

AGENDA

**VIRGINIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP AUTHORITY
RURAL VIRGINIA ACTION COMMITTEE MEETING
September 13, 2023
2:45 P.M. – 3:45 P.M.**

**One James Center, 9th Floor – VEDP Board Room
Richmond, Virginia**

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| 2:45 p.m. – 2:48 p.m. | Welcome/Call to Order – Nick Rush, Chair |
| 2:48 p.m. – 2:49 p.m. | Public Comment Period |
| 2:49 p.m. – 2:52 p.m. | Approval of Minutes for 3/8/2023 Meeting |
| 2:52 p.m. – 3:02 p.m. | VEDP Update – Jason El Koubi, Nicole Riley, and Abigail Wescott |
| 3:02 p.m. – 3:10 p.m. | Tobacco Revitalization Region Commission Update – Abigail Wescott
Confirmed: James Campos, Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Trade, Acting Director, Tobacco Revitalization Region Commission |
| 3:10 p.m. – 3:40 p.m. | The Evolve Central Appalachia Project – Abigail Wescott
Confirmed: Will Payne, Managing Director, Energy DELTA Lab
Richard Bishop, Ph. D., Professor of Practice Principal Investigator, Evolve CAPP Project, Virginia Tech Mining & Minerals Engineering |
| 3:40 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. | Committee Roundtable – Nick Rush |
| 3:45 p.m. | Adjournment |

Minutes
Rural Virginia Action Committee Meeting
Board of Directors of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership
March 8, 2023
12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.
One James Center, 9th Floor – Board Room
Richmond, Virginia

Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:30 p.m. by Chair Rush, who noted that a quorum was present.

Members present: Chair Nick Rush, Carrie Chenery, Mimi Coles, Stephen Edwards, Rick Harrell, John Hewa, and Secretary Caren Merrick.

Members absent: Nancy Agee

Other Board Members: Bill Hayter, Will Sessoms, and Pace Lochte

VEDP staff present: Stephanie Agee, Lindsay Akers, Lesley Brown, Jamie Canup, Star Cranston, Nicole David, David Devan, Jason El Koubi, Stephanie Florie, Stephen Hartka, Chris Hughes, Jennifer Garrett, Angie Jenkins, Heather McKay, Tim Stuller, Lisa Wallmeyer, and Abigail Wescott

Virtual guests present: Senator Todd Pillion and Delegate Israel O'Quinn

In-person guests: Kim McKay, Evan Price, Kendra Shifflett, and Nicole Riley

Public Comment Period

Chair Rush asked if any members of the public wished to comment. There were none.

Approval of Minutes for December 7, 2022

Chair Rush requested approval of the minutes from the December 7, 2022, meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Harrell, which was seconded by Secretary Merrick, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Inland Port Study

Chair Rush welcomed virtual guests Senator Todd Pillion and Delegate Israel O'Quinn and thanked them for making time to join the discussion.

Mr. El Koubi introduced Adam Watkins to deliver presentations on the Inland Port Study and Southside – Southwest Economic Study.

Mr. Watkins explained that the General Assembly tasked VEDP and The Port of Virginia to assess the feasibility of establishing an inland port in Region 2000 (Central Virginia Planning District Commission), the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission, or the City of Bristol and submit findings to the General Assembly no later than November 1, 2022. Mr. Watkins said that Moffatt & Nichol was hired by VEDP and The Port to complete the feasibility study.

Mr. Watkins spoke about the existing inland port in Front Royal, VA and explained the mechanics of an inland port. He highlighted the key players needed for creating an inland port, including The Port of Virginia, the rail carrier, and customers (primarily manufacturing and logistics companies) of the inland port.

Mr. Watkins said the inland port feasibility analysis also considered competition from alternative intermodal facilities. He explained that the study regions will face limited competition from existing intermodal facilities in neighboring states.

Mr. Watkins provided an overview and summary of the study, including the characteristics of successful inland ports, specific site/location analyses, recommendations, and next steps. Mr. Watkins also discussed market conditions that tend to be ideal for an inland port. The study found that based on existing demand, the Mount Rodgers region should consider steps to further study the development of an inland port in the region. The study also found that both regions have opportunities for expanding rail-centric development.

Mr. Watkins explained that VEDP's role in establishing an inland port would be to support locality efforts to target business investment and develop sites for potential users of the inland port.

Following Mr. Watkins' presentation, Senator Pillion and Delegate O'Quinn discussed their efforts to further the development of another inland port in the Commonwealth.

Committee members discussed the information provided and asked questions regarding the number of lifts needed to make an inland port viable and the importance of the participation of the rail companies in any efforts to develop an inland port.

Southside – Southwest Economic Study

Mr. Watkins provided the committee with an overview of the Southside-Southwest Virginia Economic Study. He explained that the General Assembly directed VEDP to review and determine whether barriers currently exist for development of infrastructure and supply chain investments in Southside and Southwest Virginia. The General Assembly also asked VEDP to review incentives

that the Commonwealth and its localities should utilize or develop to retain economic development and promote new infrastructure and supply chain investments in Southside and Southwest Virginia and in other areas of the Commonwealth. Mr. Watkins added that for purposes of this study Southwest and Southside were defined as GOVA regions 1 and 3, respectively.

