



## Region 8

*Cities of: Buena Vista, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Staunton, Waynesboro, & Winchester  
Counties of: Augusta, Bath, Clarke, Frederick, Highland, Page, Rockbridge, Rockingham, Shenandoah, & Warren*

### GO VIRGINIA REGION 8 COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES Tuesday, April 23, 2024, 10:00 am to 12:00pm Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport

FIRST	LAST	AFFILIATION	ATTENDED
Jon	Alger	James Madison University	
Devon	Anders	InterChange Group	
Emily	Marlow Beck	Marlow Auto Group	Virtual
Kim	Blosser*	Laurel Ridge Community College	X
Janet	Clarke	Clarke Consulting, LLC.	X
Robin	Crowder	Retired K-12 Superintendent	
John	Downey	Blue Ridge Community College	
Randy	Doyle*	Shenandoah Valley Workforce Development Board	X
Ashley	Driver	AD Engineering, LLC	X
Joanie	Eiland*	Elk Trucking, Inc.	X
Tracy	Fitzsimmons*	Shenandoah University	X
Mike	Goertzen	Serco, Inc.	X
Conrad	Helsley	NSVRC Board	X
Chris	Kyle	Shentel	
Lai	Lee	High Meadow Strategies	X
Connie	Loughhead	Des Champs Technologies	Virtual
Keith	May	Cottonwood Commercial	
Mary	McDermott	Shenandoah Valley Angel Investors	X
Mark	Merrill	Retired Medical Professional	X
Kathy	Moore	Moore Public Relations	
Doug	Moyer	Sentara RMH Medical Center	X
Yolanda	Shields*	YesBuilds	X
Bruce	Simms	Virginia Regional Transit	X
Mike	Stolarz	UTS Systems	X
Robin	Sullenberger	Highland County Economic Development Authority	X

\*Kim Blosser abstained from Winchester Application vote

\*Randy Doyle abstained from the SVWDB TPI Application vote

\*Tracey Fitzsimmons abstained from Winchester Application vote

\*Yoland Shields abstained from the SVWDB TPI Application vote

\*Joanie Eiland was not present for SVWDB TPI Application vote.

Support staff attending included: Brandon Davis (NSVRC), Deborah Flippo (Region 8 Executive Director), Joel Hensley (Region 8 Administrative Coordinator), and Jay Langston (SVP). Virtually attending: Ann Cundy (CSPDC)

*In person guests included: Cody Anderson (DHCD), Lisa Botkin (SHD), Heather Ream (SHD), Nick Sabo (Winchester Airport), Dr. Sharon Johnson (Shenandoah Valley Workforce Development Board), Keith Holland (JMU), Anthony Tongen (JMU), Chris Ferguson (Verano), Chris Runion (VA House of Delegates), Melissa Assalone (The 51 Group), Amanda DiMeo (City of Staunton), Billy Vaughan (City of Staunton), Jeremy Crute (CSPDC), Philippe Boze (CSPDC), Dave Urso (BRCC), and Bonnie Riedesel (CSPDC, retired).*

*Virtual guests included: Brandy Flint (Director of Economic Development, Rockbridge County), Debbie Melvin (Virginia Economic Development Partnership), Joseph Dennie (DHCD), Anne Herring (USDA Rural Development), Cynthia Schneider (Top of Virginia Regional Chamber), Nora Sutton (JMU), Julia Hensley (Augusta County), Bill Holtzman (Region 8 State Representative).*

### **Call to Order and Welcome**

The April 23, 2024 Council meeting for GO Virginia Region 8 was called to order by Chair Mark Merrill at 10:04 a.m. Chair Merrill asked those in attendance to introduce themselves, recognized guests and emphasized the need to replenish the Council with new members with a desire to have diversity across all spectrums.

### **Roll Call**

Joel Hensley took roll call, and a quorum was confirmed.

### **Welcome to Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport**

Chair Merrill introduced Lisa Botkin, Executive Director of the Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport (SHD). Chair Merrill reminded the council about a recent 950k grant that was given to SHD.

Ms. Botkin welcomed everyone to SHD and said they were happy to host the Region 8 Council. She provided some background about Hangar 6, the location spot for the meeting. She said this was one of two hangars completed last summer as part of the new Aviation Technology Park space and mentioned the aircraft the new space is accommodating. This location is right next to the water and sewer line project located along Valley Church Road that Region 8 helped to fund. She thanked Council for that grant which has allowed SHD to develop further. Ms. Botkin mentioned the project bids were lower than originally anticipated, allowing SHD to construct an additional 200 feet of water line further along Airport Road, closer to the Blue Mountain Site the community is interested in developing. She discussed future plans for SHD, including two additional hangars, an upgraded and expanded fuel farm, a new fuel truck access road and an expansion of their airline apron. She also said SHD's air traffic remains active and strong and noted recent assistance to JMU athletics and the Forestry Service. Ms. Botkin closed by informing Region 8 of upcoming events at SHD and took questions.

