

Regional Reporter

News and Events from the
Commonwealth Regional Council
Volume 13, Issue 2 – Winter 2019



CRC CEDS Update

Work on the Commonwealth Regional Council's (CRC) new Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the five CRC member counties is progressing, and still on track for completion in March 2019. The project is being funded by a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), with the CRC providing in-kind as a match.

Todd Gordon, Director of Planning with the Bridgewater-based Berkley Group (the consultant working with the CRC and the CEDS during this process-pictured above), gave a presentation on the project's status during the December 19, 2018 CRC Monthly Council Meeting. The CEDS Committee identified Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats for the region. The consultant, using that information plus demographic, workforce, and other data they and their partners compiled, have developed a draft vision statement and strategic goals that will be part of the CEDS. The next steps are to finalize the draft report and submit it to the CEDS Committee and public for review.

The CEDS, once completed, will identify locally-grown strategies to guide regional economic development, encourage partnerships and collaboration, and improve economic outcomes and overall quality of life in the region. The CEDS is a prerequisite for federal designation as an Economic Development District through the EDA and must be updated at least once every five years.

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CRC Staff Changes

New CRC Staff – Amy Shiffer, Office Manager

The Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC) is pleased to announce that Amy Shiffer started as the CRC's (part-time) Office Manager on November 27, 2018. She replaces the previous Office Manager, Doug Watson, who left the Council in the late summer to pursue other endeavors.

A native of Tennessee, Amy relocated to Virginia in 2003 and graduated from Longwood University in 2010 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Painting and Drawing. She is a regional landscape artist, and her artistic practice includes pastel painting and photography. Additionally, Amy has an employment and educational background in Accounting, Finance, Banking, and Management. In addition to working for the CRC, she works part-time at R. A. Wilmoth Accounting in the Town of Farmville.

Amy currently resides in Farmville. Her interests include biking, hiking, and walking. She has two children and a cat named Daisy. Her daughter, Hannah Eason, is 19 and a recent Fuqua School graduate. Hannah is currently attending VCU, where she plans to major in Communications (she worked as a Disc Jockey for several years at WFLO). Amy's son Zachary Eason, is 15 and currently a sophomore at Fuqua School. He plans to obtain his pilot's license. Zachary has developed a passion for flying through Fuqua's aviation program.



CRC CEDS Update cont.

The CEDS, once completed and approved by EDA, will make covered localities eligible for EDA grants that could fund a wide variety of infrastructure and technical assistance projects. Additionally, once the CEDS is approved, the CRC can pursue designation from the EDA as an Economic Development District.

CRC Wrapping UP Work on Phase III of Chesapeake Bay WIP

The Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC) has been working alongside the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to assist with Phase 3 of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP). The CRC was tasked with making revisions to the regional urban input deck; along with a list of programmatic actions to supplement Best Management Practices (BMPs) included in the input deck.

The CRC convened meetings on July 23, 2018, August 30, 2018, October 22, 2018 and December 11, 2018 to engage local officials, stakeholders and citizens in the WIP process. The CRC also attended a joint meeting with the DEQ and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) on December 6, 2018 in Remington, Virginia. This meeting was scheduled by DEQ to present all final revisions/comments to the regional urban and agriculture input decks.

The CRC has worked to compile accurate and corresponding data for the BMPs on the ground in the region—the compilation of this data served as the final revisions to the regional urban input deck for the CRC. In addition to the work done to collect all BMPs implemented in the region, the CRC worked to compile a list of programmatic actions that were also submitted to DEQ in the final input deck. All final deliverables have been met in the contract with DEQ, and the CRC is currently in discussions for a contract extension with DEQ to assist in the final implementation of the WIP before the submission to the EPA on August 9, 2019. The draft WIP is to be made available to planning district commissions on April 12, 2019, with the final WIP being submitted to the EPA on August 9, 2019.

CRC Awarded SHSP Grant for Additional Emergency Planning

On August 31, 2018, Governor Ralph Northam announced Homeland Security Grant awards for the 2018 application cycle. The Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC) was awarded \$19,475.00 for the development of a Volunteer, Donation Management and Coordination Plan for the CRC Region. The plan will help CRC member localities plan for and deal with any influx of volunteers and donations that come into the region as a result of a major disaster. The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) received more than 110 requests totaling \$8 for competitive grants in the 2018 grant cycle. The CRC's application was one of 48 statewide that received funding totaling \$2.2 million.

