

VIRGINIA TOBACCO REGION REVITALIZATION COMMISSION

701 East Franklin Street, Suite 501

Richmond, Virginia 23219

IN RE: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

January 9, 2024

10:51 p.m.

HEARD BEFORE: Senator Frank Ruff, Chair

Delta Hotels by Marriott, Richmond

Kanawha Ballroom

555 East Canal Street

Richmond, Virginia 23219

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1 APPEARANCES:

2 Senator Frank Ruff, Chair, Presiding  
3 Delegate James "Will" Morefield, Vice Chair  
4 Edward Blevins  
5 Amanda Cox  
6 Delegate Terry Kilgore  
7 Delegate Danny Marshall  
8 Walter Shelton

9  
10 ABSENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

11 Delegate Les Adams  
12 Julianne Hensley  
13 Senator Louise Lucas  
14

15 COMMISSION STAFF:

16 James Campos  
17 Stephen Versen  
18 Stephanie Kim  
19 Vicki Humphreys  
21 Sara Williams  
22 Sarah Capps  
23 Jordan Butler  
24 Jerry Silva

25

1 COMMISSION STAFF (con't.):

2 Suzette Patterson

3 Joyce Knight

4 Emily Van Pelt

5 Adrian Counts

6 Hannah Franke-Culler

7  
8 COUNSEL FOR COMMISSION

9 Elizabeth Myers

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21

22

23

24

25

1 (The Executive Committee meeting commenced  
2 at 10:51 a.m., and the Committee's agenda commenced  
3 as follows:)

4  
5 SENATOR RUFF: We'll get the --  
6 call role for the Executive Committee.

7  
8 MR. CAMPOS: Senator Ruff.

9  
10 SENATOR RUFF: Here.

11  
12 MR. CAMPOS: Delegate Morefield.

13  
14 DELEGATE MOREFIELD: Yes, here.

15  
16 MR. CAMPOS: Ed Blevins.

17  
18 MR. BLEVINS: Here.

19  
20 MR. CAMPOS: Amanda Cox.

21  
22 MS. COX: Here.

23  
24 MR. CAMPOS: Julie Hensley.  
25 Delegate Kilgore.

1 DELEGATE KILGORE: Here.

2

3 MR. CAMPOS: Senator Lucas.

4 Delegate Marshall.

5

6 DELEGATE MARSHALL: Here.

7

8 MR. CAMPOS: Buddy Shelton.

9

10 MR. SHELTON: Here.

11

12 MR. CAMPOS: We have a quorum, sir.

13

14 MR. RUFF: Thank you. Our first  
15 order of business, the approval of the  
16 meetings of 9-14 -- nine -- nine -- and  
17 12-19. They're published on the web site.  
18 Is there a motion?

19

20 DELEGATE MOREFIELD: So moved.

21

22 MR. SHELTON: Second.

23

24 SENATOR RUFF: Properly moved and  
25 second. All in favor, say aye.

1 COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Aye.

2  
3 SENATOR RUFF: Is there any public  
4 comment before we get into anything else?  
5 Seeing none, Vicki, if you will kick us off  
6 with the proposed grant guidelines for the  
7 new energy and agriculture programs.

8  
9 MS. HUMPHREYS: Thank you. At the  
10 December 19 meeting, I went over -- I did a  
11 presentation on the new energy ingenuity and  
12 the new and improved agribusiness fund. And  
13 so in the interest of time, I won't rehash  
14 that information.

15 But the proposed requests for  
16 proposal are in the binder and hope that  
17 everyone got a chance to review those. And  
18 I'd like to entertain any questions at this  
19 time.

20  
21 SENATOR RUFF: If we can get Jerry  
22 to give us a synopsis of what energy --

23  
24 MR. SILVA: Sure. And -- and thank  
25 you, Senator Ruff. The energy fund is --

1 was adopted last -- last -- the energy fund  
2 was adopted last May is my understanding,  
3 and allocated \$12M.

4 \$6M of that is earmarked for  
5 Southwest and the other \$6M is allocated for  
6 the southern -- the southside -- the  
7 Southern region.

