

Hampton Roads Planning District Commission Minutes of November 20, 2025 Meeting

The November 20, 2025 meeting of the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) was called to order by the Vice-Chair at 12:39 p.m. at Christopher Newport University in the Ballroom of the Davis Student Union Building, located at 1 Avenue of the Arts, in Newport News, Virginia with the following in attendance:

Commissioners in Attendance:

Jimmy Gray, Vice-Chair (HA)	Brian Thrower (SH)
Andrew Trivette, Treasurer (WM)	Leroy Bennett (SU)
Christopher Price (CH)	Kevin Hughes (SU)
Brian Solis (CH)	Lue Ward (SU)
Ella Ward (CH)	Walter Hardy (SY)
Paul Kaplan (FR)	Patrick Duhaney (VB)*
Carol Steele (GL)	Bobby Dyer (VB)
Joel Acree (IW)	Worth Remick (VB)
Michael Hipple (JC)	Amelia Ross-Hammond (VB)
Scott Stevens (JC)	Joash Schulman (VB)
Courtney Doyle (NO)*	Douglas Pons (WM)
Patrick Roberts (NO)	Mark Bellamy (YK)
David Hux (PQ)	Sheila Noll (YK)
Randy Wheeler (PQ)	

Commissioners Absent:

Patricia King (CH)	Carlos Clanton (NO)
Debbie Ritter (CH)	Jeremy McGee (NO)
Phillip Bazzani (GL)	Steven Carter (PO)
Mary Bunting (HA)	Shannon Glover, Chair (PO)
Michelle Ferebee (HA)	William Gillette (SH)
Don Robertson (IW)	Michael Smith (SM)
Alan Archer (NN)	Michael Stallings (SM)
John Eley (NN)	Melissa Rollins (SY)
Cleon Long (NN)	Stacy Cummings (VB)
Kenneth Alexander (NO)	Barbara Henley (VB)

Executive Director:

Robert A. Crum, Jr., Secretary

Other Participants:

Brian DeProfio (HA)	Bo Clayton (NN)
William Webb (IW)	Lauren Roberts Carter (CAC)
Robert Coleman (NN)	

**Late arrival or early departure*

Others Recorded Attending:

Joe Carter, Jr. (FR); Jenn Greene (HA); Angela Hopkins (NN); Megan Gribble (PO); Gregg Benton (SU); David Harrison (SY); Brent McKenzie (VB); Douglas Holroyd (YK); Andrew Stith and Mark Geduldig-Yatrofsky (Residents); Chip Filer, William Kelly, and Carter Workman (CNU); Brenda Roberts (Congresswoman Jen Kiggan's Office); Nancy Grden and Drew Lumpkin (Hampton Roads Executive Roundtable); Caleb Smith (HRT); Marcellus Nixon (SNA); Calvin Bush (Tetra Tech); Ed Reed (Two Capitols Consulting); Justin Z. Strassfield (USCG); Kurt Frazier and Diane Kaufman (U.S. Senator Tim Kaine's Office); Delegate Jeion Ward (Virginia General Assembly); Bob McKenna (VPC); Kurt Krause; and Greg Grootendorst, Kelli Arledge, Robert Cofield, Emma Corbitt, Katie Cullipher, Simone Elmore, Tealen Hansen, Nikki Johnson, Whitney Katchmark, Matt Klepeisz, Ben McFarlane, Quan McLauren, John Mihaly, Adithi Moogoor, Cynthia Mulkey, Ivy Ozmon, Pavithra Parthasarathi, John Sadler, Tammy Sommer, Jill Sunderland, Tho Tran, Joe Turner, Christopher Vaigneur, and Eric Walberg (HRPDC/HRTPO Staff).

Vice-Chair Gray welcomed the following first-time attendees:

- Mr. Rob Coleman, Newport News
- Mr. William Webb, Isle of Wight County

Special Presentations

A) Welcome Remarks

Mr. William Kelly, President of Christopher Newport University (CNU), welcomed the Commission members to campus and offered special remarks to CNU alumni. He expressed his gratitude for having the opportunity to host this meeting.