In addition to the competitive grants, VDEM awarded a total of \$2.5 million in non-competitive grants for 30 projects. That included an award of \$70,000 to Lunenburg County for supporting the regional radio cache team. Lunenburg is one (1) of five (5) radio cache teams strategically located across the State.

CRC Staff Attends VDOT Local Programs Workshop

Funding Programs, Project Issues Discussed

On September 18, 19, and 20, 2018, Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC) staff attended the sixth annual VDOT Local Assistance Workshop. This workshop focuses on providing an overview of local programs and training for program management and project development. The Workshop is meant to bring together local government, VDOT, and private sector staff to discuss delivery of the local transportation program.

The workshop included plenary sessions at the beginning and end, plus breakout sessions throughout the three days. Plenary session speakers included Stephen Birch, Commissioner of Highways, VDOT; Jessie Yung, Virginia Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration; and Catherine McGhee, Director of the Virginia Transportation Research Council. During the Plenary Sessions, speakers provided an update on efforts to ensure localities have the tools to effectively deliver transportation projects and efforts to provide innovative transportation solutions in Virginia.

Topics covered during the breakout sessions included:

New Technologies;

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CRC Staff Attends VDOT Local Programs Workshop cont.

Pre-Award Audits;
Audit Compliance;
Environmental Compliance;
Construction Documentation;
Inspection Duties;
Change Orders and Claims;
Project Management/Initiation;
Project Funding; and
Right-of-Way and Utility Relocation.



CRC staff was able to attend a number of sessions.

Some important points that came out of the breakout sessions include:

VDOT staff stressed the importance of utilizing the Locally Administered Projects (LAP)-tool for projects, while coordinating with VDOT. VDOT staff advised, repeatedly, that the LAP-MAP would be useful in project development, delivery, close out and audits.

Secondly, VDOT staff focused on the importance of partnering for successful local projects. Staff highlighted current initiatives at both the State and Federal levels regarding the Local Program. Stephen Birch, VDOT Commissioner of Highways, spoke extensively about the Local Program and the efforts to ensure that locals had the necessary tools needed to effectively deliver transportation projects.

The dates and location for next year's workshop will be announced at a later date.

CRC Grant Writing Update

STEPS Receives VHDA Grant

The CRC would like to congratulate STEPS, Inc., which learned on December 7, 2018 that the Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) awarded them a grant of \$20,000 to fund the development of an Affordable Housing Strategic Plan for Prince Edward County. The CRC assisted with the application, which was submitted on November 6, 2018. The Plan will help Prince Edward County address affordable housing, which was identified as a need in the County's Comprehensive Plan (the area is experiencing a shortage of affordable housing). The study area will include the County and the Town of Farmville. It will target those in need of affordable housing, including: first-time homeowners, the young workforce, lower income citizens, citizens with disabilities and the elderly. STEPS will work with a consultant and the Affordable Housing Coalition, which was formed to explore housing needs and consists of various stakeholders (Prince Edward County, Town of Farmville, Centra Southside Community Hospital, Farmville Area Habitat for Humanity, Prince Edward County Schools, FUQUA School, Longwood University, and Hampden-Sydney College) in the development of this study. The CRC will administer the project.

CRC Assists Local Departments with RSAF Grant Applications

The Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC) assisted with two (2) applications for the most recent round of the Rescue Squad Assistance Fund (RSAF), which closed on September 15. The CRC assisted with the following applications:

- Drakes Branch Volunteer Fire Department (DBVFD, Charlotte County), for funding to purchase extrication equipment.
- Prince Edward County Rescue Squad, for funding to purchase a new ambulance.

In January, the CRC learned that the DBVFD was awarded \$17,534.48 through the program.

The RSAF, administered by the Virginia Department of Health, provides funding to non-profit EMS agencies and organizations in Virginia. Eligible items include EMS equipment and vehicles, computers, EMS management programs, courses/classes and projects benefiting the recruitment and retention of EMS members. The CRC would like to congratulate the DBVFD on their award.

