**Commonwealth Regional Council**

**CRC Conference Room**

**Keysville, Virginia**
**October 16, 2024**

**Welcome & Call to Order**

The Chairman, Mr. Hankins, called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

**Invocation and Introductions**

Mr. Matthews gave the invocation, and Mr. Jones led the group in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag.

**ROLL CALL**

MEMBER REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT ABSENT

Amelia:

Dexter Jones Dexter Jones

 (Vice-Chair)

\*Mr. David Felts \*Mr. David Felts

Buckingham:

Mr. Paul Garett Mr. Paul Garett

\*Mr. Karl Carter \*Mr. Karl Carter

Charlotte:

Mr. Gary Walker Gary Walker

 (Treasurer)

\*Mr. Walt Bailey \*Mr. Walt Bailey

Cumberland:
Mr. John Newman Mr. John Newman
\*Mr. Eurika Tyree \*Mr. Eurika Tyree

Lunenburg:

Mr. Mike Hankins Mr. Mike Hankins

 (Chairman)

\*Ms. Taylor King \*Ms. Taylor King (V)

Nottoway:

Mr. Dickie Ingram Mr. Dickie Ingram

\*Mr. Bill Collins \*Mr. Bill Collins

Prince Edward:

Mr. David Emert Mr. David Emert

 (Secretary)

\*Dr. Odessa Pride \*Dr. Odessa Pride

Non-Member Representatives:

SVCC:

\*\*Mr. Keith Harkins \*\*Mr. Keith Harkins

Longwood University:

\*\*Ms. Sheri McGuire \*\*Ms. Sheri McGuire

Hampden-Sydney College:

\*\*VACANT \*\*VACANT

NOTE: \*Denotes Alternates

\*\*Denotes Non-Voting Member Attending

**Member County Administrators Present**

Mr. Steve Bowen, Nottoway County

Mr. Dan Witt, Charlotte County (V)

Mr. Clarence Monday, Amelia County(V)

Ms. Tracy Gee, Lunenburg County (V)

**STAFF**

Ms. Christin Jackson, Executive Director

Ms. Wendy Newton, Finance Director

Ms. Lauren Jones Pugh, Planning Director

Mr. Tyler Henderson, Regional Planner

Ms. Monica Frisby, Regional Planner

**GUESTS:**

Mr. Tony Matthews, Kenbridge Town Manager

(V) Denotes attendees who participated virtually.

**Approval of Minutes of August 21, 2024, Council Meeting:**

Mr. Hankins noted a title in the report needed correction. Mr. Emert moved, and Mr. Jones seconded to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried.

**Treasurer’s Report:**

**July/August:** Mr. Garrett stated he had reviewed the financial report and found everything to be in order. Mr. Walker moved, and Mr. Emert seconded to approve the Treasurer’s Report as presented. Motion carried.

**Report of Officers, Committees & Executive Director:**

**Chairman's Report**: There were none.

**Executive Director Monthly Activities Report:** Ms. Jackson stated that a report was included in the Council packet.Ms. Jackson stated she met with Truist to discuss ways to improve Working Capital, by reducing checks and increasing credit card or online ACH due to fraudulent activity with company checks. Ms. Jackson said the CRC received the DHCD Regional Broadband Expansion Plan Grant of $165,000. Ms. Jackson stated this grant will support the CRC with staff time and public kick-off meetings in the seven counties of the CRC. Ms. Jackson stated she submitted a Direct Cost Certification Letter to EDA based on 2021, since there was no Direct Cost fee schedule in 2002. Ms. Jackson stated one was being done in the audit this year so that the certification can be upgraded, allowing the CRC to charge direct cost fees for regional grants, potentially increasing administrative fees. Ms. Jackson stated she closed out the Firefighter 2019 grant for Prince Edward County and completed the final submission of VDEM Hazard Mitigation Plan was completed. Ms. Jackson stated the CRC staff met with Andy Wells from The Southside Planning District for GIS training. Ms. Jackson stated how well Lauren was implementing the new training. Ms. Jackson stated she has worked on updates to the CRC website with board packets, helpful links, and social media pages. Ms. Jakson and Ms. Pugh discussed CRC services with Greg Wolven, Town Manager of Burkeville. Ms. Jackson stated she presented at the Regional County Administrators meeting on EDD Designation, REDO update, Procurement of Solar Consultants, FEMA Hazard Mitigation, and VA Broadband. Ms. Jackson included the PowerPoint in the packet. Ms. Jackson stated she met with DHCD, County Administrators, Jim Garrett of Kinex, and Robert Doyle of Planet Networks to discuss moving the VATI funding over to Planet Networks. Ms. Jackson was able to write a letter to the DHCD. Ms. Jackson stated she attended the Lunenburg, Kenbridge, and Victoria Comp Plan Meeting. Ms. Jackson also stated she participated in the VAPDC training session on Communications and attended their Board meeting and participated in NADO training in Single Audit Readiness.