President Kelly stated that CNU is ranked first among regional public universities in Virginia and third in the South. He highlighted the university's mission to serve the communities, families, employers, and localities of Hampton Roads. He also noted that the university recently completed a strategic plan shaped by input from more than 200 stakeholders. The plan focuses on four priorities: strengthening the liberal arts, expanding community connections, fostering inclusion and belonging, and building a strong foundation for the university's long-term success.

Supported by new partnerships with community colleges and collaborations with Hampton, Newport News, and Virginia Beach, CNU welcomed its largest class of transfer students this fall. President Kelly added that CNU strives to be the most inclusive university in the state of Virginia. To best serve the region, CNU aligns its academic programs with the needs of regional employers, including the introduction of new programs in nursing and elementary education. He highlighted available Army and Navy Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) programs, expanded services for military veterans, and the opening of a science and engineering research center with a two-story drone lab and advanced research spaces. Lastly, he underscored the cultural and community impact of the world-class performances presented at the

Ferguson Center for the Arts, the exhibitions showcased at the Torggler Fine Arts Center, and the university's nationally recognized athletic programs.

Mr. Robert Crum, HRPDC Executive Director, asked about the enrollment trend expected for the upcoming years. Mr. Kelly stated that the demographic cliff is a challenge in Virginia and neighboring states and that fewer high school students are choosing to pursue college. CNU currently enrolls 4,500 students, marking the first increase in enrollment in nine years. He added that the university is resourced to support 5,000 students on campus and expressed a goal to return to that level. Reaching this target will require a new approach, and he emphasized the importance of ensuring that young people in Hampton Roads recognize that they have a hometown university in their own community.

**Commissioner Courtney Doyle arrived*

Approval/Modification of Agenda

Mr. Crum proposed to modify the agenda as follows:

- Removing attachment 7Bi
- Moving agenda item 6 to be presented next

Vice-Chair Gray called for a motion to approve the November 20, 2025 agenda as modified.

Motion: Commissioner Michael Hipple Moved to approve the Agenda as modified; seconded by Commissioner Bobby Dyer. The Motion Carried.

Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Report

Ms. Lauren Roberts Carter, Chair of the CAC, introduced Mr. Carter Workman, a CNU scholar whose contributions were instrumental in launching the newsletter for the *Start in Hampton Roads* Initiative.

Ms. Roberts Carter stated that *Start in Hampton Roads* is a regional initiative aimed at attracting and retaining talent. The pilot program was made possible through collaboration between the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), the Development Counsellors International (DCI), the Hampton Roads Chamber, the Hampton Roads Executive Roundtable, and other regional stakeholders.

The initiative received 1.6 million views over the past three months, showing tremendous interest from the target markets in Hampton Roads and beyond. The top-performing industries that job seekers are interested in were analyzed, with cybersecurity, energy, engineering, and maritime leading the list. The initiative reached target markets such as Charlotte and Raleigh-Durham, which have historically drawn talent away from Hampton Roads. The top-performing keywords that people searched for were "jobs in Virginia". Overall, the campaign resulted in more than 900 people expressing willingness to bring their talent and expertise to the area.

Ms. Roberts Carter stated that the pilot program provides extraordinary opportunities from a talent perspective. She thanked everyone involved for their efforts and encouraged the Commission members to reach out with any questions.

Mr. Crum asked where most people showing interest in the region are located. Ms. Roberts Carter stated that the leading metropolitan areas are New York City, Washington D.C., and Los Angeles. She added that DCI specifically targeted these areas because they share similar assets with Hampton Roads, yet their significantly higher cost of living may encourage relocation.

The *Start in Hampton Roads* Initiative presentation is available on the HRPDC website using the following link: https://www.hrpdcva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/15135/112025-PDC-06_Presentation-Start-in-Hampton-Roads-PDF?bidId=.

The handout is available using the following link:

https://www.hrpdcva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/15141/112025-PDC-06_Handout-VEDP-Overview-PDF?bidId=.