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CRC Grant Writing Update cont.

CRC Assists Victoria Fire & Rescue with AFG application

The most recent round of DHS/FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) applications was a little earlier this year than in recent years, with the application period running from September 24 to October 6, 2018. Since 2001, AFG has helped firefighters and other first responders obtain critically needed equipment, protective gear, emergency vehicles, training, and other resources needed to protect the public and emergency personnel from fire and related hazards.

For the most recent round, Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC) staff assisted Victoria Fire & Rescue (VFR) in Lunenburg County with an AFG application for funds to purchase new Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) and related gear. The CRC would like to wish VFR luck with its application.

CRC Assists WBWF with grant applications for educational outreach

The Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC) assisted the Ward Burton Wildlife Foundation (WBWF) with three (3) grant applications to help cover costs for expanding its Educational Outreach program. The CRC assisted with applications to the Coca-Cola Foundation to cover material costs, and the Virginia Environmental Endowment and S.C. Johnson to help cover program costs.

For many years, the Foundation has had an educational outreach program to teach youth about the importance of our natural resources. The outreach consisted of classroom visits to local schools by Ward Burton, former NASCAR driver and winner of the 2002 Daytona 500, inviting youth to The Cove (a 2,500-acre preserve owned by the WBWF and located near Clover, VA), and providing them with outdoor experiences such as hunting, camping, shooting, and fishing. The Foundation is looking to expand that outreach so they can take the program directly to all public schools in Virginia's Region 8 – which includes all five counties in the CRC Region. The WBWF is also partnering with Virginia State Parks to provide hands-on learning experiences at the parks.

The CRC would like to wish the Foundation luck with its outstanding grant requests.

CRC Assists Lunenburg County with BTF Application

The Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC) assisted Lunenburg County and Lunenburg County Public Schools in applying for a Baseball Tomorrow Fund (BTF) Grant. The BTF is a joint initiative between Major League Baseball (MLB) and the MLB Players Association. The fund awards grants to organizations involved in the operation of youth baseball and softball programs and facilities. The County is seeking funds from the BTF to assist in constructing new ball fields for both the softball and baseball programs, which would also benefit both the local Babe Ruth League and Dixie Youth programs. The application for the BTF grant was submitted on October 1, 2018, with funding announcements expected in the winter.

DHCD Funding Programs for Spring 2019

The Department of Housing and Community Development recently announced three (3) grants with deadlines in the spring of 2019:

Industrial Revitalization Fund (IRF): The program is targeted toward vacant non-residential structures whose poor condition creates physical and economic blight to the surrounding area in which the structure is located. Eligible properties shall include those formerly used for manufacturing, warehousing, mining, transportation and power production, as well as large-scale “white elephant” structures. The maximum level of funding for this grant is \$600,000, and requires at least a dollar-for-dollar match. No more than five percent (5%) local match will be accepted as in-kind or cash for out-of-pocket administrative costs. Applications are due by March 1, 2019. <http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/index.php/business-va-assistance/blighted-structures/industrial-revitalization-fund-irf.html>

DHCD Commercial District Affiliates Grant (CDA): The program is designed to assist organizations and communities undertake downtown revitalization efforts. Eligible projects include non-profit organizational development, market studies, branding, design projects, entrepreneur support programs, economic vitality projects and other consultant projects that contribute to downtown neighborhoods. Award amounts do not exceed \$7,000, and requires no match unless a design project is pursued. Applications are due by March 22, 2019. <http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/images/VMS/FY2020%20Affiliate%20Grant%20Manual.pdf>

Community Business Launch (CBL): The CBL is designed to assist communities in taking a systems approach to defining and pursuing an asset-based small business development strategy. The maximum CBL award for FY '20 is projected to be \$45,000. Local governments, non-profit economic development organizations, Main Street Associations and regional economic development groups are eligible to apply for this funding. There is a 25% match for single applicants. The match should consist of cash and in-kind support. Businesses must be open by September 30, 2020. Applications are due by March 1, 2019. <http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/index.php/business-va-assistance/community-business-launch-cbl.html>

VDH-ODW Releases Funding Solicitation for Water System Improvements

The Virginia Department of Health-Office of Drinking Water (VDH-ODW) has released updated information on the upcoming round of grant/loan funding. A number of localities in Planning District 14 have used VDH-ODW funds in recent years for planning and/or construction activities to repair and improve their public water systems.

