

VAPDC 2015 Summer Conference
Speaker Profiles
In Order of Appearance

Kevin Byrd, AICP, Executive Director, New River Valley Regional Commission

Kevin Byrd, AICP is the Executive Director of the New River Valley Regional Commission. In his capacity as director he oversees a broad range of federal, state and local planning programs which include housing, transportation, environmental, economic development, land use planning and GIS mapping services. Mr. Byrd began working for the Commission in 2005 as a Regional Planner and was appointed as Executive Director in October 2009. He has over 10 years of community development experience in the public sector at the town, county and regional levels of government along with private sector consulting experience. He has a Masters degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Virginia Tech and a Bachelor of Science degree from Appalachian State University.

He currently is in leadership roles with 'Round the Mountain, Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network, serving as President of the Board; Treasurer of the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions; and is on the Board of Directors for the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council (RBTC) and the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce. In his volunteer time he serves as Past President of the New River Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

Will Cockrell, AICP, Director of Planning, Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission



William "Will" Cockrell currently serves as the Director of Planning at the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) and Coordinator of the Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO. He manages rural and urban transportation programs, along with regional planning projects. His tenure at the TJPDC started in November of 2008.

Prior to joining the Planning District, Will was the senior planner for Louisa County, located in Central Virginia. During that time, he also took on the role of Acting-Director of Community Development. He is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners and holds a Master's of Science in Urban Environmental Planning from the University of Virginia's School of Architecture, with a Concentration in Land Use Planning. He has a Bachelor's of Science in Urban Environmental Planning, along with a Minor in Architecture, also from UVA.

Will serves as a Vice President for APA Virginia. In this position, he organizes the Chapter's annual conference and Chapter programs. Will is also Chair of the Virginia Association of MPOs (VAMPO) and completed his third year as an adjunct faculty member at the University of Virginia, where he teaches "The Professional Practice".

Lisa Garst, Chairman, Livable Roanoke Valley Steering Committee/Member, Salem City Council



Lisa is co-owner of Sterling-ES, an engineering sales and service firm specializing in industrial connectivity and critical communication. She is currently serving her second term on Salem City Council. Lisa is chair of the Partnership for a Livable Roanoke Valley. She is a commissioner on the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission and serves on the City of Salem's Economic Development, Downtown Revitalization and Comprehensive Plan Committees. She represents Salem on the region's Transportation Planning Organization and the Virginia Municipal League's Environmental Policy Committee. Lisa is Vice-Chair for the Board of LewisGale Medical Center and President-Elect for the Rotary Club of Salem.

Lisa is married to Reid Garst II. They have one daughter, Ashby, and Cookie, a border collie mix, and Mango, a yellow lab. She enjoys kayaking, hiking with her dogs and science fiction.

Basil I. Gooden, Ph. D., State Director - Virginia, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development



In May 2014, President Obama appointed Dr. Basil I. Gooden to serve as the State Director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Rural Development for the Commonwealth of Virginia. Basil brings a wealth of knowledge and experience in addressing housing, community and economic development issues in rural Virginia.

Basil's primary educational and professional background is in the areas of housing, community and economic development, family financial management and consumer-related issues. He has worked to improve the quality of living for people and communities by addressing issues related to family financial management, inter-generational wealth development and wealth retention strategies. He works with national experts in housing and economic development to advance wealth building strategies within limited-resource and socially-disadvantaged populations.

