



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, July 23, 2024, 10:00 am to 12:02 pm Laurel Ridge Community College

FIRST	LAST	AFFILIATION	ATTENDED
Devon	Anders	InterChange Group	
Emily	Marlow Beck	Marlow Auto Group	✓
Kim	Blosser	Laurel Ridge Community College	✓
Eric	Bond	Augusta County Schools	✓
Janet	Clarke	Clarke Consulting, LLC.	✓
Robin	Crowder	Retired K-12 Superintendent	
Dottie	Day	Navy Federal Credit Union	✓
Randy	Doyle	Shenandoah Valley Workforce Development Board	Virtual
Ashley	Driver	AD Engineering, LLC	✓
Tracy	Fitzsimmons	Shenandoah University	✓
Mike	Goertzen	Serco, Inc.	✓
John	Graves	Luray Caverns Corporation	✓
Conrad	Helsley	NSVRC Board	✓
Chris	Kyle	Shentel	
Lai	Lee	High Meadow Strategies	✓
Keith	May	Cottonwood Commercial	
Mary	McDermott	Shenandoah Valley Angel Investors	✓
Mark	Merrill	Retired Medical Professional	✓
Kathy	Moore	Moore Public Relations	Virtual
Doug	Moyer	Sentara RMH Medical Center	✓
Yolanda	Shields*	YesBuilds	✓
Bruce	Simms	Virginia Regional Transit	✓
Mike	Stolarz	UTS Systems	✓
Robin	Sullenberger	Highland County Economic Development Authority	Virtual
Anthony	Tongen	James Madison University	Virtual
Dave	Urso	Blue Ridge Community College	✓

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

In person guests included: Cody Anderson (DHCD), Jeanian Clark (LRCC), Jeremy Crute (CSPDC), Alison Denbigh (Staunton EDA), Nina Fox (Page County), Cynthia Schneider (Top of Virginia Regional Chamber)

Virtual guests included: Amanda DiMeo (City of Staunton), Brandy Flint (Director of Economic Development, Rockbridge County), Anne Herring (USDA Rural Development), Dr. Sharon Johnson (Shenandoah Valley Workforce Development Board), Betty Mitchell (Highland Co. EDA), Margaret Rockwell (McGuire Woods, LLC), Kristina Ramsey (City of Buena Vista)

Call to Order and Welcome

The July 23, 2024 Council meeting for GO Virginia Region 8 was called to order by Chair Mark Merrill at 10:00 a.m. Chair Merrill welcomed members and provided a special welcome to new members. He asked those in attendance to introduce themselves and recognized guests. Chair Merrill reminded the attendees about the public nature of the meeting and the need to follow state laws and regulations.

Roll Call

Deborah Flippo called the Council roll, and a quorum was confirmed.

Welcome to Laurel Ridge Community College

Chair Merrill introduced Dr. Kim Blosser, President of Laurel Ridge Community College, and thanked her for hosting today's Council meeting. Kim welcomed Council to LRCC's Middletown campus, emphasizing its role as a comprehensive community college serving eight localities on three campuses-Middletown, Page County and Fauquier County. Last year, LRCC served 12,000 individuals, many intending to transfer to universities or in workforce development programs. She discussed the 2026 launch of a teacher education lab school in partnership with James Madison University and Shenandoah University, aimed at addressing the shortage of teachers throughout the region and Commonwealth. Kim also highlighted the economic impact study of community colleges throughout the state and of each community college. She highlighted that a significant percentage of students are staying and working locally, and the higher annual earnings of those with an associate's degree. She further shared the college's recent developments and future plans, and the semi-annual publication of their magazine, *The Laureate*.

Jeanian Clark, LRCC's Vice President of Workforce Solutions and Continuing Education, discussed the expansion of workforce development programs and equipment, made possible with a GO Virginia grant, which was used to equip new labs for welding, construction trades, advanced manufacturing and mechatronics. She also mentioned the success of the Virginia Workforce Credentials Grant, their "stackable" short-term industry career credentials program, with high completion rates and significant employer participation.

Approval of the January 23, 2024 Minutes

Mary McDermott motioned to approve the April 2024 meeting minutes, followed by a second from Tracy Fitzsimmons. The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

Nominating Committee Report and Recommendations

Chair Merrill, on behalf of the Council and the community, thanked outgoing Council members Robin Crowder and Robin Sullenberger for their dedicated service to Region 8. He reported that two-year term extensions for Kim Blosser, Conrad Helsley, and Lai Lee were recommended by the Nominating Committee. He explained this is a motion and it was seconded by Janet Clarke and approved by unanimous vote. Dr. Eric Bond was recommended by the Nominating Committee to serve a 4-year term to fulfill the by-laws requirement for a K-12 representative, which was seconded by Yolanda Shields, and approved by unanimous vote.

