

Staff Report

To: Planning District Commissioners

From: Alec Brebner, Kelly Hitchcock, and CVPDC staff

Date: March 21, 2024

The following items appear on the Planning District Commission's March 21, 2024, agenda. The narrative following each heading provides context action requested or point of discussion.

Special Guests

Nicole Overley and Traci Blido will present to the Commission the state of workforce development throughout the planning district and across the commonwealth. Your questions and feedback to their presentation, "Responding to Workforce Needs," is welcomed and encouraged! The duo will note the beginning of the commonwealth's new Department of Workforce Development and Advancement and the opportunities it has provided the planning district in the context of declining federal funding for operations.

Intergovernmental Review: Bedford Rural Business Development Grant

The Town of Bedford is tapping multiple resources to contribute to its municipal comprehensive plan update. Town staff is applying for a Rural Business Development Grant from the US Department of Agriculture to execute a Downtown Strategic Plan within the broader planning process. CVPDC staff will contribute to the plan by preparing the transportation chapter.

A USDA Rural Business Development Grant requires "intergovernmental review." Typically, a grant application with this requirement yields an e-mail with a comment form from CVPDC staff to local administrative offices in the planning district. In most instances, CVPDC staff receives no negative feedback, which is interpreted as a waiver of comment. Staff subsequently prepares a letter of support for the applicant to include in its submittal to the grantor.

Due to the Town's innovative pursuit of resources and the timing of the USDA grant application deadline, the Town has asked the CVPDC to conduct the intergovernmental review at the Commission's regular meeting. Those present will be asked to complete the typical form (one per locality) for advancement to the Town together with a letter of support from CVPDC signed by the executive director.

CVPDC Rural Work Program

Each year the CVPDC prepares a work program presenting the programs and projects that staff will undertake. The rural work program utilizes the \$58,000 VDOT State Planning & Research grant, and \$14,500 local match, to execute technical assistance to CVPDC rural areas. As in past years, this program provides a range of technical assistance services from grant support and multimodal planning.

This year's draft plan includes continued assistance to the Town of Bedford with its stormwater infrastructure including physical inventory, rating, mapping, and summary documentation. In Fiscal Year 2025, CVPDC staff will also assist the Town with the Transportation Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan update. The chapter will indicate a system of transportation infrastructure needs and recommendations that include the designation of new and expanded transportation facilities and a map that shows road and transportation improvements including cost estimates. The stormwater and transportation efforts

together constitute CVPDC’s support of the Town’s boundary line adjustment and provision of services to new residents and landowners.

The Final FY2025 Rural Work Program will be presented to the CVPDC for adoption at its regular May meeting on May 16, 2024.

CVPDC Brownfields Program Update

The CVPDC submitted a Brownfield Community-Wide Assessment grant to EPA in December 2021. A \$500,000 EPA Brownfield Community-Wide Assessment grant with no cash match required was awarded in 2022 for three-year grant period, July 1, 2022, to September 30, 2025. The program has been very successful, with an estimated \$132,000 in pending Phase-I and Phase-II Assessment efforts underway. Staff anticipates the grant will be closed to new candidates (funding expended) in the summer of 2024.

The following is a general summary on the program activities to date:

Activity	Locality	Notes
Property Owner Program Information Request	Amherst (2) Appomattox (2) Bedford (2) Campbell (8) Altavista (3) Appomattox Town (4) Bedford Town(5) Brookneal (2)	This includes direct property owner communication with CVPDC, and in some cases environmental Standards/Montrose consultants, to discuss their property and potential grant program/assistance. In each case CVPDC staff followed up letter/email was provided by CVPDC staff.
Property Approval Questionnaire (PAQ) Submitted for EPA Approval	Amherst (0) Appomattox (1) Bedford (0) Campbell (3) Altavista (1) Appomattox Town (1) Bedford Town (5) Brookneal (2)	13 PAQ, or Phase 1 Assessment funding approval requests have been submitted to EPA. 100% were approved by EPA. Some PAQ/Phase I Assessment approval included multiple, contiguous, single-owner parcels.
Phase I Assessments Performed	Amherst (0) Appomattox * (1) Bedford (0) Campbell (3) Altavista * (1) Appomattox Town (1) Bedford Town(5) Brookneal (1)**	12, or 92%, of the 13 PAQs approved by EPA resulted in a completed, or under development, Phase I Assessment activity. 4 Phase I Assessments are directly involved in property transfer activity. 5 Phase I Assessments are supporting anticipated property transfer or expansion initiatives. Communication with property owners on potential EPA or DEQ Brownfield
Phase II Assessments Performed or Active	Campbell (1) Appomattox Town (1) Bedford Town (1) Brookneal (1)	Phase II activity includes development of Field Service Plans, submitted to EPA for approval, which outline the range of exploratory activity. In some cases, this has included old tank removal, soil boring activity, mitigation recommendations.