Special Presentations (continued)

B) Unveiling Black History in Hampton Roads

Dr. Amelia Ross-Hammond, Virginia Beach City Council Member and HRPDC Commissioner, briefed the Commission on this item.

Dr. Ross-Hammond reported that she is the Founder and Chairman of the Virginia African American Culture Center (VAACC). She stated that she visited Charleston, South Carolina, as part of a leadership exchange program through the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce. During the visit, she met Mr. Kurt Krause, former CEO of Visit Norfolk and former President of the Virginia Travel Association. Through their shared interest in history and culture, the idea of creating a travel booklet that would connect travelers to the rich African American heritage of Hampton Roads emerged.

The goals of the VAACC are to share the essential roles of African American culture in the region's history and to build partnerships with African American sites and cultural centers across the Commonwealth. What began as a conversation led to uniting nine municipalities around a shared vision to honor history, celebrate resilience, and welcome visitors to explore. The project gained momentum through the committed collaboration of local governments, tourism partners, historians, and cultural organizations. Working together, these partners identified the stories, landmarks, and experiences that most vividly convey the region's role in shaping African American history. Furthermore, the VAACC provided the initial grant funds to create a brochure that received statewide recognition and was granted \$100,000 by the General Assembly.

Dr. Ross-Hammond noted that every city in Hampton Roads holds important African American stories of struggle and triumph. She highlighted a few of the key sites and

stated that the list of historic sites continues to grow. She then invited Mr. Krause to address the Commission.

Mr. Krause stated that the brochure is the first edition of a regional guide highlighting African American heritage sites. The guide is intended to spark public interest in local history and serve as a foundation for future editions. He noted that the guidebook is not a complete list of all sites within Hampton Roads. The group collaborated with local marketing organizations to identify the best sites for inclusion. Future editions of the guidebook are planned and will be more comprehensive; however, additional funding is needed to produce them.

Mr. Krause summarized the suggested two-day itinerary and highlighted a few items. Day one covers Hampton and Williamsburg, featuring the Hampton University Museum, the Downing-Gross Cultural Arts Center, and Colonial Williamsburg's African American Interpretation Program. These sites present the history of African American cultural life and the experiences of free and enslaved residents in the colonial capital. Day two focuses on the Underground Railroad, including the Great Dismal Swamp and its education pavilion, the Portsmouth self-guided tour, and Norfolk's Waterways to Freedom tour.

The guide also includes additional story stops supported by QR codes. These codes direct visitors to related online resources and allow for engagement tracking, helping encourage return visits, and deeper exploration.

Mr. Krause expressed gratitude for the opportunity to present the project and extended thanks to the participating municipalities for their investment. Furthermore, he thanked Delegate Askew, Senator Lucas, and the Hampton Roads General Assembly caucus for their unanimous support of the budget amendment, which provided \$100,000 in funding and made the project possible.

Dr. Ross-Hammond added that these sites remind us that history is not only a set of dates and facts, but a living legacy that continues to shape our future. The hope is that the journey will deepen understanding of Hampton Roads and its central role in African American history, and that it inspires reflection, conversation, and action to tell the regional story.

She thanked the Mayor and City Manager of Virginia Beach for their efforts and stated that land had been allocated to build a Virginia African Culture Center, which would serve as a hub for the region.

Mr. Krause added that from an economic development perspective, this project also encourages people to visit the region and has the potential to attract talent and businesses to the region.

Commissioner Ella Ward emphasized the importance of tourism in promoting regional history. She encouraged the inclusion of Cornland School in Chesapeake in future editions.

Commissioner Hipple noted that one of the sites named under Williamsburg is actually in James City County. He added that there are many sites to see and encouraged the Commission members to come visit.

Vice-Chair Gray acknowledged Dr. Ross-Hammond for her leadership, contributions, and dedication to the African American Cultural Center project and the guidebook.