Executive Director's Report

Deborah Flippo provided an informative overview of her activities as Executive Director since the April Council meeting. She provided an update on the June State Board discussions about Regions 2, 4 and 9 Project VITAL applications for significant investments in the biotechnology sector, and she highlighted upcoming deadlines and events for the next two months, including receiving applications for the executive director position. Council members

asked questions about the State Board discussions, funding expectations, and more. Deborah addressed these issues with input and additional detail provided by Cody Anderson. Deborah reported that the next State Board meeting will be preceded by a State Board Retreat, all taking place in Danville on September 9-10. She expressed her gratitude for the support she has received from the Planning District Commissions since May.

Financial Status Report

Brandon Davis of the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission provided an update on Region 8's financial status. He explained that the "financial dashboard" has been updated in an effort to try to keep all projects on one page. Brandon explained that he has consolidated all closed projects into the first column of the report. He turned the Council's attention to the current budget and funding allocations. Brandon explained and reinforced Deborah's comments that there is significant funding available for projects in this fiscal year. Brandon emphasized that if any Council members want further information, he can provide detailed information about every dollar spent for GO Virginia funding. Chair Merrill and Deborah reminded the Council that DHCD "reclaimed" unused funds from regional councils as part of the Governor's FY 2025 budget. Deborah emphasized that Region 8 received only a minor reduction incident to the fact that Region 8 had allocated a majority of its funds. Chair Merrill highlighted the benefits of Region 8 not holding back funds for future deployment as they could become at risk of a "claw back".

At Chair Merrill's request, Brandon explained the different funding streams for Go Virginia Regional Councils—competitive funding, per capita allocations, and the capacity building budget. Council members discussed the ability to pursue competitive funding, and Cody Anderson then explained the accessibility of that funding in detail, including the 2:1 (GV: local/industry) match requirements and competitiveness of the funding. Chair Merrill summarized that Region 8 could spend \$1 million on one or two projects, and fund additional projects through the competitive pool. The Council agreed that we need to start thinking creatively and strategically with more access to larger funding.

Talent Pathways Initiative Update

Dr. Sharon Johnson, SVWDB Executive Director, provided a brief update on the recently approved and contracted TPI project. Contracts were signed on July 1, planning meetings were held with the subcontractor team, and a meeting is planned for July 26 with the finance teams (SVWDB and NSVRC). Sharon also met with Sara Dunnigan, DHCD Deputy Director, to discuss strategies for success, based on GO Virginia's other TPI projects. Immediate activities will include continued reporting at R8 Council meetings, project planning, development of a communications plan with regional stakeholders, a research plan, and an Industry Coalition Plan followed by data collection. Chair Merrill confirmed with Sharon that the project is on schedule and there are no barriers at this point.

Council Chairman's Report

Chair Merrill reminded the Council that one of the priorities of the Council for this year is to "repopulate" the Council in advance of significant departures in May 2025. He provided an update on the current Council membership and the need for new members to replace/succeed the seven members who will meet the maximum 8-year term requirements in May 2025. He asked Council members to reflect on leaders in their communities and to provide recommendations/suggestions for at least four nominations particularly from Rockingham/Harrisonburg private sector, and to provide those suggestions to either Deborah or himself. He also provided an update on the ongoing search for a new executive director, with applications open until mid-August, and interviews in September. Chair Merrill also asked that Tracy Fitzsimmons provide a representative from the Grant Review Committee to serve on the selection committee. Finally, in anticipation of the next discussion about Project Pipeline, he asked Council to be engaged in potential projects as they are identified.

Projects Discussion – Closed, Current and Future

Deborah provided information about closed projects, current projects, the FY25 fund balance, pipeline development process, and timing for spending FY25 funds. She discussed resources for pipeline development such as the April 2023 Pipeline meetings with stakeholders, past and current planning projects, and other discussions with stakeholders. Chair Merrill repeated his request that Council members look through the Pipeline Development

Meetings list of potential projects and identify those in their region with strong potential. Throughout this discussion, Deborah recommended that workforce development projects be placed on hold until the TPI “roadmap” is identified, and that “economically transformative” projects (a requirement for accessing competitive funds) would likely be site development projects, like Blue Mountain site development and a study for a meat processing cooperative in Page County. Representatives from Page County and Jay Langston from SVP updated the Council on the progress of their potential and current projects. The Council members agreed to pursue competitive funding, encouraging the Blue Mountain and Page projects to apply – and considering a focus on advanced air mobility throughout the region (with input from Greg Campbell, State Director of Aviation). At Janet Clarke’s suggestion, the Executive Committee will discuss strategies further at its next meeting.

Public Comment

No public comment was given.

Next Council Meeting

October 22, 2024, starting at 10:00am, location to be announced.

Adjournment

With no further business before the Council and Janet Clarke’s motion, Chair Merrill adjourned the meeting at 12:02 p.m.