**GO Virginia Region 2 Council Meeting Minutes**

**January 27, 2023, 1:00p.m.- 3:00p.m.**

**Room 212, Roanoke Higher Education Center, 108 N Jefferson Street, Roanoke, Virginia, 24061.**

Council members in attendance: Eddie Amos (Vice-chair), Michelle Austin, Nathaniel Bishop, John Capps, Janice Crawford, Sandy Davis, Paul Denham, John Dooley, Vince Hatcher, Patricia Huber, Floyd Merryman, Marty Muscatello, Kim Payne, Debbie Petrine, John Putney, Ray Smoot (Chair), Justin Yalung.

Council members participating remotely: Kenneth Craig, Michael Friedlander.

Council members not in attendance: Beverley Dalton, Don Halliwill, Mike Hamlar, Fourd Kemper, Debbie Petrine, Luke Towles.

Staff in attendance: John Provo, Quina Weber-Shirk, Rachel Jones, Sarah Lyon-Hill, Julia Kell.

Public in attendance: Sara Dunnigan, Billy Gammel, Mary Zirkle, Jonathan Buttram, Laura Hamilton, Megan Lucas, John Hull, Amy Minnix, Brian Hamilton, Carley Graves, Emma Brown, Jason Suhr, Jeff Sturgeon, Kristen Costello, Laura Morillo, Matt Earnest, Scott Weimer, Pam Bailey, Mimi Coles, Ruth Caul, Shelley Foster, Bob Patterson.

The meeting convened at 1:00p.m. and adjourned at 3:02p.m.

***Financials Review***

John Provo reviewed the financial reports included in the board packet. Council has a remaining balance of $1,903,430 in per-capita funds. If the 2 proposals before council are approved, there will be a remaining balance of $967,718.

***Project Pipeline and Project Proposals***

***Project Pipeline***

Quina Weber-Shirk began with a brief overview of project proposals currently in the pipeline; including an implementation request from the Blue Ridge Partnership for Health Sciences, an employer-childcare request from United Way Roanoke, a partnership between Radford University and Virginia Tech to create a Radford Innovation, Certification, and Security Hub, as well as a possible statewide competitive application, in partnership with Region 3, from the Blue Ridge Partnership for Health Sciences.

***Project Proposals***

***Career Acceleration Program***

Quina Weber-Shirk then reviewedthe new project proposal, *Career Acceleration Program*, submitted by Lynchburg Beacon of Hope. This project seeks to implement a nationally innovative and replicable Promise Career Acceleration model. Focusing on companies and occupations in the Region 2 target industry sectors, the project will accelerate the training, mentorship, career development, and placement of talented opportunity youth and prime-age workers in the greater Lynchburg region. Laura Hamilton, Lynchburg Beacon of Hope, reviewed project deliverables and answered questions from the council. Michael Friedlander requested clarification regarding how the targeted workers will be identified, and how they will be connected to professional development opportunities. Laura Hamilton responded by stating the team selects candidates through their 10 year-long partnership with the Lynchburg City schools, with an estimated 600 high school graduates each year. Additionally, they have continued to build relationships with local employers in the Lynchburg sub-region. John Dooley then inquired on how the project will support long-term sustainability. Laura Hamilton responded by stating in their 10-year history, they have privately raised over $14 million through local individuals and the foundation’s employers to support the Stay Close, Go Far scholarship program through the class of 2027. The internship program is funded almost entirely by participating employers. Hamilton stated the internship program is funded almost entirely by participating employers, and their board is exploring opportunities to further the success of the program long-term.

Lynchburg Beacon of Hope’s request totaled $540,000 in Region 2 per-capita funds, with a match of $585,000.

Council members abstaining from the vote include John Capps.

Kim Payne motioned to approve this proposal, and Kenneth Craig seconded. All were in favor and none opposed.

