

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
GEORGE WASHINGTON REGIONAL COMMISSION**

May 18, 2015

The Robert C. Gibbons Conference Room
406 Princess Anne Street, Fredericksburg Virginia

MEMBERS PRESENT AND VOTING: Vice-Chair – Jim Howard, **King George County;** **City of Fredericksburg:** Matt Kelly & Billy Withers; **Caroline County:** Jeff Black; **King George County:** Dale Sisson; **Spotsylvania County:** Paul Trampe; **Stafford County:** Laura Sellers & Gary Snellings

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jeff Sili – Caroline County; & Chris Yakabouski – Spotsylvania County

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Mr. Mark Slauter, DEM; Mr. Eldon James; & Mr. Kevin Page, DRPT

STAFF: Tim Ware, Executive Director; Lloyd Robinson, FAMPO; Marti Donley, FAMPO; Diana Utz, Daniel Reese, FAMPO & JoAnna Roberson, GWRC

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Howard called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. with a quorum present, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF GWRC MEETING AGENDA

Upon motion by Mr. Kelly and seconded by Mr. Sisson, with all in consensus, the agenda for the May 18th meeting was approved as submitted.

APPROVAL OF GWRC MEETING MINUTES (April 20, 2015) - (Action Item)

Upon motion by Mr. Sisson and seconded by Mr. Black, and all others in consensus, the minutes from the April 20th meeting were approved as submitted.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT - None

FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. Ware relayed that the Financial Report is included in tonight's agenda packet. Mr. Ware advised that GWRC's total assets are \$421,431.45 and the total liabilities are \$183,451.65. Mr. Ware stated that GWRC is financially sound at this time and showing positive balances.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Ware advised that a presentation was made at the University of Mary Washington and there was interest in the Commission establishing a regional mayors & chairs meeting. Mr. Ware stated that the meeting agenda and meeting times are being finalized and that the regional meeting will be held at GWRC. Mr. Ware advised the Commission that next month is the time of the year for elections of new officers so this will be an agenda item for the June meeting.

Mr. Ware relayed that the Commission is applying for a Broadband regional planning grant. If approved, this grant will be a maximum of \$75,000 but would require local matches from the Planning District 16 localities.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

- a.) **Stream & Rain Gauge Network for the Upper Rappahannock Basin** – Mr. Mark Slauter, Virginia Department of Emergency Management

Mr. Eldon James was in attendance at tonight's meeting. Mr. James gave a brief re-cap of changes that have occurred to the Rappahannock River over the last five years. Mr. James advised that as a result of serious flooding in Floyd County five years ago that the Virginia Department of Emergency Management developed a stream and rain gauge network system. Mr. James stated that with his discussion with the Rappahannock River Basin Commission that the committee has expressed interest in this process coming to this area as well.

Mr. James advised that seven localities would comprise a stream and rain gauge network system being implemented here and these localities are the City of Fredericksburg and the Counties of: Culpeper, Fauquier, Orange, Rappahannock, Spotsylvania & Stafford. Mr. James relayed that the costs for this project includes 50% corporate funding; 25% funding from the Commonwealth; & 25% funding from each of the seven localities. Mr. James advised that each locality's portion of expenses would equate to \$12,214.

Mr. James stated that to date, the City of Fredericksburg has not replied back as to whether they would fund their locality portion; however, it was per request from the City Manager that this meeting be scheduled and presented to GWRC which is why it is on tonight's agenda. Mr. James stated that Culpeper just supported the request with a 7-0 vote; Fauquier has already endorsed; Orange is still awaiting a decision; Rappahannock has already endorsed; Spotsylvania has not replied back to date; & Stafford has indicated it fully supports.

Mr. Mark Slauter with Virginia Department of Emergency Management gave a presentation to the Commission. Mr. Slauter advised that across the state, there are 64 individual location sites included in the master report that depict where flooding occurs. Mr. Slauter stated that the system they have implemented for Floyd County will be universal state-wide. Their study also depicts water quality features, flash-flood forecasting, up-river sensors, etc. Mr. Slauter advised that their system currently

provides 24/7 updates to the National Weather Service so immediate responses are sent out to residents in a specific locality when potential flooding could occur.