Before moving to the approval of the January Minutes, Chair Merrill reminded Council of Deborah Flippo's intention to retire by the end of the calendar year.

### **Approval of the January 23, 2024 Minutes**

Conrad Hensley motioned to approve the January minutes, followed by a second from Joanie Eiland. The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

### **Executive Director's Report**

Deborah Flippo began her report by updating Council on the Governor's budget "swipe." We believed there was \$49k left in addition to the \$250k of funds to be used for the Talent Pathways Initiative. She also mentioned good news regarding unallocated funds remaining for Region 8 that DHCD and NSVRC discovered. After the potential approval of upcoming applications, Region 8 will be left with \$78k thanks to this discovery. Based on conversations with DHCD, we anticipate Region 8 will only lose \$8k and can carry over \$70k. In short, Region 8 will have more money than we originally thought.

Ms. Flippo reviewed highlights from the JLARC legislative study. All projects are now a 2:1 match and the Per Capita allocated funds will remain the same. There were new Gubernatorial appointments to the State Board. State Senator Creigh Deeds is now our legislative representative and Bill Holtzman is a new Region 8 representative on the State Board. There is

also a new Vice-Chair for Regional Councils Deborah presented an overview of the new criteria for potential healthcare projects. Chair Merrill brought up that Region 8 would potentially qualify for healthcare projects. Tracy Fitzsimmons discussed the Next Gen Nurses project as an example. Dr. Fitzsimmons mentioned a regionwide nursing proposal that former chair George Pace had put together several years ago and the possibility at looking at that proposal again. More discussion ensued over the topic of healthcare and rewriting state policy #4 regarding the definition of “traded sectors.” The Council was also briefed on Planning Grant funding caps and changes to ROI requirements for Competitive Fund Grants. Ms. Flippo also remarked on the positive feedback that Region 8 has received regarding the new e-newsletter and the website. As Ms. Flippo wrapped up her presentation, Chair Merrill acknowledged the presence of guest Delegate Chris Runion. Delegate Runion made some remarks and thanked Region 8 for their focus on the region’s economic needs. Cody Anderson from DHCD summarized a committee formed to look into various metrics to understand the sustainability and effectiveness of the GOVA projects and improving on reporting figures.

## **Election of New Members**

### *Outgoing Council Members*

Chair Merrill acknowledged outgoing Council members: Dr. John Downey (BRCC), President Jon Alger (JMU), Joanie Eiland (Elk Trucking) and Connie Loughhead (Des Champs Technologies). He explained the strategy for staggering new members and inviting previous members back in the future if they want to serve again. Chair Merrill asked members who were elected to the Council at the April meeting and were attending for the first time -- Bruce Simms, Mike Stolarz and Randy Doyle - to introduce themselves to the Council.

### *New Council Members*

Chair Merrill reviewed changes to the Council and mentioned the GO Virginia requirement to have representation from Colleges and Universities in the region. Chair Merrill asked Anthony Tongen (JMU) and Dave Urso (BRCC) to introduce themselves. Chair Merrill then provided a background for two other potential new members, Dottie Day (Navy Federal Credit Union) and John Graves (Luray Caverns).

Robin Sullenberger moved to approve the four individuals up for nomination. The motion did not need a second since this was a committee recommendation. Chair Merrill clarified that Anthony Tongen and Dave Urso were nominated for a two-year term, while Dottie Day and John Graves were nominated for a four-year term.

The Chair asked for a vote and the motion by Mr. Sullenberger was approved unanimously.

## **Open and Closed Projects Report**

Joel Hensley provided an update on open and closed projects. GO Virginia Region 8 now has funded 23 total projects; there are 8 open projects and 15 closed projects, totaling \$7 million in grants. Joel reminded Council he is happy to provide a detailed update on any of the open projects a member is interested in, and for this meeting he updated Council on the SCCF Capacitor Incubator Project since that project was approved at the April 2023 meeting last year. Joel reported SCCF has achieved half of their stated goal over a year before the project closes.

Joel then provided a post-close out report on the Emil and Grace Shihadeh Innovation Center. Region 8 funded this project in 2019 and the project closed in 2021 and exceeded its goal of training 600 students by training 631 students. He highlighted noteworthy successes that have taken place since 2021, and over 70% of Winchester High School Juniors have taken at least one class at the facility. Winchester City Public Schools has a goal of having 100% of students taking at least one class as the Center.

Dr. Blosser and Dr. Fitzsimmons also provided updates and success stories coming from the Shihadeh Center since they both work closely with the school. Chair Merrill closed the discussion and mentioned a quick update on the Blue Mountain Feasibility Study Project.

