



NRGRDA – Legislative Committee Meeting
June 26, 2025 at 4 p.m. – Virtual
Beckley, WV

Call to Order

Allison Taylor called the meeting to order at 9:12 a.m.

Attendance

Committee Members Present: Allison Taylor, Anita Groves, Craig Chapman, Daniel Hall

Staff Present: Jina Belcher, Jozy Moore

Guests: Joe Reidy, Whitney Wetzel (3PS – Lobbyists)

Discussion Items

1) Drafting Legislation

Allison asked about the process for NRGRDA to draft its own legislation based on established priorities.

Joe Reidy outlined two approaches NRGRDA has used with Bowles Rice attorney Corey Bonasso:

- **Option 1:** NRGRDA provides Corey with a clear bill concept → Corey drafts the bill → NRGRDA identifies a sponsor → The draft is submitted to legislative bill drafting
- **Option 2:** NRGRDA identifies a sponsor → Submits the concept directly to legislative bill drafting (riskier due to potential misinterpretation)

Joe recommended having policy priorities and draft concepts ready by early November to begin engaging sponsors and the drafting process.

Jina noted Corey will remain NRGRDA's main contact but may involve others from his firm depending on the topic.

2) November 2-4 Interim Planning (Pipestem)

Potential Sites for Tours and Reception:

- Summit Bechtel Reserve
- Route 19 Corridor (Crossroads Mall to Summersville)
- Raleigh County Airport Industrial Park
- Summersville Lake State Park
- Summersville Airport

Joe will coordinate with state legislators to explore NRGRDA-led tours during November interim meetings.

Proposed Priorities and Policies

Priorities: What's important to the NRGRDA region?

Policies: How do we address those issues?

Proposed Legislative Priorities for 2026

1. **Infrastructure** – Broadband, water/sewer, and transportation improvements
2. **Land Use** – Zoning, redevelopment tools, and site readiness
3. **Childcare** – Support for providers and access expansion
4. **Economic Development Funding** – State programs and incentives
5. **County Revenue** – Stable tax base and fiscal tools
6. **Housing** – Workforce and attainable housing development

Proposed Legislative Policies to go with NRGRDA's Priorities

1) Infrastructure

a. Broadband

- Jina raised whether there's a regional preference for fiber, cable, satellite, or a mix.
- Allison suggested coordinating a broadband strategy with Regions 1 & 4, especially for fiber and cable, which require multi-county cooperation.
- Allison also noted that former President Trump's support of Starlink may influence broadband policy and funding.

b. Transportation

- **Industrial Access Road Fund**
 - This fund provides up to \$400,000 per county annually but is underused.
 - Jina noted that \$400K is often insufficient for industrial road projects (~\$1M+).
 - Craig proposed allowing regional EDAs to pool funds (e.g., \$1.6M for four counties).
 - Allison recommended including county support letters to strengthen any proposal.
 - Jina suggested expanding eligible uses to include match requirements for large road projects, which often go unfunded due to lack of local match.
- **Public Transportation**

- Allison pointed out limited rideshare access and gaps in public transit, especially around the National Park. She asked whether private partnerships could help.
 - Joe referenced KRT's new on-demand option, [KRTplus](#).
 - Jina discussed ongoing conversations with New River Transit and Mountain Transit Authority, whose primary users are in recovery programs due to available reimbursements. These agencies are open to tourism-related expansions if financially feasible.
 - **Legislative Concepts for Reintroduction**
 - [HB 2560](#) – Creating Infrastructure Ready Jurisdictions
 - [HB 2835](#) – Creating the WV Infrastructure Deployment Clearinghouse
 - Jina noted that while both align with NRGRDA goals, but state agencies may lack capacity to implement them at this time.
-

2) Land Use

a. [HB 2014](#) (Microgrid/Data Centers)

- Allison said it's not the right time to push for amendments to HB 2014, though having a proposal ready would be wise.
- Joe agreed but said to be ready to propose changes is opportunity presents itself. Jina already submitted a proposal during the session at a Senate committee hearing.
- Allison suggested sharing the proposal with other EDAs who may wish to pursue it.

