**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, April 22, 2025, 10:00 am to 11:56 am

Winchester Regional Airport – New Terminal

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| **FIRST** | **LAST** | **AFFILIATION** | **ATTENDED** |
| Devon | Anders | InterChange Group |  |
| Emily | Marlow Beck | Marlow Auto Group | ✓ |
| Kim | Blosser | Laurel Ridge Community College | Virtual |
| Eric | Bond | Augusta County Schools | Virtual |
| Janet | Clarke | Clarke Consulting, LLC. | ✓ |
| Ed | Daley | Interim Warren County Administrator | ✓ |
| Dottie | Day | Navy Federal Credit Union | ✓ |
| Randy | Doyle | Shenandoah Valley Workforce Development Board | ✓ |
| Ashley | Driver | AD Engineering, LLC | ✓ |
| Tracy | Fitzsimmons | Shenandoah University |  |
| Mike | Goertzen | Serco, Inc. | ✓ |
| John | Graves | Luray Caverns Corporation | ✓ |
| Conrad | Helsley | NSVRC Board | ✓ |
| Greg | Hitchen | Waynesboro Economic Development Director | ✓ |
| Bobby | Hobbs | Senior VP, Cornerstone Bank | ✓ @ 10:04a |
| Lai | Lee | High Meadow Strategies | ✓ |
| Tracey | Luellen | Senior HR Manager, Toray Plastics | ✓ |
| Keith | May | Cottonwood Commercial | ✓ |
| Mary | McDermott | Shenandoah Valley Angel Investors | ✓ |
| Mark | Merrill | Retired Medical Professional | ✓ |
| Kathy | Moore | Moore Public Relations |  |
| Doug | Moyer | Sentara RMH Medical Center |  |
| Cary | Nelson | President, H.N.Funkhouser & Co. |  |
| Yolanda | Shields\* | YesBuilds | ✓ |
| Bruce | Simms | Virginia Regional Transit | ✓ |
| Mike | Stolarz | UTS Systems | Virtual |
| Anthony | Tongen | James Madison University | ✓ |
| Dave | Urso | Blue Ridge Community College | ✓ |

*Support staff attending included: Alison Varner-Denbigh (Region 8 Executive Director), Brandon Davis (NSVRC)), Ann Cundy (CSPDC), Jay Langston (SVP-ExOfficio), and Cody Anderson (DHCD).*

*In person guests included: Jeremy Crute (CSPDC), Jeanian Clark (LRCC), Nick Sabo (Host), Sharon Johnson (SVWDB), Mason Bishop (WorkED Consulting), Ryan Hall (SCCF), and Mitch Moore (R8 Potential Member).*

*Virtual guests included: Lisa Botkin (SHD), Brandy Flint (Rockbridge Co), and Joseph Dennie (DHCD).*

**Call to Order and Welcome**

The April 22, 2025 Council meeting for GO Virginia Region 8 was called to order by Chair Yolanda Shields at 10:02 a.m. Shields asked those in attendance virtually and in person to introduce themselves. Shields reminded the attendees of the public nature of the meeting thus the need to follow state laws and regulations.

# Roll Call

Alison Varner-Denbigh called the Council roll, and a quorum was confirmed.

**Welcome to Winchester Regional Airport (OKV)**

Shields introduced Nick Sabo, Winchester Regional Airport’s Executive Director. Sabo welcomed the attendees to the new terminal that was supported by GO Virginia Region 8 via a site planning grant for $100k in 2023. He highlighted the airport’s recent growth, including a $24million construction project, and its commitment to workforce development in the aerospace industry. Sabo spoke about the current GO Virginia Region 8 funded project called Advanced Air Mobility Cluster & Workforce Pipeline Development Study. It is a $71K planning grant that started in April 2024 and still in progress. He is looking forward to doing a presentation of the study upon completion to the council.

