

Minutes
Rural Virginia Action Committee Meeting
Board of Directors of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership
October 21, 2020
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.
[Zoom Meeting]

Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:02 p.m. by Chair Rick Harrell, who noted that a quorum was present.

Members present: Secretary Brian Ball, Carrie Chenery, Dan Clemente*, Deborah Flippo, Chair Rick Harrell, Secretary Aubrey Layne, Dan Pleasant, Ned Masee, *ex officio*

*Please note that Ned Masee appointed Dan Clemente to this committee for the duration of the meeting

Members absent: None

Other Board Members: Marianne Radcliff, and Xavier Richardson

VEDP staff present: Lindsay Barker, Vince Barnett, Christine Bell, Sean Brazier, Jamie Canup, David Devan, Jason El Koubi, Emily Fay, Stephanie Florie, Jennifer Garrett, Sandi McNinch, Lori Melancon, Debbie Melvin, Nathalie Molliet-Ribet, Stephen Moret, Christy Morton, Carrie Vuori, and Adam Watkins

Guests present: Liz Povar, and Deputy Secretary Cassidy Rasnick

Opening Remarks

Chair Harrell welcomed guests to the electronic meeting of VEDP's Rural Virginia Action Committee. Chair Harrell shared these remarks: "As you well know, the Governor declared a state of emergency in March due to the potential spread of COVID-19. Because an in-person meeting is unsafe and we wish to discharge our lawful purposes, duties and responsibilities, we are permitted by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, as amended by the State Budget, to meet by electronic means without a quorum of our members being physically assembled at one location.

We are gathered now in a Zoom environment that is open to the public. The agenda suggests that the Committee will enter into a closed meeting for a portion of our meeting. When the Committee is ready to enter into a closed meeting, the Committee members and VEDP support staff necessary to support the closed meeting will leave this public Zoom environment and gather in a separate Zoom environment. When the closed meeting is concluded, the Committee members will rejoin this public Zoom environment and the public portions of the meeting will continue. Should anyone from the public get disconnected from the public Zoom environment

and be unable to re-engage, he or she should call (804) 278-7702 and speak to Jennifer Garrett. We will do our best to re-engage and will halt the public portion of the meeting until the connection can be re-established.

Here are reminders of a few things that will be different than our in-person meetings:

- Everything on the public Zoom environment will be recorded and the recording will be posted on VEDP's website.
- All votes will be taken by roll call.
- Please use the mute function, unless you are speaking—and remember to unmute at the appropriate time.
- During the public comment period, any member of the public wishing to make a comment may simply unmute and speak at that time, or use the Chat function and ask to be given an opportunity to speak.
- Likewise, during the meeting, Committee members may simply unmute themselves to speak or use the Chat function.”

Public Comment Period

Chair Harrell solicited public comments. There were none.

Approval of Minutes for August 5, 2020 Meeting

Chair Harrell asked for approval of the minutes from the August 5, 2020, meeting. Mr. Massee appointed Mr. Clemente to this Committee for the duration of this meeting. A motion was made by Secretary Layne and seconded by Mr. Dan Pleasant and the minutes were approved as presented by roll call vote:

Upon the vote:	Secretary Ball	Absent for vote
	Ms. Chenery	Absent for vote
	Mr. Clemente	Aye
	Ms. Flippo	Absent for vote
	Mr. Harrell	Aye
	Secretary Layne	Aye
	Mr. Pleasant	Aye

Update on Economic Development (ED) 101 & VEDP Orientation – Christy Morton

Ms. Morton began by saying she had mentioned to the committee at the last Rural Action committee meeting in August, that we would be conducting the VEDP Orientation differently than we have in the past by going virtual.

Ms. Morton gave an update on the ED 101 session and VEDP Orientation that was held in a Zoom environment in August. Ms. Morton mentioned that we added an ED 101 session, one hour prior to the beginning of the regular VEDP Orientation. We invited Chief Administrative Officers (County Administrators, City Managers, etc.) from localities across Virginia that do not have a designed Economic Development director and encouraged them to invite board members and any others that might benefit. Ms. Morton also shared that in the past, the

Orientation has always been held in person, but due to space restrictions in our Board Room, the maximum number of outside attendees was approximately 20 people.

Due to COVID-19, Ms. Morton mentioned we held this virtually and opened it up so that more people could attend. Ms. Morton was pleased to report that the ED 101 session which took place from 8:30am – 9:30am, was led by Mr. Moret and had 76 participants. Ms. Morton then shared that the virtual Orientation had 69 participants. Overall, both events were very successful, and we received great feedback. We will be including the ED 101 with the Orientation moving forward. Our next virtual ED 101 and Orientation will be held on December 3.

Recovery of Rural and Small Metros – Stephen Moret

Mr. Moret gave an update on where we are in recovery in rural Virginia and how it compares to the rest of the Commonwealth. He mentioned that when you look at the unemployment rate, although it is technically accurate, it doesn't reflect the true loss of employment that has occurred. Virginia has seen a decrease in the unemployment rate, but the bad news is the workforce participation rate has gone down dramatically.

Mr. Moret shared that the Commonwealth as a whole, got down to an unemployment rate in August of about 6.1% seasonally adjusted. If you look at the total change in employment from February, before the pandemic, through August, we're down about 6.3% in total employment, order of magnitude 240,000 or so jobs. Mr. Moret said we anticipate that more than 200,000 people who were working in February will still not be employed in January 2021.