Prior to joining USDA – Rural Development, Basil served as the Chief Deputy Director of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for twelve years. His primary administrative responsibilities included strategic management, technology advancement, and community development initiatives in economically distressed communities. Before DHCD, Basil worked at Virginia Tech where he served as the Coordinator of Outreach and Community Relations. Additionally, Basil worked with Virginia Cooperative Extension as an Extension Specialist where he designed and implemented a statewide research project to assess community issues impacting localities across Virginia. Some of his previous professional experiences include working as a Legislative Assistant to a former U.S Congressman from the Fifth Congressional District of Virginia and a Legislative Aide to a former U.S. Senator from Virginia. He is an active board member of several statewide organizations such as the Council for Rural Virginia, Housing Virginia, EarthCraft Virginia, Preservation Virginia, and the Virginia Cooperative Extension State Extension Leadership Council. He previously served as an Advisor on the Buckingham/Cumberland County FSA County Committee. Basil is a native of Buckingham County, Virginia where he and his family own and operate a cattle farm, raising Black Angus beef. His family farm also participates in tree farming and land conversation efforts. As a youth, Basil was actively involved in many Virginia Cooperative Extension related activities that focused on crop production, livestock and 4-H activities.

Basil graduated from Buckingham County High School and attended Virginia Tech where he received a B.A. in Political Science. He earned a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree from Syracuse University in 1995. Additionally, he is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where he received a Master of Public Health (MPH) and a Ph.D. in 1998.

Basil currently resides in Henrico County with his wife, Dr. Susan T. Gooden, who is a professor of public policy at the Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University. They have one daughter, Caper, who is currently a student at the College of William and Mary.

Robert E. Gittler, Economic Development Representative, Philadelphia Regional Office, Economic Development Administration

Mr. Gittler serves as the Economic Development Specialist for Virginia and West Virginia for the U.S. Department of Commerce – Economic Development Administration (EDA). Specifically, he develops and manages economic development investments on behalf of EDA and has a key role in the solicitation, analysis, monitoring and quality assurance of investments in accordance with EDA's funding priorities and strategy. He consults to key partners from among a range of local, regional, and state governmental entities, institutions of higher education, and non-profit organizations. Other key responsibilities include client service and assessing economic trends and regional competitive strengths and weaknesses in order to identify the highest-impact priority projects in development-ready distressed communities.

Immediately prior to joining EDA in 2008, Mr. Gittler served nine years as Senior Manager for the Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Southeastern Pennsylvania (BFTP/SEP), one of the nation's preeminent Technology-Based Economic Development organizations. At BFTP/SEP he directed the Program Analysis and Development unit, undertook the organization's economic impact analyses, and staffed various regional

initiatives. Earlier positions included work with the City of Philadelphia Commerce Department and approximately 10 years in commercial real estate consulting and appraisal.

Mr. Gittler holds an M.U.P. (Master of Urban Planning) /Economic Development concentration from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a B.A. in Urban Studies from Drew University in Madison, NJ.

Curtis Brown, Chief Deputy State Director, Virginia Department of Emergency Management

Curtis Brown serves as the Chief Deputy State Coordinator at the Virginia Department of Emergency Management. He has homeland security and emergency management policy experience at the federal, state, and local levels. He also worked in the non-profit sector at a Community Development and Community Foundation. Prior to his current position, Curtis served as the Regional Emergency Management Administrator for the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC), Professional Staff on the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security, and Senior Special Assistant to the Governor in the Office of Commonwealth Preparedness. Curtis received his Bachelor of Science in Political Science from Radford University, his Master of Public Administration from Virginia Tech, and his Master of Arts in Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Bill Shelton, Director, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development

Bill Shelton currently serves as the director of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development and is responsible for the management and policy oversight of the agency, which provides community development and housing program support to communities across the commonwealth. Shelton is an ex-officio member of the Board of Commissioners of the Virginia Housing Development Authority and serves on the board of Virginia Community Capital Inc. He also serves as the governor's alternate state representative for the Appalachian Regional Commission. A native Virginian, Shelton received his bachelor's degree in politics from Washington and Lee University and a master's in urban and regional planning from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Marissa Levine, MD, MPH, Interim Commissioner, Virginia Department of Health



