

Minutes
Rural Virginia Action Committee Meeting
Board of Directors of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership
December 6, 2023
12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

One James Center, 7th Floor – Katherine Johnson Room
Richmond, Virginia

Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:30 p.m. by Chair Rush, who noted that a quorum was present.

In-person Committee members: Chair Nick Rush, Carrie Chenery, Stephen Edwards, Rick Harrell, John Hewa, and Secretary Caren Merrick

Committee members absent: Nancy Howell Agee and Mimi Coles

Other in-person Board members: Pace Lochte and Bill Hayter

In-person VEDP staff: Lesley Brown, Greg Burkart, Star Cranston, Nicole David, Jason El Koubi, Stef Florie, Stephen Hartka, Chris Hughes, Nicole Riley, Lisa Wallmeyer, Adam Watkins, and Abigail Wescott

Virtual VEDP staff: Carrie Vuori and Blake Omohundro

In-person guests: Anita Begnaud, Joseph Benevento, James Campos, Carthan Currin, Chris Peace, Matthew Shank, Kendra Shifflett, Jerry Silva, and Stephen Versen

Approval of Minutes for September 13, 2023

Chair Rush requested approval of the September 13, 2023, meeting minutes. A motion was made by Mr. Hewa, and seconded by Ms. Chenery, and the minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

Public Comment Period

Chair Rush asked if any members of the public wished to comment. There were none.

Closed Meeting

Policy Discussion; Budget and Legislative Proposals

A motion was made by Secretary Merrick and seconded by Mr. Harrell to move into a closed meeting. The members unanimously approved the motion shown below.

I move that the Legislative and Policy Committee convene a closed meeting to discuss specific strategies pursuant to Subdivision A 50 of §2.2-3711 of the Code Virginia, which allows for the discussion of activities related to the strategic plan that would reveal to the Commonwealth's competitors for economic development projects the strategies intended to be deployed by the Commonwealth.

Chair Rush allowed VEDP staff and legislative guests to stay for the closed meeting.

Back in Open Meeting, Certification of Closed Meeting – Followed by a Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Wallmeyer read the following certification and then conducted a roll call vote:

Do you certify that to the best of your knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements of FOIA were discussed in the closed session, and (ii) only such matters as were identified in the motion to go into the closed session were heard, discussed, or considered during the closed meeting?

Upon the vote:	Mr. Rush	Aye
	Ms. Chenery	Aye
	Mr. Edwards	Aye
	Mr. Harrell	Aye
	Mr. Hewa	Aye
	Sec. Merrick	Aye

Private Higher Education Institutions in Rural Virginia

Abigail Wescott introduced guest presenters Chris Peace, President of the Council of Independent Colleges, Matthew Shank, President of the Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges, and Carthan Currin, President of the Commonwealth Alliance of Rural Colleges.

Chris Peace, Council of Independent Colleges

Mr. Peace gave a brief overview of his background. He shared that there are 28 member colleges and universities that are active across the three private higher education institutions represented at the meeting. He spoke about their common causes highlighting their statewide presence and largely rural focus.

Mr. Peace spoke about accessibility and affordability of the Commonwealth's private colleges, funding from the General Assembly, and the Tuition Assistance Grant (TAG).

Mr. Peace reviewed the Council of Independent Colleges 2024 Policy Initiatives and economic impact on the Commonwealth.

Matthew Shank, Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges (VFIC)

Mr. Shank explained that the primary role of his foundation is to provide access to students who otherwise would not be able to afford to attend a private college/university. He said that 17 private colleges/universities, including two Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Hampton and Virginia Union), are VFIC members.

Mr. Shank provided information on the students the VFIC serves. He spoke about the importance of Virginia's private colleges, highlighting their diversity, affordability, and personalized offerings.

Carthan Currin, Commonwealth Alliance of Rural Colleges

Mr. Currin provided details on the history of the Alliance, its mission, and its member institutions.

Following Mr. Currin's remarks, the Committee and presenters engaged in a discussion on enrollment challenges and trends, as well as specific programs that are needed to address workforce shortages in the healthcare field, including mental health.

Chair Rush thanked the presenters for their remarks and the Committee offered a round of applause.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Rush adjourned the meeting at 1:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Lesley Brown