

NORTHERN VIRGINIA REGIONAL COMMISSION

Minutes of the Commission Meeting Held Thursday, April 23, 2015

COMMISSIONERS

(The names of those members present are highlighted.)

Hon. Sharon Bulova

Hon. David S. Butler

Hon. Peter Candland

Hon. Janet Clarke

Hon. John C. Cook

Hon. Laurie A. Dirocco

Hon. Jay Fissette

Hon. Gerald M. Foreman II

Hon. Libby Garvey

Hon. Penelope A. Gross, NVRC Chairman

Hon. Pat Herrity

Hon. Catherine Hudgins

Hon. Frank Jones

Hon. Kwasi Fraser

Hon. Jeffrey C. McKay

Hon. Lisa C. Merkel

Hon. Martin E. Nohe

Hon. Harry J. Parrish II

Hon. Redella S. Pepper, *NVRC Treasurer*

Hon. Frank J. Principi

Hon. R. Scott Silverthorne

Hon. Paul C. Smedberg

Hon. Linda Smyth

Hon. David Tarter

Hon. Scott K. York

County of Fairfax

Town of Leesburg

County of Prince William

County of Loudoun

County of Fairfax

Town of Vienna

County of Arlington

Town of Dumfries

County of Arlington

County of Fairfax

County of Fairfax

County of Fairfax

City of Manassas Park

Town of Purcellville

County of Fairfax

Town of Herndon

County of Prince William

City of Manassas

City of Alexandria

County of Prince William

City of Fairfax

City of Alexandria

County of Fairfax

City of Falls Church

County of Loudoun

STAFF PRESENT

G. Mark Gibb

Gina Kesselmann-Smith

Ken Billingsley

Jeongmin Kim

Robert Lazaro

Corey Miles

David Schwengel

Michelle Simmons

Debbie Spiliotopoulos

Peggy Tadej

Executive Director

Executive Assistant

Director, Demographics and Information

NVRC international intern

Director, Regional Energy Planning

Senior Environmental Planner/Coastal Program Manager

Director, Regional Business Planning

Director, Human Services

Senior Environmental Planner

No. Va. Regional BRAC Coordinator

OTHERS PRESENT

Gerald Connolly

Bruce Bennett

Katie Boyle

Kirsten Buhls

Margaret Fisher

Judy Fraser

Caroline Haynes

Terry Liercke

James McGlone

Sue Rowland

Mary Van Dyke

Congressman, District 11

HDML/HMTCC

Fairfax County staff

Virginia Cooperative Extension

Plant NOVA Natives Campaign

Plant NOVA Natives Campaign

Plant NOVA Natives Campaign

Director, Audubon Society of NOVA

Plant NOVA Natives Campaign

NVRC – Legislative Liaison

Plant NOVA Natives Campaign

- CALL TO ORDER** Chairman Gross called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.
- PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all present.
- ROLL CALL** The roll was called and all members present or absent were noted for the record.
- MINUTES** Commissioner Butler moved approval of the Commission meeting minutes of March 26, 2015. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bulova and carried unanimously. Commissioner Garvey abstained, as she didn't attend the last Commission meeting.
- PRESENTATION 1** Chairman Gross introduced and welcomed Congressman Gerald E. Connolly.
- Congressman Connolly started out with saying that so much of the regional work gets done in meetings like this and it almost never gets any attention and thanked for serving.
- He then proceeded with the following: This Congress started out badly, as for the first 100 days nothing got done. There were also threats of shutting down the Department of Homeland Security. But then Speaker Boehner allowed a sort of a non-partisan vote to keep it open and extend funding through the end of the year without conditions. That is how in the last 40 years all major fiscal issues have been resolved. Transportation section though cannot operate on short-term horizon. It requires long-term planning. There are 61,000 bridges in the US that are substandard. The question is how can long term planning be funded. The bottom line is the US has to invest in infrastructure, and if we do there is a return on that investment (e.g. Metro system in our region). Whatever it costs, it serves its purpose.
- On a positive note from the economic point of view there is mostly good news. The numbers are all up where they need to be up and down where they need to be down. Congressman Connolly also added that the US just completed the 61st consecutive month of net positive job growth, for example. That has never happened in the history of the US.
- Congressman Connolly also commented on the budget that just has been conferenced and said that it is terrible. It cuts 5 trillion dollars in domestic investments over the next 10 years. That affects everything NVRC does. But the debt was not reduced. Instead the 5 trillion savings went towards a tax cut, to reduce the top tax level from 36 % to 25 %. That costs 5 trillion dollars. That is a public policy commitment. According to Congressman Connolly this was a disastrous thing to do and so this budget is not good, especially not for Northern Virginia.
- Then Congressman Connolly brought up the I-66 issues. Recently Congressmen Connolly, Comstock, Beyer and Woodall, who represent all of Northern Virginia in Congress, wrote a letter to the Secretary of Transportation outlining their concerns, that not one of them was brought into this discussion for their input, even though their constituents are going to be very affected by the plans that are being discussed regarding I-66. Some local officials have been briefed and Congressman Connolly and his fellow 3 Congressmen who participated in the letter to the Secretary of Transportation, haven't taken the position that they oppose a specific proposal, but they raise serious questions. Depending on your route (e.g. route from Loudoun to Washington DC) you might get hit 3 times with tolls under this new plan for the I-66. You will be hit on the Dulles Greenway, Toll road and I-66. Going from HOV 2 to HOV 3 is a very serious change. The enforcement of the HOV 2 rules is very slim and there are lots of violators. Why would the first thing we do be to radically alter the commuting pattern of our citizens, when you have that access capacity being eaten up by violators. If these changes take effect, this will create absolute gridlock on the other roads, because people don't want to pay the tolls. This can already be seen at Tysons Corner. There is a huge bottleneck in Tysons right

