



Central Virginia Planning
District Commission
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Central Virginia Planning District Commission Executive Committee Meeting Minutes April 10, 2025 @ 1:00 PM

Meeting Location: CVPDC Offices
828 Main Street, 12th Floor
Lynchburg, VA 24504

Members Present:

Chairman Reggie Bennett, Town of Altavista
Frank Rogers, Campbell County
Sara McGuffin, Town of Amherst
Bart Warner, Town of Bedford
Gary Shanaberger, Town of Altavista
Michael Campbell, Town of Appomattox
Jeremy Bryant, Amherst County

Joining Virtually:

John Spencer, Appomattox County
Donna Witt, City of Lynchburg

Staff Present:

Alec Brebner
Sandy Dobyns
Patti Lassiter

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Reggie Bennett welcomed the Executive Committee. The meeting started at 1:00 p.m.

2. Consideration of Requests for Electronic Participation

Chairman Bennett asked for a motion for John Spencer to participate electronically. Sarah McGuffin made the motion, which Gary Shanaberger seconded. John was approved to participate in the meeting virtually.

3. Fiscal Year 2026 Work Plan & Budget Recommendation

Alec thanked everyone for attending the scheduled executive committee budget meeting. The bylaws stipulate that a committee, including the managers and the chairman, should convene to make a budget recommendation before May 15 of that year, which then goes to the full commission for a vote. Alec appreciates everyone taking time out of their day to meet.

Alec had three main topics to discuss: a work plan, a document outlining the budget highlights, and the budget itself. The good news is that there are likely fewer moving parts than last year since the CVPDC doesn't have as many new grants. Because the PDC had ten new grants last year, many of those projects are ongoing, which is reflected in the work plan. Alec highlighted a few new items in yellow for everyone's attention.

Alec emphasized that our financial condition is sound. He briefly discussed our situation during the January audit, when the auditors gave a favorable report. In the March meeting, Alec offered a broad overview of some topics to be discussed. Alec will go through the agenda item by item and welcome any questions.

The first item on the agenda is Economic and Community Development, one of the core reasons why Planning District Commissions (PDCs) were established in the 1960s. The centerpiece of Economic Community Development for PDC is the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Alec mentioned last year that staff would be seeking a grant for this and is pleased to report that staff successfully obtained a \$30,000 grant, awarded for each of the next two years, which requires a 50% match.

In addition, Alec previously discussed pursuing an agribusiness planning initiative. The CVPDC received a \$10,000 award from the Tobacco Commission to contribute to this initiative. Initially, the grant was expected to fund a standalone project. However, the award was cut in half during the Tobacco Commission meeting, which took place after PDC had already adopted its budget.

As a result, staff incorporated that \$10,000 into the CEDS initiative, adding an agribusiness component. Staff will convene farmers, producers, and extension agents to participate in this new component. Although smaller than initially envisioned, staff is optimistic about its success, as it addresses an area that has not historically been considered at a regional level. Questions or concerns regarding Economic and Community Development or the CEDS were welcomed.

Alec moved to the next agenda item, the Brownfields initiative. Staff had \$500,000 allocated for this project and spent most of it over the past couple of years. Currently, there is about \$30,000 remaining. This funding was designated for Phase-One site assessments throughout the region. There are multiple examples across the region where staff have been able to provide support.

As staff wrap up this funding cycle, they need to reapply for additional funds, but they likely won't have access to them until the end of FY26. Therefore, staff did not include any new funding from this initiative in the budget. However, the CVPDC still has the \$30,000 left and may find a suitable use within the next two months. The remaining amount is insufficient to fund a complete site assessment.

Alec moved on to hazard mitigation planning. Staff previously discussed that the Department of Emergency Management had contacted the CVPDC regarding grant funding for disaster planning. Staff applied for a hazard mitigation grant requiring only a 5% local match. This grant is valued at \$126,000. FEMA has a unique adoption process. First, the staff must complete the regional plan, submit it to FEMA for approval, and then present it to all county boards, city councils, and town councils for endorsement.

