



GO VIRGINIA REGION ONE COUNCIL

September 7, 2017
Minutes

The GO Virginia Region One Council held its third meeting on September 7, 2017 at Wytheville Community College, Conference Room 219, Wytheville, Virginia. Members present were Beth Rhinehart, Duane Miller, Cathy St. Clair, Dean Sprinkle, George Cridlin, Moir Beamer, Josh Lewis, Travis Staton, Keith Perrigan, Donna Henry, Mike Quillen, Mike Stollings, David Leonard, Kyra Bishop, Sam Cassell, Lois Clarke, and Joe Gary Street.

Welcome and introductions: Mike Quillen, Chair of the Region One Council presided over the meeting and Ms. Becki Joyce recorded minutes. Mike Quillen called the meeting to order and confirmed a quorum was present. Dr. Dean Sprinkle, President of Wytheville Community College offered a welcome to the committee and public.

Mike Quillen noted to change the agenda to add the Economic Development subcommittee. Donna Henry gave the motion to approve the agenda. Keith Perrigan seconded the motion and the council approved. The council approved the minutes as is.

Report Items:

Reports from Committees

Chambers of Commerce

Beth Rhinehart reported that the subcommittee meeting was recently held with regional chambers in Lee County, Virginia. The next meeting is scheduled with Washington County on September 8, 2017. The chambers provided an update of GO Virginia Region One. The chambers are interested in developing asset mapping for the region. Many of the chambers consider tourism as economic development engines and feel it may be overlooked. The City of Bristol is a great example where tourism is one shining star holding it together for that community. Mike Quillen noted Tourism is important and there are efforts and support by other organizations underway. The plan is not indicative of lack of support for tourism, however coordination of efforts for a better understanding would be helpful.

Education

Dean Sprinkle reported that the education subcommittee, consisting of Wytheville Community College, Bluefield College, Southwest Community College and UVA Wise met prior to the council meeting. Dean stated higher education is accustomed to meeting demands as needs arise. In meeting those needs, the

council must understand that when new industry is coming in, higher education may not collectively or individually have programs in place, however all can work with the industry to start up on a short term basis and then add to their curriculums to modify to address the long term need. The process for a college or university to add a new program and have it approved through SCHEV can take time. Higher education entities are equipped and prepared to meet the need on a short term basis and long term basis. Chancellor Henry noted that workforce needs are not necessarily filled from one institution, and that all the institutions are adept at working together to communicate and fill that need. Keith Perrigan noted that K-12 must be part of the equation when working with the workforce. K-12 needs to be agile, understanding workforce needs and what kind of graduates K-12 needs to provide as a part of the pipeline.

Economic Development

Josh Lewis gave an update on the economic development subcommittee. The subcommittee reviewed and discussed the growth and development plan. Josh stated there were a lot of good ideas and discussion around the plan, with specifics to making sure leadership development is focused on and especially manufacturing leadership development as well as entrepreneurial leadership. Upon review, a concern was raised that tourism is left out of the plan. Another concern raised is agribusiness. Noting the average age of a farmer is 70, and that we currently have no succession plan in place, we need to make it a priority.

Non-Profits

Travis Staton reported he had provided the council the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed or ALICE report at the last council meeting. In Southwest Virginia the ALICE population is another 30% above the 18% poverty rate. There is a saturation of low paying jobs in the region, which are crucial jobs, but do not cover cost of living. Travis emphasized the importance of the council's work to support higher paying professional jobs.

Creation of New Committees

A discussion was held regarding whether there is a need for a workforce development committee. Members of the council discussed the concern that workforce development and industry needed more effective communication and increased understanding of employer needs. Mike Quillen stated that what is missing retraining efforts of out of work coal miners. Mike Stollings stated there is a great need for alignment of resources. It is a challenge for businesses to know and understand all the resources and potential training avenues available. Shannon Blevins recommended Aleta Spicer, Region 1, and Marty Holliday, Region 2, and it was determined that these workforce development members would be invited to join the education subcommittee to help link together education and workforce development and improve communication.

Action Items:

Growth and Diversification Plan

Chris Chmura and Leslie Peterson with Chmura Economics and Analytics presented the findings in the Region One Growth and Diversification Plan economic, demographic and workforce skills gap. The presentation took into account the labor shed, industry research, historical data, occupation clusters,

and how the plan development work arrived at identifying key targets. A question and answer session was held after the presentation.

Vision and Mission

Shannon Blevins share the vision and mission of the growth and diversification plan, explaining the steps that were taken to create the plan, through strategic plan research and document review, community surveys, community meetings and regional conversations, SWOT analysis and data compilation. Shannon reviewed the four target areas of advanced manufacturing, agriculture, food and beverage processing, information technology and energy and minerals. The core strategies to be considered with each target area are human capital, infrastructure and innovation. Shannon indicated the industry targets and strategies are designed to be a framework for the council to match up potential projects and assess how it aligns with the plan for funding decisions. Mike opened the floor for the council to provide comments and ask questions. Cathy St. Clair made a motion to accept the Growth and Diversification plan as presented and Joe Gary Street seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Proposal Review Process

Mike Quillen requested the Economic Development subcommittee take charge to develop an application process, and coordinate it to mirror the Tobacco Commission, VCEDA and DHCD processes aligning with State Board requirements. Duane Miller and Josh Lewis agreed to take on the project and report back at the December council meeting.

Discussion Ideas:

Project Ideas

Mike Quillen listed a few project ideas that are being discussed within the region. These ideas fit well within the industry targets. A few were: agriculture and food processing with interest in cherry trees, hemp, and fish processing facility; energy and minerals interest with wind and solar and work being done on the economic analysis for its viability, as well as the hydro pump storage project; information technology interest with PDC2 having applied for a broadband study; a casino; and a coalfield land rush innovative idea.

Implementation of the Plan

Shannon Blevins reported on the SWVA Economic Forum and its objectives. The original action teams were formed as a way to work toward the GO Virginia initiative. The planning team for the Forum met with representatives from the executive committee for GO Virginia Region One and discussed transitioning the action teams to working groups aligned with the industry targets. It was agreed upon by the SWVA Economic Forum steering committee and the GO Virginia Region One Executive committee members to align the Forum with the GO Virginia initiative. Mike Quillen asked the council for their input and opinion on being a part of the SWVA Economic Forum. Shannon indicated this would be a great way for GO Virginia to coordinate with the Forum and have a venue for publicity and communication for Region One. The council agreed.

Public Relations and Publicity

Mike Quillen reported that there was some negative publicity currently in the news and newspapers regarding the economic status of the region. Travis Staton recommended the council appoint an official spokesperson. Beth Rhinehart stated she felt like this gave the council an opportunity to have a strong voice to Richmond and carry a positive impact. Cathy St. Clair recommended we consider periodic press releases and to get the word out. Beth Rhinehart suggested that we utilize all council member's databases to send out emails and information. Shannon Blevins informed the council that UVa-Wise will be developing a GO Virginia Region One Council website to use as a portal for applications and to push out information.

Public Comment

Michelle Jenkins encouraged the council to reach out to county administrators and provide them the priorities. She offered her support along with Congressman Morgan Griffith's.

Jim Baldwin indicated he would like to see the negative public perception change. The negative perceptions hurt us. He feels we need to emphasize our strengths as they greatly outweigh our weaknesses. For example, the region has world class broadband. Jim emphasized the PDC's are all committed to doing what needs to be done to grow.

Next meeting date and location

Shannon Blevins reported the next meeting date was December 7, 2017, at 10 am, at Bluefield College, Lansdell Hall, Chandler Boardroom, Bluefield, Va.

Adjournment