**Consent Agenda**

The January 28, 2025 Regional Council Meeting Minutes was motioned for approval by Mark Merrill, followed by a second from Mary McDermott, and was approved by unanimous vote. The Election of New Council Members consisted of four new proposed members—Mitch Moore (Shenandoah University), Hobey Bauhan (VA Poultry Federation), Lisa Botkin (SHD), and Shawn Pellington (McKee Foods). The executive committee motioned for the regional council to consider, Conrad Helsley seconded, and council approved by unanimous vote. The executive committee also motioned for consideration of three term extensions—Yolanda Shields (4 years to April 2029), Emily Marlow Beck (2 years to April 2027), and Ashley Driver (2 years to October 2027). The motion was seconded by Ed Daley and was approved by unanimous vote.

**Grant Review Committee Report**

Committee Chair Ashley Driver introduced the Expressways to Power Per Capita Implementation Application. He stated that the application was very well written and one of the best submissions in years. He explained the process the GRC follows and asked the applicant to provide a brief presentation on their project.

*Expressways to Power*

Driver explained this application is requesting $401,374 to implement a new powerline training center at Laurel Ridge Community College with the first cohort starting in September 2025. The new program will offer short-term training and credentials to prepare students for power and energy work. The project design has been well informed by prominent state, regional, and local energy leaders/professionals who have worked in partnership with LRCC through the Northwestern Virginia Power & Energy Consortium. The Expressways to Power will enable students to develop fundamental aspects of electric utility line work, including how to safely operate industry equipment and install, remove, maintain, and repair low-and high-voltage distribution lines. Over the 2-year grant term, the project will offer training to a total of 4 cohorts—each lasting approximately 13 weeks. During that time, participants will be exposed to comprehensive curricula, coursework, and experiential learning that will position them for 7 industry credentials, transition to a 4-year journeyman apprenticeship program, and work in the field. The requested funding will consist of $188,178 in equipment and $213,196 in curriculum development.

Alison stated to the council that the FY25 unallocated funds totaled $609,705.21 minus the Page County Meat Processing Project of $87,450 still awaiting state approval minus the Proposed Expressways to Power of $401,374 would still leave a remaining unallocated balance of $120,881.21 at the end of the year (June 30, 2025).

GRC Chair Driver made a motion on behalf of the GRC Recommendation to support the Pathways to Power implementation grant for $401,374, and seconded by Dottie Day. A roll call vote to approve was unanimous, with Kim Blosser, Ed Daley, and Conrad Helsely abstaining due to potential conflicts of interest.

**Financial Status Report**

Brandon Davis of the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission presented the proposed FY26 Per Capita Capacity Budget of $250k with the breakdown of administration and planning expenses. The expenses have remained consistent YOY with the consideration of reallocating funds for website improvements, CRM, and contract services for the executive director. Keith May motioned to approved, seconded by Mike Goertzen, and approved unanimously.

Brandon presented the Comprehensive Financial Dashboard. The spreadsheet received some format improvements by moving the ERR Program, TPI initiatives, and General Assembly Recaptured funds under the Revenues by Funding Source section. The open projects were audited, closed a few projects, and balanced with Alison’s internal financial reports and CAMS used by DHCD.

**Talent Pathways Initiative Update**

Sharon Johnson (SVWDB) gave an update on the progress of the TPI project, next steps, and final report due to DHCD in July. Mason Bishop (WorkED Consulting) gave a presentation on findings of the study, identified key takeaways, and how it applies to Region 8.

**Growth & Diversification Plan Update**

Ann Cundy (CSVDC) gave an update on the progress of the G&D Plan and the scheduling of industry focus groups in May. Jeremy Crute presented the results from the survey and JobsEQ data.

**Appreciation of Service**

Six original Council Members who helped start the GO Virginia Region 8 council back in 2017 finished the maximum 8-year term today. As a token of our appreciation, they were presented with a custom engraved crystal.

**Public Comment**

No public comment was offered.

**Next Council Meeting**

July 22, 2025 at Blue Ridge Community College—Plecker Workforce Center starting at 10:00am.

**Adjournment**

Alison requested all council members and support staff to complete the Contact Card for emergency purposes. With no further business before the council, Chair Shields adjourned the meeting at 11:56 a.m.