***Bedford Regional Metal Workforce Retention Center***

Quina Weber-Shirk continued with a brief overview of the new project proposal, *Bedford Regional Metal Workforce Retention Center,* submitted by Town of Bedford Economic Development Authority (EDA). This project seeks to develop a master plan for a facility, programming and operation model of a proposed Bedford Regional Metal Workforce Retention Center. Mary Zirkle, Town of Bedford EDA, and Jonathan Buttram, Chairman, Bedford EDA, reviewed project deliverables and answered questions from the council. Sandy Davis requested clarification on the target audience. Mary Zirkle responded by stating the target audience would include existing employees from participating businesses, students within the local community colleges, as well as Bedford County Public Schools in an effort to address the governor’s initiative to ensure all high school graduates hold a credential or certification when entering the workforce. Eddie Amos inquired on which programs within the local community colleges would be considered the “anchored tenant” in which this study would demonstrate immediate success. John Capps responded that welding and sheet metal fabrication would be most beneficial considering Central Virginia Community College is over capacity within their welding program, and the school does not have the space required for trainings such as pipe fitting and metal fabrication. John Capps stated the additional space afforded from this project would be a real asset to the college and an even greater asset for the area.

Town of Bedford EDA’s request totaled $99,900 in Region 2 enhanced capacity building funds, with a match of $213,772.

Council members abstaining from the vote include John Capps.

John Dooley motioned to approve this proposal, and Michelle Austin seconded. All were in favor and none opposed.

***Council conversation. Materials and Machinery Manufacturing Cluster and Site Development***

***Cluster Update, Project Evaluation Staff***

Sarah Lyon-Hill reviewed cluster highlights including data on jobs available in each sub-region, existing in chemical manufacturing, plastics, metal work, and industrial and tool machinery. Lyon-Hill continued by reviewing top employers within the region, as well as top occupations within the cluster. She then reviewed Region 2 projects existing in site development, offering highlights from project outcomes, such as the advancement of 521+ acres to a higher tier on the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program (VBRSP), scale, 3 businesses attracted, 783 students trained, 76 upskilled employees, and over 70 jobs created or filled.

***Panel Discussion***

John Provo led a council conversation around the materials and manufacturing cluster beginning with asking Janice Crawford, Framatome, to describe needs and common misconceptions around her firm’s work within the industry. Crawford identified top needs within Framatome to be workforce initiatives such as those funded by the regional council, and talent attraction and retention strategies. Crawford continues by detailing the crucial need for engineering professionals within the company, such as Ph. D completers, as well as students who have participated in training programs focused on equipment operation within or in partnership with the higher education institutes. Justin Yalung, Inorganic Ventures, identified the primary needs of his company to be talent attraction and site development, further elaborating on the history of his company and how initiatives existing within these clusters contributed to it’s success. Pam Bailey, Bedford County Economic Development, expressed how an earlier funded project, Center for Energy and Research Education (CERE) Labs within Liberty University, proved to be such a large asset surrounding hands on training needs in the sub-region. Megan Lucas, Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance, discussed the importance of GO Virginia funding in the site development space, further elaborating on the Central Virginia Training Center Redevelopment and how GO Virginia funding not only played a critical role in the initial start of that project, but also closed the loop by providing additional funding when extra support was needed at the end of the grant period. Lucas continued by stating the first project funded by GO Virginia was a due diligence study on 6 industrial sites within Lynchburg; of those 6, most have now moved from a tier 2 to a tier 3 on the VBRSP scale, crediting the original study for the ultimate advancement of those sites. John Hull, Roanoke Regional Partnership, provided closing remarks regarding the GO Virginia funding provided for the extension of utilities to the WoodHaven Technology Park, as that first step made further advancements possible such as the rezoning of the site, the construction of a road to the site, and the grading of 30 acres on the property.

***State Updates, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development***

***Governor’s Budget***

Sara Dunnigan, Deputy Director, GO Virginia, and Billy Gammel, GO Virginia Senior Program Administrator, provided updates from the state level on the governor’s budget, 2023 Growth & Diversification Plan Review, as well as the program review conducted by JLARC. Included in the Governor’s budget is an allocation to implement the Talent Pathways Planning Grant Program, allocating $250,000 to each region, with the primary focus on the development, retention, and attraction of talent within high impact industries identified in each GO Virginia region. Dunnigan continued with an overview of the additional $4,500,000 to be allocated for implementation purposes. These funds shall be used to build capacity within the selected organization to implement strategies that may arise during the planning process of the Talent Pathways Initiative. Additionally, $20,000,000 will be allocated to qualifying regions to support the development of emerging strategies from the Talent Pathways Initiative. These funds may be used for programs that support transition of veterans into full-time employment in Virginia and programs that address reskilling or upskilling of of adults for workforce needs and employment opportunities in Virginia. Grant funds may also be used for the marketing of the program and resulting pathways.

