



Region 8

*Cities of: Buena Vista, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Staunton, Waynesboro, & Winchester
Counties of: Augusta, Bath, Clarke, Frederick, Highland, Page, Rockbridge, Rockingham, Shenandoah, & Warren*

GO VIRGINIA REGION 8 COUNCIL

Tuesday, January 26, 2021, 10:00am to 12:00pm

Virtual Full Council Meeting

COVID-19 Crisis/Restrictions for Social Distancing

FIRST	LAST	AFFILIATION	ATTENDED
Jon	Alger	James Madison University	X
Devon	Anders	InterChange Group	
Kim	Blosser	Lord Fairfax Community College	X
Kathlynn	Brown	SRI International	X
Greg	Campbell	Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport	X
Robin	Crowder	Retired K-12 Superintendent	X
John	Downey	Blue Ridge Community College	X
Ashley	Driver	Howell Metal Company	
Joanie	Eiland	Elk Trucking, Inc.	X
Tracy	Fitzsimmons	Shenandoah University	X
Mike	Goertzen	Serco, Inc.	X
Conrad	Helsley	NSVRC Board	X
Mike	Keyser	BARC Electric Cooperative	
John	King	Virginia Poultry Growers Cooperative	X
Chris	Kyle	Shentel	X
Lai	Lee	High Meadow Strategies	X
Connie	Loughhead	Des Champs Technologies	X
Keith	May	Cottonwood Commercial	X
Jill	McGlaughlin	Classic Kitchen & Bath	
Mark	Merrill	Retired - Valley Health System	X
Kathy	Moore	Moore Public Relations	X
Terry	Short	Waynesboro City Council & CSPDC Board	X
J.J.	Smith	Valley Proteins	X
Jeff	Stapel	Shickel Corporation	X
Rick	Till	HR Dynamics LLC	X

Support Staff Attending Included: Brandon Davis (NSVRC), Ashley Shickle (NSVRC & Region 8 Interim Program Coordinator), Bonnie Riedesel (CSPDC), Elizabeth McCarty (CSPDC), Mary Lou Bourne (JMU & E2 Advisory Committee), Jay Langston (SVP & ED Ad Hoc Committee), and Jen Weaver (SVP & Region 8 Administrative Coordinator).

Call to Order

The January 26, 2021 Council meeting for GO Virginia Region 8 was called to order by Chair Chris Kyle at 10:00a.m.

Introduction of Council Members & Guests

Chair Kyle thanked Council members and support staff for their efforts in making 2020 a successful and exciting year for Region 8 despite the challenges brought on by the pandemic. Time was then given for each Council member to introduce themselves and Jen Weaver, Administrative Coordinator, acknowledged Region 8 support staff as well as guests joining the meeting.

Presentation: Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC) Cybersecurity Program Update, Dan O'Brien & Marlena Jarboe

Marlena Jarboe, Dean of Academic Affairs at Blue Ridge Community College, gave a brief history of the Cybersecurity program funded through Region 8. She noted students of the program pay only \$300 for a \$5,000 value and receive Security+ training and the necessary certification test. She also gave special thanks to the cities of Harrisonburg and Waynesboro for their tremendous partnership. Two and a half years into the program, Dean Jarboe said it has proved to be a huge success.

Dan O'Brien, Cybersecurity Instructor at BRCC, then updated the Council on some of the program's accomplishments. The goal was for 50 students who live in Region 8 to obtain cybersecurity jobs – 68 students have now completed the training, with four graduates earning over \$100,000 per year. As well, 12 new high paying cybersecurity jobs were created in the Valley directly due to the GO Virginia program. While the pandemic drastically changed the delivery of the classes, the program had great success even going online. Being virtual also highlighted the numerous telework opportunities, which some graduates have taken advantage of. Mr. O'Brien said he is delighted the program has been extended thanks to the BRCC Foundation and the Virginia Fast Forward grant program.

Council Action

Approval of October 20, 2020 Council Minutes

The minutes of the October 20, 2020 Council meeting were reviewed. Mark Merrill motioned for the minutes to be approved; seconded by Jon Alger. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Executive Committee Reports and Updates

Region 8 Committee Appointments

Vice Chair Joanie Eiland updated Council on various appointments to Region 8 committees. In addition to Chair and Vice-Chair, the Executive Committee consists of Rick Till, who also serves on the Grant Review Committee, and Connie Loughhead, who was recently added to the Nominating Committee as well as designated Region 8 representative for the GENEDGE "Re-Tooling Virginia" Advisory Board. Ms. Loughhead already was a member of the Growth and Diversification Committee. The Executive Committee also includes Keith May, who serves as Region 8 representative on the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) sites guidance workgroup.

Dr. Kim Blosser recently accepted the position as Vice-Chair for the Grant Review Committee and Lai Lee has also accepted an appointment on that committee. Terry Short has agreed to chair the Growth and Diversification Committee with Robin Crowder added as a new member of that committee. Ms. Eiland thanked Council members for their participation on the various Region 8 committees and for the great work being done by all.

