

**GO VIRGINIA REGION 3 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
ZOOM MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, November 18, 2020**

The GO Virginia Region 3 Executive Committee met on Wednesday, November 18, 2020 utilizing Zoom virtual technology.

REGULAR BUSINESS

1. Call To Order And Chairman's Opening Comments

Chairman Lail called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

Chair Randy Lail welcomed everyone to the GO Virginia Region 3 Virtual ZOOM Council meeting. Due to the nature of the Declaration of a State of Emergency due to the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) and pursuant to Code §2.2-3708.2, this meeting is being held by electronic communications, via the web platform ZOOM. The catastrophic nature of this declared emergency makes it impractical and unsafe to assemble a quorum in a single location. The virtual platform was selected to abide by the restrictions on public gatherings as stated in the Governor's Emergency Declaration and to protect the health of citizens. The required public notice and receipt of public comments was provided as outlined in the requirements of electronic meetings. The agenda items for this meeting are considered essential to the overall operation of GO Virginia Region 3.

2. Roll Call and Confirmation of Quorum

Chairman Lail declared a quorum was present.

A. Region 3 Council Members:

Member	Present	Absent
Tim Clark	✓	
Randy Lail, Chairman	✓	
Charles Majors, Vice Chairman	✓	
Karl Stauber	✓	
Sherry Swinson	✓	

B. Region 3 Staff in Attendance:

Name/Organization	Organization
Bryan David-UVA Weldon Cooper Center	Region 3 Program Director
Liz Povar-Riverlink Group	Region 3 Contract Staff
Nancy Pool	Region 3 Contract Staff
Deborah Gosney-Southside PDC	Region 3 Support Org/Fiscal Agent
Lisa McGee-Southside PDC	Region 3 Support Org/Fiscal Agent

C. Guests in Attendance:

Name	Organization
None	

3. Public Comments

No written or verbal public comments were received.

4. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

Conflicts of interest potentially exist for activities benefiting and/or contracts issued to the following organizations and projects listed below:

Name	Organization(s)
Charles H. Majors	Mid-Atlantic Broadband, Institute for Advanced Learning and Research, Danville Regional Foundation, Future of the Piedmont
Randolph Lail	Mid-Atlantic Broadband

5. Approval of Minutes

Chairman Lail noted that the minutes of the September 16, 2020 Executive Committee meeting were received via email prior to the meeting and included in the meeting packet. **Charles Majors made a motion that the minutes from the September 16, 2020 Executive Committee meeting be approved as presented; the motion was seconded by Sherry Swinson and by roll call vote all members voted affirmatively.**

6. Financial Reports

Deborah Gosney reviewed the Financial Reports that were included in the meeting packet for period October 1, 2020 – October 31, 2020. **Sherry Swinson made a motion that the Financial Reports for period ending October 31, 2020 be approved as presented; the motion was seconded by Charles Majors and by roll call vote all members voted affirmatively.**

OLD BUSINESS

7. Approved Projects Updates

Updated Project Progress Reports were included in the meeting packet for the following projects:

- GO Tec 2B – The project is tracking as expected. The GO-TEC team is progressing well under the current pandemic conditions. MOU’s are being collected for the next phase of the project and other milestones of the project are being met.
- Bridge to Recovery – Arrangements are being made for the Bridge to Recovery team to present project progress at the Council meeting in January and project milestones are being met.
- Mid-Atlantic Broadband Communities Corporation (MBC) – Middle Mile Expansion for Economic Growth – The EDA application is under review pending approval.
- Common Platform (Major Clarity) – Project milestones are being met.
- Genedge – Retooling Virginia Manufacturing for Strategic Industries – The GENEDGE team is meeting regularly and reaching into the various GO Virginia regions; several applications are being reviewed by GENEDGE. Project milestones are being met.

NEW BUSINESS

8. Committee Reports

- A. Communication Committee - At the Region 3 Council meeting on October 28th, the Communications Committee reported it wanted to proceed with a “refresh” of the Region 3 website. There was a Council consensus that the Communications Committee should proceed with the project to improve the website’s functionality and to further the goals of Region 3’s Digital Communications Plan. A scope of work and budget for the project from Letterpress Communications is detailed below:

The total cost for these elements is \$8,800. Letterpress Communications provided a timeline for services. The proposed scope of work and budget are dated October 15, 2020, and the proposal indicates it is valid for thirty (30) days. Letterpress Communications will be confirming that these services and cost quotation remain valid.

