000
CRC Staff assisted the Robert Russa Moton Museum with the administrative close-out of this Tobacco Grant funded project. The Moton Museum installed 10,000 SF feet of insulation in the facility's attic; restored/repaired the window systems; and installed UV windows for thermal effects.
- **Town of Phenix SERCAP Well Project**
Total Budget - \$74,300
CRC Staff assisted the Town of Phenix in the completion of its Municipal Well Project funded by the Southeast Rural Community Action Program (SERCAP). This project involved the completion of a new town well and connection of said well to the Town's water system.
- **CRC/DMME EECBG Post Award Coordination (Regional)**
Total Budget - \$28,320
CRC Staff are assisting the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) with coordination activities relating to the Energy Efficiency Community Block Grant (EECBG) program within Planning District 14. Activities include coordinate with DMME and "flow down" of ARRA Requirements to block grant recipients; and collection information needed from recipients by project, format, and report to DMME and DOE, and perform sub-recipient monitoring and reporting on DMME's behalf. EECBG funding is for construction activities.
- **Prince Edward County EECBG Project – STEPS Manufacturing Facility**
Total Budget - \$2,019,492
CRC Staff is assisting Prince Edward County in the administration of its Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) which involves the installation of a new HVAC system in the STEPS Manufacturing Facility located in the Town of Farmville.
- **Town of Victoria Safe Routes to School Project**
Total Budget - \$107,000
CRC Staff are assisting the Town of Victoria in the administration of this VDOT funded project. This project includes physical improvements in the vicinity of Victoria Elementary School. These improvements include new and improved sidewalks, curbing, new and improved crosswalks, and signage.

**Providing Regional Governmental Services - Project Administration
(Planning Projects)**

- **Amelia County CDBG Telecommunication Planning Grant (Implementation)**

Total Budget - \$43,000

The CRC is assisting the County of Amelia in the implementation of its awarded CDBG Telecommunications Planning Grant. The grant funds received will help fund the development of a complete Telecommunications Plan for the County. The ultimate goal of this Plan is to identify present and future needs (including Broadband) in Amelia County and how best to address those needs. It is expected that this phase of planning will lead to a CDBG Construction funds application.

- **Buckingham County/Town of Dillwyn Regional Water Supply Plan
(Phase I Amended and Phase II)**

Total Budget - \$10,000

CRC staff assisted the County and Town in the completion of Phase I Amended activities of the Virginia State Water Control Board Water Supply Planning Regulations. Phase I Amended activities included water demand management information and drought response and contingency plan.

CRC staff have also begun assisting the County and Town with Phase II activities of the Virginia State Water Control Board Water Supply Planning Regulations. Phase II activities include existing resource information, projected water demand information, submission of final water supply plan to DEQ and public information meetings and public hearings.

- **Town of Drakes Branch Comprehensive Plan Amendment**

Total Budget - \$16,000

CRC Staff assisted the Town in the completion of a Comprehensive Plan Amendment. The Town formally adopted the Comprehensive Plan, along with the attached Charlotte County Comprehensive Plan in July 2010.

- **Lunenburg/Kenbridge/Victoria Regional Water Supply Plan (Phase III and Phase IV)**

Total Budget - \$2,000

CRC staff assisted the County and three Towns in the completion of Phase III activities of the Virginia State Water Control Board Water Supply Planning Regulations. Phase III activities included water demand management information and drought response and contingency plan.

CRC staff also began assisting the County and Town with Phase IV activities of the Virginia State Water Control Board Water Supply Planning Regulations. Phase IV activities include existing resource information, projected water demand information, submission of final water supply plan to DEQ and public information meetings and public hearings.

- **Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan (Planning District #14) – Update**

Total Budget - \$75,000

The CRC is continues to undertake an update of the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan for Planning District 14. The Plan will identify ways to make the region safer from hazards. As part of the Plan Update, Amelia County will be incorporated into the Regional Plan. Adoption is anticipated for Fall, 2011. Updating the Plan will keep the localities in Planning District 14 in compliance with the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 which requires that localities maintain and update a local Hazard Mitigation Plan to remain eligible for certain type of FEMA funding.

