

Minutes
Western Piedmont Council of Governments
Bimonthly Policy Board Meeting
Tuesday, November 22, 2022
Town of Long View

Members Present:

Jill Patton, Chair
Joseph L. Gibbons, Vice-Chair
George Holleman, Treasurer
Larry Chapman, Secretary
Larry Yoder, At-Large
Wayne Abele, At-Large
Kitty Barnes, At-Large
Marla Thompson, At-Large
Kelvin Gregory
Johnnie Carswell, Alternate
Ronnie Setzer
Ramona Duncan
Joie Fulbright
Jim Green, Alternate
Dennis Anthony
Barbara Pennell
Dr. Caryl Burns
Tracy Townsend, Alternate
Ben Honeycutt
Phyllis Pennington, Alternate
Danny Hipps
Chris Jernigan
Ronnie Thompson, Alternate
Jerry Hodge
Beverly Danner, Alternate
Allen Spencer
Kendra Edwards, Alternate
Wayne Annas
Bobby Mosteller
Erisha Lipford
Helen Chestnut
Malla Vue
Randy Burns
Tommy Luckadoo

Members Absent:

Bob Floyd, Past Chair
Robbie Wilkie, Alternate
Mike Labrose

Local Government/Agency:

Hickory
Lenoir
Taylorsville
Hudson
Alexander County
Burke County
Catawba County
Long View
Brookford
Burke County
Cajah's Mountain
Connelly Springs
Conover
Conover
Drexel
Gamewell
Granite Falls
Granite Falls
Hildebran
Long View
Maiden
Morganton
Morganton
Newton
Newton
Rhodhiss
Rhodhiss
Rutherford College
Sawmills
Appointed
Appointed
Appointed
Appointed
Appointed
Village of Cedar Rock
Caldwell County
Caldwell County

Members Absent (continued):

Donald Robinson	Catawba
Dale Sherrill	Claremont
Sheila Perkins	Glen Alpine
David Williams, Alternate	Hickory
Mike Smith, Alternate	Hildebran
Holly Crafton-Lay, Alternate	Maiden
Charlie Watts	Valdese
Amparo R. Alfaro	Appointed
Jeanna Price	Appointed

Guests/Others Present:

Tamara Brooks	Connelly Springs
Tom Hart	Conover
Sherri Bradshaw	Drexel
Scott Hildebran	Lenoir
James Brinkley	Long View
TJ Bates	Long View
Chuck Mullis	Long View
James Cozart	Long View
Keith Warren	Sawmills
Chase Winebarger	Sawmills

WPCOG Staff Present:

Anthony Starr, Executive Director
Sherry Long, Assistant Executive Director
Ashley Bolick, Director of Administrative Services and Human Resources
Andrea Roper, Director of Finance
Ben Willis, Director of Community and Economic Development
Alison Adams, Director of Community and Regional Planning
Jason Toney, Communications Manager
Elizabeth Hilliard, Executive Administrative Assistant
Tasmin Mack, Human Resources Specialist

Call to Order/Welcome

A regular meeting of the WPCOG Policy Board was called to order at 6:45 pm by Chair Patton. Chair Patton thanked the Town of Long View for hosting. Town of Long View Mayor, Marla Thompson, welcomed the Policy Board to Long View.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting were considered. Mr. Joie Fulbright made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 27, 2022 meeting and Mr. Jerry Hodge offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business/Reports

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

NADO Awards Recognition

Mr. Anthony Starr, WPCOG Executive Director, stated the National Association of Development Organizations' (NADO) is a Washington, DC-based association that promotes programs and policies that strengthen local governments, communities, and economies through regional cooperation, program delivery, and comprehensive strategies. The association's Aliceann Wohbruck Impact Awards program recognizes regional development organizations and partnering organizations for improving the economic and community competitiveness of our nation's regions and local communities.

