

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

April 18, 2016

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

MEMBERS PRESENT AND VOTING: **Chair** – Jim Howard **King George County; City of Fredericksburg:** Billy Withers; **Caroline County:** Jeff Black & Nancy Long; **King George County:** Ruby Brabo; & **Stafford County:** Meg Bohmke & Laura Sellers

MEMBERS ABSENT: City of Fredericksburg – Matt Kelly; County of Spotsylvania – Greg Benton & Paul Trampe

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Dale Sisson, King George County

STAFF: Tim Ware, Executive Director; Paul Agnello, Danny Reese, Lloyd Robinson & Nick Quint, FAMPO; Kate Gibson, CoC; Diana Utz, Leigh Anderson & JoAnna Roberson, GWRC

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Howard called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. with a quorum present; which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF GWRC MEETING AGENDA

Upon motion by Mr. Withers and seconded by Ms. Brabo, with all in consensus, the agenda for the April 18th meeting was approved as submitted.

APPROVAL OF GWRC MEETING MINUTES (March 21, 2016) - (Action Item)

Upon motion by Mr. Withers and seconded by Ms. Sellers, and all others in consensus, the minutes from the March 21st meeting were approved as amended.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT – There was no one from the public who spoke; however, Mr. Howard recognized Mr. Dale Sisson. Mr. Sisson had previously served as a member of the Commission from 2004 to 2015. Appreciation was extended to Mr. Sisson for his years of service to the Commission and a plaque and resolution were presented to Mr. Sisson.

Mr. Sisson stated that he had enjoyed his years of service to the George Washington Regional Commission and that he had been a part of working with three directors and one interim director. Mr. Sisson stated that he has seen the Commission grow from being financially unstable to the financially sound organization it is today. Mr. Sisson contributed the financial success to Mr. Tim Ware and the dedicated staff. Mr. Sisson stated that while serving on the Commission he had the opportunity to learn a lot; to effectively work together with members from the other jurisdictions,

and to keep a focused attitude on regional perspectives, ideas, projects and issues. Mr. Sisson wished the current members and the Commission the best of luck in its ongoing endeavors to make this region continually more successful.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. Ware advised that the Financial Report is included in tonight's agenda packet. Mr. Ware stated that the Commission's revenues are over the expenditures and we are even higher than where we expected to be at the ninth month of the fiscal year.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Ware advised that several months ago a presentation was given in regard to the Vanpool Alliance program. Mr. Ware stated that this is the program that provides revenue back to a region for annual vanpool data that is submitted to the state. Mr. Ware stated that the program exists between NVTC, PRTC, & GWRC. Mr. Ware relayed that the initial start-up of the program required a match which at the time was covered in full by NVTC & PRTC. It was the understanding that before this region would begin receiving the annual federal dollars that the match would be paid back first to the other two entities. Initially this region was expecting to begin receiving the annual revenues in FY2018; however, it appears that they may actually begin in FY2017. Mr. Ware also advised that the money that was expected to be generated to the region has also increased by \$18,000 annually. An amendment to the MOU will allow for GWRC to participate in the "other miles" disbursement with PRTC and NVTC on a percentage basis. Mr. Ware stated that the funds generated would be used for 5307 projects and the Commission would decide on how these funds are distributed. Ms. Utz stated that a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would need to be signed by all three entities (NVTC, PRTC, & GWRC) and this new MOU should be coming before the commission at the upcoming May 16th meeting.

Mr. Ware relayed that the City of Fredericksburg has sent an invitation for the Commission members to participate in their annual river float. Mr. Withers stated that the canoe trip is an approximate 4-5 mile trip and that he has participated in the event for several years and it has always been a good event. Mr. Ware stated that the trip is scheduled for Saturday, May 20th. Several members indicated that they had received the email; however, Ms. Brabo said she did not get it. Mr. Ware advised that he would forward the information to all members after the conclusion of tonight's meeting.

GWRC Regional Land Bank – Mr. Tom Carlson, Habitat for Humanity

Mr. Carlson advised that he is the Executive Director for Habitat for Humanity and currently they work with the City of Fredericksburg and the Counties of King George, Spotsylvania and Stafford. Mr. Carlson stated that they are also working with Caroline County to see if it will be feasible for them to join as well.

Mr. Carlson stated that other states have formed land banks and they have been quite successful. Mr. Carlson advised that a land bank creates a 5013C to help localities to deal with condemned properties, delinquent properties, etc.