- **Town of Victoria VCDBG Housing Rehabilitation Planning Grant (Preliminary)**

Total Budget - \$3,000

CRC Staff assisted the Town of Victoria with the completion of preliminary planning activities relating to the identification of needed housing improvements within the Town. Preliminary activities included 1) completion of an initial public meeting, 2) completion of an initial management team meeting, 3) completion of a preliminary housing assessment, 4) completion of a preliminary infrastructure assessment, 5) completion of neighborhood surveys, and 6) completion of a second management team meeting.

- **Lunenburg/STEPS, Inc. VCDBG Planning Grant (Preliminary)**

Total Budget - \$3,000

CRC Staff assisted Lunenburg County with the completion of preliminary planning activities relating to renovation/addition to the STEPS Manufacturing Facilities located in the Town of Victoria. Preliminary activities included 1) completion of an initial public meeting, 2) completion of an initial management team meeting, 3) development of a draft RFP for professional services, 4) inventory and survey of other sheltered workshop facilities in the region, 5) completion of a second management team meeting.

- **Town of Victoria VCDBG Housing Rehabilitation Planning Grant (Implementation)**

Total Budget - \$27,000

CRC Staff are currently assisting the Town of Victoria with the implementation of its funded VCDBG Housing Rehabilitation Planning Grant activities. The grant funds will be used to finalize planning documents relating to the identification of housing improvements within select areas of town. It is expected that this phase of planning will lead to a CDBG Construction funds application.

**Commonwealth Regional Council
Regional Governmental Activities
July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011**

Providing Regional Governmental Services

- Commonwealth Regional Council Computer Network/Web-Site – Ongoing
www.virginiasheartland.org
- Commonwealth Regional Council Newsletter – Semi-Annually
- Commonwealth Regional Council Annual Report - Annually
During the months of February, March and April 2011, Staff appeared before every Board of Supervisors and Town Councils located within the region to personally present the FY 09-10 Annual Report and answer questions
- Commonwealth Regional Council Chief Administrative Officer’s Committee Meeting – Monthly (sharing/networking opportunity)
- Regional Geographic Information System (GIS) Program – Ongoing
- Commonwealth Regional Council U.S.G.S. Mapping Services – Ongoing
- Commonwealth Regional Council Statistical Information Services – Ongoing
- Commonwealth Regional Council Grant Clearinghouse Program - Ongoing
- Commonwealth Intergovernmental Review Process (CIRPS) – Ongoing
- Commonwealth Regional Council Rural Transportation Planning Program - Annually

Providing Regional Services Approach

- CRC Letters of Support
 - Town of Victoria - Letter of Support for the Victoria Bike Belong Grant Application
 - Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) – Letter of Support for VECF Grant Application for “Smart Beginnings”
- Workshops/Roundtables
 - Congressman Robert Hurt Roundtable – February 25, 2011

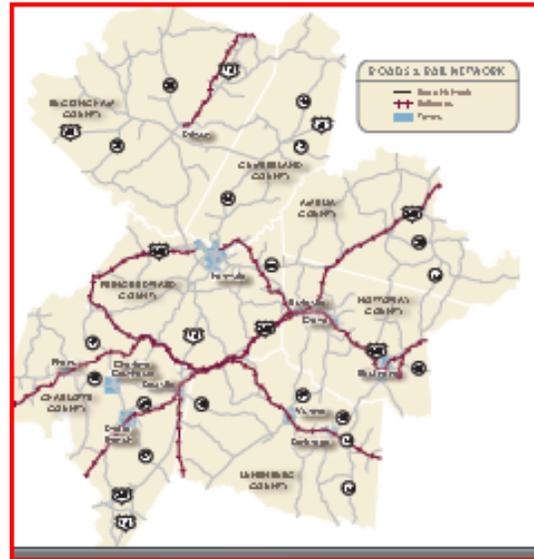
- Growth Management & Rural Preservation in Rural Communities Workshop – April 13th and 27th, 2011
 - Regional Chesapeake Bay Phase II WIP Data Delivery Meeting – June 21, 2011
-
- 2011 Redistricting Mapping
 - Inexpensive Marketing/Advertisement Opportunities (Minimum due to budgetary limitations)
 - 2011 Virginia CDBG Program Regional Priorities
 - Regional Contact with Virginia Economic Development Partnership for industrial prospects