As for regional support, CVPDC staff can assist with initiatives and grant writing. In recent years, the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission (SCRC) finally received funding after being established. The CVPDC now receives over \$22,000 a year in federal funding that supports capacity building. Importantly, funding applications do not necessarily have to go through the SCRC; they could also be submitted to other sources, such as Tobacco Commission programs, which fall within the SCRC's scope. Alec highlighted a challenge staff faced: the SCRC does not reimburse CVPDC on a dollar-for-dollar basis for its time.

Alec shared that this situation with the SCRC aligns with trends observed at the national level, especially regarding specific National Institutes of Health (NIH) grants that have been canceled and restored. One significant issue was a proposal to reduce their overhead rate from 90% to 15%.

Alec shared an example of grant writing and administration. The Career & Technical Education Institute in Appomattox is progressing, albeit not as swiftly as initially hoped. Staff anticipate that CVCC will purchase the facility's equipment and is on track to start classes there in August. If that timeline is missed, the aim is to begin in January instead. Nearly \$900,000 has been secured in awards for this facility in the town of Appomattox. Additionally, staff has ongoing projects like the CDBG implementation grant for the Town of Bedford and planning grants from Madison Heights and Altavista.

Alec went on to discuss recent developments regarding regional water supply planning. Most **Executive** Committee members participated in discussions last fall about this topic. The key change is that DEQ no longer requires applicants to scope out the entire plan for \$8,800; instead, the planning effort can be initiated with that amount. The PDC directors have been comparing notes on how to allocate these resources.

A meeting in Altavista a couple of weeks ago, where the DEQ presented information, generated significant interest among attendees for the CVPDC to work on this plan. Alec wanted to bring this back up for discussion, as there's potential to pursue the \$8,800 grant in FY26. This funding could be used for data investigation and exploration, which is crucial.

Prospective consultants for water supply planning indicated that the most significant unknown affecting their cost estimates is the uncertainty surrounding the data they will find. They have a good sense of what data are available from the Lynchburg City Water Department; however, it's challenging to provide accurate cost estimates including systems with limited documentation. Additionally, larger private water users, such as GREIF, must be considered as part of the plan and must be included in efforts to gather information regarding water usage. In the past, costs have ranged from \$350,000 to \$500,000. Clarifying data availability now might help refine future estimates, especially since this plan is not due until 2029.

A significant question is how to fund this after the initial \$8,800 is allocated. The DEQ staff suggested lobbying the General Assembly for additional funding. To facilitate this discussion, Gary has suggested inviting Mark Peake, who is on the Planning District Commission, to join the CVPDC May meeting to explore ideas.

Sara feels it is essential that we start the convening process. The board needs to come together to assess what resources everyone has and determine what the region needs to produce and what the final outcome will look like. One challenge is that the first funding window passed, and Sara wants to ensure we don't miss future opportunities because we haven't organized ourselves effectively. Sara would like the PDC to take a proactive role in convening this group. She doesn't want to commit PDC funding—just time—to ensure we don't overlook anything. Additionally, we need to coordinate with Nelson County to clarify their involvement.

Alec clarified that DEQ assigned Nelson to Central Virginia and Bedford County to Roanoke. If there is a decision to move forward, Alec would discuss collaboration with Nelson County staff, who works with CVPDC staff on the Region 2000 landfill, to determine their preferred course of action. In conversations Alec has had with Nelson, they have expressed a desire to continue working with the CVPDC. They even have a board member who previously lived in California and is sensitive to the water supply issues based on his experiences there.

Sara mentioned that Nelson County's board chair was present in Altavista, and he was very engaged and interested. They both understood the importance of deciding soon whether to continue with this group or send a letter to explore other options. It seemed Nelson was inclined to stay with the current group. However, Sara doesn't want to delay, as she believes the regions that position themselves sooner will be able to access the funding.

Frank recalls that the localities, including himself, decided to keep it local until they learned more. Since the meeting in Altavista, the Campbell County team returned with the message that it makes more sense to approach this regionally. Frank is now on board with that strategy, recognizing it's a change from his previous position. Frank appreciates that Alec and his staff brought this to the board's attention some time ago.

