



Veritas Vineyard & Winery, Nelson County

RURAL VIRGINIA ACTION COMMITTEE

March 18, 2026

**VIRGINIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP AUTHORITY
RURAL VIRGINIA ACTION COMMITTEE MEETING**

MARCH 18, 2026 | 1:30 PM TO 2:15 PM

**JAMES CENTER ONE, BOARD ROOM, 9TH FLOOR
901 EAST CARY STREET, RICHMOND, VA 23219**

Committee Members

Nick Rush, Chair
Mimi Coles
Rick Harrell
Bill Hayter
Connie Loughhead

Ex-Officio Member

John Hewa

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|-----------------------|---|
| 1:30 – 1:32 PM | Welcome/Call to Order – Nick Rush, Chair |
| 1:32 – 1:33 PM | Public Comment Period – Nick Rush |
| 1:33 – 1:35 PM | Approval of Minutes for December 10, 2025 Meeting – Nick Rush <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Action Item - Vote to Accept |
| 1:35 – 2:10 PM | Guest Presentation – Sean McMurray, Executive Director, The Wellspring Foundation |
| 2:10 – 2:15 PM | Open Discussion and Anticipated Topics |
| 2:15 PM | Adjournment |

Minutes
Rural Virginia Action Committee Meeting
Board of Directors of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership
December 10, 2025
12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.

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

Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:00 p.m. by Chair Nick Rush.

In-person Committee members: Rick Harrell, Connie Loughhead, Nick Rush, Secretary Juan Pablo Segura

Absent Committee members: Mimi Coles, Stephen Edwards, Bill Hayter

Other Board members present: John Hewa, Todd House, Anne Oman, Steven Stone, Secretary Stephen Cummings

Public Comment Period

Chair Rush solicited public comments. There were none.

Approval of Minutes for June 11, 2025 and September 17, 2025

Chair Rush requested approval of the June 11, 2025 and the September 17, 2025, meeting minutes. Upon motion by Ms. Loughhead, seconded by Mr. Harrell, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Rural Healthcare and Impacts on Economic Development

Lindsay Akers, VP of External Affairs, introduced Julie Dime, Vice President of Government Affairs at the Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association (VHHA). Ms. Dime outlined VHHA's vision to make Virginia the healthiest state in the nation and its mission to collaborate with members and stakeholders to support the sustainability of hospitals and health systems while improving health outcomes across the Commonwealth. She noted VHHA's strategic priorities include sustaining hospitals, addressing behavioral health needs and workforce shortages, improving population health, holding health plans accountable, and fostering a positive business climate aligned with economic development.

Ms. Dime emphasized the role of hospitals as economic anchors, noting they contribute approximately \$62 billion annually to Virginia's economy and employ more than 125,000 individuals statewide, often serving as the largest employer in rural communities. She stated that hospitals provide critical infrastructure comparable to transportation and broadband and deliver significant community benefits. In 2023, hospitals provided \$3.7 billion in charitable contributions, supported 3.4 million emergency visits, 765,197 inpatient admissions, and 86,248 births. Private hospitals accounted for more than 92% of behavioral health admissions

statewide. Ms. Dime concluded by noting that investments in health care support community stability, workforce productivity, and economic growth.

Ms. Akers then introduced former Delegate Dave Nutter, Director of Rural Health Initiatives. Mr. Nutter provided an overview of health and economic challenges in rural Virginia, citing higher rates of chronic illness, shorter life expectancy, aging populations, and persistent primary care workforce shortages. He noted that more than 30 counties are designated Health Professional Shortage Areas and that limited access to services remains a concern.

He emphasized the relationship between community health, workforce stability, and economic competitiveness, highlighting the role of Medicaid expansion in reducing the uninsured rate and supporting hospitals and local economies. He noted that Virginia hospitals have fully funded the state share of Medicaid expansion since 2019, covering more than 650,000 low-income adults.

Mr. Nutter discussed the financial vulnerability of rural hospitals due to payer mix and thin operating margins and outlined potential impacts from proposed federal policy changes. He also addressed workforce shortages and strategies to strengthen health care workforce pipelines. He concluded with an overview of Virginia's Rural Health Transformation Program and ongoing collaboration to improve access to care and support rural communities.