Award-winning projects were recognized during NADO's 2022 Annual Training Conference, held in Pittsburgh, PA, on October 15-18. WPCOG was honored during the 2022 NADO Conference for the following two awards:

NC Foothills Experience Web Application

The NC Foothills Experience Web App (www.expncfoothills.com) is a first-of-its-kind application that is designed to demonstrate to prospective residents and businesses – as well as current residents – that our region provides a high quality of life, offering an ideal work-life balance.

The web app focuses on four key categories that contribute significantly to our region's quality of life: Outdoor Adventures – state and local trails and greenways, parks, ball fields, and biking opportunities; Fun Places – cultural amenities including museums, libraries, art galleries, and historic destinations; Farm Fresh – local food in the form of u-pick farms, roadside stands, butchers, and farmers markets; and Cool Spaces – wineries, distilleries, bike shops, outfitters, and local breweries.

Each location and event included within these four categories are represented by icons on maps, which users can click on to see immersive drone videos, photos, and written descriptions. Users can then click on another category to build their own personalized experiences. For example, after selecting a historic destination to visit, a user can click on the other categories to create a multi-destination experience, including a bite to eat at a local brew pub, a bike ride on a greenway, and a visit downtown. Because the app is built on ESRI's geographic information systems platform, location is central to its overall functionality, allowing users to easily get directions to multiple locations on their mobile devices or computers. Users can also click through to each location's homepage to learn even more.

Industrial Growth Analysis (IGA)

The Industry Growth Analysis (IGA) (found at www.westernpiedmontworks.org) report serves as a regional snapshot of future economic development opportunities by defining growing and shrinking job sectors, low and high-paying jobs within those sectors, and educational opportunities in the region to acquire the educational attainment to fill those jobs. The analysis is of particular importance as the region recovers from the negative impacts caused by the COVID- 19 pandemic.

The IGA is accomplished by creating a series of industry employment and wage tables and charts. All industry sectors are plotted into one of four zones based on average weekly wages and national growth projections over the next ten years. The report identifies the region's "most-favored" industries, which pay above the average regional wage and are expected to grow nationally over the next ten years. The "most-favored" industries should become the focus of economic development efforts in the Western Piedmont Region. Conversely, industries that pay below the average regional wage and/or are expected to decline over the next decade are not considered economic development targets.

In addition, the IGA also reviews regional educational offerings to determine if training is available to prepare Western Piedmont residents for positions in the area's identified "most-favored" industries. Included in the examination are degree programs from the Western Piedmont's three community colleges (Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, Catawba Valley Community College, and Western Piedmont Community College). The report also includes bachelor's and master's programs from Lenoir-Rhyne University and Appalachian State University.

HOME Consortium American Rescue Plan Funding

Ms. Sherry Long, Assistant Executive Director, stated on March 11, 2021 President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan (ARP) into law, which provides over \$1.9 trillion in relief to address the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy, public health, state and local governments, individuals, and businesses.

To address the need for homelessness assistance and supportive services, Congress appropriated \$5 billion in ARP funds to be administered through HOME to perform activities that must primarily benefit qualifying individuals and families who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or in other vulnerable populations.

The Unifour HOME Consortium received \$4,182,773 which can be spent on brick and mortar. Before any funds can be obligated, the City of Lenoir must solicit public input and submit a comprehensive plan to HUD on how the funds will be used by the end of 2023. The WPCOG administers the program on behalf of Lenoir and the region.

At the request of local government officials, WPCOG staff is reviewing possible uses of the funding including replicating the Sarasota Florida Homeless Assistance Model. This program utilizes a holistic approach to serving the homeless population by establishing a centralized record system of individuals experiencing homelessness, using existing non-profits to provide support, as well as adopting ordinances to address unauthorized soliciting aid and loitering.

The development of a regional case management program, identification of gaps in services and/or areas in need of improvement are also being explored. WPCOG staff has begun interviewing local service providers to identify how the ARP funds might be used to address the needs of our local homeless population without duplicating existing services.

Staff requested the Policy Board to provide direction to staff together with suggesting local service providers that should be interviewed. No action is required at this time.

