HAMPTON ROADS GO VA Region 5 Council Meeting
October 29, 2026, MEETING #43
MEETING MINUTES

Meeting number forty-three of the GO Virginia Hampton Roads Regional Council ("Regional Council") was held Thursday, October 29, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. This meeting was in-person at the Secure Energy Future Center (SEFC), Tech Center Research Park in Newport News, VA.

Present:	Terry Banez	Patrick Coady	Steve Cook
	Janet Days	Marshall Everett	Tom Frantz
	Greg Grootendorst	Jeff Holland	Sarah Jane Kirkland
	Monty Mason	Thomas McCarthy	Bob McKenna
	Josh Miller	Paul Nolde	Casey Roberts
	Rob Shuford, Jr.	Jennifer Smith	
Absent:	Marcia Conston	Sharon Goodwyn	Mark Johnson
	Aubrey Layne	Doug Pons	John Olson
Virtual:	Monique Adams	Mark Perryman	Lynn Taylor

Hampton Roads Executive Roundtable Staff:
Nancy L. Grden, President & CEO
Donna Morris, Executive Vice President
Drew Lumpkin, VP External Affairs and Strategic Initiatives
Diane Nolan, Director of Operations & Project Management

I. Call to Order/Welcome:

Chairman Tom Frantz called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and thanked Chelsea Olivieri and Secure Energy Future Center for hosting our meeting.

Recognized guests included Greg Grootendorst, Deputy Executive Director, HRPDC, the newest Region 5 Council member, and State Board members Delegate Virgil Thornton and Dr. McKinley Price.

II. Public Comment: Donna Morris welcomed Dr. Shameka Gerald, who has partnered with the Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce (VPCC) to create the ALL HANDS skilled pathways initiative, focused on exposing young people ages 12–24 to maritime and shipbuilding careers. VPCC received one of five grants awarded by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation under the broader national framework of "Pathways with Purpose Through Career-Connected Learning." Council member Bob McKenna connected Dr. Gerald with the Council's workforce development partners.

Delegate Virgil Thornton, representing the 86th House District, expressed strong support for Region 5, stating "Region 5 is the DEAL," with leadership focused on defense, shipbuilding, nuclear-powered submarine development, energy, aviation, and global logistics. The region emphasizes continued investment in regional industry partnerships and workforce development to grow and retain talent while attracting new talent to the Commonwealth.

III. Approval of July 23, 2026, Regional Council meeting minutes:

Mr. Frantz presented July 23, 2026, meeting minutes for consideration.

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ON A MOTION MADE AND SECONDED, THE REGIONAL COUNCIL UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE MINUTES OF THE JULY 23, 2026, REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING AS PRESENTED IN THE AGENDA PACKET.

IV. GO VA State Board Updates:

Chairman Frantz recognized Sara Dunnigan, Deputy Director of Economic Development and Community Vitality, DHCD for a comprehensive overview of the GO VA Program's accomplishments since its inception in 2018. Statewide, the program has supported 390 projects totaling $175 million, with every region participating annually. She highlighted that FY2026 was a record year, with $28.4 million in funding obligated, and noted that the FY2027 appropriation was reduced by approximately $5 million. Hampton Roads has received approximately $24.5 million across 50 projects, including 29 implementation projects and 21 planning grants. The region's largest investment areas are talent development, sites and infrastructure, and cluster scale-up, with a focus on maritime, shipbuilding, advanced manufacturing, unmanned systems, aerospace, and energy.

Ms. Dunnigan highlighted the region's strong collaborative network, with 14 of 16 localities participating and 155 partner organizations involved in GO Virginia projects. Hampton Roads has demonstrated strong project sustainability, with 63% of completed projects continuing beyond the grant period and another 11% planning to continue. She encouraged the region to maintain its focused investment strategy, validate industry demand, establish realistic project timelines, secure firm matching commitments, and maintain strong partner engagement throughout project implementation.

Looking ahead, Ms. Dunnigan emphasized the importance of moving beyond collaboration toward greater regional alignment and coherence. With significant resources and initiatives underway, she encouraged Region 5 to ensure projects are connected and mutually supportive rather than operating independently, noting that coordinated efforts will be essential to maximizing the region's long-term economic impact.