In closing, Mr. Slauter advised that the status and review for a Rappahannock River Basin Gauge project would include the following:

- Installation & maintenance of 13 gauge locations
- Total project implementation cost would be approximately \$190,000
- Radio path analysis completed to finalize site selections and specific equipment needs
- 2015 General Assembly has approved the first year of funding for the 2-year project (the first year's funding from the General Assembly is \$42,750).
- VDEM is contributing 20% of the cost

There was committee consensus from the Commission members that this type of stream and rain gauge system is drastically needed in this region and asked that Mr. James continue with his efforts to obtain regional consent and financial support to ensure that this project moves forward.

b.) GWRC Resolution No. 15-11, Accepting Grant from Virginia Department of Forestry to Develop Alternative Future Development Scenarios to Represent the Range of Potential Policy Approaches to Forest Land Retention – Mr. Tim Ware

Mr. Ware advised the Department of Forestry will conduct a study in the Rappahannock River Watershed that will assess growth trends throughout the region and evaluate spatial variability of a forest's ecosystem service value. Future development scenarios within each locality will be studied and the Commission will be allocated \$14,257 to complete the work.

Upon motion by Mr. Sisson and seconded by Mr. Kelly with all in consensus, Resolution No. 15-11 was unanimously adopted by the GWRC Commission. (Note: Ms. Sellers advised that there is a typo on the Resolution whereby the date is incorrect and should be changed to reflect May 18, 2015 – Mr. Ware advised that this would be corrected accordingly).

c.) GWRC Resolution No. 15-12, Respectfully Requesting that the Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) Place Caroline & King George Counties in Category D of the Factor Weighting Frameworks for Project Ratings Under the New House Bill 2 Project Rating System – Mr. Tim Ware

Mr. Ware advised that Resolution No. 15-12 came as a result of discussion from the Commission at last month's meeting in regard to the assigned category rating that both Caroline and King George counties had received in regard to the HB2 project rating system. Preliminary ratings had placed both localities under a Category C classification. It was requested that this be reviewed and consideration be given to place both Caroline & King George Counties under a Category D rating and this Resolution be forwarded accordingly to the Commonwealth Transportation Board.

Upon motion by Mr. Sisson and seconded by Mr. Black, Resolution No. 15-12 was unanimously adopted. (Note: Ms. Sellers advised that there is a typo on the Resolution whereby the date is incorrect and should be changed to reflect May 18, 2015 – Mr. Ware advised that this would be corrected accordingly).

d.) GWRC 2016 Preliminary Budget – Mr. Tim Ware

Mr. Ware advised that he was submitting the draft GWRC 2016 budget for review by the Commission and that this document would be finalized for approval at the upcoming June meeting. Mr. Ware stated that the total budget of \$2,017,421 represents a \$549,011 decrease from the previous fiscal year's budget. Mr. Ware stated that these figures are based on the per capita request of \$0.6433 from the local governmental contributions. Mr. Ware advised that after satisfying the local match requirements and program support that the agency will have a surplus of \$88,281.

Mr. Ware stated that staffing will remain at 10 full-time employees and 2 part-time employees. Mr. Ware advised that this year's budget considerations include a 3% cost of living raise to the employees and this impact to the budget will be \$22,329.

In regard to GWRideconnect, Mr. Ware stated that a budget decrease of \$446,868 will be realized. This decrease is the result of the I-95 Marketing campaign that has been completed and the way in which CMAQ resources are accounted for within the GWRC budget. Mr. Ware stated that the annual DRPT grant will remain the same as this past year.

Mr. Ware advised that the FAMPO funding will decrease by \$86,339 and it is anticipated that \$63,227 can be carried over to FY2017. Mr. Ware stated that the planning services revenue will be decreased by \$15,804 and with this cost-savings measure in place from FY2014, the department can continue to be self-sustaining.

Mr. Ware stated that GWRC currently participates and will continue to be included within Stafford County's Health Insurance plan. Mr. Ware advised that an approximate 16% increase in insurance premiums will be incurred for FY2016. Mr. Ware stated that the fringe benefit and indirect cost will be increased by \$29,000 for FY2016.

Mr. Sisson asked that Mr. Ware provide the Commission members with a break-down for the last 5 to 10 years of employee cost-of-living annual raise increases that have been awarded to the staff at GWRC. Mr. Sisson stated that he felt that in years past, the Commission has not always been able to award a cost-of-living raise and that overall he felt that GWRC had been lacking in this area and he thinks we do need to be fair to the employees.

