

Minutes
Rural Virginia Action Committee Meeting
Board of Directors of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership
March 18, 2026
1:30 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.

One James Center, 9th Floor – Board Room
Richmond, Virginia

Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:46 p.m. by Chair Nick Rush.

In-person Committee members: Mimi Coles, Rick Harrell, Bill Hayter, Connie Loughhead, Nick Rush

Absent Committee members:

Other Board members present: John Hewa, Todd House, Pace Lochte, Emily O’Quinn, Will Sessoms, Secretary Mark Sickles, Steven Stone

Public Comment Period

Chair Rush solicited public comments. There were none.

Approval of Minutes for December 10, 2025

Chair Rush requested approval of the December 10, 2025, meeting minutes. Upon motion by Ms. Loughhead, seconded by Ms. Coles, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Guest Speaker, Sean McMurray, Wellspring Foundation

Sean McMurray, Executive Director of the Wellspring Foundation, provided an overview of the organization, an independent, nonprofit private foundation established in 2021 to promote health and economic well-being in Washington, Grayson, Russell, and Smyth counties. He outlined the Foundation’s funding priorities, informed by a community health needs assessment and strategic plan, which focus on health, children and families, workforce development, education, economic development, and workforce housing.

Mr. McMurray described Wellspring’s grantmaking process and highlighted key community investments, including workforce development initiatives, regional child development hubs, and quality-of-life projects. He emphasized the Foundation’s workforce housing strategy through Appalachian Highlands Housing Partners, including a community land trust model that preserves long-term affordability for workforce households earning 80-120 percent of area median income. He further highlighted RidgeBuilt, a precision-built modular home manufacturing facility designed to reduce housing costs, accelerate production, and create jobs in Russell County, as well as HOMEWorks, a construction-trades education and training program that partners with local schools to prepare workers for careers in advanced construction and housing production.

Adjournment

The next meeting of the Rural Virginia Action Committee will be held on June 3, 2026. There being no further business, Chair Rush adjourned the meeting at 2:34 p.m.

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