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CRC Grant Writing Update cont.

VDH-ODW Releases Funding Solicitation for Water System Improvements cont.

Typically, there are two different pots of funding – the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) Program, which provides funding (usually loans) for larger construction projects such as water distribution system repair and replacement; and the Water Supply Assistance Grant Fund (WSAG), which provides grants for smaller construction projects such as construction/upgrade of wells and storage tanks and planning grants to develop preliminary plans and engineering documents for future construction funding applications. Applications are due by April 1 (can be postmarked), with a how-to-apply workshop webinar tentatively scheduled for February 20, 2019.

General information about these funding programs, with changes for this year's round of funding, can be reviewed online at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/drinking-water/financial-construction-assistance-programs/>

CRC Project Update

Emergency Planning Activities Moving Ahead

The Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC) is moving closer to completion of activities related to its State Homeland Security Program (SHSP) grant that was awarded in 2017. The grant is funding the development of FEMA-approved debris management plans and Memorandums of Understanding for disaster assistance for the localities in the CRC Region. Draft Debris Management Plans has been developed for Amelia, Buckingham, and Charlotte Counties, and data collection has begun on draft Plans for Lunenburg and Prince Edward Counties. Working with one of the local County Attorneys, CRC staff has developed a draft MOU that is being reviewed by the other localities. The CRC has until March 31, 2019 to complete the scope of the current grant.

Dillwyn Housing Project: Bids for First Set of Houses

The Town of Dillwyn's Housing Rehab project is now moving along, with the first two (2) houses bid out in December (bids were opened on December 17, 2018) and construction on those houses expected to begin in January or February 2019. The CRC is assisting the Town with this project, which is funded by a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) through the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). In addition to these two houses, four (4) others are slated for rehab or substantial reconstruction and one (1) vacant house will be demolished. The hope is that the Rehab Specialist hired by the Town, Roanoke-based Southeast Rural Communication Action Project (RCAP), will be able to begin work write-ups for the next group of houses in the Spring.

Drakes Branch Flood Protection Study Near Completion

The Town of Drakes Branch Downtown Area Flood Study is set for completion in January. The study, funded by the Department of Conservation and Recreation, is intended to further refine the flood area and identify solutions to flooding issues in the downtown area, which were identified as a need during the planning phase of the Town's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Downtown Revitalization project. Richmond area-based A. Morton Thomas and Associates has been hired to conduct the study. Tasks involved include hydraulic and hydrologic modeling and survey of the study area, a conceptual plan for improvements and funding scenarios, and a revised flood plain map. The consultant and CRC presented findings and a draft report to the public at a Community Meeting in October – just days after Hurricane Michael came through the area, causing major flooding in Drakes Branch and other parts of the region.



Related to Hurricane Michael, on December 18, 2018, the President approved a federal disaster declaration for the event covering multiple localities in Virginia – including Amelia, Charlotte, Lunenburg, and Prince Edward Counties. As a result, localities covered under the declaration are eligible for FEMA Public Assistance and other funding to help recover from damages related to Michael. Anyone needing assistance related to Michael should contact Gene Stewart (540-383-5126) or Lucy Carter Smith (804-922-0454) with The Virginia Department of Emergency Management, Region 3.

Work Progressing on Local Comprehensive Plans

The Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC) is working on two local Comprehensive Plans:

Lunenburg/Kenbridge/Victoria Joint Comp Plan Update: The CRC is continuing to assist Lunenburg County and the Towns of Kenbridge and Victoria with an update of their Joint Comprehensive Plan. The draft Plan was reviewed by the Joint Working Committee in December 2018 and January 2019, and CRC staff is working with the Committee on some final revisions to complete the document. Adoption of the Plan is expected to occur in the late Winter or early Spring.

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CRC Project Update cont.

Work Progressing on Local Comprehensive Plans cont.