8 With that, there's already  
9 been an energy focus that we're -- that  
10 we're attempting to highlight, whether it be  
11 supply chain, ED infrastructure, renewable.

12 I -- I actually, in some of my  
13 briefings heard waste to energy is being  
14 considered in -- in many of these different  
15 areas. So with that, we would like to see  
16 what is out there by actually highlighting  
17 what opportunities exist in these regions.

18 And so the -- the outline that  
19 we drafted highlights opportunities, not  
20 only with tobacco but with other partners  
21 that we can actually seek additional funding  
22 with the focus being on energy, energy  
23 supply and manufacturing of energy  
24 components. Anything having to relate to  
25 what's currently happening in the existing



1 marketplace. So I met with, not only ADP, I  
2 met with Dominion and some of the co-ops as  
3 to what their opportunities are as also as a  
4 way of partnering with these -- with these  
5 groups.

6 So that's a synopsis of what  
7 you have in front of you. It's the energy  
8 fund. I didn't want to make it restrictive,  
9 but I also didn't want to open it up to  
10 where you have so many you have to look.

11 So we're trying to find a  
12 balance and we'll see how that -- how that  
13 works in -- in this first round. We are  
14 adopting, also, the -- the loan part of the  
15 program as part of this -- which you've  
16 heard from Joe Shearin earlier today.

17  
18 SENATOR RUFF: Any questions of  
19 either Vicki or Jerry on that -- on that  
20 program?

21  
22 DELEGATE MOREFIELD: Mr. Chairman.

23  
24 SENATOR RUFF: Yes.

25

1 DELEGATE MOREFIELD: I move to  
2 approve the new energy and agribusiness  
3 framework.

4 MR. BLEVINS: Second.

5  
6 SENATOR RUFF: Properly moved and  
7 second. Any further conversation? Hearing  
8 none. All in favor, say aye.  
9

10 COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Aye.  
11

12  
13 SENATOR RUFF: All opposed? Okay.  
14 On to agriculture. Did you want to add  
15 anything to that?  
16

17 MS. HUMPHREYS: Yes. The  
18 agribusiness fund, as you've seen over the  
19 last couple of days here, we've had some  
20 pretty complex agribusiness projects come  
21 in.

22 And our new approach to this  
23 is simply much more collaborative. We are  
24 going to take pre-applications for the  
25 agribusiness program so that we can have

1 staff review those for a level of -- of  
2 complexity that we need to engage other  
3 partners to collaborate with us on funding  
4 those initiatives. That's all I have to  
5 add.

6  
7 SENATOR RUFF: Any questions of  
8 Vicki?

9  
10 MS. KNIGHT: Excuse me. May I  
11 interrupt one second? Someone left their  
12 lights on on their car. It's a BMW. The  
13 license plate number is GY18X5. So if you  
14 left your lights on in your car, you need to  
15 go check it out. Thank you.

16  
17 SENATOR RUFF: Is there a motion?

18  
19 DELEGATE MOREFIELD: All right,  
20 Mr. Chairman, in my last motion, I did  
21 include this report, agribusiness. So we  
22 voted previous.

23  
24 SENATOR RUFF: All right. I'll  
25 take your word for it, Will. We'll move on.

1 That is -- Stephanie, you're up.

2  
3 MS. KIM: I think we discussed this  
4 at the last meeting. But basically, we  
5 wanted your approval for recommendation of  
6 the Full Commission for approval of  
7 administrative fees for our former loan  
8 forgiveness program.

9 If you recall, Southwest  
10 Virginia Higher Education currently  
11 administers that program. It is winding  
12 down, even though those loan payments  
13 continue for 10 years.

14 So they handle the billing and  
15 the funds, as well as -- currently, they  
16 still have some active grants where they  
17 have to verify employment and residency over  
18 the coming years.

19 So it is for administration  
20 fees, \$121,143.00 for this current fiscal  
21 year. And this year, we would take it out  
22 of an existing incentive -- work incentive  
23 grant that we have. But that also is  
24 winding down this year. So going forward,  
25 it will be part of our administrative

1 budget.