The presentation is available on the HRPDC website using the following link: <https://www.hrpdcva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/15134/112025-PDC-02B%20Presentation-Unveiling-Black-History-in-Hampton-Roads-PDF?bidId=>

The Handout is available using the following link:

<https://www.hrpdcva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/15139/112025-PDC-02C%20Handout-A-Trail-of-Trials-and-Triumphs-PDF?bidId=>

Public Comments

Mr. Robert Crum, HRPDC Executive Director, stated that there were no submitted public comments. Vice-Chair Gray invited members of the public to address the Commission. There were no requests to provide public comment.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Crum referenced his monthly report in the agenda packet and highlighted a few items of interest for the Commission members' information.

Mr. Crum noted that the tenth anniversary of the Dutch Dialogues was celebrated in Downtown Norfolk from November 5 to November 7, 2025. The event brought together 150 participants who reflected on the significant progress made in regional resiliency during the past decade.

Consent Agenda

Vice-Chair Gray noted that the Consent Agenda included the following items for consideration and approval:

- Treasurer's Report – September 2025
- HRPDC Applications for Community Flood Preparedness Fund Round 6
- Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program 2025
- Title VI Goals and Accomplishments FY 2024 - 2025

Mr. Crum noted that, as approved during the agenda modification, item 7Bi was removed from the consent agenda.

Motion: Commissioner Dyer Moved to approve the Consent Agenda as modified; seconded by Commissioner E. Ward. The Motion Carried.

Appointment of Nominating Committee

The HRPDC Bylaws provide that, at its Annual Meeting in January, the Commission will elect a Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer to serve during the upcoming year. The Chair and Vice-Chair must come from separate localities and be elected officials. The offices of Secretary and Treasurer must be voted on an annual basis, but need not be elected officials and may succeed themselves.

Vice-Chair Gray requested that the following Commissioners serve on the HRPDC Nominating Committee and provide a report to the Commission at its Annual Meeting:

Chesapeake – Ella Ward
Franklin – Paul Kaplan
Gloucester – Phillip Bazzani
Hampton – Jimmy Gray
Isle of Wight – Joel Acree
James City – Michael Hipple
Newport News – Cleon Long
Norfolk – Courtney Doyle
Poquoson- David Hux

Portsmouth – Shannon Glover
Smithfield – Michael Smith
Southampton – William Gillette
Suffolk – Leroy Bennett
Surry – Walter Hardy
Virginia Beach – Bobby Dyer
Williamsburg – Douglas Pons
York – Sheila Noll

Motion: Commissioner Hipple Moved to approve the Nominating Committee; seconded by Commissioner Douglas Pons. The Motion Carried.

Fiscal Infrastructure Framework for Hampton Roads

Mr. Crum noted that this agenda item stems from the discussion held at the previous Commission meeting, where members reviewed and approved the regional legislative agenda for the upcoming General Assembly session. He noted that while the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO) requested the establishment of a primary and secondary road fund, the Board did not identify a specific revenue source for the fund. Previous conversations had included the possibility of using the regional sales tax as a funding mechanism.

Mr. Crum thanked the representatives from Virginia Beach for initiating the discussion through the letter they presented at last month's meeting. The discussion included a broader conversation about local funding needs. The Commissioners agreed that improvements to primary and secondary roads are needed; however, it was stressed that funding challenges also include significant needs for flood prevention.

To prevent flooding, significant and costly infrastructure projects are necessary in all localities. It was noted that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) study in Norfolk has been completed; however, to secure the necessary federal funding, a \$900 million match is required. This financial requirement presents a substantial hurdle that needs to be addressed and requires collaborative efforts to secure the resources needed. Other funding needs included school construction and modernization, toll relief mitigation, and investments in public transportation.

A regional fiscal infrastructure framework was prepared and presented to the Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) at their last meeting. Hampton Roads residents, visitors, and businesses have already contributed more than \$5 billion toward major transportation investments. There was discussion concerning the tax structure of the Commonwealth, which provides only narrow opportunities to generate revenue. Notably, state-approved tax exemptions are having a dramatic impact on local government budgets. The group recommended asking the General Assembly for assistance and forwarding the framework for the HRPDC's consideration.