Alec noted that, in efforts to fund this project, staff submitted a pre-application to VDEM for

assistance. Staff was pleased to receive approval. The CVPDC must now complete a full application in July.

Frank asked how the \$8,800 works. Is that per applicant? Alec stated that it's per region. Sara explained that there was a pool of \$8,800 available. If everyone accessed this fund, each region would receive that amount. However, if not everyone applied, the remaining funds would be distributed among those who did. Central Virginia missed the first \$8,800 opportunity. Looking ahead, there is a second opportunity for \$8,800 available. While it isn't a large amount, it could at least help Central Virginia begin convening and gathering data.

Frank asked if a motion was needed to include this in the work plan. Alec replied that it had already been added to the work plan, and if the board was satisfied, it could remain as stated.

Frank asked if Nelson would be included due to the watershed. Sara responded that the DEQ designated this region based on the watershed during the last planning cycle. During the previous regional water supply planning, participants were allowed to choose their own regions while this particular region has a fairly rational geography. Many regions followed this approach, prompting the DEQ to designate geographies instead; now, jurisdictions must formally request to be released from their assigned regions.

Alec introduced agenda item number six, which is also a significant issue. Frank brought this topic to his attention a couple of months ago. For those who may not be aware, ambulances used to be able to transport patients to the hospital, where they could restock their drug supplies. This allowed them to efficiently manage their resources and return to providing care. However, recent regulations have changed this process, and hospitals can no longer host drug resupply services for ambulances. As a result, every ambulance must return to its EMS station to restock before returning on the road.

Frank was ahead of the curve on this issue, anticipating the regulation's impact before it took effect. The public safety directors, however, agreed that they had already made significant progress with local solutions and that further innovative alternatives might not be necessary.

Greg Wormser, the city's fire chief, has since contacted CVPDC staff to suggest further study. He is assessing whether the system is sustainable in the long term, considering both operational costs and the time lost while ambulances are off the road.

Since, two localities—Lynchburg and Campbell—are interested in discussing this matter, staff proposed to convene a regional conversation to determine whether we can continue with the current approach, explore other options, or simply entertain new ideas for improving the situation.

Frank mentioned he initially considered whether there might be a way to regionalize the pharmaceutical operation. However, it reminded him of the broadband discussions; when they started talking about broadband on a regional level, some areas had made much more

progress than others, making it difficult to connect everything meaningfully. He believes that since this is still in its early stages and they are beta testing what they are rolling out, there might still be an opportunity for discussion. Each of them must establish their pharmacies, which involves securing facilities, stocking medications, and even installing safes in all of their ambulances. They need to order the medications, manage inventory, and handle deployment. He is uncertain if an economy of scale can be achieved in any aspect of this process.

Jeremy mentioned discussions within Amherst's EMS team and detailed inventory tracking. Frank noted that expensive medications might expire due to a lack of use in a small locality. Gary wondered if resources could be pooled for inventory management.

Alec moved on to discuss workforce development. Tracy Blido, the executive director, expects to note another 10% cut in the budget. This trend is reflected in the current budget, as they reduced one full-time equivalent (FTE) position a couple of years ago. The Workforce Development Board is generally satisfied with its progress; however, the steadily declining funding is presenting a significant challenge.

On the housing side, staff had that regional housing market analysis completed a few months ago, and one of the things recommended was to convene conversations and to do outreach around housing solutions and ideas. That has precipitated the housing summit on June 25. The CVPDC received \$2 million three years ago to invest in affordable housing units around the region. Remaining dollars from that grant appear in the FY2026 budget with a deadline to expend by the end of the calendar year.

On the topic of transportation, the TPO is the biggest funding source for PDC staff. Alec is the chairman of the Virginia Association of MPOs, and he interfaces with leadership from around the state, including VDOT and FHWA. In this role, Alec participates in negotiations over funding allocations. The CVTPO got a \$25,000 increase through this process.

