

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

July 21, 2014

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

MEMBERS PRESENT AND VOTING: **City of Fredericksburg:** Matthew Kelly, Bill Withers; **Caroline County:** Jeff Black, Jeff Sili; **King George County:** Jim Howard, Dale Sisson; **Spotsylvania County:** Paul Trampe, Chris Yakabouski (Chair); **Stafford County:** Gary Snellings

MEMBERS ABSENT: Cord Sterling, County of Stafford

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Al Harf, PRTC; Nick Donohoe, Secretary of Transportation; Jason Robinson & Craig Van Dussen, VDOT; & Elizabeth Borst, Farmers Market

STAFF: Tim Ware, Executive Director; Andy Waple, FAMPO; Marti Donley, FAMPO; Danny Reese, FAMPO; Diana Utz, GWRC; JoAnna Roberson, GWRC.

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Yakabouski called the meeting to order at 6:02 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. Snellings with all in consensus, the agenda for the July 21st meeting was approved as submitted.

APPROVAL OF GWRC MEETING MINUTES (June 16, 2014) - (Action Item)

Upon motion by Mr. Kelly and seconded by Mr. Howard, with Mr. Black & Mr. Sisson abstaining and all others in consensus, the minutes from the June 16th 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 the auditors would be on-site in August to conduct the yearly audit. Mr. Ware stated that the draft Financial Report reflects that the agency is doing better financially than even anticipated. Mr. Ware stated that staff has been very cognizant in "weathering the storms" and being very frugal and thrifty in regard to expenditures.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Ware advised that as part of assuming the duties of the Continuum of Care program previously maintained by the City of Fredericksburg that GWRC has a new employee who just started today. Mr. Teiji Epling will now be the Continuum of Care Coordinator and will be staffed full-time through the GWRC office.

Mr. Ware stated that Mr. Nick Donohoe who is the Secretary of Transportation will be making a presentation at tonight's FAMPO meeting and anyone from the Commission is more than welcome to attend that meeting as well to hear the presentation.

Mr. Ware relayed that the broadband interest group in conjunction with the University of Mary Washington is moving forward. Mr. Ware stated that meetings will soon be held with the IT staff from each of the local jurisdictions and data is still being gathered so that continued meetings, cooperation, and coordination can occur as this concept is explored in greater detail. Mr. Ware relayed that the IT staff from both the City of Fredericksburg and the County of Spotsylvania have both been reluctant to release any of their data for study to the committee. Mr. Ware stated that another meeting would be held next month to continue with the regional broadband opportunity.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

- a.) **Regional Farmers Market** – Ms. Elizabeth Borst (Ms. Vanessa Griffin was asked to attend representing the Stafford County Farmer's Market but was unable to participate due to a family emergency)

Ms. Borst who is the regional coordinator for the Spotsylvania Farmer's Market updated the commission on the market's activity. Ms. Borst stated that the local farmer's markets are high growth industries and a lot more things could be accomplished if there were more people involved. Ms. Borst stated that there are \$4 million dollars of SNAP benefits being issued annually within the Fredericksburg region and now there are 6 market programs who are utilizing the food stamp benefits (SNAP) as payment for fresh vegetables. Ms. Borst said that Stafford County operates its own program but the 6 markets that she oversees are the 3 in Spotsylvania County; the 2 in the City & 1 in King George.

Ms. Borst stated that the momentum and consumer interest in buying locally grown vegetables and food products continues to increase. Ms. Borst stated that there is a lot of demand and request for organic-grown vegetables. Ms. Borst relayed that currently there is 1 organic farm within the region and if more were available that the demand for the product would continually increase. Ms. Borst stated that the region sees a lot of female and minority farmers and there are a lot of grants available to assist new farmers get their business up and running.

Ms. Borst relayed that this season just started April 1st and to date approximately 4,000 people have been in attendance at the local farmer's markets throughout the region. For a quick re-cap, Ms. Borst stated that there have been 556 SNAP dollars circulated, with 145 new SNAP food customers

making purchases, and 1,100 credit card SNAP transactions that have been recorded since the start-up of this season's market days. Ms. Borst stated that there needed to be some type of forum made available to the local economic developers and organizations as there is a lot of federal grant money available for the start-up of new markets throughout the region.

Mr. Kelly asked if there was a mileage restriction on how far the farmers could be from to participate in one of the local markets. Mr. Kelly stated that the markets in the City of Fredericksburg require that the farmers be within 100 miles of the City. Mr. Withers asked what percentage of the farmers are actually from Planning District 16. Ms. Borst stated that currently 2/3 of the farmers who are participating in the local markets are from the Northern Neck.

Ms. Borst stated that there are 45 vendors who show up weekly at the 6 markets and as produce does not last long, the region needs a downtown storage hub facility whereby produce could be taken too weekly and distributed to the citizens within the region. Ms. Borst stated that the equipment needed has already been secured but without the storage building available then they cannot move forward in this direction.

Ms. Borst stated that she would like to see Planning District 16 find a way to sell more produce. A fresh-food access location would be a great next step; expansions on local food bank opportunities that would cater to school age children; seniors, etc. would be on the "wish" list.

Mr. Sisson stated that the Department of Social Services in King George County does a fantastic job on coordinating food efforts to the residents of their county. Mr. Sisson asked if the same type of activity occurs within the other local Social Services departments within the region.

Ms. Borst stated that she meets annually with directors of the local Social Service departments and meets regularly with case workers; however, for whatever reason, they are not as receptive to engaging in an increased mission to promote larger participation of fresh foods through the farmer's markets. Mr. Kelly asked Mr. Sisson if he had any insight as to what actually King George is doing that may be better or different than the other agencies regionally are doing. Mr. Sisson stated that he did not know specifically what was being done differently but he did know for a fact that the Social Services department there does a tremendous job in promoting the use of food purchases through the local markets.

Mr. Sili stated that in Caroline County that the Resource Council takes on the summer school feeding program and the seniors program. Mr. Sili stated that currently the farmer's market meets on Saturday in Caroline County and they only have 10 vendors so he did not think they were at a point where they would be willing to branch out to sell their products in other parts of the region.

Mr. Kelly asked if GWRC could coordinate and host a Continuum of Care meeting of local staff departments, local social service departments, farmer's market coordinators, etc. so that a better and more effective regional plan could be established. Mr. Kelly stated that he did not think the initial meeting should include the market vendors but maybe at a later time they could be included as well. Ms. Borst stated that she thought a regional meeting would be a great step forward and that she appreciated the past and on-going GWRC support for the farmer's market venues.

b.) Other New Business –

Mr. Snellings asked if Mr. Ware could have a representative from the Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR) to either come to the September meeting and give a brief presentation and/or if a report could at least be submitted that gives some insight into the Rappahannock River's water supply, etc. Mr. Snellings stated that he is not asking that GWRC come up with plans or solutions on how to preserve or conserve the water but as the water levels vary daily – i.e. some days you can walk all the way across the river from the Fredericksburg to the Stafford sides & some days the water is way too deep so Mr. Snellings does feel this is a regional issue that needs to be discussed.

Adjourn The GWRC meeting was adjourned at 6:32 p.m. The next GWRC meeting date is September 15th at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Timothy Ware
Executive Director
(Draft minutes prepared by JoAnna Roberson)