***JLARC Review***

Sara Dunnigan continued with an overview of the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) review of the effectiveness of the GO Virginia Program. When conducting its study, JLARC will determine whether regional collaboration on economic development efforts has improved because of GO Virginia, and to evaluate whether the GO Virginia board has developed effective guidelines for use of the funds and an appropriate scoring system for awarding funds, provided sufficient guidance to regions for the development of their Growth & Diversification Plans, and collected appropriate information on project performance to assess regions’ progress in achieving their economic development goals.

***2023 Growth & Diversification Plan Review***

Billy Gammel continued with a brief overview of the 2023 Growth & Diversification Plan Review. Each region has a Growth & Diversification Plan, which is a guiding strategy to achieve its economic development goals. Councils determine projects of importance based on the strategies and goals outlined in their plan. Each council is required to review their Growth & Diversification Plan biennially while receiving grants, with the goal of this review to provide councils an opportunity to reflect on the plan and reinstate their commitment to targeted industries and goals and strategies. When reviewing their 2021 plans, DHCD will require each region to reflect and update the following criteria; performance of regional economy, situational analysis for each targeted industry sector, skills gap analysis for each targeted industry sector, plan goals and strategies, as well as partners for collaboration. All updates will be due to DHCD by October 15, 2023.

***Regional Staff Updates***

***Outreach/Marketing Plan***

In the interest of time, John Provo provided a brief overview of packet items such as the outreach and marketing plan developed by regional staff.

***Talent Pathways Initiative***

John Provo continued with highlights of the Talent Pathways Initiative, previously reviewed by state staff. At the previous council meeting, council approved guidelines related to the Talent Pathways funding proposal. Region 2 staff have received preliminary guidance from state staff to operationalize this planning effort and have engaged regional partners to collaborate on the structure of this initiative.

***Quarterly Project Reporting/LRBA Center for Entrepreneurship Resubmission***

John Provo reviewed the state deferral of the Center for Entrepreneurship proposal, stating regional staff have met with state staff, as well as the applicants, to resolve questions/challenges for resubmission for consideration at the next state board meeting. This does not require action by the regional council. Region 2 staff reviewed active project status, noting there are two current projects listed in yellow, meaning they did not meet a quarter 4 milestone and staff is monitoring. All other active projects are listed in green, meaning they have met quarterly milestones and are on track with their current deliverables.

***Council Business***

***Minutes***

Council reviewed minutes from the Region 2 Council Meeting held on November 2, 2022. Chairman Smoot asked if there were any corrections, additions, or questions regarding the minutes; there were none.

Sandy Davis motioned to approve the minutes, with Nathaniel Bishop seconding. All were in favor and none opposed.

***Nominations for Member Appointment/Reappointment***

Chairman Smoot recommended the reappointment of the following council members to serve an additional three-year term: Eddie Amos, Kim Payne, Don Halliwill, and Debbie Petrine. Council members Floyd Merryman, John Dooley, and Victor Iannello have declined an invitation to serve another term. Chairman Smoot then offered the council the name of Amy Sebring, Chief Operating Officer, Virginia Tech, to fill John Dooley’s open position within the NRV.

Sandy Davis motioned to appoint Amy Sebring, and reappointments of Eddie Amos, Kim Payne, Don Halliwill, and Debbie Petrine. Justin Yalung seconded. All were in favor and none opposed.

***Review of Current Vacancies***

Rachel Jones reviewed current vacancies existing on the council, stating there are five vacancies existing in the Roanoke sub-region, and one vacancy existing in the Lynchburg sub-region. Region 2 staff have been tasked with coordinating a closed discussion consisting of two members from the regional council and Roanoke regional representatives to bring forth membership nominations for the consideration of the full council at its next meeting on April 28, 2023.

***Election of a Chair***

With the expiration of a second 2-year term serving as chair, Ray Smoot will step down as chairman of the council, but will remain as a regional council member, as well as a member of the executive committee. Smoot thanked those who currently serve on the council, those who have served on the council in the past, and those who support the work of the council. The executive committee has recommended the election of Eddie Amos as chairman of the Region 2 Council.

Nathaniel Bishop seconded the executive committee’s motion to elect Eddie Amos as chairman. All were in favor and none opposed.

The meeting adjourned at 3:02p.m.