The CAOs emphasized that tax exemptions for veterans are crucial; however, local governments cannot bear the burden of these exemptions alone, and assistance from the state is necessary.

Suggestions for a path forward include the following:

- Creation of a primary and secondary road fund
- Collaborative efforts with Virginia Crescent PDCs on state tax exemptions
- Request General Assembly to undertake a comprehensive review and modernization of the tax system
- Forward-thinking approach to infrastructure funding

Mr. Crum referenced the handout regarding a potential house joint resolution that would attempt to establish a fiscal infrastructure framework. This handout was submitted by Delegate Bonita Anthony earlier that day and was distributed to the Commission members. Mr. Crum noted that the HRTPO took action to approve the pathway forward, but to forward the house joint resolution to the CAOs with the request to study and evaluate, and to bring forward a recommendation in the January 2026 meeting.

Commissioner Christopher Price, who serves as the Vice-Chair of the CAO Committee, stated that it was recognized that the Commissioners may not have had sufficient time to fully review the related correspondence; however, he emphasized the urgency and significance of the matter and committed to expediting further discussions among the CAOs and bringing a recommendation to the upcoming Board meetings.

Vice-Chair Gray stated that while the City of Hampton heavily relies on real estate taxes, it also strives to maintain a low rate to ensure affordability for its residents. He added that communities are changing, and the taxation structure needs to be modernized to reflect that.

Vice-Chair Gray asked for a motion to approve requesting assistance of the Virginia General Assembly to undertake a comprehensive review and modernization of the state's tax system, including assistance to address the significant impact that existing state tax exemptions are having on local government budgets and the ability of local governments to fund essential infrastructure and government services.

Motion: Commissioner Ross-Hammond Moved to approve as stated; seconded by Commissioner E. Ward. The Motion Carried.

Vice-Chair Gray asked for a motion to refer the house joint resolution introduced by Delegate Anthony to the CAOs for discussion.

Motion: Commissioner Pons Moved to approve as stated; seconded by Commissioner Hipple. The Motion Carried.

The Fiscal Infrastructure Framework presentation is available on the HRPDC website using the following link: https://www.hrpdcva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/15136/112025-PDC-09_Presentation-Fiscal-Infrastructure-Framework-PDF?bidId=.

The handout is available on the HRPDC website using the following link:

https://www.hrpdcva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/15140/112025-PDC-09_Handout-Email-Correspondence-Delegate-Anthony-PDF?bidId=.

GO Virginia Region 5

Ms. Nancy Grden, Hampton Roads Executive Roundtable President and CEO, briefed the Commission on the Region 5 Growth and Diversification Plan.

The Hampton Roads Executive Roundtable serves as a support organization for Region 5, providing an opportunity to focus on regional strategy while directing state funds toward key industries. A central goal of GO Virginia is to strengthen cooperation among localities. Ms. Grden noted that nearly every city and county present has applied for GO Virginia funding, provided matching funds, submitted letters of support, or served as an active partner. She expressed her appreciation for the continued collaboration demonstrated across the region.

Legislation requires that the Growth and Diversification plan be updated every two years. To align the plan with the activities and initiatives that need to take place, the Hampton Roads Executive Roundtable collaborated with the HRPDC, Hampton Roads Alliance, and the Old Dominion University (ODU) Dragas Center. She thanked Ms. Nikki Johnson, HRPDC Regional Economist, and Mr. Michael Evans, Hampton Roads Alliance Director of Business Intelligence, for their assistance in preparing the plan.

Ms. Grden began her presentation by presenting the region's key industries. She noted that the strategic plan is updated every two years and that no new industries have emerged unexpectedly. This stability is viewed as positive because it confirms that the sectors identified in prior plans remain central to the region's economic strength and will continue to play an important role as the region pursues innovation and growth in alignment with national and international priorities. The key industries include advanced manufacturing, cyber defense, shipbuilding and ship repair, life sciences, unmanned systems, and water technologies. The region has a strong concentration of firms and employment in these fields, demonstrating that it has distinctive advantages and that these industries present significant opportunities for future growth across all localities in Region 5.