Local and Regional Competitiveness Initiative

Adam Watkins, VP of Economic Competitiveness, provided an update on VEDP's Local and Regional Competitiveness Initiative (LRCI). He noted that LRCI was launched in 2021 to provide local and regional economic development organizations (EDOs) with peer benchmarking data to inform strategy and operations. Based on partner feedback, VEDP redesigned the survey and reports in early 2025 to improve usability, expand priority topic areas, and allow customized peer comparisons.

He stated VEDP launched the updated survey in July, with participation from 98 local and 16 regional EDOs. Participants received customized reports in November comparing their responses to selected peer organizations. Preliminary findings show that rural EDOs face greater staffing constraints and are more likely to identify housing and infrastructure as significant barriers to economic development.

Mr. Watkins noted that VEDP produced 114 customized reports and consulted with more than 60 state, local, and regional partners during the redesign process. He stated that VEDP will continue to support EDOs through follow-up engagements, case studies, shared resources, and potential capacity-building initiatives, including a proposed pilot grant program to address staffing challenges.

Adjournment

The next meeting of the Rural Virginia Action Committee will be held on March 18, 2026. There being no further business, Chair Rush adjourned the meeting at 12:56 pm.



James City County

RURAL VIRGINIA ACTION COMMITTEE

March 18, 2026

AGENDA

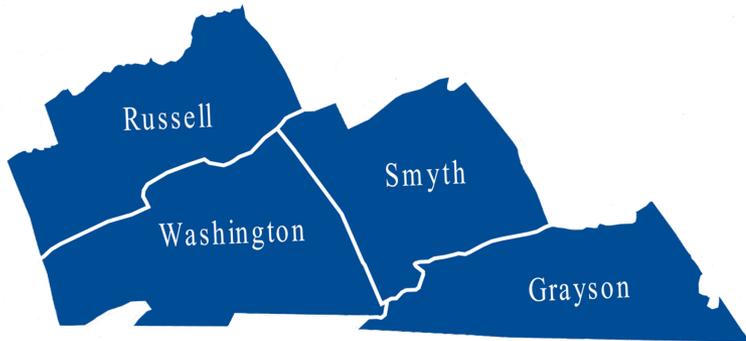
Guest Presentation: Wellspring Foundation

WELLSPRING FOUNDATION

OF SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA

Virginia Economic Development Partnership
Rural Virginia Action Committee
March 18, 2026

About Us



- Independent, not-for-profit private foundation – established November 2021
- **Vision** – leveraging collaborative partnerships to promote a healthy, thriving region
- **Mission** – to enhance the health and wellbeing for the Virginia residents of Washington, Grayson, Russell and Smyth counties by cultivating goal-oriented partnerships
- Visit our website: www.wellspringva.org

Funding Priorities



Our Areas of Interest

We have completed a community health needs assessment and strategic plan that informed our areas of interest which include:

Health
Children & Families
Workforce Development
Education
Economic Development

\$64.8 million in commitments as of February 2026

Our Process



Community Investments

Washington County Promise Program/PATH Program

Paramont Center for Applied Technology & Workforce Development

EO Regional Workforce & Child Development Hub

Virginia Creeper Trail



Workforce Housing

Appalachian Highlands Housing Partners (AHHP)

Community Land Trust – homes for workforce at attainable price

RidgeBuilt – precision built modular home factory

HOMEWorks – construction trades education and training facility



Community Land Trust

Affordability in Perpetuity

- Preservation
- Redevelopment (in-fill)
- New Construction

Target population – members of the workforce in the 80-120% AMI range

Land Banking



RidgeBuilt

Attainable housing through off-site construction of home components at a precision built modular home factory

Addresses structural barriers to housing production by reducing costs and accelerating housing delivery without compromising durability or design

Supports economic opportunity and long-term community stability

New job creation in Russell County, a financially, doubly distressed county

RidgeBuilt







HOMERWorks

Partner with local high schools and community colleges

Blend of hands-on training and real-world production

Prepare workforce for careers in advanced construction and building trades



HOMEWorks



WELLSPRING FOUNDATION

OF SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA

Questions/Discussion

Sean McMurray
Executive Director

Sean.mcmurray@wellspringva.org

**848 French Moore Jr. Blvd.
Abingdon, Virginia 24210**

info@wellspringva.org www.wellspringva.org

TOPICS FOR NEXT MEETING