

Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission
Strategic Planning Committee Meeting
Hilton Richmond Downtown
501 E. Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219
Monday, January 7, 2025
10:30 a.m.

Commissioners Present

Mr. Edward Blevins, Chair
Ms. Gretchen Clark
Dr. Sandra Frederick
Secretary Matthew Lohr

Delegate Daniel W. Marshall, III (Remote)
Secretary Caren Merrick
Honorable William A. Pace
Mr. Walter “Buddy” Shelton

Absent

Delegate Terry G. Kilgore
Mr. Arthur “Dale” Moore

Senator Todd E. Pillion

Staff

Honorable James Campos
Mr. Stephen Versen
Mr. Jordan Butler
Ms. Sarah Capps
Ms. Adrian Chapman
Ms. Vicki Humphreys

Ms. Stephanie Kim
Mr. Jerry Silva
Ms. Roz Stein
Ms. Emily Van Pelt
Ms. Sara Williams

Counsel for the Commission

Ms. Elizabeth Myers, Assistant Attorney General

Guests

Dr. John Accordino, Professor, Department of Urban Studies and Planning, Virginia Commonwealth University
Dr. Sheryl Bailey, Visiting Professor of Practice and Adjunct Faculty, School of Public and International Affairs, Virginia Tech
Dr. Scott Tate, Associate Director for Community Innovations, Center for Economic and Community Engagement, Virginia Tech (Remote)

Strategic Planning Committee Chair Blevins opened the meeting at 10:39 a.m.

Commissioner Shelton moved to approve the remote participation of Commissioner Marshall; Commissioner Pace seconded the motion; all members voted to approve.

Director Campos called roll and determined that a quorum was present.

Commissioner Clark moved to approve the minutes from the previous Strategic Planning Committee meeting on September 26, 2024; Shelton seconded the motion; all members voted to approve.

The meeting was opened to public comment, and there was none.

Campos introduced Deputy Director Versen to review the strategic planning process.

Versen gave an overview of the more robust approach to the current strategic planning process, describing the work with Virginia Tech's Center for Economic and Community Engagement and the effort to engage stakeholders across the footprint over the past several months.

Dr. Accordino introduced Dr. Tate, leader of this process, and Dr. Bailey, who gave the group an overview of her background, which includes working with the Tobacco Commission in the past. Accordino and Bailey gave a presentation on the process of investigating the future needs of the Commission and its stakeholders while also working to develop a multi-year financial plan for the Commission.

Versen relayed feedback he received from the input sessions including: funding for smaller sites; the need to invest in local organizations' capacity to apply for grant funds—i.e., there is a lot of money available, but it takes a great deal of time and effort to apply for funds; the role the Commission, given its relative flexibility, might play in targeting its funding to fill gaps that other major funders cannot fill due to eligibility limits.

Accordino requested feedback from Commissioners on the following three questions:

1. What should the VT team look at more deeply?
2. What questions and issues are most pressing for each Commissioner?
3. What should the VT team spend less time on?

Commissioner Everett brought up his concerns about farmer debt and considered whether the Commission might have an impact there. He would also like to see the Commission make an impact by increasing agricultural marketing opportunities in Southern and Southwest Virginia.

Commissioner Lohr asked how the VT team will deal with conflicting information they receive from stakeholders, e.g., some people want more spending on tourism, while others want less. Accordino responded that they will work to understand those responses at a

more fine-grain level. They will bring the results to the Commission for discussion to determine the best approach to put forth in the strategic plan.

Blevins talked about the importance of looking at impact versus outcome, which is a critical component when determining where to direct more or less effort.

Commissioner Frederick asked whether the study group will be able to provide information on overlap or gaps in funding within the footprint. Tate replied that this is an important goal of their work on this project.

Deputy Secretary Powell asked whether the study group will evaluate the reasons that efforts are not being funded, especially in regards to ROI analysis, and make recommendations. Tate talked about the need to distinguish between assessing ROI at the project level versus the program level. The team will give that their attention and make recommendations to the Commission and staff to help them determine the best strategies to choose.

Accordino described next steps, which will include more interviews with leaders, a survey of stakeholders, analysis of TRRC documents and program files, developing financial scenarios, all followed by a final synthesis of information and a work session with the Committee or Commission to work through what the information means for the plan and strategy. He affirmed the importance of the Commission's work, as evidenced by input he has received from many stakeholders about the crucial role the Commission plays in the Southern and Southwest regions.

There was no other business.

Blevins adjourned the meeting at 11:29 a.m.