V. Project Spotlight

Chairman Frantz introduced the *Secure Energy Future Center (SEFC)*, led by Chelsea Olivieri, Managing Director of the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center, as the meeting's project spotlight.

Launched in 2023 as a green hydrogen demonstration project, the initiative evolved into a broader energy innovation hub in response to changing market conditions. Opened in April, the Center connects industry, universities, government, and regional partners to address energy challenges, attract investment, and support commercialization.

Initiatives include an eight-part Energy Literacy Program that issued 263 certificates, monthly Tech Talks, research and modeling, workforce development, technology demonstrations, and entrepreneurship and accelerator support. A TerraPower partnership will develop a first-of-its-kind advanced nuclear control room simulator, supported by a $1 million grant and total investment exceeding $2 million. Collaboration with Jefferson Lab and regional partners supports the energy supply chain.

Discussion emphasized collaboration, connectivity, innovation, and investment in Hampton Roads' economy. Ms. Olivieri confirmed engagement with regional companies

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and military installations on small modular reactors, nuclear propulsion, and space economy opportunities.

VI. GO Virginia Grant Updates

Chairman Frantz introduced Nancy Grden, who reported that the VersAbility TECH Center grant was completed and closed. Council member Casey Roberts described planning to assess facilities, training capacity, and employer demand in maritime and advanced manufacturing while expanding employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The next phase will explore converting VersAbility's 75,000-square-foot facility into an open industrial training center offering 10 trades, with projected capacity to train up to 1,000 students annually.

Ms. Grden also provided updates on the following Region 5 initiatives:

EVRIFA Site Planning Grant: Planning is underway across multiple Hampton Roads localities to identify sites for aerospace and advanced manufacturing, including manufacturing, testing, and industry expansion.

DEAL Industry Strategy: Approximately $26 million in GO Virginia funding and matching support has advanced the Defense, Energy, Aerospace, and Logistics (DEAL) strategy and established a foundation for industry cluster development. Additional projects are in the pipeline.

Advanced Air Mobility & Aerospace: Initiatives build on the Mobility Innovation Center in Newport News, Eastern Shore Community College workforce training, and prior site and corridor studies. They support aerospace and advanced air mobility opportunities connected to NASA Wallops, the Virginia Space Authority, and the Eastern Shore.

Ms. Grden introduced Lauren Roberts Carter to present Start in Hampton Roads, a regional talent attraction and retention initiative connecting job seekers with employment opportunities and promoting the region as a place to live and work.

The Hampton Roads Chamber reported that launch was three weeks away. A $300,000 GO Virginia grant, with Workforce Council matching funds, supports the region's first coordinated talent attraction campaign and jobs portal. Features include thousands of daily job listings from LinkedIn and Indeed, a cost-of-living calculator, employer profiles, quality-of-life marketing, and an interactive map of all 17 localities. Target audiences include industry and young professionals, military personnel, transitioning service members, veterans, and their families.

VII. Regional Update

GO VA Updates – Sara Dunnigan reported approval of the VMA Maritime Pipeline Program Planning Grant application.

Nancy Grden emphasized aligning regional investments, including GO Virginia funding, with federal opportunities and noted two developments:

- Maritime Prosperity Zones: Proposed federal policy could create 100 zones nationwide to encourage private maritime investment. Regional leaders are advocating for Hampton Roads and Virginia's inclusion, citing the region's maritime businesses and commercial and defense assets.

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- NASA Space Academy: NASA issued a Request for Information for a new Space Academy. Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) is leading Virginia's application, with Hampton Roads serving as lead applicant, drawing on regional NASA facilities, industry and university partners, workforce training, and existing investments.

Both opportunities highlight regional collaboration and leveraging existing investments to pursue federal resources and strengthen key industries.

VIII. Other Business: Chairman Frantz announced that the next Council meeting will be held virtually on January 21, 2027.

IX. Adjournment: There being no further business, Mr. Frantz adjourned the meeting at 11:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Donna S. Morris
Secretary to the Regional Council

APPROVED

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Thomas R. Frantz
Chairman of the Regional Council

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