before the final toll on the beltway. Everybody gets off at Route 7 to avoid that one toll and it creates enormous traffic jams on route 7 and Tysons, all because of toll diversion. If this happens on I-66, he is afraid that it is going to have a huge spill off on Route 29, 50 and 123. We already have that now. If I-66 shuts down because of an accident or any other incident that occurs on I-66, these routes become parking lots. Maybe this can be worked out, but a dialogue with the Northern Virginia citizens is needed. Congressman Connolly further said that they were so alarmed at a briefing they received last week, which was the first time they heard it was this far along, that they wrote a letter to the Secretary of Transportation and released it deliberately to try and slow down the process to allow input. If it is decided that's the plan and it makes sense and there are no other better alternatives, then fair enough, but the current lack of consultation is hard to understand. So Congressmen Connolly, Comstock, Beyer and Woodall are going to meet with Secretary Layne next week, but Congressman Connolly wanted the Commissioners to know why they did what they did as this is a profound change.

Questions and answers

Commissioner Cook commented that Fairfax County has been briefed 2-3 times on this I-66 issue and added that he is surprised that Congressman Connolly and his fellow Northern Virginia Congressmen haven't been briefed. But this is not new to Fairfax County, whose board was working on this for a long time. He understands Congressman Connolly's concern about not being involved in the dialogue though.

Commissioner Bulova added that she was shocked when she heard that members of Congress have not been briefed. But Fairfax County did give input on property concerns, etc. She then pointed out that she shares Congressman Connolly's concern about shifting from HOV 2 to HOV 3.

Commissioner Parrish thanked Congressman Connolly for coming and added that the City of Manassas hasn't been briefed at all on the I-66 plans. And so he is glad that the Congressmen decided to get involved. There is more work to be done here. The regional partner that apparently has been chosen to work with the state on this is NVTC not NVTVA, which is a question mark at least to his mind. So he is very appreciative of the fact that Congressman Connolly brought this up and that he is getting involved into it as this is a substantial set of decisions that will take place with regard to a road that has served all of our communities so well.

Commissioner Garvey added that Arlington County Council hasn't been briefed on the I-66 issue and that she was not aware of the progress in plans. Commissioners Merkel and Butler confirmed that neither Town of Herndon nor Town of Leesburg has been briefed.

Chairman Gross added that there is a need for additional outreach.

Congressman Connolly then told the Commissioners that he will keep them informed of any updates and that something needs to be done with this I-66 plan, but it has to be least inconvenient for everyone.

PRESENTATION 2

Chairman Gross introduced and welcomed Alan Ford, who is the President of the Potowmack Chapter of Virginia Native Plant Society and the Plant NOVA Natives Steering Committee Chair.

Mr. Ford thanked the Northern Virginia Regional Commission on behalf of the Plant Nova Natives Campaign Steering Committee for the support. This campaign is an effective collaboration of many agencies, advocacy groups and individuals committed to the goal of increasing the use of native plants in the newer landscape in our region.

The Plant Nova Natives Campaign is currently unfunded and while they are applying for grants the campaign continues through dedicated volunteers.