2  
3 SENATOR RUFF: Stephanie, we have  
4 some new members here that was not here when  
5 we were doing the -- the student loan  
6 subsidy. Can you kind of give us a high  
7 level of what we were -- what we were doing?  
8

9 MS. KIM: Yes.

10  
11 SENATOR RUFF: Thank you.

12  
13 MS. KIM: Previously, really since  
14 the inception of the Commission, we had a  
15 loan forgiveness program where we would give  
16 out student loans to those going to four-  
17 year institutions.

18 And if they graduated and came  
19 back to the region to live and work, we  
20 would forgive a year of loans for each year  
21 that they worked.

22 So it was good and varied.  
23 But as with many loans that don't have any  
24 underwriting or credit approval, there --

25

there were some defaults. And so those go

1           into debt set-off as -- referred to the  
2           Office of the Attorney General. So there  
3           are about 343 accounts with the Office of  
4           the Attorney General for collections.

5                       And then if you don't come  
6           back to the region and work and live, then  
7           you are in repayment. And they are repaying  
8           the Southwest Virginia Higher Education  
9           Settlement each month.

10                      They -- they send out bills  
11           and then they pay them. And then they pass  
12           that on to us each quarter, I think. So --  
13           and then, they're still verifying, you know,  
14           graduation and employment and residency for  
15           another 500 accounts.

16                      Actually, there are 690 that  
17           are either in deferment or still active  
18           students. But it is an old program. We  
19           haven't done it since 2018, I believe. But  
20           it goes on.

21  
22                      SENATOR RUFF: Thank you. Any  
23           questions about this expenditure?

24  
25                      DELEGATE MOREFIELD: Mr. Chairman.

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SENATOR RUFF: Yes.

DELEGATE MOREFIELD: I move to approve the administrative costs for fiscal year '24 and for the scholarship work incentive.

SENATOR RUFF: Is there a second?

DELEGATE KILGORE: Second.

SENATOR RUFF: Properly moved and second. Any further conversation? Hearing none. All in favor, say aye.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Aye.

SENATOR RUFF: All opposed? Okay, that is approved. Stephen, I think you're up next with the Senior Administrative Specialist.

MR. VERSEN: About five years ago, I was working at the Virginia Department of Agriculture. And one of my colleagues,



1 Joyce Knight, retired from that  
2 organization. I was sad, but I enjoyed  
3 working with Joyce but was thrilled to have  
4 the opportunity to work with her again, as  
5 she took on a job in retirement of helping  
6 to organize these meetings for the  
7 Commission.

8 Now after about five years of  
9 this work, she is actually going to finally  
10 retire this spring, creating a big need by  
11 the Commission to do all the work.

12 There's a tremendous amount of  
13 work that goes on before the meeting goes  
14 on. We saw this opportunity -- not only to  
15 fill this important, but to take on a couple  
16 of other needs the Commission has.

17 We used to have a woman, Stacy  
18 Bridges, that did work for us. She helped  
19 provide some staff support in the TROF  
20 program. We used to have a data analyst who  
21 did our data management for us.

22 Those duties have been  
23 distributed amongst the staff and are being  
24 done. But we believe that those duties  
25 would pull together into a new position and

1 effectively allowing us to expand what the  
2 staff can do. So we are proposing the  
3 creation of a new senior administrative  
4 specialist position that would service this  
5 commission, that would provide support to  
6 TROF as well as this new loan program.

7 I think TROF is run currently  
8 by Jordan Butler, who would be supporting  
9 him in our work. As well as supporting the  
10 new loan program and, importantly, to help  
11 with our data management and the current  
12 data system we use. The position is -- the  
13 description is included in your books.

14  
15 SENATOR RUFF: You've heard the  
16 proposal.

17  
18 MR. BLEVINS: Mr. Chair, I just  
19 have a question. If we're seeing this as a  
20 budget that we pay all -- all administrative  
21 -- you know, just the administration and the  
22 -- I'm just trying to make sure we keep  
23 that.

24  
25 MS. KIM: We'll absorb it in the

1 current year. Because by the time this  
2 person is on, it'll only be a few months  
3 left.

4  
5 MR. BLEVINS: Okay.