Mr. Carlson advised that the Land Bank Entities Act of 2016 was signed by the Governor on March 1st and becomes effective July 1st. Mr. Carlson stated that a locality of two or more may create a land bank entity. It can be established as a non-profit (501 (c) (3) that will assist a locality to address vacant, abandoned and tax delinquent properties. Mr. Carlson stated that in order to establish a Land Bank Entity, you need to serve public hearing notices to the public surrounding the property in question; you need to establish a governing Board and the Board may establish personnel and staff as needed.

Mr. Carlson stated that the Land Bank Entity could establish by-laws; can sue or be sued; can borrow money; can enter into contracts for management of rental or sales of real property; can accept grants/donations from any source; & may accept transfers or conveyances of real properties from a specific locality.

Mr. Carlson advised that data obtained from other states that have an established Land Bank Entity has shown that up to 50% of delinquent property taxes have been collected after the Land Bank Entity has been endorsed.

Mr. Carlson stated that currently Habitat obtained three properties from Stafford County. Now where the properties before were abandoned and no income being received from them the new land owners are paying taxes on the property. Mr. Carlson stated that a Land Bank Entity opportunity is a win/win situation as it is a windfall for the property owner; is a windfall for the 501 (c) (3) organizational entities; and a windfall for the specific locality. Mr. Carlson stated that he has already given this presentation to the City Council and hopes to schedule appointments to go before the Boards of Supervisors in the other localities.

Ms. Bohmke asked if the data from the other states who have implemented this concept is available that shows the success; the number of properties required to date; the revenue that has been generated, etc. Mr. Carlson stated that this data is available and he would forward the report to Mr. Ware and ask that Mr. Ware forward it to all of the Commission members.

OLD BUSINESS

a.) Harry Nice Bridge – Ms. Ruby Brabo, King George County

Ms. Brabo advised that included in tonight's agenda packet is a letter that was drafted to be submitted to both the Governor of Virginia and the Governor of Maryland from the George Washington Regional Commission. The purpose of the letter was to ask that both states, Maryland and Virginia, give consideration to making safety repairs to the Harry Nice Bridge within the time frame originally scheduled and that this project not be pushed further back before any improvements are made.

Ms. Brabo stated that she had a revised letter that was drafted by the County Attorney in King George County that was distributed to commission members. Ms. Brabo was asking that the Commission endorse the revised letter instead of the letter included in tonight's agenda packet.

Mr. Withers stated that he felt the intent of the first letter was in asking that more involvement occur between Maryland and Virginia. However, he feels the second letter is asking the commission to agree to going to the next step in the process.

Ms. Long asked if it is appropriate to address the Governor of Virginia with a request to impede onto the Governor of Maryland. Ms. Long stated that we could request that the Governor of Virginia speak on the issue but not provide direction to the Governor of Maryland. Ms. Long stated that the letter could encourage the Governor of Virginia to be proactive and to work with the Governor of Maryland to encourage that the project stay on the original time line for repairs needed.

Ms. Sellers stated that she would not feel comfortable in endorsing this letter tonight until she has had the opportunity to present it to the Board of Supervisors in Stafford County for their endorsement. The project cost is extensive and if this project would be approved, then what projects would be pulled or pushed further out. Ms. Sellers stated that she would like the request at tonight's meeting to be deferred until the May GWRC meeting.

Ms. Brabo stated that the intent of the letter is not to approve the project but instead to ask that consideration be given by both the states of Maryland and Virginia that the project not get pushed further out before necessary repairs are made and that the project remain on the original schedule.

Ms. Brabo stated that it is important to ensure that both governors concur. Both Mr. Howard and Ms. Sellers stated that as currently Virginia has no funding allocated for improvements being made to the Virginia side of the 301 bridge that they were not sure if this was an actual position the region should ask the Virginia governor to endorse.

Mr. Howard stated that as there was committee discussion and no concise committee endorsement from tonight's meeting that his request would be for both letters – the one drafted by Mr. Ware to be submitted from the Commission and the one drafted by the King George County Attorney be combined and meshed into one document. Mr. Howard stated that it was committee consensus that a request be made to both the Governor in Virginia and the Governor in Maryland for them to keep the improvement projects to the Harry Nice Bridge on its original schedule; however, the commission is not supporting that funding dollars to this region be allocated to the repairs needed at the Harry Nice Bridge.

Ms. Sellers made the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Withers, with everyone concurring that the letter be revised and brought back before the Commission for endorsement at the upcoming May 16th meeting.

b.) **Dahlgren Railroad Heritage Trail** – Ms. Ruby Brabo, King George County

Ms. Brabo stated that at the March Commission meeting she had discussed the Dahlgren Railroad Heritage Trail in King George County. Ms. Brabo advised that the previous agreement would have prevented any park from being transferred to the Commonwealth of Virginia for operation and maintenance. Ms. Brabo relayed that the original budget amendment has now been updated and that King George County is not pleased with the latest revision.