**Scoping the Future - Discussion of Innovative/Regional Ideas:** There were no comments.

**Old Business:**

**Staff Monthly Project Reports:**

**Update on Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) Phase III:** Ms. Frisby stated that a report was included in the Council packet. Ms. Frisby stated CRC staff met with Linda Eanes, Cumberland County 4-H Extension Agent, and hosted a rain barrel workshop on August 15th with a homeschool group involving ten students. Ms. Frisby stated the CRC staff coordinated with Nottoway County Extension Agents, Terry Abston and Lye Currin and Richard Rash, agricultural teacher at Nottoway High School, to integrate the Rain Barrel Program into the agriculture class curriculum. Ms. Frisby stated the program was scheduled for September 19th and 25th, and October 17th and 31st. Ms. Frisby stated she is currently working with Lunenburg County.

**Update on Buckingham County Comprehensive Plan Update:** Mr. Henderson stated that a report was included in the Council packet. Mr. Henderson stated that in the September 16th Planning Commission Work Session we did not have enough members to make a quorum to review the revisions to Section 5 and Section 6.

**Update on Lunenburg County Comprehensive Plan Update:** Mr. Henderson stated that a report was included in the Council Packet. Mr. Henderson stated the CRC staff attended the Comprehensive Plan on September 5th. Mr. Henderson stated at this meeting, the revised draft of the update to the Land Use Section and the initial draft of the update to the Special Policy Areas section were presented. Mr. Henderson stated due to time constraints, the Joint Working Committee was able to review the Land Use Section and Special Policy Areas up to Area #6 out of 9 in the draft. Mr. Henderson said the committee agreed to provide feedback on the remaining Special Policy Areas by Friday, September 13th, but no response has been received.

**Update on CRC Affordable Workforce Housing Development Program:** Ms. Pugh stated that a report was included in the Council packet. Ms. Pugh said the land clearing for Ashley Way homes in Keysville has been completed and the foundation of one of the five homes has been done. Ms. Pugh stated all five homes have been completed at Cardinal Homes and are awaiting delivery. Ms. Pugh stated the family for the Cumberland County build with Southside Homes, is currently applying with USDA. Ms. Pugh stated the CRC was working with Smyth Properties on a Deed of Trust on both properties. Mr. Walker stated that while the Affordable Workforce Housing Development projects have been successful, there is still a significant housing shortage. Mr. Walker also stated most roads are owned by the developer of the housing project, not the county. Homeowners cannot afford to maintain the roads if issues arise years later. Mr. Bowen stated the cost of electricity and water connections is a significant barrier for homebuyers starting out. Mr. Walker suggested that a coordinated effort among the counties might bring attention to these issues by contacting local Delegates and Senators.

**Update on Kenbridge and Charlotte County Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation (ESHP) Fund Projects:** Ms. Pugh stated that a report was included in the Council packet. Ms. Pugh stated the Charlotte County Courthouse Complex project has been completed. Ms. Pugh stated after reviewing the updated preservation trust agreement, Charlotte County found this agreement to be in order and is still waiting for it to be mailed to them for signature. Ms. Pugh said the CRC staff has contacted DHR staff multiple times to see this document's status. Once received the document will be signed and recorded at the Charlotte County Clerk's Office.

