

WEST PIEDMONT PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION

MINUTES

of the

March 26, 2026 Meeting

held at the Commission Office
1100 Madison Street, Martinsville, VA

PRESENT

Jim Adams, Chairman, Henry County
Kathy Lawson, Treasurer, Martinsville
Nick Mitchell, Franklin County
James Turner, City of Danville
Dr. Gary Miller, Danville(V)
Jonathan Wood, Patrick County
Ralph Casey, Rocky Mount
Fatimah Casey, Rocky Mount
Tim Tatum, Vice-Chairman, Franklin County
Wes George, Henry County
Pam Coblér, Henry County
Jerry Adams, Patrick County
Clayton Kendrick, Patrick County(V)
David Rotenizer, Franklin County
Lucas Tuning, Rocky Mount
Aaron Rawls, Martinsville
Joe Martin, Martinsville
Dillard Jones, Pittsylvania County

STAFF

Michael Armbrister, Executive Director

ABSENT

Ken Bowman, Pittsylvania County
Lee Vogler, Danville
Justin Brown, Pittsylvania County

GUEST

Mr. Eric Cramer, RSN
Mr. Rob Taylor, RSN
Mr. Greg Coltrain, RSN
Mr. Steve Sandy, Franklin County

(V) = Virtual Attendance

In accordance with the ***West Piedmont PDC Remote Electronic Participation and All-Virtual Meeting Policy***, members attended virtually for the following reasons:

Clayton Kendrick-Virtual-Out of town
Dr. Gary Miller-Virtual-Personal matter

1. Call to Order and Welcome

The Chairman established a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

2. Regional Forum Opportunity – Comments from Public

There were no other comments from the public.

3. Consent Agenda

- a. Confirmation of Minutes of the February 26, 2026 Meeting.
- b. Treasurer's Report – December 31, 2025 and January 31, 2026.

Mr. Wes George made a motion, seconded by Mr. Jerry Adams, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Upon vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

4. Presentation by RiverStreet Networks, Status of WPPDC VATI projects—Rob Taylor, RSN Director of Business Development & Government Affairs.

The presentation detailed various funding initiatives, including the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) from 2022 and 2023, and the federal Broadband Equity Access Deployment (BEAD) program. It highlighted the substantial financial investment from state, federal, county, and private sources, totaling over \$308 million, aimed at passing nearly 68,000 locations across multiple counties. Challenges such as regulatory delays, changes in broadband definitions, and mapping system issues were also discussed, alongside the strategic approach to integrate different funding rounds for efficient construction. RiverStreet Networks outlined its commitment to expanding service, particularly to hard-to-reach areas, and provided timelines for when residents in Franklin, Henry, and Patrick counties could expect service availability.

VATI Funding Rounds (2022 & 2023):

West Piedmont West Projects: Covered Patrick, Henry, and Franklin Counties, totaling approximately \$95 million for 10,056 locations (VATI 2022) and an additional 4,526 locations (VATI 2023) due to a change in broadband definition (25x3 to 100x20 Mbps). Funding included contributions from APCO, counties, RDOF, River Street, and state VATI.

West Piedmont East Projects: Covered six counties (Bedford, Campbell, Charlotte, Nottoway, Amelia, Pittsylvania), totaling approximately \$159 million for 25,000 locations (VATI 2022) and an additional 3,300 locations (VATI 2023). County matching funds primarily came from ARPA.

Pittsylvania County 2023: A separate project funded for 2,100 additional locations, offsetting its lack of matching funds in that round due to significant prior contributions.

Broadband Equity Access Deployment (BEAD) Program:

Described as potentially the final round of federal funding for rural fiber. River Street Network secured \$44 million for 9,799 hard-to-reach locations, despite a shift in funding priorities that allowed satellite options to compete with fiber.

Total Combined Project Scope and Funding:

Combined funding across all projects exceeds \$308 million, including \$38 million in local grants, \$140 million in state grants, \$50 million from RDOF, and \$80 million from River Street

Network. Total locations passed across all projects are just under 68,000, with 14,426 currently having service available (7,638 in West Piedmont PDC region).

County-Specific Impacts (BEAD Fundable Locations):

Franklin County: 2,628 fundable locations, with River Street getting 112 and Zytel getting 2,274, others to satellite.

Henry County: 2,563 fundable locations, with River Street getting 1,999 and Bright Speed getting 546, others to satellite/Comcast.

Patrick County: 1,586 fundable locations, with River Street getting 1,287, and others to Amazon and Bright Speed.

Pittsylvania County: 3,684 fundable locations, with River Street getting 1,925, and others to satellite; noted a high number of de-obligated locations due to mapping updates.

PDC Region Service Potential: An estimated 5,173 BEAD fundable locations, plus an additional 5,900 locations within 300 feet (standard drop), and 24,358 locations within 2,000 feet, indicating potential service to 11,000 to 33,000 locations. River Street offers no-cost standard drops (up to 2,500 feet) if within their network.

