

NORTHERN VIRGINIA REGIONAL COMMISSION

Minutes of the Commission Meeting Held Saturday, February 26, 2005

Thomas Balch Library, Leesburg, Virginia

COMMISSIONERS

(The names of those present are highlighted)

Commissioner Hilda M. Barg
Commissioner Melvin Bray
Commissioner Sharon Bulova
Commissioner Gerald E. Connolly, NVRC Treasurer
Commissioner W. S. Covington, III
Commissioner Joan Cross
Commissioner William T. Druhan, Jr.
Commissioner Joan DuBois
Commissioner Barbara A. Favola, NVRC Vice Chairman
Commissioner Robin Gardner
Commissioner Penelope A. Gross
Commissioner Catherine Hudgins
Commissioner Elaine N. McConnell
Commissioner Martin E. Nohe
Commissioner Michael O'Reilly
Commissioner Harry J. Parrish, II
Commissioner Redella S. Pepper
Commissioner Bryan Polk
Commissioner M. Jane Seeman
Commissioner Paul C. Smedberg
Commissioner Linda Smyth
Commissioner J. Walter Tejada
Commissioner Bruce E. Tulloch
Commissioner Kristen C. Umstattd, NVRC Chairman
Commissioner Lori Waters

County of Prince William
Town of Dumfries
County of Fairfax
County of Fairfax
County of Prince William
City of Fairfax
Town of Purcellville
County of Fairfax
County of Arlington
City of Falls Church
County of Fairfax
County of Fairfax
County of Fairfax
County of Prince William
Town of Herndon
City of Manassas
City of Alexandria
City of Manassas Park
Town of Vienna
City of Alexandria
County of Fairfax
County of Arlington
County of Loudoun
Town of Leesburg
County of Loudoun

STAFF PRESENT

G. Mark Gibb
Linda M. Tenney
Kenneth Billingsley
Katherine Mull
Doug Pickford
Michelle Simmons
James Van Zee

Executive Director
Deputy Director
Director, Demographics
Senior Environmental Planner
Director, Environmental and Heritage Resources
Director, Human Services
Director, Regional Planning Services

GUEST PRESENT

Jody and Bruce Bennett
David Fuller
Anton "Tony" Gardner
Katie Hammler
Susan Horne
James Vaughn

Residents of Vienna
Leesburg Planning Department
Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, Univ. of Virginia
Leesburg Town Council
Leesburg Town Council
Resident of Reston

CALL TO ORDER Chairman Umstattd called the meeting to order at 9:25 a.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all present.

AUTHORIZATION
TO SIGN LETTER OF
AGREEMENT FOR
MEDIA BUYING
SERVICES

A motion was made to approve Resolution No. P05-06. The motion was seconded and unanimously adopted.

STRATEGIC
PLANNING
SESSION

Mr. Anton Gardner of the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia, facilitated the Commission's Strategic Planning Session.

Mr. Gardner began the session by asking Commissioners to reply in turn to the question, "What do you hope to accomplish today?" Replies included the following:

- Define NVRC's purpose, mission and focus;
- Establish what direction or niche NVRC should take;
- Exchange information; learn more about NVRC and all the member governments;
- Enhance regional collaboration on shared problems;
- Make NVRC more effective, as a body of elected officials that speaks for Northern Virginia;
- Find a way to build NVRC's profile and image.

Mr. Gardner then explained it had been agreed previously that a segment of the meeting would provide an opportunity for each jurisdiction to discuss its challenges. He again solicited Commissioners opinions in turn, and recorded the replies on flip chart paper, signifying the frequency with which some issues were mentioned repeatedly.