One element not recommended at this time was identified as a video tutorial for the “Apply” page at a cost of \$2,250. The current project pipeline is being cultivated from in-person meetings and conversations with prospective project principals representing interested organizations more so than with individuals or organizations which pursue utilizing the website to complete an application before meeting with the Program Director. The Program Director will be responsible for coordinating and guiding a project’s principals in a one-on-one environment on how an application is to be completed for a specific project.

This project is considered a *special project* under the services contract with Letterpress Communications. Deborah Gosney confirmed that there are sufficient funds for a total project budget of \$10,000. These funds would be made available through the customary budget amendment process to the Letterpress Communications line-item.

It is the recommendation of the Communications Committee to approve the engagement of Letterpress Communications for the Region 3 website project at a budget not to exceed \$10,000 and authorize staff to make to the necessary budget amendments.

Sherry Swinson made a motion that the Letterpress Communications Special Project Contract be approved, and the website redesign be approved as presented; the motion was seconded by Karl Stauber and by roll call vote all members voted affirmatively.

9. Region 3 Office Space – SOVA Innovation Hub

The Region 3 Council has used meeting space provided by the Halifax Industrial Development Authority until the Spring of 2020 when the pandemic’s public health safeguards limited large, in-person meetings. Another development for the Region 3 Council was the engagement of a Program Director to manage the Region 3 Council’s program on its behalf.

In light of these developments, the SOVA Innovation Hub is currently under construction by Mid-Atlantic Broadband Communities Corporation (MBC) in partnership with Microsoft’s TechSpark in the Town of South Boston (<https://sovainnovationhub.com/>). GO Virginia Region 3 awarded a grant (~\$80k) to fund an economic impact study, site development, and architectural design for this project. In addition to having co-working space available at the building, it will house MBC’s corporate offices and Microsoft’s TechSpark program.

Suitable office space for the GO Virginia Region 3 Program Director has been identified on the first floor of the building. The office should be made available for occupancy by January 1, 2021, or soon thereafter based on the building's completion. The monthly lease rate is quoted at \$451.25 per month based on a twelve (12) month lease for an annual lease cost of \$5,415.00.

The lease payment includes all utilities, high-speed internet, cleaning, and access to the kitchen/coffee/snacks, printer/copy/fax station, reception area, and other support amenities. The private office lease also includes eight (8) hours use per month for a small conference room (5 people) and one (1) day per month day for the large conference room/training space (25-30 people). Additional reservations for either of these meetings rooms are discounted, but SOVA Innovation staff has advised that because GO Virginia Region 3 is an important partner to the SOVA Innovation Hub additional time for the large meeting space will be made available at no cost.

Deborah Gosney and the Program Director have reviewed the current operations budget for the Region 3 Council and identified funds which are available for the total annual lease expense. An amount has been tentatively included as a budget amendment for the office space lease expense from January 2021 through June 2021. Annualized funding for the lease expense would be budgeted for FY2021-2022 and thereafter.

In addition to the SOVA Innovation Hub office space, the UVA Cooper Center received permission from the New College Institute's (NCI) Interim Executive Director Karen Jackson that office space could be made available to GO Virginia Region 3 as may be needed. This office space would be at the NCI's Baldwin Building in Martinsville.

After discussion, the Executive Committee referred this matter to the Region 3 Council and recommended that it authorize the Chairman to execute a lease for the GO Virginia Region 3 office space at the SOVA Innovation Hub in South Boston and make necessary budget changes.

PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S REPORT

10. Entrepreneurship and Innovation Investment Strategy

The Entrepreneurship and Innovation Investment Strategy was adopted at the October 28, 2020 Region 3 Council meeting. Subsequently, a *Request for Letters of Interest* (RFLI) was widely distributed soliciting qualified partners to implement elements of the strategy.

Executive Committee members were provided a copy of the Request for Letters of Interest (RFLI) in the meeting package. Liz Povar provided an update, noting that potential interested parties had requested an extension.

