**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, July 22, 2025, 10:00 am to 11:54 am

Blue Ridge Community College – Plecker Building

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| **FIRST**  | **LAST**  | **AFFILIATION** | **ATTENDED** |
| Hobey | Bauhan |  | ✓ |
| Emily | Marlow Beck | Marlow Auto Group | absent |
| Kim  | Blosser | Laurel Ridge Community College | ✓ |
| Eric | Bond | Augusta County Schools | Virtual |
| Lisa | Botkin | Shenandoah Regional Airport | ✓ |
| Janet | Clarke | Clarke Consulting LLC. | ✓ |
| Ed | Daley | Interim Warren County Administrator | ✓ |
| Dottie | Day | Navy Federal Credit Union  | ✓ |
| Randy | Doyle | Shenandoah Valley Workforce Development Board | Absent |
| Ashley | Driver | AD Engineering, LLC | ✓ |
| John | Graves | Luray Caverns Corporation | Absent |
| Conrad | Helsley | NSVRC Board | ✓ 10:23a |
| Greg | Hitchen | Waynesboro Economic Development Director | ✓ |
| Bobby | Hobbs | Senior VP, Cornerstone Bank | Virtual |
| Lai  | Lee | High Meadow Strategies | ✓ |
| Tracey | Luellen | Senior HR Manager, Toray Plastics | Virtual |
| Mary | McDermott | Shenandoah Valley Angel Investors | Virtual |
| Mitch | Moorel | Shenandoah University | Absent |
| Doug | Moyer | Sentara RMH Medical Center | ✓ |
| Cary | Nelson | President, H.N.Funkhouser & Co. | Absent |
| Shawn | Pellington | McKee Foods | ✓ |
| Yolanda | Shields\* | YesBuilds | Absent |
| Bruce | Simms | Virginia Regional Transit | Virtual |
| 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), Cody Anderson (DHCD), and Jack Honig (DHCD)*

*In person guests included: Jeremy Crute (CSPDC), Elizabeth Goodloe (CSPDC), Brandy Flint (Applicant: Rockbridge Co), Paige Owens & Robyn Sherman (Rockbridge CTE & WBL), Sharon Johnson (SVWDB), Mason Bishop (WorkED Consulting), Mary Sullivan (VTop), Kristina Ramsey (Buena Vista), Michele Edwards (Staunton Mayor), Alice Woods (Staunton City Council), and Delegate Chris Runion (11:14am arrival).*

*Virtual guests included: Joel Hensley, Liz Salvage (SVWDB member), Julie Shafferl (Ben Cline’s Aid), Jessica Blythe (Staunton ED), Lisa (Valley Health)*

**Call to Order and Welcome**

The July 22, 2025 Council meeting for GO Virginia Region 8 was called to order by Vice Chair Janet Clarke at 10:00 a.m. Denbigh asked those in attendance virtually and in person to introduce themselves. Clarke 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 Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC)**

Clarke introduced Dave Urso, Vice-President of BRCC and GoVaR8 Council Member.

**Consent Agenda**

The April 22, 2025 Regional Council Meeting Minutes was motioned for approval by Ed Daley, followed by a second from Greg Hitchen, and was approved by unanimous vote.

**Grant Review Committee Report**

 Committee Chair Ashley Driver introduced the two grant applications totaling $170,000 from Rockbridge County Economic Development. He explained the process the GRC follows and asked the applicant to provide a brief presentation on their project.