## **Financial Status Report**

Brandon Davis of the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission provided a brief update on Region 8’s financial status and NSVRC’s organization structure, responsibilities and the stability they provide to Region 8 staff and

Council. He mentioned he works closely with Cody at DHCD and was interviewed by JLARC during their study. Mr. Davis mentioned he is always happy to speak to any Council member if they have any questions about what his organization does and how they provide support.

Mr. Davis turned the Council's attention to the current budget and funds and what the budget will look like should the Council choose to vote for the two applications up for a vote at this meeting. Chair Merrill asked a question regarding the capacity building budget. Mr. Davis first explained the per capita funds, then discussed the \$250k provided from the State for capacity building which includes funds spent on staff and meetings, etc. Mr. Davis said they kept the expenditure for this fund for Fiscal Year 2025 the same as it was for the previous year and they have flexibility to make administrative changes throughout the year as necessary.

Vice-Chair Yolanda Shields motioned for approval of the FY25 Capacity Building Budget followed by a second from Mary McDermott. The motion passed unanimously.

## **Grant Review Committee Report**

### *Winchester Airport Advanced Air Mobility Cluster and Workforce Development Pipeline Study*

Grant Review Committee Chair Dr. Tracy Fitzsimmons reiterated the the purpose of the Grant Review Committee (GRC) and provided a summary of the Winchester Airport Advanced Air Mobility Cluster and Workforce Pipeline Development Study grant application for \$71,000. Due to a potential conflict, Committee Chair Fitzsimmons said GRC Vice-Chair Ashley Driver led the discussion in the Grant Committee meeting, and she further stated she and Dr. Blosser would refrain from the discussion and from voting on this project. She introduced Winchester Regional Airport Executive Director Nick Sabo.

Mr. Sabo explained advanced air mobility and said that 70% of all airport passenger traffic flows through 1% of airports in the country (the core 30 airports) and that NASA has researched the issue and came up with a small aircraft solution, which has evolved into Advanced Air Mobility. The goal is to take advantage of the infrastructure that is already in place and improve access for other uses to use aircraft in ways that are more efficient and cost-effective. Mr. Sabo encouraged members to read the Virginia's Advanced Air Mobility Future report by Virginia's Unmanned Systems Center, which states that air mobility will be a \$4 billion industry in the near future. Mr. Sabo said there is a lot of potential in the future for the smaller airports, but we need to collaborate with stakeholders in order to realize that potential. Mr. Sabo took questions from Council members.

On a recommendation by the Grant Review Committee, second by Vice-Chair Yolanda Shields, the application was approved unanimously, with Dr. Blosser and Dr. Fitzsimmons abstaining from voting.

### *Shenandoah Valley Workforce Development Board (SVWDB)-Talent Pathways Initiative Proposal (TPI)*

GRC Chair Fitzsimmons asked Deborah Flippo to remind Council about what TPI is and its significance. Ms. Flippo reminded Council the funding can potentially be swiped by the Governor if an application is not approved, and that the allotment amount is \$250k. Ms. Flippo said the SVWDB submitted a Qualifications Statement and was determined to be the selected Coordinating Entity for Region 8's TPI program. SVWDB has the same footprint as Region 8.

Ms. Flippo introduced Dr. Sharon Johnson, Executive Director for SVWDB. Dr. Johnson reviewed the requirements for the project and mentioned this is a one-year project. It includes an analysis of labor, training opportunities and the gaps that exist in addition to having an asset map which will give the region an entire glance at all the resources available in the region. This will allow Council to see where there might be gaps or overlapping services. Quarterly updates will be provided, and Dr. Johnson expressed a desire to provide updates to any local government entity that is interested in this project or any organization that may want to stay informed on the project's progress. The intention is for the results of this project to be used by anyone in the region. Ms. Johnson believes the results can be used to inform the Growth and Diversification Plan Update and explained further opportunities can come from this project. Dr. Johnson took several questions from the Council and further discussion ensued.

With a recommendation coming from the Grants Review Committee and a second by Mary McDermott, the motion passed unanimously with Randy Doyle and Yolanda Shields abstaining from the vote.

**Special Recognition of Billy Vaughn, City of Staunton Economic Development Director**

In lieu of a presentation by a local economic development director, Deborah Flippo recognized Billy Vaughan, Economic Development Director at the City of Staunton, and previously at Rockingham County. Mr. Vaughn announced his retirement earlier this year and will be leaving his post in Staunton at the end of May. Several Council members shared their appreciation and stories of Mr. Vaughn.

**Public Comment**

No public comment was given.

**Next Council Meeting:**

July 23, 2024, starting at 10:00am, location to be announced.

**Adjournment:**

Chair Merrill summarized the actions taken during the meeting. Mike Goertzen mentioned the Shenandoah Valley's TechNite event on May 8 from 6pm-9pm and invited all Council members to sign up to attend. With no further business before the Council, Chair Merrill adjourned the meeting at 12:00 p.m.