The Executive Committee authorized staff to work with applicants to complete full applications and to extend the deadline from November 13, 2020 to June 30, 2021 to allow for additional Letters of Interest and applications. All Letters of Interest should first be reviewed by the Innovation Committee prior to being submitted to the Project Review Committee for consideration. The Request for Letters of Interest will be reposted to all sources in an effort to effectively broadcast that the deadline has been extended to June 30, 2021.

11. Carbon Credit Offset Aggregation

The Program Director shared information regarding the development of a potential Region 3 program under the Healthy Watersheds Forest Retention Project sponsored by numerous State and Federal organizations. When operationalized, this program would assist forest landowners to

access the voluntary carbon credit offset markets for the purposes of attracting private capital to these landowners and the community at large. These landowners would access these markets via the aggregation of forest lands. An overarching goal of this program was to financially induce a significant amount of privately owned forest land to be actively managed for growth and thereby contribute to a quantifiable increase in the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

Using an economic development authority as the aggregation vehicle was enabled by an amendment to §15.2-4901 (Industrial/Economic Development Authorities Act) of the Code of Virginia adopted by the 2019 Virginia General Assembly.

This program can benefit rural forest landowners of small to large acreage counts as well as local economic development authorities to create long-term revenue streams from the emerging and growing voluntary carbon offset credit markets. These landowners would receive payments over a number of years from the carbon offset credit market, and the economic development authorities would receive a reasonable percentage of these payments to cover operational overhead expenses and to use for traditional economic development programs and projects. Furthermore, this program does not prevent or otherwise limit a forest landowner from cutting timber and realizing customary periodic revenues from their forest lands.

The Program Director shared that the GO Virginia Region 3 Council is uniquely positioned to facilitate and support the stand-up of a regional pilot project to demonstrate the program's operation and positive economic impact. This economic impact includes the attraction of dollars from outside the community to forest landowners via payments received from the carbon credit offset markets and by creating a demand for high-wage jobs involved with forestland management and related activities. These initial jobs would likely include professional foresters and allied positions, land surveyors, real property title and records examiners, and in-community individuals hired by firms active in the carbon credit offset markets.

The Program Director provided background information and a presentation highlighting an example of how the economic development authority might be used as the aggregation vehicle and what it may mean financially to a forest landowner.

The next steps to advance this type of project would be to initiate the development of an *Enhanced Capacity Building (ECB)* application with two (2) deliverables identified for the first phase of the project. The first deliverable would be an economic impact and job creation analysis. The second deliverable would be a report from a qualified and knowledgeable attorney about the available legal structures under Virginia law for at least two (2) local economic development authorities to develop, start-up, and manage a program with a recommendation on the best structure to pursue. With this information gathered, then an ECB application would be developed and pursued via Department of Housing and Community Development GO Virginia staff. No local economic development authorities in Region 3 have been identified at this time, and it may be premature to do so.

The Program Director reported that while working with Orange County on the program, he communicated frequently with Dr. Fletcher Mangum (Mangum Economics) about preparing an economic impact and job creation analysis and understands that Dr. Mangum has done extensive prior work for the Region 3 Council. Additionally, GO Virginia legislative and legal matters have been coordinated with Mr. Preston Bryant (McGuire Woods Consulting), thus these two professional organizations would be capable of preparing and sharing a preliminary scope of work, budget, schedule, and deliverables regarding their respective work.

The consensus of the Executive Committee was for the Program Director to continue developing the project's concept and to present his work at the Committee's February meeting. Further, the Program Director will provide a report on this potential project at the Region 3 Council meeting in January.

OTHER BUSINESS/ADJOURN

Region 4 is working with Region 5 on Virginia's Virtual Workforce and is seeking a representative from Region 3. Julie Brown from the Institute for Advance Learning and Research has agreed to represent Region 3.

There being no additional business matters to go before the GO Virginia Region 3 Executive Committee, Chairman Lail adjourned the meeting at 12:28 p.m.



Deborah B. Gosney, Southside PDC
Support Organization/Fiscal Agent

DocuSigned by:



Ernest "Randy" Lail
Chairman