Keyville Comp Plan Update: The CRC is working with the Town of Keyville on an update of its Comprehensive Plan. The first part of this process was a Community Meeting, held on November 15, 2018 at the Keyville Fire Department to gather citizen input on issues of importance to the Town. Building on the input received from that meeting, CRC staff is now working with the Town's Planning Commission to develop a survey for receiving additional input. The Plan Update for Keyville is expected to be complete in the Spring of 2020.

CRC Quick Notes

Governor Announces Administration/Board Appointments

Since July, Governor Ralph Northam has announced a number of administration and board appointments. Local appointments of note include:

- Brandon Hatcher of Buckingham County, appointed as the Executive Assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry.
- The Honorable Marilyn Tavenner of Amelia Court House, appointed to the Board of Directors of the Virginia Commonwealth University Health System Authority.
- Alison King, PhD, of Amelia, appointed to the Board of Health Professions.
- Gerald K. Washington of Buckingham County, appointed to the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries.
- The Honorable Arthur Townsend of Victoria (Lunenburg County Sheriff), appointed to the Virginia State Crime Commission.

The CRC Council and staff would like to congratulate these individuals on their appointments.

VAPDC planning 50th Anniversary Celebration for January 31.

The Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions (VAPDC) has planned a 50th Anniversary Reception for Thursday, January 31, 2019 in Richmond. VAPDC will also join the Virginia Association of Counties to host the annual County Government Day at the Omni Richmond Hotel during the day, with the VAPDC reception later that evening at the hotel.

VAPDC is an organization representing and advocating for Virginia's 21 Planning District Commissions (PDC)/Regional Councils (RC). VAPDC works to bring diverse resources together at the regional level in partnership with local, state, and federal entities to strengthen regions and the State. The Association promotes coordination and cooperation among the State's PDCs/RCs to heighten their effectiveness and efficiency; provide mutual assistance and the exchange of ideas; and otherwise promote understanding for how PDCs/RCs can help save their regions and the Commonwealth time and money. PDCs/RCs were formally created by the General Assembly in 1968 through the Virginia Area Development Act (VADA), in response to a growing recognition that growth and infrastructure problems often transcend local boundaries. PDCs/RCs were intended to encourage and facilitate local government cooperation in addressing problems and opportunities that are greater than any one locality. VADA was superseded by the Regional Cooperation Act of 1995, which made some changes to the Regional Planning Process.

For more information, or to register, please go to <https://www.vapdc.org/copy-of-links>



Calendar of Events

Late January

- 24 – VML Legislative Day, Richmond
- 30 – Virginia Rural Center Rural Caucus Reception, Richmond
- 31 – VACO/VAPDC County Government Day at the General Assembly, Richmond
- 31 – VACO Board of Directors Meeting, Richmond
- 31 - VAPDC 50th Anniversary Reception, Richmond

February

- 1 -Virginia General Assembly to pass resolution honoring VAPDC -50th Anniversary
- 1-2 – VACO Chairpersons Institute, Richmond
- 18 – State and local government, CRC offices closed for Presidents Day
- 19-20 – CTB workshop and action meeting, VDOT Central Office, Richmond
- 20 – CRC Monthly Council Meeting, Farmville - Prince Edward Public Library
- 23 – Virginia General Assembly 2019 Session adjourns

March

- 19-20 – CTB workshop and action meeting, VDOT Hampton Roads District Office
- 20 – CRC Monthly Council Meeting, Farmville - Prince Edward Public Library
- 29 – CDBG Competitive grant applications due to DHCD

April

- 9-10 – CTB workshop and action meeting, VDOT Central Office, Richmond
- 17 – CRC Monthly Council Meeting, Farmville - Prince Edward Public Library
- 22 – State and local government, CRC offices closed for Easter
- Date TBD – VACO Spring Board of Directors Meeting, Wythe County

May

- 14-15 – CTB workshop and action meeting, VDOT Northern Virginia District Office
- 15 – CRC Monthly Council Meeting, Farmville - Prince Edward Public Library
- 27 – State and local government, CRC offices closed for Memorial Day

June

- 18-19 – CTB workshop and action meeting, VDOT Central Office, Richmond
- 19 – CRC Monthly Council Meeting, Farmville - Prince Edward Public Library

May-September – VACO Regional Meetings, dates and locations TBA

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