



GO Virginia Region One  
Executive Committee Meeting  
December 13, 2018  
Minutes

The GO Virginia Region One Council Executive Committee convened on December 13, 2018 at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon, Virginia. Executive Committee members present were Chairman, Mike Quillen, Donna Henry, and Lois Clarke. Region One Support Staff present was Robyn Lee.

Chairman Mike Quillen called the meeting to order.

**Letter of Support – “Bring USDA to Bristol Effort”**

The Executive Committee meeting was scheduled following a recommendation by the GO Virginia Region One Council at their December 4, 2018 meeting to consider a letter of support for Washington County and the City of Bristol’s attraction efforts to relocate the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) offices to Bristol. A quorum was not present at the Council meeting at the time this topic was discussed, therefore a recommendation to act on a letter of support was made to the Executive Committee. Chairman Quillen asked Jason Berry, Washington County Administrator, Whitney Bonham, Washington County Economic Development Director, and Randall Eads, Bristol City Manager to provide a background and update on the initiative.

- Jason Berry provided a history of the attraction effort, indicating that the One Alpha Place location is one of 135 sites that have submitted an expression of interest. Jason stated that they believe they will make the cut for the short list, which should be announced in January.
- Whitney Bonham shared that Washington County submitted a five page proposal in which they emphasized the readiness of the site and the ideal location, as well as other positive features including affordability, telecommunications capacity, land grant proximity, and quality of life. In addition, they are highlighting the site’s national significance and relevance.
- Randall Eads thanked the Executive Committee for considering the support letter and indicated that they are excited for the employment opportunities USDA could bring for the area.
- Chairman Quillen indicated that Virginia Tech is considering a letter of support after initial feedback was received that the USDA offices are interested in proximity to an agriculture research institute. He also named many of the other Virginia institutions that have submitted an expression of interest, noting that the Washington County/City of Bristol submission is the only one in Region One. Chairman Quillen communicated that he is working to connect with Senator Warner and Senator Kaine to engage their support.

Donna Henry made a motion to approve a letter of support from the GO Virginia Region One Council for the “Bring USDA to Bristol” effort. The motion was seconded by Lois Clarke and approved.

### **State Board Updates**

Chairman Quillen participated in a call with State Board Chairman Dubby Wynne and Vice Chairman Ben Davenport the previous week. He informed the Executive Committee that they are working on a white paper to communicate State Board priorities for GO Virginia funding. Chairman Quillen mentioned that the State Board is interested in hiring a regional entrepreneurship position for each region to build the entrepreneurial ecosystem. He noted that there is work being done by many organizations in this arena, including Opportunity SWVA, and he will continue to keep the Council updated as to how this proceeds.

Chairman Quillen notified the committee that the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development did not recommend the Virginia Highlands Community College: Advanced Technology & Workforce Center project to the State Board for funding. DHCD indicated that the State Board is not interested in funding capital projects such as this request. In addition, they would like to see the project better align with the traded sectors. Region One Support Staff is working with DHCD and VHCC to restructure the project to meet DHCD and the State Board's needs. Robyn Lee mentioned that DHCD administratively approved the VT: Coal to Graphene Market Study project in the amount of \$25,000. The State Board accepted this approval at their meeting on December 11, 2018.

### **Adjournment**

Chairman Quillen adjourned the meeting and thanked the Executive Committee, Washington County staff, and City of Bristol staff for their attendance.