

Minutes
Rural Virginia Action Committee Meeting
Board of Directors of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership Authority
March 8, 2017
901 East Cary Street
One James Center, 9th Floor – Board Room
Richmond, Virginia

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Chairman Ned Masee, who noted that a quorum was present.

Committee Members Present: Mary Rae Carter, Mark Heath, David Hudgins, Mike Ligon, Ned Masee, Dan Pleasant, Gary Walker, Dan Clemente (ex officio)

Committee Members Absent: Elizabeth Crowther

VEDP Staff Present: Carolyn Elliott, Stephanie Florie, Jennifer Garrett, Dan Gundersen, Jay Langston, Rob McClintock, Sandi McNinch, Stephen Moret, Alex Thorup

Guests Present: Terry Ramsey, Chris Lumsden

Public Comment Period

Chairman Masee solicited public comments. There were no public comments given.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Masee asked for approval of the minutes from the December 7, 2016, meeting. A motion was made by Gary Walker, seconded by David Hudgins and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Virginia's Rural Challenge in Perspective/Rural Development Opportunities

Stephen Moret noted that nearly half of Virginia's localities have been losing population, especially the rural areas. Most Virginia localities have experienced some employment growth but the rural areas have experienced very slow job growth. What is happening in Virginia is happening across America. There are agencies that can be partnered with for assistance such as VCEDA, UVA Wise and the Tobacco Commission. Mr. Moret noted rural area need and educated and diverse workforce, better access to customers and supplies, and better "trailing spouse" opportunities. He said that the VEDP strategic plan will look to improve the competitiveness of each region, as well as the Commonwealth as a whole. Mr. Clemente noted that it is best to know the amount of money available and then determine what can be accomplished with that amount; for example, if we invest X dollars in a project, we will be able to make

what accomplishments with that amount of money. When asked about the amount of funding needed for this committee, Mr. Moret noted that with \$15 million/year, VEDP could have the best workforce unit in the country. While VJIP is popular because it is easy to use, it does not address the workforce problem. In Louisiana, they worked through the community colleges. He said during his recent regional visits, the community colleges he has spoken with have been very enthused. He stated that more funds are needed to identify sites and that we need to look at an economic growth strategy for Virginia. While most regions have a core infrastructure, it was questioned by Mr. Clemente as to whose responsibility it is to do research in this area, noting that VDOT is not necessarily the responsible party. Mary Rae Carter was asked if transportation had been a topic in any of her discussions and she said it had not. This seems to be a concern with the regional groups. It was noted by several committee members that perhaps the committee needs to consider transportation as a main focus for this group. It was concurred that this is an important subject to the rural area. In closing, Mr. Clemente commented that each region needs to look at their area and resources.

Next Meeting and Adjournment

The next scheduled Committee meeting is June 7, 2017. There being no further business, Chairman Masee adjourned the meeting at 2:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Moret
Secretary