Highlight #1

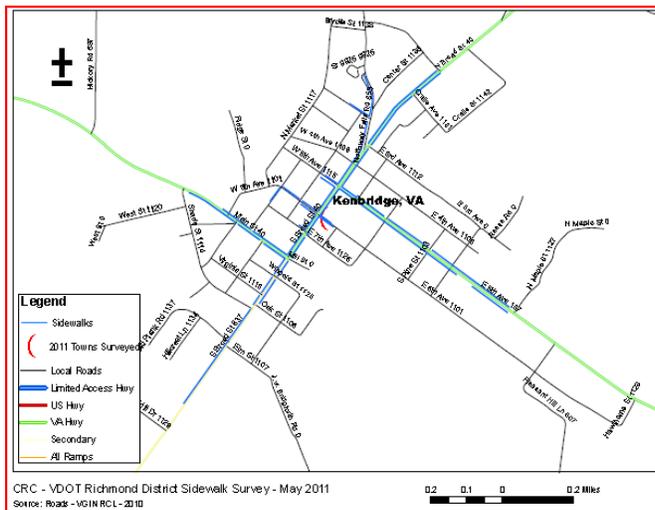
Commonwealth Regional Council Rural Transportation Planning Program

The Commonwealth Regional Council continues the region-wide rural transportation program. This program, covering seven (7) counties and eleven (11) incorporated towns, is overseen by a committee with representatives from all member jurisdictions as well as representatives from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). The Committee met on a regular basis throughout the year.

During FY 10-11, the Commonwealth Regional Council adopted the “*Commonwealth Regional Council Long-Range Transportation Plan*”. This Plan will serve as a long term strategy for the transportation network of the region and as a component of the 2035 *Surface Transportation Plan*. The Plan was developed as a vision plan, addressing all needs of the transportation system studied regardless of anticipated funding availability. This Regional Plan can then be used by local, regional and state agencies to identify transportation funding priorities.



On May 3, 2010, the Commonwealth Regional Council conducted a sidewalk survey in the CRC region to obtain data on the sidewalk locations. Specifically, the localities within the VDOT Richmond District (Counties of Amelia, Lunenburg, and Nottoway) were surveyed.



VDOT did not have very accurate information on the locations of the sidewalks in this District. The Council had completed a similar Sidewalk Survey for the VDOT Lynchburg District (Counties of Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland and Prince Edward) during FY 09-10. During this sidewalk survey, the CRC once again partnered with Longwood University to complete this project.

Highlight #2

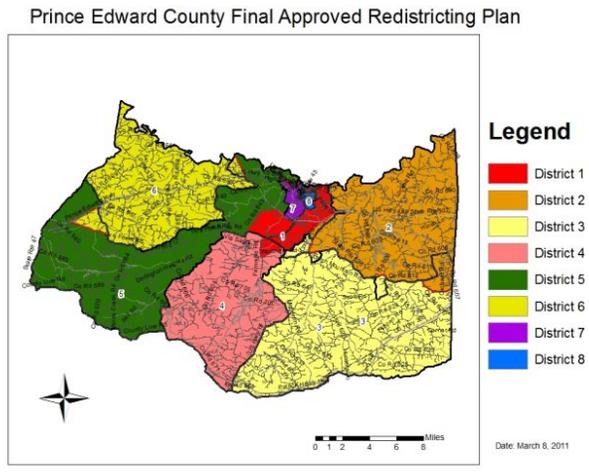
Commonwealth Regional Council

Provides GIS 2011 Redistricting Assistance

Every 10 years, following the U.S. Decennial Census, Federal Law requires election districts to be redrawn to ensure each elected district has roughly the same population. The requirement to redistrict in Virginia localities requires Redistricting to be completed and receive Pre-Clearance by the U.S. Department of Justice prior to November of 2011 elections. Because Virginia has elections in November of 2011, there is a tight window for Redistricting. In order to provide