6  
7 MS. KIM: So we're not asking for a  
8 budget amendment at this point. But it will  
9 be in next year's budget as a full time  
10 position.

11  
12 MR. BLEVINS: That didn't answer  
13 the question.

14  
15 DELEGATE KILGORE: What's our  
16 percentage -- our percentage of the budget  
17 we use to -- to run this -- to run the  
18 place, in other words.

19  
20 MS. KIM: It's -- it's our  
21 administrative budget, which should be about  
22 \$2M -- just over \$2M a year. So it depends  
23 on how much we decide to award in grants as  
24 to what percentage that would be of the  
25 total budget.

1 DELEGATE KILGORE: It's less than  
2 two percent, right? Less than two percent,  
3 right? I think so.  
4

5 MS. KIM: Yes.  
6

7 SENATOR RUFF: It's in the back of  
8 the Board book on page 99.  
9

10 DELEGATE KILGORE: Page 99? And I  
11 -- I didn't mean to put you on the spot. I  
12 just --  
13

14 MS. KIM: Actually, this year we  
15 have a \$2.9M administrative budget. And a  
16 total budget, with expenditures of \$28.6M.  
17 So it's probably right on that -- just over  
18 10%.  
19

20 DELEGATE KILGORE: Okay.  
21

22 MS. COX: Mr. Chairman.  
23

24 SENATOR RUFF: Yes.  
25

1 MS. COX: Yes, thank you. Thank  
2 you. And Joyce, thank you for your service  
3 if you're still here. We're going to miss  
4 you. Well done.

5 So -- so what will happen --  
6 will happen to Joyce's position? We're not  
7 going to just fill that position, we're  
8 going to create --

9 MS. KIM: She's currently a part  
10 time --

11  
12  
13 MS. COX: Oh, part time. Okay.

14  
15 MS. KIM: Yeah. So we would fill  
16 it with it a --

17  
18 MS. COX: Okay, perfect.

19  
20 MS. KIM: -- full time salaried  
21 person that would also take on some other  
22 duties.

23  
24 MS. COX: And what's the breakdown

25

between part time and full time employees?

1 MS. KIM: Usually, a part time  
2 employee works 30 hours or less per week and  
3 --

4  
5 MS. COX: Oh, I'm sorry. Across  
6 the Commission, how many are part time --

7  
8 MS. KIM: We only have one part  
9 time employee and that's Joyce. And that  
10 was previously a full time position when it  
11 was held by Stacy.

12 Except that she -- she went on  
13 disability. She -- when she was no longer  
14 with the Commission, we had to quickly fill  
15 that position just to continue the meetings.

16 So Joyce was already retired  
17 from the State. So that -- it would impede  
18 with her retirement if she went on full time  
19 --

20  
21 MS. COX: Okay, okay. That's fine.  
22 Thank you, that's fine. My understanding is  
23 that Jerry was also a part time person, so  
24 you had two part time --

25

1 MS. KIM: Well, we have quasi full  
2 time staff. So there are several of us that  
3 are quasi full time that would work 30 hours  
4 or more. So all -- they receive all the  
5 full time benefits, they're just prorated.

6  
7 MS. COX: So how many quasi -- I  
8 mean, I just appreciate knowing. Thank you  
9 very much. How many full time, how many  
10 quasi full time, how many part time? Again,  
11 what are the staffing -- what's the current  
12 level with the staffing?

13  
14 MS. KIM: We have four quasi full  
15 time. And then we have one part time. And  
16 then we have nine full time.

17  
18 MS. COX: Okay. Thank you.

19  
20 SENATOR RUFF: Any other questions?  
21 Is there a motion?

22  
23 DELEGATE MOREFIELD: Mr. Chairman,  
24 I move to approve the creation of the  
25 position.



1 SENATOR RUFF: Is there a second?

2  
3 MS. COX: Second.

4  
5 SENATOR RUFF: Proper move and  
6 second. Any further conversation? Hearing  
7 none. All in favor, say aye.

8  
9 COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Aye.

10  
11 SENATOR RUFF: All opposed?  
12 Thanks, Stephanie.

