

## **GO Virginia Region 2 Council Meeting minutes**

March 19, 2018

3:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Inn at Virginia Tech

901 Price's Fork Road

Blacksburg, VA 24060

Members in attendance: Marla Akridge, Ab Boxley, Beverly Dalton, Sandy Davis, Dr. John Dooley, William Fralin, Dr. Michael Friedlander, Don Halliwill, Dr. Brian Hemphill, Dr. Victor Iannello, Floyd Merryman, Marty Muscatello, Debbie Petrine, Dr. Ray Smoot, and John Williamson.

Members participating remotely: Kenneth Craig, Terry Jameson

Staff in attendance: Dr. John Provo, Ronnie Stephenson, and Elli Travis

Public in attendance: Ben Bowman, Darlene Buchanan, Patrick O'Brien, and Morgan O'Quinn

Chairman Smoot convened the meeting at 3pm.

### **Council Vacancies and other business**

Ab Boxley moved that Pareena Lawrence, President of Hollins University, be forwarded to the state board for approval to fill the vacancy created by the departure of Angela Falconetti. Boxley noted Lawrence's experience with economic development and her moves to revamp Hollins' business curriculum in the area of entrepreneurship. Dr. Iannello seconded the nomination, which was approved unanimously by the council.

Chairman Smoot noted the anticipated resignation of Shannon Valentine who was named Virginia's Secretary of Transportation. Smoot shared that Secretary Valentine spoke to him of her appreciation for the council and its work to date and requested that council members from the Lynchburg area bring forward a recommendation to fill secretary Valentine's seat.

Chairman Smoot asked if there were corrections to the minutes from the Council's February meetings. There were no corrections and Dr. Dooley moved their approval. John Williamson seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

### **Updates on state action**

Dr. Provo shared that the first round of Region 2 project applicants, approved by the state board in February, are all in contract negotiations with the state and council staffs. Each project will be a sub awardee to a master contract between the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, staff to the state board, and Virginia Tech, staff to the council. The second round of applicants, approved by the council in February, are currently under review by state staff and external experts. Action is anticipated by April 10 when the state board next meets.

Provo noted the adoption by the state board of a streamlined administrative approval process for projects under \$100,000 where enhanced capacity building is a focus. Application requirements would be similar, but would only require review by state staff. This process was used for two of Region 2's first round projects and one second round project.

Provo noted that there was no news on the state budget. While both chambers of the legislature are far apart, GO Virginia is at a continuing or greater level funded.

Provo shared that the state has just informed regional councils' staffs that regions would primarily bear the responsibility for informing potential project applicants about the state competitive fund. This non-reverting fund contains almost \$11m for the current fiscal year. Region 2 staff has already been working on this, with several discussions with potential applicants underway. These projects should engage more than one GO Virginia region and operate at a large scale, addressing problems of significance to Virginia's economic competitiveness. Otherwise, they are generally the similar in form and substance to projects funded through regional per capita funds.

Provo promised that a general notice will be provided to the council's extended mailing list across the region. Council members were also asked to contribute to that outreach effort. State staff will help applicants identify local participation and match. State guidance on program requirements continues to emerge, so potential applicants should contact council staff directly with their ideas.

Chairman Smoot reminded everyone that the role of the regional council in this process is also to review and endorse proposals that come from or involve this region. He also noted that scheduled council meetings for the remainder of the quarter may be cancelled if no projects require council action.

### **Staff Presentation on metrics and evaluation plan**

Dr. Provo introduced Elli Travis to present staff's preliminary plan for collection and analysis of data from GO Virginia. Travis emphasized three distinct phases. First, we will collect performance data from the individual applicants as required by the state. Second, we will conduct analysis of aggregate project data and connect it to the program logic model, which connects project data to the goals of the Region 2 Growth and Diversification Plan. Telling this larger story will allow us to evaluate the GO Virginia program in the region. Third, over time, we will further aggregate GO Virginia data with other datasets to create a regional dashboard and data bank. This will be a tool for the Council, providing assistance for economic development stakeholders across the region. Whether directly funded by GO Virginia or not development professionals will have tools to better decide where and how to invest limited resources in support of economic growth and diversification, and measure the progress stimulated by their investments.

In discussion with council it was noted that this was no small task and would be carried out over time in a collaborative manner through work shared between applicants and staff. Council

members noted gaps in the initial metrics proposed by project applicants, which are being addressed by staff as project contracts are finalized. Council members provided substantive methodological and philosophical feedback on a number of metrics, which staff will consider as the next iteration of the plan is developed. Chairman Smoot asked about progress by other regions in this area and understanding we are somewhat forward leaning, encouraged staff to share this work with the state as a best practice for others to learn from and we from them. Smoot further stated that metrics and evaluation should be taken with the utmost seriousness and are critical to the continued support of GO Virginia.

### **Public Comment**

Darlene Burcham, Town Manager of Covington, addressed the council. She called attention to research conducted by the National League of Cities highlighting broadband challenges in rural areas, but also surprising areas resilience, including business growth across all of rural Virginia.