

**REGIONAL COUNCIL 9 SITES TASK FORCE APRIL 12, 2024**

**1:00 to 1:30 PM**

**1001 Research Park Blvd., Suite 301, Charlottesville In-person meeting**

**MINUTES**

**Attending:** Ethan Dunstan, Patrick Mauney, Andy Wade, Jonathan Weakley

**Virtual:** Ned Galloway

**Absent:** Gizelle Curtis, Christine Jacobs, Brandon Payne, Paige Read

**Staff:** Shannon Holland, Christie Taylor, Helen Cauthen

**Guests:** none

# Welcome

Ethan Dunstan called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM.

# Roll Call

A roll call was performed as noted above.

# Public Comment

There was no public comment.

# Approve Meeting Minutes

A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes though it was acknowledged that members were not present at the April 15, 2021, Meeting as noted in those Minutes. Motion carried.

# Discuss Sites Initiative

Shannon Holland shared that she was looking for the expertise from this Task Force to discuss the possibility of a site initiative being funded from the Region 9 Council operating budget. She suggested that if such an activity was undertaken it should 1) catalyze future site activity in the near term in the form of future GO Virginia grants

2) establish a criteria and framework for the Council to prioritize and support advancing sites in a regular cadence and 3) address Growth & Diversification Plan requirements. Shannon Holland noted that the Council has used operating funds in the past to fund priority initiatives, such as the recent Super Regional Strategies developed during the regional CEDS processes.

Shannon Holland added that she had just learned that the 2025 Growth & Diversification Plan Update guidance just released by DHCD requires that each council complete a “current inventory of sites relative to their targeted traded industry sectors to inform and prioritize future site investments...”

Helen Cauthen shared insights from a recent Economic Development partners meeting about accelerating site development within the CVPED area. The CVPED ED Partners recommend that a sites project:

* Identify the top 10-12 sites in region including Fauquier and Rappahannock
* Also identify at least one site in each county
* Include an evaluation and prioritization of existing sites
* Identify target sector(s) for each site
* Estimate of the cost of work to achieve Tier 3

There was much discussion as to what type of activity the Council might undertake that would catalyze future sites projects in the near term. There was discussion of what could be accomplished with only $25,000 to

$50,000 considering the cost of site development. During discussion it was noted that GO Virginia could address sites 25 acres and above, but that Virginia Business Ready Sites were targeting larger sites, typically of 100 acres or more (with exceptions for 50 acres or more).

It was discussed that many sites in our region are privately held and therefore more difficult to fund by GO Virginia. It was suggested that perhaps the focus should be on less developed sites and identify priority sites for development to a Tier 3. Then, an implementation grant could fund some of the due diligence needed to advance those sites.

Ned Galloway mentioned that certain counties have already prioritized or assessed their lists of sites and possibly have a prioritized choice ready for evaluation. Focusing efforts on identifying sites in counties that have not yet undertaken this work could benefit the region.

Patrick Mauney recommended structuring the Request for Proposal (RFP) such that each priority is quoted individually. This approach would enable the Council to determine which initiatives can be undertaken within the constraints of the available budget.

In summary, some activities that could be included in a sites initiative might be:

* Develop a baseline inventory of sites relative to their targeted traded industry sectors to inform and prioritize future site investment
* Evaluate existing sites in VEDP’s Virginia Scan (and/or those submitted by counties) and prioritize
* Also identify target sectors best suited for existing sites in VirginiaScan.
* Ask each locality for any site(s) they would like to include in the process (publicly owned, easily acquired or possibly available for option agreement)
* Identify new sites in the region, evaluate for suitability to GO VA target sectors, estimate cost of due diligence needed to get to Tier 3 or higher, and prioritize them based on developability.
* Select the best site in the region that is not already a Tier 3 and estimate cost to achieve Tier 3 (potential future planning grant and implementation grant)
* Identify and prioritize sites only in counties that have not done similar work yet.
* Decide size of sites to evaluate/prioritize – > 25 acres, >50 acres or >100 acres.

# Other Business

There was no other business discussed at the meeting.

# Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:10 PM.