**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 MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday, January 23, 2024, 10:00 am to 12:00pm

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82232518697?pwd=5I3UMLTcPA7thioyknNZpjve63Fd45.1>

Virtual Only Meeting

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **FIRST** | **LAST** | **AFFILIATION** | **ATTENDED** |
| Jon | Alger | James Madison University |  |
| Devon | Anders\* | InterChange Group | X |
| Emily | Marlow Beck | Marlow Auto Group | X |
| Kim | Blosser | Laurel Ridge Community College | X |
| Janet | Clarke | Clarke Consulting, LLC. | X |
| Robin | Crowder | Retired K-12 Superintendent | X |
| John | Downey | Blue Ridge Community College | X |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Randy | Doyle\* |  | X |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ashley | Driver | AD Engineering, LLC |  |
| Joanie | Eiland | Elk Trucking, Inc. | X |
| Tracy | Fitzsimmons | Shenandoah University | X |
| Mike | Goertzen | Serco, Inc. | X |
| Conrad | Helsley | NSVRC Board |  |
| Chris | Kyle | Shentel |  |
| Lai | Lee | High Meadow Strategies | X |
| Connie | Loughhead | Des Champs Technologies |  |
| Keith | May\* | Cottonwood Commercial | X |
| Mary | McDermett | Shenandoah Valley Angel Investors | X |
| Mark | Merrill | Retired Medical Professional | X |
| Kathy | Moore | Moore Public Relations | X |
| Doug | Moyer | Sentara RMH Medical Center | X |
| Yolanda | Shields | YesBuilds | X |
| Jeff | Stapel | Shickel Corporation | X |
| Robin | Sullenberger | Highland County Economic Development Authority |  |

*\*Keith May attended after roll call. Was present for final three votes*

*\*Devon Anders left early and was not present for final vote*

*\*Randy Doyle was in attendance as a guest and later nominated and approved as a new member*

*Support staff attending included: Cody Anderson (DHCD), Brandon Davis (NSVRC), Deborah Flippo (Region 8 Executive Director), Joel Hensley (Region 8 Administrative Coordinator), Jay Langston (SVP), and Bonnie Riedesel (CSPDC).*

*Guests included: Jen Weaver (Administrative Manager, SVP), Dr. Sharon Johnson (CEO, Shenandoah Valley Workforce Development Board), Hannah Cooper (Staunton Innovation Hub), Brandy Flint (Director of Economic Development, Rockbridge County), Nora Sutton (JMU), Ann Cundy (CSPDC), John King (Region 8 State Representative), Rebekah Castle (Director of Economic Development, Augusta County), Kristina Ramsey (Director of Economic Development, City of Buena Vista), Cynthia Schneider (TVRC), Joseph Dennie (DHCD), Brian Shull (Director of Economic Development, City of Harrisonburg)*

**Call to Order and Welcome**

The January 23, 2024 Council meeting for GO Virginia Region 8 was called to order by Vice-Chair Joanie Eiland at 10:01 a.m. Ms. Eiland acknowledged Bonnie Riedesel’s upcoming retirement and thanked her for her guidance and support to GO Virginia over the years.

# Roll Call

Joel Hensley took roll call and a quorum was confirmed.

**Approval of October 2023 Council Meetings**

The minutes for the October 10, 2023, hybrid Council meeting were reviewed. Mark Merrill motioned for the minutes to be approved; seconded by Dr. Downey. The minutes were approved unanimously by roll call vote.

**Annual Election of Officers**

Per Article VI of Region 8’s bylaws, Vice-Chair Eiland explained the requirement to elect a Chair and Vice-Chair at the first meeting of the new calendar year. Vice-Chair Eiland motioned to nominate Mark Merrill as the next Chair and Yolanda Shields as the Vice-Chair for 2024. The motion was seconded by Dr. Downey and unanimously approved by roll call vote.

Chair Mark Merrill thanked the Council for the confidence placed in he and Yolanda Shields.

**Election of New Members**

Chair Merrill said the current Workforce Development Representative on the Council, Jeff Stapel, will be retiring and the new chair of the Shenandoah Valley Workforce Development Board is Randy Doylewho is ready to begin his membership on the Council immediately, upon approval. Randy spoke a few words about his passion for Economic Development. Mr. Stapel said Mr. Doyle will be an excellent replacement as a Workforce Development Board Representative and thanked him for his willingness to serve.