*Rockbridge Co Dual Enrollment Cybersecurity Program*

Applicant explained this application is requesting $39,826.60 to purchase essential equipment to support the cybersecurity program, including 26 Dell OptiPlex computers, 26 Raspberry Pi Microcomputers, a Cisco switch, a wireless access point, and grant administration costs. The local match of $20,000 covers a portion of the instructor’s salary, funded by Rockbridge County and City of Lexington. The program will introduce a structured, progressive curriculum in cybersecurity in partnership with Mountain Gateway Community College offering dual enrollment, which includes Computer Information Systems (DE), Cybersecurity I Fundamentals (DE), and Cybersecurity II Operations (DE), Cybersecurity III Operations Advanced (DE). Students will be eligible to earn industry-standard certifications that are highly sought after by employers in IT field such as CompTIA A+, CompTIA Network + (NET+), CompTIA Security+, and Security Pro Certification. If approved by the state, the program will be implemented immediately after purchased equipment arrives. This program forecasts 20 students trained, 16 credentials awarded, and 10 job placements per year.

*Rockbridge Co Advanced Manufacturing Workforce Development*

The grant project is requesting $131,128 which will support the purchase of equipment and curriculum for welding, fabrication, and manufacturing training, including a forklift, plasma table, welders, toolboxes, software, and safety equipment. The matching funds of $71,000 will cover part of the forklift cost and installation of permanent gas lines in the welding lab. The investment modernizes the CTE programs and supports credential attainment aligned with the local workforce needs. Manufacturing Program participants will receive Manufacturing Technician Level 1 (MT1) and OSHA Forklift Operator Certification. The Welding Lab participants will earn NCCER Core – Introduction to Basic Construction Skills with the Dual Enrollment Welding Certifications of Flux Core Arc Welding (FCAW), Gas Metal Arc Welding (GMAW), Gas Tungsten Arc Welding (GTAW), and Shielded Metal Arc Welding (SMAW). The program forecasts 30 students trained, 30 credentials awarded, and 20 job placements per year.

Alison stated to the council that these grant proposals will use up the remaining FY25 unallocated funds totaling $120,881.21 as of June 30, 2025.

Lai Lee made a motion to support the Rockbridge Co Dual Enrollment Cybersecurity implementation grant for $39,826.60 and seconded by Dave Urso. A roll call vote to approve was unanimous. Lisa Botkin made a motion to support the Rockbridge Co Advanced Manufacturing Workforce Development Program for $131,128 and seconded by Conrad Helsley. A roll call vote to approve was unanimous.

**Financial Status Report**

 Brandon Davis of the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission presented the Comprehensive Financial Dashboard. It was indicated that GoVaR8 has two current grant projects with project extensions – The Capacitor Incubator Program has been extended to 12/31/25 and the Winchester AAM Pipeline Study has been extended to 11/1/2025 (both approved by DHCD). After taking into account the approval of the two current grant proposal above (presented today), the cumulative FY26 per capita available balance is $1,061,800.90. It is anticipated to have the Ag Innovation Center – BV project and SHD Technology Park project formally closed out prior to next quarter.

**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 FINAL study (PowerPoint Presentation Attached) and explained the proposed solutions for the Manufacturing and Transportation & Logistics Industry Workforce Issues. The Final TPI report will be distributed to Region 8 via email (using Hubspot CRM database), posting on new GoVaR8 social media channels, SVWDB will distribute, and Alison will arrange a follow-up virtual meeting for anyone interested in attending for Q&A session.

**Growth & Diversification Plan Update**

 Jeremy Crute (CSVDC) gave an update on the progress of the G&D Plan in regard to the completion of the regional SWOT analysis. The plan review timeline and next steps were explained via the Power Point Slide (attached) which showed the 9/15/25 G&D Plan Draft Deadline to DHCD, GoVaR8 Plan approval on 10/28/25, and final plan submission to DHCD by 10/31/25.

**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.

**Director’s Report**

Alison showed a slide on Upcoming Events, Quarter 3 objectives, links to Statewide AI initiatives, and links to GoVaR8 forms of connectivity (website, email, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram).

**Public Comment**

 No public comment was offered.

**Next Council Meeting**

October 28, 2025 at Mountain Gateway Community Collete—Joe Wilson Workforce Center starting at 10:00am.

**Adjournment**

With no further business before the council, Vice-Chair Clarke adjourned the meeting at 11:54 a.m.