At the conclusion of this segment, Commissioner Connolly summarized the remarks by all Commissioners into the following "top 10 regional issues":

- Transportation
Traffic congestion, HOV, HOT lanes, telecommuting, Metro funding, pedestrian connections, VRE, Dulles rail, 2030 update plan
- Public safety
Gangs, emergency preparedness and homeland security, 9-1-1 financing (telecom tax threat), regional aid compacts, citizen corps
- Environment
Chesapeake Bay imperatives, solid waste challenges, air quality non-attainment, open space/ land acquisition, recreational facilities
- Demographic shifts
Aging population, undocumented residents, day laborers, diversity recruitment challenge, language, social services (prenatal care, uninsured, domestic abuse)
- Affordable housing
Preservation, Affordable Dwelling Units, use of nonprofit and for-profit partners for magnet housing, homelessness, residential overcrowding, workforce (magnet) housing
- Economic development
DoD and BRAC, relationship with military community, regional competitiveness, technology advantage, knowledge-based workers, Dulles airport, role of federal government
- Education

Early learning initiative, financing of education (composite index), demographic challenge, school construction/ renovation, Standards of Learning, No Child Left Behind, universities and colleges – higher education role with economic development

- Growth and development (urbanization)
“Reality Check”: 2 million people/ 1.6 million jobs in the region by 2030, redevelopment and revitalization, growth management/ land use policies, better use of public land, relationship with military, “smart growth”
- Financing local government
Revenue diversification, public-private partnerships, reliance on property tax, state unfunded mandates, car tax
- Dillon rule
General Assembly accountability, Northern Virginia inequities

Mr. Gardner next invited Commissioners to offer their opinions on the question, “What KEY THINGS are going right at NVRC now?” Replies included the following:

- Specific programs and activities addressing: Chesapeake Bay, AIDS, Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail; demographics, environmental and human services programs; emergency preparedness activities; charrettes – community problem-solving
- Publications, including specifically the emergency preparedness brochure
- The competence, passion and accessibility of NVRC staff
- Good location, improved financial condition
- The forum for the elected officials to interact collegially and share information and experiences
- The forum for local staff to meet together
- The practice of bringing together stakeholders on issues that affect them
- The information and contacts that come through participation in NVRC
- Identification of issues; opportunity to address a wide range of issues
- The opportunity to position NVRC to be more influential in speaking/ advocating for the region with the General Assembly and others

Mr. Gardner then asked Commissioners, “If NVRC could be all it could be, what ELSE would be going right?” Commissioners suggested that NVRC could:

- Have a more interactive legislative program with a fuller array of advocacy strategies, such as letter writing, alerts, working with interest and stakeholder groups on legislative initiatives
- Have more sharing on how issues are being addressed and what “toolboxes” or techniques can be made available to others
- Improve NVRC’s profile and communications with local, state and federal elected officials; with the media and the public
- Focus the best and highest level of activity on top priority issues; establish a process for prioritizing issues and reviewing priorities regularly
- Establish partnerships with business and academic communities
- Make effective use of citizens
- Make sure NVRC does serious things that are achievable
- Create a power structure that is effective in advancing an agenda, withstanding controversy, demanding accountability from the General Assembly
- Create an internal structure that makes NVRC operate effectively; emulate what works in other regional entities
- Network with other regional commissions on common interests

Mr. Gardner followed up by asking, "What are the next steps? What should we do more of ...do less of ...do differently ...to be the best we could be? What are the key things to work on?" Commissioners replied with the following ideas:

- Adopt a plan for addressing what NVRC should do about the top issues, recognizing that some issues are not in NVRC's purview
- Begin with gangs, affordable housing, local vs. state authority, issues with which NVRC can achieve successes
- Discuss strategy and action plan for one issue per meeting
- Address both the topic and how to increase NVRC's profile / advocacy role
- Develop a communication strategy that includes issuing press releases and coordinating messages and media contacts with local public affairs offices
- Time a press conference for the end of the General Assembly session; arrange for Commissioners to comment to the media
- Quarterly, share information about what each jurisdiction is doing on a particular issue, instead of having a presenter at the Commission meeting; announce the issue in advance so local sta
- Gear discussion of issues to practical solutions; bring in experts to advance this objective

Commissioner Favola volunteered to chair a communications committee.

In closing, Mr. Gardner observed that this session demonstrated there is energy to do things differently. He cautioned that "the energy with which you leave is rarely what you bring to the beginning of the next meeting," and called for Commissioners to expect that NVRC's staffing and organizational structure, and the way members relate to one another, must change, to realize what the Commission wants to do.

ADJOURNMENT There being no further business, Chairman Umstattd invited members to enjoy a trolley tour of Leesburg departing immediately. She adjourned the meeting at 1:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

G. Mark Gibb
Executive Director

Approved by:

Kristen Umstattd
Chairman