Appomattox Brownfields Area-Wide Plan	Town of Appomattox	Stromberg Gerrigan & Associates (SGA), Environmental Standards/Montrose subconsultant, guide a redevelopment/reuse planning project for Confederate Blvd, Main Street and Church Street in the Town. Project includes corridor and designated property site reuse renderings. Project has included coordination with Appomattox Town Phase 1 Assessment of vacant building.
Regional Brownfields Inventory and Prioritization	Regional	Stromberg Garrigan & Associates (SGA), Environmental Standards/Montrose subconsultant, leading brownfields inventory and parcel attribute mapping for EPA grant region.

* Denotes active or funding allocated for the activity

** Property owner did not advance Phase 1 Assessment, some work completed.

The success of the program, the continued interest from area property owners, and EPA staff program support and program staff development all indicate that the CVPDC is in a good position to submit for another grant round in November 2024. With expressed interest of the Commission, staff will reach out to EPA confirming interest ahead of the next grant round.

Central Virginia Planning District Regional Housing Study

The CVPDC received a \$100,000 Community Impact Grant (CIG) with no cash match required from Virginia Housing to execute a regional housing study. The CVPDC procured HousingForward Virginia to guide a housing market analysis to provide the region with a clear understanding of housing needs and affordability challenges and recommendations to address identified issues.

The Regional Housing Study...

- Included direct interaction with over 50 individuals, including locality staff, real-estate and listing agents, housing service providers, home builders, developers, and major employers to understand challenges, existing/foundational programs, and opportunities;
- Presents regional, county, and city housing data and summary market analysis;
- Presents existing policy and program evaluation; and
- Presents unique and tailored primary and secondary recommendations for regional, county, city, and town policy and programming.

Key CVPDC regional housing recommendations informing current staff efforts include the following:

- Implement a regional housing education campaign to assist in sharing what resources and services are available to individuals, developers, and non-profit agencies, and
- Maintain the PDCs role in coordinating regional housing goals and local, regional stakeholder coordination.

The CVPDC Regional Housing Study was developed to be accessible and easily referenced. The document is developed to be viewed on-line with interactive data sets. The entire document or sections thereof can be easily downloaded and referenced to support locality staff, regional agencies, stakeholders, and advocates.

The **Central Virginia Planning District Regional Housing Study** Executive Summary is included herein. The full report, in both interactive web-based and PDF formats, will be available on the CVPDC website at <https://www.cvpdc.org/community-development/housing> by close of business on Monday, March 18, 2024.

Annual Leave Adjustment for Deputy Director of Planning

Staff was thrilled to welcome Mariel Fowler to the team at the beginning of 2024. The CVPDC began advertising for a transportation planner in the middle of 2022. The long-term shortage of programs staff led to long hours most notably for Deputy Director of Planning Kelly Hitchcock.

Kelly was elevated to her current position in 2021 not long after Scott Smith and Phillip Gabathuler departed for other opportunities. Kelly has done a phenomenal job acclimating to the role while keeping numerous CVPDC projects and programs afloat with reports totaling merely 1.5 FTEs. With a full complement of staff in a small office, Kelly could not afford to utilize all of her accrued annual leave in 2023.

As CVPDC's longest-tenured employee, Kelly accrues 192 hours of leave annually. CVPDC's personnel policies permit each employee to carry over a maximum of 240 hours (six weeks) of annual leave from calendar year to calendar year. Kelly did enjoy some time off around the holidays of 2023 but had to check in periodically. The agency could not do without her for the entire month of December.

CVPDC personnel policies provide a cap of 240 hours of carried-over leave to limit the liability it carries on its books. The practical effect of this limit is to penalize an employee for using the time responsibly. Your executive director urges the Planning District Commission to make an exception to the rule in this instance.

The monetary value of Kelly's unused leave from 2023 is \$1,584.60. The value of savings relative to the CVPDC's personnel budget due to staff vacancies is \$59,898.