Timeline and Construction Status:

The VATI West 2022 project faced initial delays due to SCC judge approval. AEP (utility partner) is nearing completion of middle-mile fiber turnover in Franklin and Henry Counties, with Patrick County experiencing delays due to permitting. Funding is expected to be integrated with VATI projects to build simultaneously. Environmental reviews for BEAD projects are nearing completion, with contract applications expected within 60 days. Service turn-up is starting in Franklin County, with Henry County soon to follow, and a continued build-out expected past 2027.

5. Consideration of Hazard Mitigation Committee Membership and Bylaws.

The Executive Director noted that last fall, we applied for funding from VDEM and FEMA to complete a five-year update, of our regional hazard mitigation plan that is a mandated plan, for all our local governments, and we do that regionally to take that burden off our counties and cities. We don't anticipate funding to be available until June, but we want to go ahead and establish a long-term committee. Staff compiled a list of committee members as well as general by-laws for managing the committee when they meet. And those need to be approved by the commission because this is a technical committee of the commission.

A motion was made by Mrs. Kathy Lawson, seconded by Mr. Tim Tatum to approve the Hazard Mitigation and Committee Membership and Bylaws. Upon the vote, the motion passed unanimously.

6. Consideration of Amended FY 2026 Annual Work Program.

The Executive Director noted two new projects that staff are ready to charge time to. The FY26 Annual Work Program must be amended to establish the work elements for time tracking. The two projects are a DCR grant for our regional stormwater vulnerability assessment and the Franklin County Flood Mitigation at Ferrum College.

A motion was made by Mr. Tim Tatum, seconded by Mr. Joseph Martin to approve the Amended FY 2026 Annual Work Program. Upon the vote, the motion passed unanimously.

7. Consideration of Resolution of Approval for the FY2027 Rural Transportation Planning Assistance.

The Executive Director noted that each year the commission applies for funding to manage rural transportation planning. A draft Scope of Work was included in the board packets for review before the meeting. The commission will continue to work on the Rural Long-Range Transportation Plan. Once that is completed, around the end of next fiscal year, staff will start on the Regional Bicycle Plan. Both of those are included in the Scope of Work.

A motion was made by Mr. James Turner, seconded by Mr. David Rotenizer to approve the Resolution of Approval for the FY2027 Rural Transportation Planning. Upon the vote, the motion passed unanimously.

8. Consideration of WPPDC Employee Handbook-Generative AI Policy

The Executive Director noted that staff completed a recent review of the employee handbook. A comprehensive review was completed five years ago. After the review, the only item that needed to be amended or added was a policy for generative AI use. AI is becoming more prevalent in the work of the commission, and the proposed policy specifically protects confidential information and directs staff to talk to their supervisor regarding use of AI on projects.

A motion was made by Mr. Joseph Martin, seconded by Mr. Lucas Tuning to approve the WPPDC Employee Handbook-Generative AI Policy. Upon the vote, the motion passed unanimously.

9. Executive Director's Report

The Executive Director noted that the PDC has two surveys available right now. One is for the Danville MPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan and the other is for the Patrick County comprehensive plan update.

Other noted items on the Director's report:

- The PDC is currently working on five smart scale applications for VDOT that will be on the May agenda.
- State funding-There are no updates on the VAPDC budget items until the General Assembly special budget session is completed. VAPDC anticipates some additional funding for regional water studies, but probably not for PDCs in general.
- The Executive Director introduced Mr. Steve Sandy, the new Franklin County administrator.

10. Consideration of Resolution of Service Recognizing Tyler Lee

The Chairman noted that the PDC prepared a resolution recognizing the service of Tyler Lee from the town of Rocky Mount, who served on the commission. Mr. Lee was a wonderful commissioner who will be missed. The PDC needs the commission's approval to move forward with the Resolution of Service to Tyler Lee.

A motion was made by Mr. Tim Tatum, seconded by Mrs. Kathy Lawson to approve the Resolution of Service Recognizing Tyler Lee. Upon the vote, the motion passed unanimously.

11. Appointment of Nominating Committee for Fiscal Year 2027

The Chairman noted that if no one has any objections, the Executive Committee would serve as a Nominating Committee as in the past.

12. Other Business

Transportation Technical Advisory Committee meeting was scheduled for April 17, 2026 at 11:00 AM.

13. Comments from Commissioners

Henry County and Public Service Authority added Good Friday as an additional day off for their employees this year. It is with recommendation that the Commission would approve Good Friday as an additional holiday for the West Piedmont PDC Staff.

A motion was made by Mrs. Kathy Lawson, seconded by Mr. Tim Tatum to approve Good Friday off for the West Piedmont PDC Staff. Upon the vote, the motion passed unanimously

14. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:43p.m.



Mr. Michael Armbrister
Executive Director