Native Plants provide smart cost effective resources for landscaping, for cooling the air and improving air quality, for enhancing the regions natural beauty, etc. For these reasons the native plants are an essential component in stabilizing, maintaining and improving the landscape in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Mr. Ford also talked about the importance of maintaining a native plant stock and where we can find further information to educate ourselves on this matter (e.g. guidebook or www.plantnovanatives.org).

Questions and answers

Mr. Gibb mentioned Nancy Vehrs, whom he met a week before this Commission meeting and that she was very enthusiastic about this program. He added that it has been a huge success and he referred to the guidebook, which clearly explains why it is important to put native plants in the Northern Virginia landscape. He then asked Corey Miles (NVRC staff) to add to that. She mentioned that there is roughly 9000 dollars in private donations that came in to fund the new edition of this guide, which is being sold for 5 dollars each and all the profit from this guide goes back into a fund for guide printing.

Chairman Gross added that the guidebook is very readable and understandable and asked if the nursery stock of our native species is more available now, since this was a problem in the past.

Mr. Ford explained that this is a long-term effort. It is recognized that there are 3 different stakeholders involved -> 1. Home/Property owner; 2. Sellers/Commercial Retailers; 3. Growers. The first and strongest effort has been on developing and putting this guide out for the homeowner. It is recognized that driving demand will drive supply. The next step is working with commercial retailers, letting them know that this guide is available, that the public is going to be asking for these plants. The third step is to say to the growers what they need to be growing. There is evidence that more people are paying more attention to this message and he is hopeful that he is going to start seeing more native plants regularly available and identified as native plants in the nurseries.

Commissioner Bulova asked if the Redbud tree is appropriate to grow which Mr. Ford affirmed and added that these trees can be bought commercially.

Commissioner Garvey asked if there is a list available online of nurseries that are selling native plants. Mr. Ford affirmed (www.plantnovanatives.org).

Commissioner Parrish thanked Mr. Ford for the guide and added that this will help to know what plants should be planted.

Chairman Gross asked the volunteers of the NOVA Native Plants Campaign to introduce themselves (names mentioned on p. 1 of the Commission minutes under "Others present").

PRESENTATION 3

Chairman Gross asked Ken Billingsley (NVRC staff) to present his findings on the impact of defense spending in Northern Virginia. (-> presentation was distributed), which he did.

Chairman Gross added that the numbers are still in draft form, so she cautioned not to use these just yet, as there will be updates and refinements.

Mr. Gibb commented that the large percentages will not change and that is the intention of this presentation to show the impact on Northern Virginia and how overwhelming it is.

EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR'S
REPORT

Printed copies of the report were distributed and Mr. Gibb went through the slides:

- Four Mile Run Ground Breaking Ceremony Set – May 20 at 5:30 pm

- Smart Cities Council
- Solarize NoVA Now in Full Gear
- Solar PV Map for Northern Virginia
- Universal Waste Training – May 12
- Bicycle Pedestrian Safety Activities
- Community, Military, Federal Facility Partnership of Northern Virginia

CHAIRMAN'S
REPORT

Chairman Gross announced that she participated on a Transit and Transportation panel last month with David Snyder of the City of Falls Church.

Chairman Gross also informed the Commissioners on the personnel matter and that the attorney's report is not available yet. But she did receive 60 to 90 days to finish it. So it should be any week now that this report will be ready.

LEGISLATIVE
REPORT

Commissioner Cook, Legislative Committee Chairman, suggested to make an effort as a Commission to try to get into the Governor's budget in the form of a letter. He would like to get this letter ready to be sent next month in preparation for the Governor's budget.

WORKFORCE
COMMITTEE
REPORT

Chairman Gross told the Commissioners that people are interested in Workforce. She then asked Bob Lazaro (NVRC staff) if he had any further information. Mr. Lazaro informed the Commission that there was a meeting with representatives of the George Mason University and they are very interested in working with the Commission.

Mr. Gibb added he spoke to Paul Reagan, Governor's Chief of Staff, and asked for the Governor to be involved.

NVTA REPORT

Commissioner Nohe reported that CTB adopted an FY 15/16 2 year plan. The next big project is the TransAction plan. FY 17 funding will be done under the existing TransAction plan, because they cannot afford to wait as TransAction takes 2 full years.

Commissioner Bulova thanked Commissioner Nohe for the great job he has been doing as Chairman of NVTA. The outreach was amazing.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Gross adjourned the meeting at 9:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

G. Mark Gibb
Executive Director

Approved by:

Penelope Gross,
Chairman