Dr. Marissa Levine was appointed interim Virginia State Health Commissioner by Governor Terry McAuliffe effective February 1, 2014. Dr. Levine previously held the positions of Chief Deputy Commissioner for Public Health and Preparedness and Deputy Commissioner for Public Health and Preparedness since February 2009. Prior to this role, Dr. Levine directed local health departments in two districts within Virginia since 2002. Dr. Levine is a board-certified family physician who also received a Masters of Public Health (MPH) degree from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. She received her MD from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in Bronx, NY and completed family practice residency training at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. Dr. Levine started her career in private medical practice in Pennsylvania. She subsequently joined the staff of an academic medical center and became the director of a family practice residency training program in northwestern Pennsylvania. While in Pennsylvania, Dr. Levine was also very involved in community health improvement efforts and was a member of the local board of health.

Joseph J. Hilbert, Director, Governmental & Regulatory Affairs, Virginia Department of Health

Joe has been the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Director of Governmental and Regulatory Affairs since January 2002. In this capacity, he assists and advises the Commissioner on a wide range of policy, operational, and legislative issues. Joe also serves as VDH's legislative liaison during the General Assembly Session, and works closely with staff in the Governor's Office, Secretary's Office, other Executive Branch agencies, and the legislative branch. Prior to coming to VDH, Joe served as a Senior Health Policy Analyst at the Joint Commission on Health Care for three years, where he researched and reported on a number of health care-related issues for the General Assembly. Prior to that, Joe served as a legislative analyst for the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission for eight years. In that role, he conducted a number of policy analyses and program evaluations concerning several different state agencies and programs. Joe has a B.A in Political Science from the State University of New York at Albany, and an M.P.A. from New York University.



William H. Leighty, Principal, DecideSmart

From January of 2002 until September of 2007 Bill served as Chief of Staff to Governors Kaine and Warner of Virginia.

As Chief of Staff, Bill served as the Chief Operating Officer of the Commonwealth. In 2005, *Governing* Magazine named Virginia the “Best Managed State in the Nation” and in 2007, *Governing* Magazine named him one of the nine “Public Officials of the Year.” For seven years, Bill was the Director of the Virginia Retirement System, where led the agency to three consecutive US Senate Productivity Awards.

Upon retirement Bill joined DecideSmart LLC consulting. In April of 2008, he served as Senior Advisor to the Scottish Executive advising the government on how to design and implement Scotland Performs, a national performance management system. In July of 2008 Bill conducted a performance review of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, a \$52 billion pension system. In 2011, at the request of the National Governors Association, Bill led a 5 person delegation to Nigeria to conduct a “new governors” seminar for the newly elected governors of Nigeria.

In August of 2012 Bill was appointed “Professor of Practice” by Virginia Tech and teaches strategic planning and administrative behavior in the MPA program in the College of Architecture and Urban Studies.

Bill joined state government after serving in the United States Marine Corps. Bill graduated from Mary Washington College in 1978, and holds an MBA from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Becky Nave, Public Relations & Marketing Director, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development

Becky Nave is an advocate for the 19 counties, 54 towns, and 4 cities she serves under Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in the Southwest Virginia region. Through the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation she promotes cultural heritage organizations like The Crooked Road, ‘Round the Mountain, and Southwest Virginia’s great outdoors through the Appalachian Spring initiative. Becky is the lead in the regional brand deployment of Southwest Virginia that showcases the creative economy. Prior to her work with Commonwealth, she was the Senior Business Trainer for People Incorporated of Virginia. She assisted entrepreneurs by providing business, financial, and development services through micro-loans, one-on-one technical assistance and training to clients throughout Southwest Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley. Becky has more than 15 years of experience in community and economic development and has taught a variety of workshops at the state and national level. She is a graduate of King University with a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration.

Glen “Skip” Skinner, Executive Director, Lenowisco Planning District Commission

Glen Skinner has served as the Executive Director of the LENOWISCO Planning District Commission (PDC) since 2008. Prior to that he served as County Administrator in Wise County, Virginia and Assistant Director, Senior Planner and Planner at LENOWISCO PDC.