Mr. Watkins said that VEDP's Economic Competitiveness and External Affairs divisions collaborated on this study, in addition to over 50 external stakeholders.

Mr. Watkins reviewed the five strategic focus areas that are critical for accelerating regional growth in target industries, which include capacity building, workforce, sites and buildings, infrastructure, and incentives/cost of doing business. Mr. Watkins shared the recommendations that are being proposed for each of these focus areas based on the study's findings and discussed each in detail.

Following Mr. Watkins' presentation, the Committee discussed the study's findings and recommendations and the need for funding to address the challenges identified in the study.

Secretary Merrick described the nonprofit organization, Golden LEAF Foundation, in North Carolina and highlighted efforts from that organization that could be considered for Virginia.

Topics and Discussion – The Year Ahead

Chair Rush asked meeting participants for their ideas on guest speakers and/or topic suggestion for upcoming Committee meetings.

Mr. Edwards suggested inviting a speaker from the Eastern Shore/Wallops Island, specifically mentioning General Mercer.

Secretary Merrick suggested energy, water, housing, and broadband access as possible topics to explore at future meetings.

Chair Rush said he would like to discuss the entire Rural ecosystem at future meetings, including availability of capital, hotels, schools, and quality of life issues.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Rush adjourned the meeting at 1:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lesley Brown
Acting Recording Secretary



Cumberland Gap National Historical Park,
Lee County









TASKFORCE FOR RURAL VIRGINIA ECONOMIC GROWTH

September 13, 2023

PAST UNDERSTANDING: RURAL THINK TANK

- Over the years, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) has given much attention to the Commonwealth's rural communities.
- In addition to the VEDP Board's Rural Virginia Action Committee, the Rural Think Tank was created to expand the attention on rural economic development efforts outside the Board and to local leaders.
- The group of around ten members consisting of local and regional economic development organizations, business leaders, and other organizations discussed and aligned on clear priorities for rural economic development, helping VEDP's strategic initiatives for rural localities.
- The group stopped meeting in 2020 due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

PRIOR RURAL THINK TANK PRIORITIES

Recommendations	Status	Initiative description
1. Rural marketing		Brand rural Virginia as the most attractive, most competitive locations in the U.S. for manufacturing and other sectors open to rural locations (e.g., BPO, data centers, distribution)
2. Ubiquitous broadband		Leverage public-private partnerships and/or incentives to achieve ubiquitous broadband coverage in Virginia within 5-7 years
3. Expanded site inventory		Dramatically expand competitive site inventory, ranging from mega sites to business parks depending on the regional strategy
4. Customized workforce		Create a world-class, turnkey, customized workforce development incentive program for competitive economic development projects to build confidence that a high-quality, trained workforce can be secure
5. Partnerships to fund projects		Partner with the Tobacco Commission, VCEDA and other economic development funding sources in rural Virginia to target and attract high-impact projects to rural Virginia communities through private capital investment partnership opportunities
6. Tax / incentive changes		Encourage state and local leaders to work together in a bipartisan fashion to make state and/or local tax changes to ensure that Virginia's tax burden rankings for new, job-creating investments are no worse than those for existing firms
7. Community competitiveness		Bring back some form of a community competitiveness/readiness index
8. Civic leadership		Rebuild civic leadership with the next generation in rural Virginia

2023 REVAMP: TASKFORCE FOR RURAL VIRGINIA ECONOMIC GROWTH

- The re-constituted Rural Think Tank will be the Taskforce for Rural Virginia Economic Growth.
- The Taskforce will give a platform and voice to the Commonwealth's rural communities.
- With participation and support from all levels of government within the Commonwealth, the Taskforce will cultivate a positive impact through action-oriented collaboration. The group will focus on targeting areas of concern and working to find sustainable solutions.
- The Taskforce's mission will work with various state partners, showing collaboration and partnership across the Commonwealth between Virginia's rural communities and other state entities.

2023 REVAMP: ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT TEAM

- VEDP will organize and implement a rural-focused group comprised of the leadership of all levels within rural parts of Virginia.
- Taskforce membership will consist of 12 to 15 members representing diverse rural geographic regions.
- VEDP has been working closely with the Tobacco Commission and the Center for Rural Virginia in the formation of the Taskforce's revamp.
- VEDP Board's Rural Virginia Action Committee would serve as an advisory group to communicate current and new pain points and share the progress of actionable steps.

TASKFORCE MEMBERSHIP



Elected Officials

- General Assembly
 - House of Delegates
 - Senate
- Local Officials
 - Rural Community Elected Officials



Economic Development Partners

- VEDP
- Virginia's Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission
- Center for Rural Virginia
- VEDA
- DHCD
- VDACs



Other Partners

- Education Sector
- Business Sector Experts

NEXT STEPS

- Confirming membership
- Kickoff meeting is being set for this fall
- Update at December Board Meeting



Angel Overlook, Patrick County

Q&A