Mr. Moret mentioned there is quite a range across the Commonwealth. Northern Virginia, greater Richmond, Central Virginia, greater Fredericksburg, etc., have relatively high percentages. Some of the smaller regions are facing smaller job losses, but their pace of recovery is likely to be slower. Mr. Moret explained that much of the variations have to do with the difference in industry mix across regions. For example, those regions that have more hospitality, more retail, and more healthcare, tend to be more heavily impacted than others. Mr. Moret said that in smaller regions, the extent of impact was greatly dependent upon whether some of their bigger employers like manufacturers experienced layoffs and whether those have come back yet.

Mr. Moret shared that current forecasts suggest that rural Virginia will take roughly three years longer to recover than the largely urban or more metro regions of Virginia. Moody's in general is expecting that it's going to take a few years for Virginia as a whole to regain its pre-pandemic employment levels. For this committee, the most concerning thing is the delay of years from when urban or metro Virginia gets back to where it was pre-pandemic versus the predominately rural localities in the Commonwealth.

Mr. Moret pointed out that the pandemic has accelerated trends that were underway like digitization and the implementation of artificial intelligence mechanisms, but it has also exacerbated equity divides that were already there. People who have been the most heavily impacted are largely disadvantaged populations and people of color.

Mr. Moret shared that our top priority in the next several months will be working with the administration, the General Assembly and others, and our partners to try and accelerate economic recovery to help the 200,000 or so people that were working, to help them get back to

work. Mr. Moret highlighted that it does look like, if Moody's is correct, it could take our rural regions longer to get back to full strength than the rest of Virginia.

Secretary Layne asked Mr. Moret if he was finding that the participation rate is being impacted by a lot of women who are having to stay home because of closed schools. Mr. Moret said it's a variety of reasons, but certainly the combination of closed schools in situations where people have younger children, as well as situations where people who normally use childcare are not currently able to use childcare. Mr. Moret said we don't have an exact breakdown, but he would anticipate these two factors are the biggest things that are holding back the participation rate.

Closed Meeting

Chair Harrell stated that the committee would move into Closed Session to discuss the Local Regional Competitiveness Initiative (LRCI). A motion was made by Ms. Chenery and seconded by Mr. Clemente, and unanimously approved by roll call vote, the Committee moved into a closed meeting.

I MOVE THAT THE RURAL VIRGINIA ACTION COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE VIRGINIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP AUTHORITY CONVENE A CLOSED MEETING PURSUANT TO VIRGINIA CODE §2.2-3711(A)(50) TO ENGAGE IN A DISCUSSION OR CONSIDERATION OF THOSE PORTIONS OF VEDP'S STRATEGIC PLAN, MARKETING PLAN OR OPERATIONAL PLAN, THAT MAY RELATE TO TARGET COMPANIES, SPECIFIC ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES AND STAFF FOR MARKETING ACTIVITIES, AND SPECIFIC MARKETING ACTIVITIES THAT WOULD REVEAL TO THE COMMONWEALTH'S COMPETITORS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS THE STRATEGIES INTENDED TO BE DEPLOYED BY THE COMMONWEALTH, THEREBY ADVERSELY AFFECTING THE FINANCIAL INTEREST OF THE COMMONWEALTH.

Upon the vote:	Secretary Ball	Aye
	Ms. Chenery	Aye
	Mr. Clemente	Aye
	Ms. Flippo	Aye
	Mr. Harrell	Aye
	Secretary Layne	Aye
	Mr. Pleasant	Aye

Ms. McNinch stated we should leave this public environment and go to the link for the other Zoom meeting for the closed session.

Open Discussion

Back in Open Meeting, Certification of Closed Meeting – Followed by a Roll Call vote:

WHEREAS, THE RURAL VIRGINIA ACTION COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE VIRGINIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP AUTHORITY HAS CONVENED A CLOSED MEETING ON THIS DATE PURSUANT TO AN AFFIRMATIVE RECORDED VOTE AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE VIRGINIA FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT; AND

WHEREAS, THE ACT REQUIRES A CERTIFICATION BY THIS COMMITTEE THAT SUCH CLOSED MEETING WAS CONDUCTED IN CONFORMITY WITH THE ACT;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, THAT THE COMMITTEE CERTIFIES THAT, TO THE BEST OF EACH MEMBER'S KNOWLEDGE, (I) ONLY PUBLIC BUSINESS MATTERS LAWFULLY EXEMPTED FROM OPEN MEETING REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE ACT WERE DISCUSSED IN THE CLOSED MEETING TO WHICH THIS CERTIFICATION RESOLUTION APPLIES, AND (II) ONLY SUCH PUBLIC BUSINESS MATTERS AS WERE IDENTIFIED IN THE MOTION BY WHICH THE CLOSED MEETING WAS CONVENED WERE HEARD, DISCUSSED, OR CONSIDERED IN THE CLOSED MEETING BY THE COMMITTEE.

Upon the vote:	Secretary Ball	Absent for the vote
	Ms. Chenery	Aye
	Mr. Clemente	Aye
	Ms. Flippo	Aye
	Mr. Harrell	Aye
	Secretary Layne	Aye
	Mr. Pleasant	Aye

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Harrell adjourned the meeting at 1:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Bell
Acting Recording Secretary