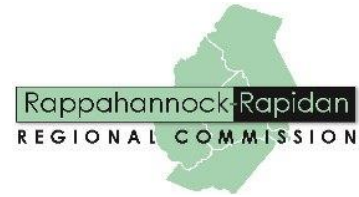


Executive Director's Report

April 19, 2023



The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Regional Commission with a summary report of work plan-related activities, staff attendance and participation at local/regional/ statewide meetings, and updates on initiatives impacting the Regional Commission and our localities.

Administration:

- Councilmember Richard Heflin was appointed to the Commission from the Town of Remington just after our February meeting. I was glad to meet with him for an orientation in March and look forward to working with him!

Environmental & Natural Resources

- Staff partnered with the George Washington Regional Commission to submit a proposal to the Department of Environmental Quality to support additional best management practice (BMP) installation activities within the Rappahannock River watershed. Funds would be utilized to support forest riparian buffer plantings in high priority agricultural lands as well as urban tree planting projects in public parks or school property, where such projects have local support and coordination.
- The RRRC Food Council has reviewed priority projects identified in the 2015 Farm and Food System Plan and found positive movement in support of those priorities. As a result, the Council has identified new priority projects that include those listed below, and you may connect with Michelle Edwards to learn more about the work of the Food Council:
 - Improve Farmland Access
 - Foster Food Business Entrepreneurship
 - Foster Financial Literacy among producers and local food businesses
 - Foster equity, diversity and inclusion in the food system
 - Foster farm to school connections between schools and producers
 - Foster development of producer co-ops
 - Support farmland conservation programs
 - Support access to healthy, local foods for all in the region

Emergency Planning & Hazard Mitigation

- We continue to coordinate meetings for VDEM, local staff and the Rappahannock River Basin Commission on the Stream Gauge implementation project. A set of slides from an update meeting held earlier this month is included here and this project should be completed later in 2023.
- We hosted staff from FEMA Region III and VDEM Region 2 to discuss the upcoming Hazard Mitigation Plan update process in March. There are new guidance documents in place and we are planning to include the Resiliency Plan development as part of the Hazard Mitigation Plan update. Once we have official word on funding from FEMA, the planning effort should take 12-15 months with local adoption processes following after that time.

Homelessness & Regional Housing

- Rebecca Wareham will present information from the January Point in Time Count conducted by Foothills Housing Network. As previously noted, staff continue to engage with a wide range of partners in seeking short and long-term solutions for our region's housing vulnerable population.
- We have also noted increasing collaboration opportunities between housing service providers and those organizations working with clients on food insecurity. Recent positive examples include connecting Fauquier FISH with Coordinated Entry and the re-convening of a Culpeper Ministerial association with Coordinated Entry and other housing providers. Staff are also providing technical assistance to several partners in identifying locations for shower/hygiene options for homeless community members.

Economic Development & Tourism

- In partnership with local tourism directors, Commission staff submitted an application to the Virginia Tourism Corporation Marketing Leverage Program in late February. We expect to hear back by May and, if funded, the project would support additional outreach and advertising for regional tourism efforts.
- The CEDS process continues to progress, with an initial data report presented to the Strategy Committee on April 18th. Updates are being posted to the project webpage (<https://www.rrregion.org/ceds>) and we anticipate scheduling interviews and focus groups in the next several months to incorporate qualitative information with the data already collected.

Transportation

- Kristin Peraza will be a co-presenter at the Community Transportation Association of America conference in Oklahoma City in May on the Regional Transportation Collaborative and the work to grow transportation partnerships, leverage funding and increase mobility options throughout the region.
- Staff are finalizing a scope of work to support development of a transportation project identification, evaluation and prioritization framework for the Commission and localities to use in matching projects with funding sources, evaluating project components and providing a tool to guide Commission support for projects based on local and regional transportation needs. This would be completed via technical assistance through the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment Growth and Accessibility Program.
- RRRC Commuter Services will begin its spring and summer outreach efforts in the next several months. You will likely see Earth Day and Bike Month advertising in April and May and staff plan to be at Culpeper Fest and other upcoming community events.
- Staff attended the Creating Walkable Piedmont Communities workshop in Culpeper at the end of March. If your community needs assistance in grant application development, please reach out to us as we can offer grant writing assistance, letters of support or other technical assistance. We have recently held several discussions with the towns of Remington and Madison on such topics.

Local Technical Assistance

- We continue to support Madison County's Comprehensive Plan update. The County's steering committee is working towards adding a housing chapter before beginning revisions to other existing plan sections.
- I attended VAPDC congressional meetings with staff from Senator Kaine and Senator Warner's office and coordinated with Congresswoman Spanberger's office on the Community Project Funding opportunities targeted towards local governments in her district
- Met with Town of Madison staff on pedestrian and downtown planning opportunities. We anticipate providing grant assistance related to Exploring Main Street and other DHCD programs to the Town moving forward.
- Met with Town of Gordonsville staff regarding technical assistance for long-term Town initiatives
- Met with Rappahannock County Water & Sewer Authority Chair and staff in April to discuss technical assistance and grant opportunities
- Provided data, general information and support letters to various requests from Town of Orange, Town of Culpeper, Town of Remington, Rappahannock County, Culpeper County and other local partners in March and April