Financial Status Report

Brandon Davis, Executive Director, Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission, reviewed the financial documents included in Council packets. He noted as more projects are funded, the amount of financial documentation will continue to grow and he thanked his Director of Finance and Administration, Shelley Owens, for her tremendous work. Currently Region 8 is operating at about six months' reserve, a level Mr. Davis said he is comfortable with and would like to see continue. He directed members to page 3 of the financials which provided a "snapshot" for the entire Region 8 program, capturing total funding versus all funded projects and their corresponding allocations. The remaining documents shared were detailed budgeted revenues and expenditures reports color coded by project.

Region 8 Funded Projects Status Report

Bonnie Riedesel, Executive Director, Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission, reviewed the project status report provided to Council. To date, 11 projects have been approved and funded by the Region 8 Council. One proposal, the LOCAL-I project submitted by the Common Grain Alliance, has just been administratively approved by DHCD and will make 12 projects funded in the region. Three projects have been closed out: Rockbridge Area Advanced Manufacturing (RAAMP), Staunton Innovation Hub Tech-Lab Feasibility Study, and Shenandoah Valley Talent Solutions Strategy. The Blue Ridge Community College Cybersecurity Jobs Program will be closed out at the end of the month.

Ms. Riedesel noted the Shenandoah Valley Sites Enhancement project that was submitted in the fall was deferred by the State GO Virginia Board at their December meeting. The application is currently being revised and will be re-submitted in early February for consideration by the State Board in March.

A question was raised by a Council member on the requirements for tracking job placement through GO Virginia funded projects. Ms. Riedesel said GO Virginia requires tracking through performance reports of one year from fiscal closeout of a contract. The Council member suggested, as in the case of the Cybersecurity program, utilizing successful graduates to tap into their host organizations to promote the classes coming behind them as job prospects.

GENEDGE "Re-Tooling Virginia" Update

Connie Loughhead, Region 8 representative on the GENEDGE "Re-Tooling Virginia" Advisory Board, reported the group had met on January 25th. At that meeting, the Board voted to accept two more companies into the program. To date, twenty businesses have applied and gone through pre-assessment meetings. Ms. Loughhead gave an overview of the extensive vetting process involved for potential companies, noting that difficult questions are asked to ensure the GO Virginia grant money is spent appropriately. Region 8 currently has two companies that have been accepted into the program. Ms. Loughhead encouraged Council members to share information about the program with businesses in the region as it is a great opportunity to tap into available resources.

Sites Guidance Workgroup Update

Keith May, Region 8 representative on the GO Virginia Sites Guidance workgroup, gave a brief background on the recent formation of the group, noting in 2019 the GO Virginia policy was amended to allow funding to be used for site development. A main goal of that change was to get more sites to Tier 4 status and make Virginia more competitive against North Carolina. With Virginia being so diverse, however, it was recently decided regional GO Virginia site applications would need to be treated fairly so this workgroup was tasked with drafting documentation to guide future decisions. Mr. May reported the workgroup has had two meetings and have agreed the main goals to ensure a fair process include: data driven, transparency, excellent economic impact, and the inclusion of public or private ownership. He said the group has made progress, but it has been somewhat of a challenge due to the diverse goals of different regions.

A Council member requested an update on the Region 8 Sites Enhancement application that had been deferred by the GO Virginia State Board. Chair Kyle said he, the applicant and Region 8 staff have had favorable conversations with both the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and Virginia

Economic Development Partnership (VEDP). Plans are to re-submit a revised application in February to go back before the GO Virginia State Board in March.

Growth & Diversification Committee Update

Terry Short, Chair of the Region 8 Growth and Diversification Committee, noted the group had recently met to discuss strategies for updating the Growth and Diversification plan. The original plan was created in 2017 as part of the certification process for GO Virginia regional councils and was then amended in 2019. The 2021 update will likely be due around August and Mr. Short said the Council will be kept updated throughout the process. DHCD is working on guidance for updating the plans and should have that information available soon. Mr. Short said a focus of the Region 8 update will be to highlight outcomes of funded projects as well as garner ideas for how to potentially tap into competitive funds available. The process will start with data collection and review in addition to meetings with representatives from other regions to document successes. Upcoming meetings for the committee are being planned to keep the group updated and allow for sharing of ideas.

Public Comment

There was no comment from the public. Brandon Davis, Executive Director, Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission, acknowledged the great work done by both Chair Chris Kyle and Vice Chair Joanie Eiland during the various Region 8 transitions in 2020.

Next Council Meeting: Tuesday, April 27, 2021 starting at 10:00a.m.

Adjournment: There being no further business to come before the Council, Chair Kyle adjourned the meeting at 11:20a.m.