

**Hampton Roads
Planning District Commission**

**2022
Regional Legislative Agenda**

Coastal Resiliency

- Request the creation of the Virginia Commonwealth Flooding Board.
 - The Commonwealth Flooding Board (CFB) would direct and prioritize state and federal funding for flood mitigation, ensure collaboration and alignment among State agencies, and coordinate flood mitigation planning and adaptation efforts.
 - The CFB would be similar to the Commonwealth Transportation Board which meets on a regular basis to address transportation needs and issues in Virginia. The CFB would serve a similar role for statewide flooding issues.
 - The challenge of flooding is a statewide issue which requires the needed resources, staff and organizational structure to ensure that Virginia can address this issue in an ongoing, systematic and collaborative manner.

See attached CFB White Paper for additional information.

Offshore Wind

- Continue to support efforts to support and promote the offshore wind industry and make the Hampton Roads region a hub for supply chain jobs to support this emerging industry.
 - The region's geographic location, harbor and specialized workforce position the 757 to be the hub to support wind turbines planned for construction along the east coast.
 - Request that the General Assembly establish the Offshore Wind Supply Chain Fund to assist Hampton Roads companies in their efforts to participate in the offshore wind supply chain. This fund would be used by companies to offset some of the costs to support this emerging industry. Funds could be used for worker training/certification, new product development or repositioning, equipment upgrades, and implementing new operations processes to support offshore wind.

Broadband/Fiber

- Support funding programs and policies that advance regional efforts to develop interconnected and modern fiber networks.
 - The Hampton Roads region is planning a fiber network that will connect to the subsea cables that have come ashore in Virginia Beach and spread this ultrafast service throughout the 757 region.
 - The first phase of this effort is the southside fiber ring – the procurement process is currently underway for the construction of this fiber ring. The next phase of this effort will expand this fiber network to the Peninsula.
 - Current State funding programs for broadband place priority on last mile service to rural areas.
 - State funding programs should include funding opportunities for middle mile/dark fiber networks that support urban, suburban, and underserved areas.

Economic Development Site Readiness

- Support funding programs and policies that assist local governments with preparing shovel ready sites for economic development and job creation.
 - The Hampton Roads region has utilized funding through the GO Virginia program to advance regional economic development sites through the Tier-system utilized by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP).
 - This regional approach has been viewed as a model program in Virginia for preparing shovel-ready economic development sites.
 - Important to support the continuation of funding for programs that support regional efforts to advance economic development site readiness.

Housing

- Support the continuation of efforts to appropriate funding for housing programs and projects.
- Review enabling legislation at the State level to ensure that all localities have consistent authority to implement tools such as inclusionary zoning and impact fees.

Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI)

- Sustain UASI funding levels for the Hampton Roads region.

Support an Increase in Funding for School Construction and Modernization

- Support the continuation of efforts to provide increased state funding for K-12 public education.
- Evolving technology and facility needs require funding to ensure that our K-12 facilities remain modern and can meet today's public education best practices and needs.

Preserving and Expanding Tree Canopy

- Support legislation to provide local governments with greater authority in the reforestation, preservation, and management of urban forests.
- Urban forests play important role to capture and store carbon, reduce stormwater runoff, improve air quality, reduce energy use, and mitigate urban heat islands and their health effects.

Support Revisions to Public Notification Requirements for Discretionary Land Use Requests

- In response to excessive costs, unreliability of services and an overall decline in readership of print newspaper, localities are seeking alternative methods to provide public notice that reflect current trends, are more effective, and are more cost efficient.

Increased Flexibility for Public and Regional Bodies to hold Electronic Meetings

- Experiences over the past 18 months illustrate that electronic meetings can increase public participation and reduce the need for travel.
- Current provisions within the Code of Virginia are very restrictive regarding the ability of public bodies to conduct electronic/virtual meetings outside of a declared State of Emergency.
- While the importance of in-person meetings is recognized, the General Assembly should consider providing increased flexibility for public bodies and regional bodies to hold electronic/virtual meetings, when deemed appropriate.

Increased State Funding for Planning District Commissions

- Planning District Commissions (PDCs) play a critical role in coordinating regional cooperation and strategies that strengthen our regional economies and improve the quality of life for the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- PDCs also serve a critical role by supporting state agencies in program and project delivery which results in cost savings for the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- In FY 2022, the HRPDC receives \$165,943 as a base allocation from the Commonwealth of Virginia. While this amount represents a \$14,000 increase, it is more than \$200,000 less than the HRPDC received from the Commonwealth in the year 2001.
- State funding should reflect the critical role that PDCs play within their regions and the support and cost savings PDCs create for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Virginia Commonwealth Flooding Board

Virginia needs a new entity to direct and prioritize state and federal funding for flood mitigation, ensure collaboration and alignment among State agencies, and coordinate state, local and regional planning and adaptation efforts. In the Commonwealth, flooding is caused by three sources, which sometimes occur simultaneously: precipitation, wind, and tides. Flooding impacts all regions of Virginia including those with upland, riverine, and coastal environments. Each of these drivers appears to be getting worse as a result of changing climatic conditions. Extreme rainfall events repeatedly have caused riverine and inland flooding and have also intensified coastal flooding. Coastal areas are also experiencing the impacts of sea level rise. Increased sea level means regular high tide events result in more flooded roads and properties and storm events impact larger portions of coastal communities. There is a need to define the scope of these problems, design solutions, and invest in mitigation.