assistance to expedite the process, the Commonwealth Regional Council in January of 2011 authorized staff to purchase Redistricting Software and provide Redistricting Mapping services to localities interested, free of charge. The CRC purchased DistrictSolv Redistricting Software. In February of 2011, the U.S. Census Bureau released the Virginia 2010 Census data counts necessary for Redistricting. Eight localities requested assistance from the CRC to

prepare 2011 Redistricting Map products. Committees were designated in each of the eight localities to begin the Redistricting process. CRC Staff began facilitating the mapping sessions for each committee. The Redistricting Software utilized GIS ArcGIS software to enable the Committee members to view a map of the County on a large screen. The County map portrayed roads, current election district lines (as a starting point), and block boundaries. Total population and racial characteristics also were displayed for each Election District as well as down to the block level. The starting point for measuring inequality among election districts is the Ideal District which is the total population divided by number of districts. The software enabled CRC Staff to select blocks to be apportioned to election districts and as they were moved, the software would update the numbers for each election district “on the fly”. The software displays the overall maximum deviation of all Election Districts as well as the percent of deviation of each election district. While the U.S. Department of Justice does not provide a precise allowance for deviation, it is suggested a “safe harbor” would be a 10% maximum deviation of all election districts. This also equates to a +/-5% deviation of each election district. Committee members have been very pleased with the software and its ability to provide them a visual data map that changes instantly as they make decisions. Committees are ranging in size from as little as two people and to as large as an 18 person committee. Most committees have met at the CRC offices to utilize the staff and software. However, the CRC also offers a “cloud concept” whereby a CRC Staff is able to travel to a remote site and still have access to the data and software via the Internet using WebEx PCNow. Several of the localities already assisted have received “Pre-



Clearance” from the U.S. Department of Justice. GIS Mapping for Redistricting is still relatively new, first being offered with the 2000 Census. Before this technology was available, localities had to use paper maps to view the census populations released of each Census Block and then mathematically calculate how each would change as they manually redrew the Election District lines. This could take countless hours. With GIS technology, the process has been improved to allow the users to create multiple plans to review and provide more information at a much faster pace.

Highlight #3 Commonwealth Regional Council Growth Management & Rural Preservation in Rural Communities Workshop

The Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC) hosted two half-day workshops in April where attendees learned more about preparing for growth in rural communities. The workshops, facilitated by the Virginia Cooperative Extension, were held on April 13 and April 27 in the Mill Room.

April 13 – Smart Growth and Comprehensive Plans

Jesse Richardson, a professor at Virginia Tech, discussed the difference between growth and sprawl and the difference between growth control and growth management. Growth management involves reasonable projections of growth and how best to accommodate it. Two pillars of smart growth are to encourage development in appropriate areas, and to discourage development in resource areas.



Dr. Michael Chandler discusses the importance of having a Comprehensive Plan at the April 13 workshop.

He made a distinction between growth and sprawl (the big difference is that growth is inevitable, while sprawl is not), and addressed a number of myths regarding growth. They include: If you zone for development, or build houses, people will come; downsizing and easements will stop growth; and you can reduce housing by restricting supply (and, conversely, more supply means more growth).

Richardson said you can control growth – where it goes (on a small scale), and what it looks like (within limits) – and that no-growth strategies sometimes backfire. Tools available to localities for controlling growth include cluster development, Planned Unit Developments, Urban Development Areas, Purchase of Development Rights programs, and Transfer of Development Rights programs. Richardson said you need a “pragmatic balance,” and localities need to prioritize lands to develop and conserve. Localities need to prioritize goals and have a plan. Richardson compared having a plan to driving in a car. “If you don’t know where you’re going, you’re probably not going to get there,” he said.

