

The Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance and the Local Government Council hosted the Lynchburg Regional members of the GoVA Region #2 for organizational briefings and discussion, May 18, 2017, at the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance office.

Attendees: John Putney, Shannon Valentine, Kenny Craig, Watt Foster, Floyd Merryman, Bev Dalton, Dr. John Capps, Gary Christie, Megan Lucas, Jamie Glass, Kelly Hitchcock, Bob Bailey and Ben Bowman

Welcome: Megan Lucas provided a welcome.

GO Virginia Updates: John Putney provided a brief update about the previous GO Virginia meetings. Those meetings focused on the work plan and working groups. There are four identified working groups and a survey has been sent to the Region 2 board requesting participation and submission of individuals for working group participation.

Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance Briefing: Lucas provided an explanation of packet materials which included: Alliance Annual Report, executive summary of regional studies, LRTAG goals, power point presentation and FIOA flyer. Shannon Valentine noted she could email a link to the connectivity study to interested individuals. Lucas gave an Alliance overview briefing which included regional demographics, regional economic development practices, initiatives and partnerships.

Lucas referenced the upcoming supply chain study, Watt Foster questioned the process of identifying companies in the region. He also recommended to consider smaller, fast growing companies. Lucas noted the Alliance would share the list of surveyed companies as the permission is given.

Valentine noted recruitment and skilled workforce is key to regional success. Ben Bowman noted career pathways and a key mission is understanding industry sectors and developing career pathways, especially with the community college. Bowman noted in Region 2 he believes there are more students per capita in the collective region than the rest of the state. Bowman noted a talent solutions team has been developed to connect public/private schools, universities, and career services to better prepare the workforce and industry workforce needs.

The Local Government Council presentation was postponed, by Gary Christie, to continue group discussion. Bowman noted the critical importance of continuing to identify talent in the region, the feasibility of workforce center on CVCC campus and importance of skill development in young talent. Foster noted the lack of CDL certified drivers in area. Putney noted the need for machinists and questioned what CTEs are doing to create a pipeline of skilled workers. Craig questioned how closely do we work together now to identify issues in region with workforce.

In reference to the presentation for the Regional Council #2 to be held on May 22nd, the group discussed what is remarkable about the Lynchburg Region. Valentine noted higher education per capita including all universities and the community college. Putney questioned retention of college students and Lucas explained the Alliance has set a retention goal of 10% of college students for the next five years.

Valentine noted water resources are an asset and not marketed enough. Foster questioned the rail system and power. Discussion occurred about rail relationships and current property with rail. Discussion occurred about the reliability of highway system and it should be included as regional assets and the Lynchburg Region is a multimodal community. The group noted the rail access in the region is

important to the Roanoke partners in GO Virginia. Valentine noted Lynchburg is an intersection of CSX and Norfolk Southern rail lines.

Bob Bailey highlighted Liberty University's plan to grow from R3 to R1 University with the recent purchase of the CAER and the engineering focus should be included as an asset.

Putney noted the recent document by John Provo's team on the GO Virginia website and using the shell to develop talking points for May 22nd. Capps recommended showing high skills and progression of our workforce skill sets because there is a perception that Lynchburg is old school manufacturing.

Gary Christie noted importance of changes in the next U.S. Census. If it is determined 25% of Bedford residents are commuting to both Lynchburg and Roanoke the area could become one MSA.

Valentine questioned obstacles for the region. Lucas noted site preparation and natural gas as a barrier for industry recruitment. We have difficulty competing for large projects because we lack of prepared sites 50 acres or larger. Foster noted multiple sites in the region are served by propane. Floyd Merryman questioned if the airport is an obstacle. Lucas noted larger industry continues to have issues with frequent air transportation. The Alliance continues to work for a northeastern route from LYH.

In reference to potential GO Virginia projects, Lucas noted three ideas that have been briefly discussed: a centralized workforce training center, Central Virginia Training Center redevelopment, and an industrial park at the Lynchburg Regional airport.

Lucas and staff will develop the presentation for May 22nd based on suggested items and coordinate with Gary Christie and Ben Bowman.

Meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.