b. Land Reuse Agencies (LRAs)

- Support the State Auditor's previous legislation ([SB 683](#)) to improve property owner notifications, possibly expanding it to demolition and land bank actions.
- Allison suggested giving counties the same authority as municipalities to obtain search warrants for inspecting dilapidated properties.
- Jina said many legislators misunderstand or are unfamiliar with LRAs; education is needed—possibly through an interim information session.
- Jina recommended meeting with Cristal Perry in the Auditor's Office well ahead of the session. Joe will assist with scheduling.
- Joe mentioned Charleston-backed [HB 3060](#) to strengthen enforcement on negligent property owners.
- Joe added that other aggressive stakeholders are pushing LRA-related policy, and NRGRDA must decide whether to collaborate, compete, or outmaneuver them.

- Allison proposed linking LRA policy to housing (and [NRGRDA's recent housing needs assessment](#)) to align with a high-priority issue for legislators.

c. Property Tax Modernization

- Jina said the goal is to discourage speculation by aligning property tax assessments more closely with market value.
- The proposal also seeks to close loopholes that allow companies to avoid paying capital gains and transfer taxes in West Virginia.
- Jozy was asked to send the proposal to 3PS and committee members for review.

3) Childcare

- The committee agreed NRGRDA should adopt a formal position rather than pursue childcare legislation in 2026.
- Joe noted that few successful childcare bills passed in 2024 or 2025.
- Jina submitted a congressional direct spending request with Region 4 to hire a consultant for an employer-supported childcare model.
 - If funded, it would result in a pilot program and future policy recommendations.
- Jina said NRGRDA should advocate to be part of rulemaking for [SB 656](#), the 2022 tax credit for employer-sponsored childcare, ensuring the benefit can be shared across multiple employers.
- She also flagged concerns over [declining state match for the federal Child Care and Development Block Fund \(CCDF\)](#), which is growing on the federal side despite no match requirement.

4) Economic Development Funding

a. [Economic Development Project Fund \("Closing Fund"\)](#)

- Fund supports high-impact business growth, broadband, and job creation with executive approval.
- Legislature allocated \$75M to fund for FY 26 but the fund was eliminated by the [governor with line-item veto](#)

b. Local Economic Development (LED) Program

- Jina said NRGRDA receives about \$150K annually—approximately \$37K per county
- Current max per county is \$50,000 **per county**, but only if fully funded by the Legislature (which is hasn't been).

For the closing fund and LED program, Joe recommended pushing the WV EDC to advocate for reforms.

Jina noted the EDC has been reluctant to push for major changes in recent years.

5) County Revenue

a. Home Rule for Counties

- Jina emphasized the need to coordinate with Daniel Hall, who has advocated for an amusement tax ([Creating Safer Communities Act, SB 748](#)) to fund emergency services.
- Jozy will schedule a meeting.

6) Housing

a. Build WV Act

- Jina said NRGRDA is supporting Build WV applications for Hinton and Summersville, and likely Beckley.
- The goal is to create a Build WV region; each approved application covers a 20-mile area, enabling regional overlap.
- Jina proposed advocating for an increased tax credit cap based on NRGRDA's housing study.
 - Last year, the credit nearly ran out for a project in Beckley.
 - NRGRDA can quantify needed credits based on anticipated developments in housing study.
- The Build WV Act expires January 1, 2028.

Next Steps

Allison suggested that for any priority area without suggested legislation, NRGRDA should still adopt a formal position to share with legislators.

Follow-up Actions:

1) Infrastructure

◦ Transportation:

- Pursue legislation to allow EDAs to pool Industrial Access Road funds
- Develop positions on infrastructure-ready jurisdictions and broadband

2) Land Reuse: Coordinate with the State Auditor

3) Childcare: Monitor and provide updates on internal work

4) Economic Development Funding:

- Track WV EDC activity before developing an action plan

5) County Revenue

6) Housing

- Prepare policy updates to the Build WV Act, particularly the tax credit cap (\$150M statewide; \$1M max per project at \$100,000 per year for 10 years)

Meeting adjourned at 11:01 a.m.

Larry Meador, Secretary

Accepted: _____