The Lynchburg Multimodal Plan, being done by Timmons Group, has impressed the city staff and Kelly Hitchcock, our planning director. That exciting project will yield recommendations on what kind of transportation improvements could be funded in the city. It's trailing the Safety Action Plan by about three months, which will be wrapped up by the summer.

The Multi-Modal Plan complements the Safety Action Plan very well, because the Safety Action Plan primarily considers regional issues like speeding, enforcement, road departures, and high-speed arterials. In contrast, the transportation situation in Lynchburg is more complicated because there are more users of different types or modes of transportation.

The Thriving Communities project, focusing on Twelfth Street in the city, was granted a \$50,000 subaward by USDOT. That project looks to redevelop the corridor and create a stronger connection between the Amtrak station and Main Street itself.

On the environmental quality side, the CVPDC's Middle James River Preservation Plan, funded

by a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Federation, is on hold. The federal government has paused the source of the revenue at the US EPA.

The Chesapeake Bay Watershed program continues. The CVPDC has been awarded a \$15,000 supplemental award that can be used for a micro-grant program to fund demonstration projects of best management private practices and low-impact development to raise awareness of water quality.

Staff continues administering the Radio Communications Board and the Region 2000 Services Authority. With the Radio Communications Board, staff has discussed several challenges, the possible loss of a tower, and the strategy in terms of connectivity.

Alec paused and asked for questions. None were offered, so he continued with the budget highlights.

Alec started with project revenues and noted the expected increase in transportation planning dollars available to the CVTPO. He explained that no locality had proposed a study project akin to the ongoing US-221 corridor study. As a result, an apparent surplus in revenue is available should a need arise mid-year. Otherwise, the surplus could be rolled over into future years. Alec noted that the Safety Action Plan or Multi-Modal Plan might yield a follow-up initiative suitable for funding in FY2026.

Alec went on to highlight the membership contributions. In its November meeting, the Planning District Commission recommended a schedule of membership contributions. The PDC cannot require these contributions; it's a voluntary membership organization for local governments. Nevertheless, the Commission will ideally be unanimous in the dues structure it recommends. The CVPDC recommended that membership contributions remain the same from FY2025 to FY2026: \$1,227 per Town and \$0.675 per capita for the Counties and City. Alec opened the floor for questions and expressed appreciation to Sandy, who did a tremendous amount of work on the budget.

Operations expenses are flat at a million dollars. A big reason for that is that the staff proposes to freeze the administrative executive assistant position and leave it unfunded. Other than the stationing of a person at the front desk, staff has not found an enormous need for that position. Patti Lassiter is performing the executive assistant tasks and assisting with the Region 2000 financials. Patti is doing a great job. Also, when staff weighed the fact that the landfill would be closing in four years and that the CVPDC would be losing revenue, staff couldn't justify continuing the expense.

The current budget includes a proposed 3% cost-of-living adjustment, which aligns with the Commonwealth's budget for the biennium. A couple of bigger expenses included the PDC server, due to be replaced, for \$14,000. CVPDC's auditors notified staff that its cost will increase by about \$5,000 in the coming year.

Alec gave a summary statement, saying he believes the CVPDC is in good shape overall. He hopes the elected officials on the Commission are satisfied that the organization's expenses remain stable. Alec noted that an apparent surplus in revenues is unusual. This is primarily due to transportation funding on which no significant future project has a claim in FY2026. Alec further explained variations in the accounting for VDOT revenues versus DRPT revenues and the impact of the federal fiscal calendar. Carryover funds are routine and expected from FY2027 to FY2027.

Alec concluded his presentation. Chairman Bennett asked if there were any questions or need for clarification on the content presented. Hearing none, the chairman entertained a motion to recommend the FY2026 Work Plan and Budget as presented. Frank Rogers made the motion. Gary Shanaberger seconded it. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

4. Adjournment

Chairman Bennett asked if there was any further business or if anyone had an update about happenings in their jurisdictions. Hearing none, the chairman asked for a motion to adjourn. Sara McGuffin moved to adjourn. Gary Shanaberger seconded it. The meeting was adjourned at 1:53 PM.

X _____
Signature attest

Date