Mr. Snellings also asked Mr. Ware if the cost-of-living increase that is proposed for this year also includes a cost-of-living percentage factored in as well for his own salary. Mr. Ware stated that it did not. Mr. Snellings asked when Mr. Ware last received a cost-of-living increase and Mr. Ware advised that he has not been awarded one since being hired. Mr. Snellings recommended that the final budget request also include a 3% cost-of-living factored in for Mr. Ware's salary as well and this was unanimously supported.

e.) DC2RVA High-Speed Rail Update Presentation – Mr. Kevin Page, Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation

Mr. Page, with the Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation, gave an update on the status of the DC2RVA high-speed rail project. Mr. Page stated that the goal of the DC2RVA project is to improve the rail infrastructure and to devise a service development plan that will ultimately reduce rail travel time, improve the on-time performance, & to accommodate at least 8 future higher speed round trips from Washington, DC to Richmond.

Mr. Page stated that the NEPA Tier I Program development included the ideas and concepts of what this new plan would look like. Currently, the project is in the Tier II phase which is the now build phase of the project. Within this phase, the project snapshot focuses on a 123-mile corridor which will be the northernmost segment of the SEHSR corridor that will connect to the northeast corridor. This study includes the preliminary engineering and environmental reviews, the ridership & revenue reviews, improvements to station areas, and increased service frequency.

Mr. Page advised that improvements have occurred from the initial concepts that include the following: construction of additional main line tracks & crossovers; station improvements; improvements to grade crossings; improvements to sidings & signals; & straightening of curves on the existing rail tracks. Mr. Page stated that these improvements will apply to freight as well as commuting travel and will encompass a 90 mile capacity.

Mr. Page stated that currently the project is at a 30% design build level and the next step is to go out to the build phase. Mr. Page stated that the schedule for this project is aggressive and the scoping, purpose & need; alternatives; screening; public outreach; draft EIS; & final EIS will be submitted for a record of decision in FY2017.

Mr. Page stated that the service goals of the project are to build a corridor that runs effectively; that is reliable; that is safe; that decreases travel time; & that provides more train frequency routes. Mr. Page advised that operability is dead-center and is the focal point within the process. In defining the alternatives, the design options encompassed the following upgrades to include: rail alignments, new or improved stations, & road/rail crossing improvements. The service options of improvement will include more frequency of service; more schedules; & more station stops.

Mr. Page advised that beginning in June the public meetings are scheduled to occur. Beginning on Monday, June 1st, the meeting will be held in Alexandria; on Tuesday, June 2nd in Fredericksburg; & on Wednesday, June 3rd in Richmond. Mr. Page stated that the same format for each public meeting will be presented at each session and will be an open-house format. The meetings will run from 5:00 to 7:30 p.m. each night and whether you come at 5 or 7:30, each one that attends will hear the same presentation and see the same displays, etc.

f.) GWRC Strategic Planning Discussion – Mr. Tim Ware

Mr. Ware advised that the Commission discussed strategic regional planning efforts several months ago. Mr. Ware stated that the Commission asked that he compile a list of potential areas whereby regional coordination and cooperation could occur. Mr. Ware stated that he met with the City Manager and the County Administrators in April and they asked that the Commission review the list of potential areas where regionalism could occur and then bring these back to them for review. Mr. Ware also suggested that at future GWRC meetings that perhaps brief presentations can be given to the Commission on how the region works together now or if they do not work together – i.e. bring in the tourism directors from each locality to speak, etc.

Mr. Kelly stated that he felt the list provided for review was good and well thought out; however, he thinks this challenge will become more realistic and provide more opportunities regionally if the Commission picks 3-4 items from the list that it would like to focus on.

After discussion and consensus from the Commission, it was decided that the following four items were their recommendations for Mr. Ware to discuss with the City Manager & County Administrators at the next meeting. The topics to pursue are: regional fire & rescue; regional procurement opportunities; regional solid waste; & regional tourism. There was considerable interest and discussion on especially pursuing a regional tourism calendar that would be available for tourists. Even though the “hub” of tourism occurs in Fredericksburg, having information available for what also is occurring & scheduled a short drive away from Fredericksburg to the counties of Caroline, King George, Spotsylvania & Stafford is just a better overall “selling” point for attracting tourists to the area.

Mr. Ware stated that interest has also been expressed in having an annual elected officials dinner meeting that was previously held here in the past. Mr. Ware stated that this is already in the works and this event will occur this year in the Fall of 2015.

Adjourn The GWRC meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m. The next GWRC meeting is June 15, 2015 at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Timothy Ware, Executive Director

(Minutes prepared by JoAnna Roberson)