Mr. Skinner attended the University of Virginia’s College at Wise and graduated from Virginia Tech with a B.S. in Business with a major in Finance.

He is one of the co-directors of the Appalachian Prosperity Project, a university-community-industry partnership which includes the University of Virginia, the University's College at Wise and the Virginia Coalfield Coalition. He serves on a number of regional policy boards for topics including health care, economic development and place-based strategies for community development and is a member of the Trinity United Methodist Church in Big Stone Gap where he sings in the choir.

In addition, Mr. Skinner has been in a public policy-making role as a member of the Big Stone Gap Town Council, serving two years as mayor. He is married to Jan Zentmeyer and they have two daughters, Anna and Sydney.

Diana Utz, Director, GWRideConnect, George Washington Regional Commission

Diana Utz has been working in Regional Planning and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) for the past 30 years. She is the Director of GWRideConnect, the TDM agency for the George Washington Regional Commission, Planning District 16 in Virginia. GWRideConnect serves the counties of Stafford, Spotsylvania, Caroline, King George and the City of Fredericksburg. Under Utz's direction GWRideConnect works to reduce congestion, increase ridesharing, and decrease the use of the single occupant vehicle. During her time at GWRideConnect she has worked to grow and maintain an owner operated fleet of over 400 vanpools, the largest in the State of Virginia and one of the largest owner operated fleets in the Country. These vanpools remove well over a million cars from the highway annually.

Utz has work experience in rail transit, bus transit, ridesharing, employer outreach, marketing, commuter parking, long range transit and TDM planning and establishing performance measures for non-attainment areas. Utz has worked with funding agencies to establish the ADVANTAGE Program, a self-insurance pool for the vanpools in the State. She has also worked with agencies north of the region to establish the Vanpool Alliance, a program where vanpools in the Northern Virginia region report their transit data to the National Transit Database and generate additional 5307 funds back into the region. Utz works very closely with Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation and Virginia Department of Transportation in implementing rideshare and TDM techniques that reduce congestion on the highways during major construction phases. GWRideConnect works with commuters and agencies on utilizing the new I-95 HOT Express Lanes.

Utz holds a BA in Geography from the University of Mary Washington, sits on the Public Transit Advisory Board for the Fredericksburg Regional Transit, is a member of the Metropolitan Planning Organization Technical Advisory Committee and is an executive board member of the Rural Planning Caucus of Virginia. In 2010 she was the recipient of the Association for Commuter Transportation, Chesapeake Chapter's Board of Director's Award.

Wayne Strickland, Executive Director, Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission

Wayne Strickland was appointed Executive Director of the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission in February 1987. Mr. Strickland joined the Regional Commission in 1979 and held the position of Chief of Land Use and Environmental Planning. His academic background includes: a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Georgia State University, a Masters of Arts degree (in Geography) from Georgia State University, and a Master's degree in City Planning from the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Mr. Strickland has assumed leadership roles in various professional organizations. He is currently the Chair of the Southeast Regional Directors Institute. Mr. Strickland also serves as a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Development Organizations and the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions. His former leadership positions include: President of the Development District Association of Appalachia; President of the Southwest Virginia Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration; President of the Rural Planning Caucus of Virginia; and Vice-President of the Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association.

Mr. Strickland participates in numerous civic activities and serves on the Board of Directors of the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Salem-Roanoke County Chamber of Commerce, the United Way of the Roanoke Valley, the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council, and the Roanoke Valley Council of Community Services. Additionally, he is a member of the President's Advisory Council at Hollins University, the Business and Industry Advisory Committee for the City of Roanoke's Career and Technical Education program, and the Advisory Board for the Roanoke Regional Small Business Development Center. For the last 22 years, Mr. Strickland has served as a Senior Lecturer at Roanoke College teaching courses in Geography.