The General Assembly should create a Commonwealth Flooding Board (CFB) to be an oversight body to coordinate flood mitigation efforts at the State level. The CFB would be similar to the existing Commonwealth Transportation Board, which meets on a regular basis to address critical transportation needs and issues in Virginia. The CFB would be responsible for performing the same function for statewide flooding issues and should phase in the implementation of the following tasks over several years:

1. Provide a statewide forum for the discussion of flood mitigation and coordination among state agencies, regions, and localities in efforts to address this critical challenge.
2. Administer the Community Flood Preparedness Fund, including identifying priorities of regional or statewide significance, development and approval of a grant application manual, and approval of grant awards.
3. Designate and define the geographic boundaries of flood planning regions based on watersheds.
4. Develop guidance for regional flood plans then provide funding from the RGGI auction proceeds to fund regional flood plans. In many regions, the plans would be developed with support from the US Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works program.
5. Consolidate regional flood plans into a State Flood Plan.
6. Annually evaluate the alignment of state programs and associated grants and loans, including but not limited to the following, with the Commonwealth’s flood mitigation objectives identified in the regional and state flood plans.

VDOT six-year improvement program	VEDP Brownfields
VDOT long-range transportation plan	VDEM Building Resilient Infrastructure in Communities
DCR Dam Safety, Flood Prevention and Protection Assistance Fund	VDEM Hazard Mitigation Plans and Grants
DEQ Water Quality Improvement Fund	VDH Clean Water Revolving Fund
DHCD Community Block Development Grants	VDH Drinking Water Revolving Fund



This proposal to develop a state flood plan from regional plans is based on the Texas Water Development Board and its [requirements](#) for regional flood planning. However, Virginia does not have an entity like the Texas Water Development Board. The proposed Commonwealth Flood Board would fill that role.

In 2020, House Bill 22 created the Community Flood Preparedness Fund. The fund makes loans and grants available to localities for coastal and riverine flood prevention and mitigation projects. Based on HB 981, proceeds from Virginia’s participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) will be allocated to the Community Flood Preparedness Fund. In 2021, the RGGI auctions have generated to date \$64M (out of \$142M total proceeds to Virginia) of revenue allocated to the Community Flood Preparedness Fund; one more auction will be held this year in December 2021. Annual revenue is expected to be approximately \$88M. The Director the Department of Conservation and Recreation and Secretary of Natural Resources oversee the selection of grant awards for this fund. Most programs such as Water Quality Improvement Fund or Dam Safety grants are vetted and approved by an appointed board such as the State Water Control Board or Soil and Water Conservation Board. Creating a deliberative public body to oversee the CFPF would align with the Commonwealth’s established approach to prioritizing the use of such funds.

The proposed Commonwealth Flooding Board would be comprised of 16 citizens appointed by the Governor. Appointments would include one resident of each of the eleven proposed flood planning districts and five appointments of residents from five localities with the most flood insurance policies in force when the appointment is made. Appointments shall be staggered to provide stability and long-range planning beyond the tenure of any single governor. Ex officio members would include the Secretary of Natural Resources, Secretary of Transportation, Secretary of Public Safety, Secretary of Commerce, and the Special Assistant to the Governor for Coastal Adaptation and Protection whose position will be redefined as the Director of the Commonwealth Flood Planning staff.

The Board would be supported by a new Commonwealth Flood Planning staff. The Board would direct the staff’s work program to include data collection, planning, research, analysis, modeling, and project management. A staff established for this purpose would be better positioned than the existing DCR staff evaluating CFPF applications to coordinate with VDEM, DHCD and VDOT on the potential overlap of grant programs. The CFB could also serve as the nonfederal sponsor for USACE Civil Works projects. The staff would include a director, the redefined role of the Special Assistance to the Governor, plus a minimum of twelve staff with combined expertise in floodplain management, stormwater modeling, civil engineering, coastal engineering, geology, nature-based green infrastructure, land use planning, economics, benefit-cost modeling, environmental policy development, environmental justice, and financial management (grant management, bond ratings, investment strategies). The estimated budget to support the proposed staff is roughly 3% of the annual CFPF budget from the RGGI auctions. The proposed Commonwealth Flood Board and supporting staff focused on climate change would become a state resource for emerging science, data and models. It would also fulfill the first recommendation from the JCOTS study “Impact of Climate Change on Virginia’s Coastal Areas” to establish a structure for more effective collaboration and coordination.