NEW BUSINESS:

a.) 2017 Preliminary Budget – Mr. Tim Ware

Mr. Ware stated that he is presenting for review and discussion the preliminary 2017 budget request for GWRC/FAMPO. Mr. Ware advised that the budget is usually endorsed in May; however, this year we have three new board members who may not be familiar with the GWRC budget process so Mr. Ware wanted to give preliminary budget documentation.

Mr. Ware relayed that the total budget to be requested for FY2017 is \$2,545,405 and this figure represents an increase from the FY2016 in the amount of \$527,984. Mr. Ware stated that the local government contributions are budgeted at \$223,383 and this figure is based on a per capita request of \$0.6433. Mr. Ware stated that the per capita rate was approved by the Commission last year and the amount requested has remained consistent over the last several years. Mr. Ware stated that after the total discretionary and local contributions are allocated, the agency will realize a surplus of \$79,610. Mr. Ware advised that the commission receives funding from three sources: grants, dues from the localities, & approximately \$75,000 that is appropriate from legislature.

Mr. Ware stated that staffing levels will remain at 10 full-time employees and 2 part-time employees. Mr. Ware advised that budget considerations have been made to allow for a 2% cost of living increase which will equate to \$15,140.

Mr. Ware stated that GWRideconnect is granted supported and the funding allocated to this program can only be used there. The GWRideconnect budget will realize a budget increase of \$70,373. This increase is a result of the way in which the CMAQ federal resources are accounted for in the GWRC budget. Mr. Ware stated that in addition to this, a 5% increase has been requested from the DRPT grant.

Mr. Ware stated that the FAMPO funding will increase by \$426,928; with \$101,000 that can be carried over to FY2018. Mr. Ware advised that the increase is primarily the result of the additional RSTP funding surplus dollars that will be allocated to the region.

Mr. Ware stated that the previous planning services category will increase by \$6,424. Mr. Ware stated that previously GWRC had a full-time planner and that position has remained unfilled since 2014. Mr. Ware relayed that the department continues to be self-sustaining and now when the planning services are needed we contract these out to our on-call consultant firm. This allows us to pay for a project as needed and saves the company from providing medical benefits, leave time accrual, etc.

Mr. Ware advised that the fringe benefit and indirect cost categories will decrease by approximately \$11,000 for the upcoming year. Mr. Ware stated that GWRC participates in Stafford County's Health Insurance Plan. Mr. Ware thanked both Ms. Bohmke and Ms. Sellers for supporting this issue through the Stafford County Board of Supervisors.

The question was asked as to what exactly are indirect costs. Mr. Ware stated that indirect costs are the Executive Director's salary, a full-time bookkeeper's salary, building rent, utilities, etc. Mr. Ware stated that these figures are holding steady and should foresee no additional increases.

Ms. Bohmke asked what would occur to make this figure do down. Mr. Ware stated that by us having previously full-time higher-paid positions that have now been converted to part-time positions like Mr. Robinson and then by hiring new and younger employees working on the Transportation side.

Mr. Ware stated that the local dues will generate \$223,383 and the State DHCD will allocate \$75,971 for a combined total of \$299,354. Mr. Ware advised that the GWRideconnect grant will equate to \$93,398; the FAMPO grant is 475,327 & the Planning grant will be \$51,019 for a total of \$219,744; leaving a balance of \$79,610. Mr. Ware stated that the agency tries to preserve as much of the balance that it can. Mr. Ware stated that dues and DHCD funds are not restrictive; however, grant monies are. Ms. Bohmke asked Mr. Ware what would be his ultimate desired goal to have remaining in the surplus budget which is now \$79,610. Mr. Ware stated that the goals of the organization are to attain a \$250,000 remaining balance at a year end.

Mr. Ware advised that the final budget request will be submitted to the Commission for endorsement at the upcoming May 16th GWRC meeting.

b.) Other New Business

Ms. Brabo advised in regard to the Harry Nice Bridge, that as of today the state of Maryland has finished its review of the testing site on the Virginia side of the bridge. Also for those members who are members of the Virginia Association of Counties, the meeting for Region 7 will be held on June 16th in Louisa County. Ms. Brabo relayed that more information would be forthcoming but if members were interested in participating that they could at least put the meeting date on their calendars.

ADJOURN

The April 18th meeting was adjourned at 6:43 p.m. The next meeting will be held on April 18, 2016 at 6:00 p.m.

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