Dr. Michael Chandler, Director of Education with PlanVirginia, discussed the importance of having Comprehensive Plans. He said that even though the State mandates a Comprehensive Plan for each locality, the mandate shouldn’t be why you plan. Chandler said a Comprehensive Plan needs to have a change strategy and should “read like a good story” with a beginning, middle, and end. Chandler said that growth comes, but oftentimes infrastructure is not in place to handle it. He said a plan needs accountability, and should have an implementation schedule. He said change is more than just increases or decreases in population – they involve changing demographics (changing age, race, etc.), among other things – and need to be reflected in the Plan. A Comprehensive Plan is mandated, but zoning is not unless a locality is covered under the Chesapeake Bay Act. One possible consequence to not having a plan is that localities could be in danger of losing pass-through funds from the federal government. Chandler noted that new legislation effective July 1 will require localities to factor in maintenance (“life-cycle”) costs into their Capital Improvement Plans.

April 27 – Local Perspectives

Tom Harris, Amelia County Administrator, discussed his role through the years in helping rural localities plan for growth. His prior work experience includes working as County Administrator in Northampton and King George Counties. In both cases, as is the case with Amelia, he faced the task of promoting economic development while preserving rural character. In Northampton and King George, the government worked in collaboration with citizens and divergent interests to develop a vision – which was carried out through a series of steps that included a strategic plan as well as tax and zoning policies conducive to that strategy. By working with citizens and having the political will to do what was needed, both counties are working toward their goals. Harris said, “If you don’t have the political will to stay the course, I don’t care what plan you have, it’s not going to work.”

Marvin Moss, a former member of the Fluvanna County Board of Supervisors, talked about what has been happening in his county. Fluvanna, located between Charlottesville and Richmond (I-64 crosses the northern part of the County), faces opportunities and challenges in managing growth. Among the issues faced by the County through the years: The County started growing in the 1980s (the population has doubled since 1990), but the County was not ready for it and had to play catch-up; Lake Monticello has not been integrated into the County; and the County has – in the past – not implemented its Comprehensive Plan (the land use map and zoning map did not match). Moss said that despite this, Fluvanna County remains largely rural and much of the County is undeveloped. He said citizens have expressed a desire to see the County remain rural, and the latest Comprehensive Plan – adopted in 2009 – “strongly” endorses this objective and lays the basis for achieving it. Among the challenges facing the County moving forward are to align government services to meet the needs of a growing and changing population, to implement the Comprehensive Plan and ensure development goes where it is wanted (not in areas the County wants protected), and providing infrastructure that ensures balanced economic growth and lowers dependence on property tax revenues.

Cassandra Stish, a member of the Buckingham County Planning Commission, addressed her County’s efforts to align its ordinances with the County’s Comprehensive Plan. Buckingham County adopted its most recent Plan in 2008 (the CRC assisted in the development of the Plan). The Plan’s main objectives include protecting rural character; limiting development to designated areas; limiting intensive development to areas with public utilities; protecting forestry, watershed, agricultural, and historic areas; and providing for economic growth to occur. Once the Plan was completed, the County faced the task of refining its ordinances. Part of that involved simplifying and streamlining use lists in the different districts so that the zoning was more in line with what was in the Comprehensive Plan. In some cases (“garden center” and “tree nursery,” for instance), similar uses were combined. In other cases, uses were moved from by-right to special use and (in rare cases) vice-versa. Some uses were moved out of certain districts altogether. Stish said it is important to get the local governing body involved in the process, and expects that it will take a lot of political will to make all of the needed changes. Engaging the Board of Supervisors allows for dialog and clarification on changes being suggested. In addition, it allows elected officials to see that changes in the ordinances are linked to language in the Comprehensive Plan. Stish urged those in attendance to stand by their Plans, refer to them, stick to them, and follow their process.

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CRC Staff (Left to Right)

*First Row: Melody Foster, Mary Hickman, and Barbara Terry.
Second Row: Andre Gilliam and Todd Fortune.*

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