The strategic plan provides a framework for two primary purposes. First, it informs GO Virginia funding decisions by helping direct resources toward sectors with the greatest

potential for regional impact. Second, it supports alignment with broader initiatives underway not only in Hampton Roads but across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Ms. Grden highlighted several initiatives that are essential to advancing the region's growth and diversification plan. The first was the Hampton Roads Regional Investment Playbook, an effort led by the Hampton Roads Alliance. The initiative focuses on examining national and international trends, assessing the region's assets and opportunities, and determining the most effective ways to leverage them for economic growth.

The second major initiative focuses on positioning the region to pursue federal funding opportunities. With the arrival of a new administration, seven regional organizations have collaborated to identify funding prospects and assess related risks. Many of these opportunities align directly with the region's key industries, including maritime activities, unmanned systems, and cybersecurity. Ms. Grden noted that additional work will continue to ensure the region can secure federal resources that support the growth of these sectors.

The third major initiative is *Start in Hampton Roads*, which was presented by Ms. Roberts Carter earlier, and is a fully regional initiative. The work began more than a year ago with an analysis conducted in partnership with the Workforce Council to understand why residents choose to stay in or leave Hampton Roads. The findings led to the launch of a pilot effort that highlights strong interest among individuals who want to live and remain in the region. This information presents a significant opportunity for the region to leverage as it plans for future growth.

The last initiative highlighted was 757 Defend. This effort represents a unique partnership with 757 Accelerate, which is collaborating with the Mid-Atlantic TechBridge to develop a defense-focused accelerator for dual-use technology. The initiative is a crucial component of the region's innovation ecosystem, designed to support the advancement of technologies with both commercial and defense applications.

Ms. Grden provided an overview of the primary areas supported through GO Virginia funding. These include development and infrastructure, workforce and talent development, cluster scale-up, and entrepreneurship and innovation. Both the organization and its regional partners utilize these funds to advance economic development efforts. She encouraged localities and organizations to explore these opportunities, visit the website for additional details, and reach out directly with any questions or if they are interested in pursuing future projects.

Ms. Grden concluded her presentation by explaining that the industries identified in the regional growth and diversification plan align directly with the four focus areas of GO Virginia, including workforce, innovation, and related priorities. They emphasized that the purpose of the plan is not to sit unused on a shelf or remain static on a website. Instead, it is intended to guide investment decisions across the region and ensure that resources support the areas of greatest strategic value.

The GO Virginia Presentation is available on the HRPDC website using the following link:
[https://www.hrpdcva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/15137/112025-PDC-10 Presentation-GO-VA-Region-5-Growth-and-Diversification-Plan-PDF?bidId='](https://www.hrpdcva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/15137/112025-PDC-10%20Presentation-GO-VA-Region-5-Growth-and-Diversification-Plan-PDF?bidId=')

**Commissioner Patrick Duhaney departed*

Upcoming Meetings

Vice-Chair Gray noted that there is no meeting scheduled for December 2025. The next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on January 15, 2026.

Advisory Committee Minutes

Vice-Chair Gray stated that the HRPDC/HRTPO Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting minutes approved since the last Commission meeting were provided in the agenda packet for Commission member information.

Technical Committee Meeting Summaries

Vice-Chair Gray indicated that summaries of HRPDC Technical Committee meetings, including askHRgreen.org Environmental Education Committees, Planning Directors Committee, and Public Information Officer Committee, held since the last Commission meeting, were included in the agenda for Commission member information.

For Your Information

Vice-Chair Gray referenced the correspondence of interest included in the agenda packet for Commission member information.

Old/New Business

Vice-Chair Gray asked if there was any old or new business to discuss. There was none.

Adjournment

With no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 1:43 p.m.



Shannon E. Glover
Chair



Robert A. Crum, Jr.
Executive Director/ Secretary