13  
14 MS. KIM: Thank you.

15  
16 SENATOR RUFF: Stephen, any other  
17 business?

18  
19 MR. VERSEN: Stephanie was going to  
20 provide an update on the creation of the  
21 foundation.

22  
23 MS. KIM: As you recall from the  
24 last Executive Committee meeting, we talked  
25 about the creation of a 501-C-3 foundation

1 to complete the work of the Commission. And  
2 the attorney has drafted articles of  
3 incorporation, but we do need nine initial  
4 trustees to be appointed by the Commission  
5 to the foundation.

6 One would be an ex officio  
7 member from the Tobacco Commission that we  
8 -- could currently serve on the foundation.  
9 One would be the deputy director that would  
10 be on the -- the foundation's trustees.

11 And then, we need another  
12 seven -- or up to seven appointed to the  
13 foundation. Or -- and I believe you were  
14 going to create a small group to kind of  
15 work out those details.

16 And once everything is  
17 finalized, the Executive Committee has been  
18 delegated authority to approve the creation  
19 of this corporation.

20  
21 MR. BLEVINS: Has that small group  
22 been working on it then?

23  
24 MS. KIM: No, it has not been  
25 created. So we need the chairman to

1 designate a few people to --

2  
3 SENATOR RUFF: So I simply appoint  
4 them, is that what you're saying?

5  
6 MS. KIM: Right. You need to just  
7 --

8  
9 SENATOR RUFF: No action from the  
10 full Commission.

11  
12 MS. KIM: The full Commission would  
13 actually not -- the full Commission's  
14 already approved --

15  
16 SENATOR RUFF: Right.

17  
18 MS. KIM: -- the creation. And --  
19 but they have delegated authority to the  
20 Executive Committee to make final approval  
21 of the documents and the articles of  
22 incorporation. But we do need those  
23 trustees appointed before the Executive  
24 Committee can approve them.

1           SENATOR RUFF: So the full  
2 Commission does not have to approve them.  
3 So, thank you. Do we have questions?

4           MR. SHELTON: Mr. Chairman, I just  
5 would hope to -- when you make your  
6 thoughts, that you could, you know, consider  
7 the Southwest in some of those --

8           SENATOR RUFF: Why? Just making  
9 sure.

10           MS. KIM: So if any of you knows  
11 some citizens in those regions that would be  
12 interested in serving on the foundation --  
13 we can't have this Board in control of the  
14 foundation.

15           It needs to remain separate.  
16 But former Commission members are eligible.  
17 And really, anyone with an interest in that,  
18 they can work on the Commission.

19           SENATOR RUFF: Any further  
20 questions? All right. Then we will -- I  
21  
22  
23  
24

25 will move forward on appointments and y'all

1 can then deal with it.

2  
3 MS. KIM: The citizen members  
4 should have received yesterday an email from  
5 the Ethics Council. It's to make your  
6 financial disclosures by February 1st. It's  
7 an online system. So if you have not  
8 received it or have any trouble with it,  
9 just contact me.