Chair Merrill mentioned that Bruce Simms was identified as a potential new member to be nominated who was recommended by the Executive Committee. Mr. Simms is from Frederick County and is currently the CEO of the Virginia Regional Transit. Chair Merrill provided a brief biography. Chair Merrill also provided a brief biography about Mike Stolarz, Vice President of Business Development at UTS Systems, LLC who was also recommended by the Executive Committee.

Mark Merrill motioned to nominate Randy Doyle to Council effective immediately and to nominate Bruce Simms and Michael Stolarz to Council effective in April. Lai Lee seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and passed unanimously.

**Open and Closed Projects Report**

Joel Hensley provided an update on open and closed projects. GO Virginia Region 8 has now funded 22 projects and has invested 6.9 million dollars total. The SHD Aviation Technology Park project increased the outcome goals from 1,290 linear feet of 8” water line to 4,080 linear feet since the project completed its original goals under budget. The Shenandoah Valley Center for Advanced Learning has begun to purchase equipment and the Shenandoah Valley Sites Enhancement Project also exceeded expectations and upgraded 7 of 9 sites to Tier 4 with 2 sites leading to 3 different projects totaling $319 million in investments and 485 jobs.

**Financial Status Report**

Brandon Davis of the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission provided a brief update on Region 8’s financial status and provided an overview of the financial statements from Region 8 inception to present day and how much money is left unspent for FY2024. Region 8 has $4 million in active grants. The Governor’s budget includes a reduction of unspent funds but Region 8 has spent most of our current year’s allocation. Mr. Davis offered to go into more detail with council members over the phone or by email should they have questions. Cody Anderson contributed to the discussion about sustainability of projects after they have closed. DHCD is still working on methodologies for tracking outcomes long term, after a project has closed. Deborah Flippo said Joel has been gathering anecdotal information to understand sustainable success. Chair Merrill asked Council if they would like to see DHCD put some effort into looking into long-term sustainability to which Council agreed by a show of hands. Deborah Flippo acknowledged Region 8 State Representative John King who added to the discussion regarding sustainability and the recent JLARC study.

**Grant Review Committee Report**

*Blue Mountain Site Feasibility Planning Grant*

Grant Review Committee Chair Tracy Fitzsimmons provided a summary of the Blue Mountain Site Feasibility Planning Grant Application for $78,630. This study will allow for the formation of a Regional Industrial Facilities Authority (RIFA). Jay Langston said this was a natural outgrowth of the Shenandoah Valley Sites Enhancement Project. Experts will be hired to look at marketing and viability of the site and taking the viable location from approximately 200 acres to more than 500 acres. Mr. Langston explained a brief history of the site location and that a RIFA allows multiple localities to participate and reap rewards from this type of investment. Discussion revolved around an updated marketing agreement and the potential for the owner to provide some level of investment (match) in this grant. On behalf of the Grant Review Committee, Tracy Fitzsimmons motioned that the application be approved contingent on an updated marketing agreement between the owner and Augusta County and an exploration for investment by the owner. The application was approved unanimously by roll call vote.

**Talent Pipeline Initiative-Approval of Target Industry Sector**

Deborah Flippo provided a background on the Talent Pipeline Initiative (TPI). Region 8 is one of two regions that has yet to pursue this grant and it could be a part of the Governor’s budget proposed “swipe” unless Region 8 acts quickly. Each region is allocated $250,000 to hire a coordinating entity to provide an analysis of the most pressing workforce issues across the region. The Executive Committee recommended that Council approve a study of the Manufacturing, Transportation & Logistics sectors. Joanie Eiland motioned to approve the Region 8 TPI project to focus on Manufacturing and Transportation & Logistics, Lai Lee seconded the motion which was approved unanimously by roll call vote, with Keith May provided his “Aye” vote in the Zoom meeting chat.

**Executive Director Report**

Deborah Flippo provided an update on presentations she has given in the past quarter. She discussed other events where Region 8 was represented and talked about the results of the JLARC study. She also discussed the Governor’s budget proposals including Delegate Terry Austin’s bill which proposes to restore the funding reversion. Members discussed how best to advocate for GO Virginia to legislators during the General Assembly session. Joel Hensley provided a brief update on the Ad Hoc Marketing & Communications Committee.

**Public Comment**

No public comment was given.

**Next Council Meeting:**

April 23, 2024, starting at 10:00am at the SHD’s new Hangar 6 location in Weyers Cave.

**Adjournment:**

Chair Merrill summarized the actions taken during the meeting. Mike Goertzen motioned to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by John Downey and with no further business before the Council, Chair Merrill adjourned the meeting at 11:49 a.m.