**Update on VATI Grant for Cumberland, Lunenburg, and Prince Edward:** Ms. Pugh stated that a report was included in the Council packet. Ms. Pugh said that as of August 10th, 2024, 7,334 passings (out of a target of 11,397 total passings) and 1,490 installations for new customers have been completed. Currently, Kinex and their contractors are currently working in Lunenburg and Prince Edward County. MS. Pugh stated at the DHCD’s staff request, CRC staff and Kinex collected financial documents to complete an audit on July 23rd. Ms. Pugh stated the CRC staff and Kinex did provide the documentation to complete the audit on the 23rd. Ms. Pugh stated the CRC staff and Kinex did receive a positive report, and the DHCD had requested some added documentation that the CRC and Kinex did provide. Ms. Pugh stated the new owner, Planet Networks, is in the middle of transitioning the company, making staff changes, and organizing damage control. The Project Management Team meets monthly to discuss the project. The team includes local staff, CRC staff, Kinex staff, and DHCD staff. Ms. Pugh said the next meeting is scheduled for this afternoon.

**Update on Drakes Branch Building Acquisition Project:** Ms. Pugh stated that the report was included in the Council packet. Ms. Pugh stated the CRC staff has prepared bid documents to bid out the lead and asbestos abatement and posted the IFB on eVA and it will be in the newspaper later this week.

**Update on CRC Hazard Mitigation Plan Update:** Mr. Henderson stated that a report was included in the Council packet. Mr. Henderson stated the complete 722-page Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan has been uploaded to the CRC website, where it can be viewed and downloaded. Mr. Henderson stated the CRC has purchased USB drives containing the plan for distribution to localities that may face technical limitations or difficulties downloading the files. Mr. Henderson also stated in addition, the CRC staff has started developing a custom GPT tool (AI) to help users easily navigate the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

**Update on SEED Innovation Hub Project:** Ms. Pugh stated that a report was included in the Council packet. Ms. Pugh stated the CRC conducted a Davis Beacon Act on the Contractors’ submitted certified payroll documents and the CRC staff assembled and submitted documentation for the third reimbursement request to the EDA. Ms. Pugh stated the CRC staff assembled and submitted documentation for the second and third reimbursement request to the Tobacco Commission. Ms. Pugh also stated the CRC staff assembled and submitted an extension letter to the Tobacco Commission to extend the grant from September 2024 to March 2025 to give the LUREF ample time to complete the project.

**Update on CRC GO Virginia Grant – Development of Business Plan and Strategy for NEW REDO:** Ms. Jackson stated that a report was included in the Council packet. Ms. Jackson stated CRC is still fronting the cost of the VHREDA Campaign which is $88,871.76 currently. Ms. Jackson stated the CRC will be reimbursed when VHREDA is established. Ms. Jackson stated she worked with Catherine Douglas and Gary Elder on the 501c3 status with creating a board contact list, a 3-year proposed budget and working through questions on the phone with Catherine. Ms. Jackson stated the second VHREDA Bard Meeting was held on August 26th. Ms. Jackson said she researched Economic Development Job Descriptions, created a new one and circulated it to the VHREDA Board. Ms. Jackson stated the following have decided to be on the board: Jason Loehr, Executive Director of Southside Electric, Dr. Thomas Angelo of Centra Southside, and Chip Jones, Superintendent of Cumberland County Schools. Ms. Jackson stated Robert Doyle, President of Planet Networks wants to invest and assigned Andrew Lonadier as a Board Representative. Ms. Jackson stated the CRC staff sent out invoices to the counties and investors as well. The Letter Press of Farmville was the first investor to submit an investment.