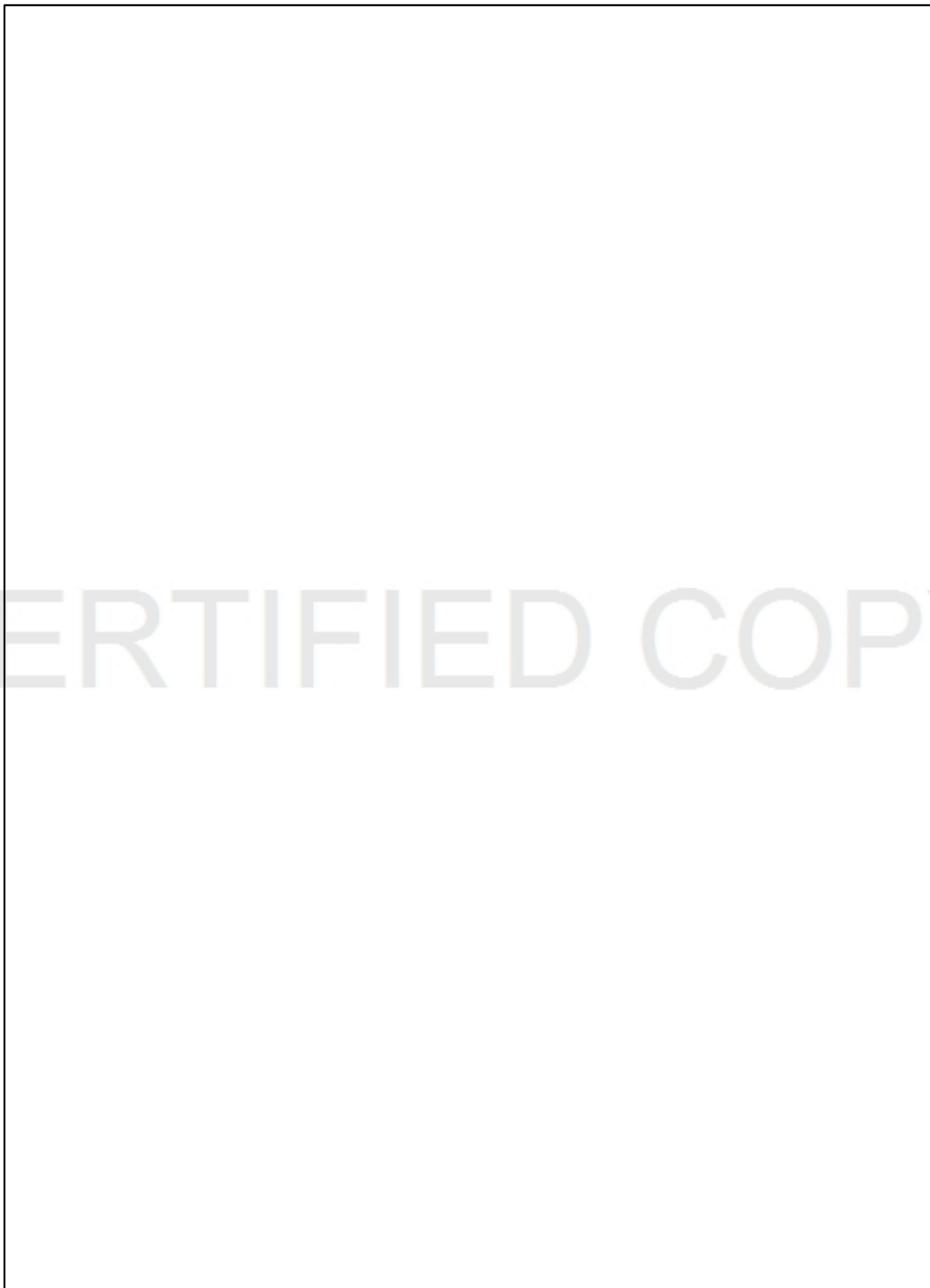
10  
11 MR. SHELTON: Stephanie, I  
12 understand there is a penalty of law if you  
13 don't do that.

14  
15 MS. KIM: Yes. It's actually --  
16 the employees are supposed to complete a  
17 statement of economic interest, that there  
18 is a \$250.00 penalty if you don't file on  
19 time.

20 But for Commission members who  
21 signed a financial disclosure form, there is  
22 not the financial penalty except, I think,  
23 to the Director. And then -- but it still  
24 is a condition of serving on the Commission  
25 and it's due by February 1st.

1                   SENATOR RUFF: Does that conclude  
2                   the other business? All right. Then we  
3                   stand adjourned. The full Commission will  
4                   begin in about five minutes.

5  
6                   (The Executive Committee meeting concluded  
7 at 11:10 a.m.)



CERTIFIED COPY



CERTIFICATE OF COURT REPORTER

I, Debroah Carter, hereby certify that I was the Court Reporter at the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING, heard in Richmond, Virginia, on January 9th, 2024, at the time of the Executive Committee meeting herein.

I further certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the testimony and other incidents of the Executive Committee meeting herein.

Given under my hand this 18th day of January, 2024.



Debroah Carter, CMRS, CCR  
Virginia Certified  
Court Reporter

My certification expires June 30, 2024.