**Update on Central Virginia Poultry Cooperative TRRC & AFID Grants:** Ms. Frisby stated that a report was included in the Council packet. Ms. Frisby stated that the CRC has executed the Planning Grant agreement with VDACS. To date, $25,115.60 has been requested for reimbursement. Ms. Frisby stated the CRC has executed both grant agreements with the Tobacco Commission. To date, $106,000 has been requested for reimbursement, along with an advancement of $318,000.

**Update on Charlotte Court House Lead Service Project Update:** Ms. Pugh stated that a report was included in the Council packet. Ms. Pugh stated the CRC staff prepared the bid document checklist, required documents, and shared this checklist with VDH staff for approval of procurement. Ms. Pugh stated the VDH contact that the staff has been working with to approve the procurement is no longer at VDH. CRC has been corresponding with VDH staff to determine the new VDH contact for procurement approval. The CRC has emailed the new contact and is still awaiting bid approval. Once approved, Charlotte Court House can move forward with awarding the contractor.

**Update on the Town of Crewe Downtown Revitalization Planning Grant:** Ms. Pugh stated that a report was included in the Council Packet. Ms. Pugh stated Hill Studio held the first kick-off meeting on August 20th with the project management team made up of business owners, the Town Manager, the Town Mayor, CRC staff, and other community sparkplugs. Ms. Pugh stated during this kick-off meeting, Hill Studio discussed their role for this project, reviewed the project area, and discussed the expected outcomes of the project. The estimated completion date is March 2025.

**Update on the EDA Planning and Local Technical Assistance Program**: Ms. Pugh stated that a report was included in the Council packet. Ms. Pugh stated the CRC applied for $70,000 in EDA Planning and Technical Assistance funds. Ms. Pugh stated the CRC was notified on September 3rd by an EDA representative that the funds were awarded to support the update of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Ms. Pugh stated the following activities have been completed this quarter by the CRC staff: Preplanning activities to prepare for CEDS update, attending weekly check-in meetings with Convergent Non-Profit Solutions, providing grant writing services, and corresponded, set up meetings, researched grant opportunities, and vetted potential grant applications.

**Update on the VDOT Rural Transportation Planning Program:** Mr. Henderson stated that the report is included in the Council packet. Mr. Henderson stated the CRC staff have been actively engaged in professional and collaborative efforts in the region. Mr. Henderson stated the CRC staff have completed Local Road Safety Plan Training, Launch & Learn: Emerging Technologies, Title IV Program Plan Update, and Assistance with Keysville’s Ready, Set, Go! Project.

**Update on the SCRC, LDD Program:** Mr. Henderson stated that the report is included in the Council packet. Mr. Henderson said the CRC continues to make progress on initiatives supported by the SCRC. Mr. Henderson stated the key updates were Grant Assistance and Technical Support, Comprehensive Planning, and Broadband & Economic Development Initiatives. Mr. Henderson stated the CRC has exhausted all SCRC funds for the year.

**New Business:**

**Staff Reports**

Update on Grant Writing: Ms. Frisby stated a copy of the grant writing report was included in the Council packet. Ms. Frisby congratulated the Blackstone Volunteer Fire Department on being awarded $97,409.52 from the Assistance to Firefighters Grant to purchase a vehicle exhaust system. Ms. Frisby stated the CRC staff worked with the Town of Victoria on an application and submitted it to the VDOF Preservation Trust Fund to upgrade the recreational area and bridge on Modest Creek Reservoir and is awaiting approval.

**Closed Session:** N/A

**Council Member Comments:** Ms. Jackson was asked by Melody Foster, former Executive Director of the CRC, to thank the board for the generous gift to see Daniel at the Sight and Sound Theater in Pennsylvania.

**Commonwealth Intergovernmental Review Process (CIRP):** There were no comments.

**Other Business:**

**Council Member Comments:** There were none.

**Adjournment, Next Meeting:** The meeting adjourned at 9:51 a.m. The next meeting was set for Wednesday, November 20th, at the CRC’s office at the Heartland Building in Keysville, Virginia.

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 Mr. David Emert, Secretary