3rd Amendment of the FY2022-23 Budget

Ms. Andrea Roper, Director of Finance, stated the attached 3rd Amendment of the FY2022-23 budget reflects a total budget of \$24,837,971 and an operating budget of \$8,760,791 which represents an increase of the total budget from the September 27, 2022, budget adoption of \$37,815.

The 3rd Amendment of the 2022-2023 Budget includes:

- General Government increased due to the addition of website maintenance and human resource service contracts.
- An increase in Environmental Protection due to an increase in stormwater contracts.
- Community and Regional Planning increased due to new GIS and planning project contracts.
- Aging increased due to an increase in the MIPPA grant and UNCA grant.
- Chargeable salaries decreased and compensated absences increased due to personnel changes across several departments.
- Contractual decreased mainly due to contractual funds being allocated to salaries in the environmental protection department.
- An increase in supplies due to normal programmatic needs across several departments.
- Advertising/subscriptions increased due to subscriptions in the IT department and small increases for programmatic advertising needs in several departments.
- An increase in contingency due to the addition of several new contracts.
- Transfer to Capital Reserve Fund increased due to the increase in indirect funds generated by personnel changes.
- Capital Reserve Fund increased due to the increase in transfers from the general fund.

Staff requested the Policy Board to review and approve the Third Amendment of the 2022-2023 Budget.

Ms. Kitty Barnes made a motion that the Policy Board approve the Third Amendment of the 2022-2023 Budget as proposed and Mr. Larry Yoder offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Nominating Committee Report

Ms. Kitty Barnes, Nominating Committee Chair, stated each year the Board Chair appoints a nominating committee for the purpose of recommending persons for the Officers, Executive Committee and Appointed Delegates of the Policy Board. Chair Patton appointed Wayne Abele (Burke County), Larry Chapman (Hudson), Kitty Barnes (Catawba County) and George Holleman (Taylorsville) to serve as members of the 2022 Nominating Committee.

Ms. Barnes, Nominating Committee Chair, will present the recommendations from the Nominating Committee listed below. Changes from 2022 are highlighted.

Position	Recommendation	Term Ends
Chair	Jill Patton (Hickory)	Dec. 2023
Vice Chair	Joe Gibbons (Lenoir)	Dec. 2023
Secretary	Larry Chapman (Hudson)	Dec. 2023

Treasurer	George Holleman (Taylorsville)	Dec. 2023
Immediate Past Chair	Bob Floyd (Cedar Rock)	Dec. 2023
Executive Committee At-Large	Randy Burns (Burke County)	Dec. 2023
Executive Committee At-Large	Cole Setzer (Catawba County)	Dec. 2023
Executive Committee At-Large	Marla Thompson (Long View)	Dec. 2023
Executive Committee At-Large	Larry Yoder (Alexander County)	Dec. 2023
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Malla Vue	Dec. 2023
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Jeanna Price	Dec. 2023
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Tonia Stephenson	Dec. 2023
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Amparo Alfaro	Dec. 2024
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Erisha Lipford	Dec. 2024
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Tommy Luckadoo	Dec. 2024
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Helen Chestnut	Dec. 2024
Forum Representative	Marla Thompson (Long View)	Dec. 2023
Alternate Forum Representative	Larry Yoder (Alexander County)	Dec. 2023

The Policy Board was requested to elect the officers, Executive Committee members, and appointed delegates for 2023.

Mr. Danny Hipps made a motion that the Policy Board approve the nominations as presented by the Nominating Committee and Mr. Chris Jernigan offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Outgoing Board Member Recognition

Chair Patton recognized the following outgoing Policy Board members for their years of service:

- Mr. Keith Warren, Town of Sawmills
- Ms. Kitty Barnes, Catawba County
- Mr. Wayne Abele, Burke County

Other Business

Executive Director’s and Staff Reports

Mr. Anthony Starr, WPCOG Executive Director, reviewed the Executive Director’s Report providing details and current operations of the WPCOG and issues that may be of interest to board members.

Administration

- The WPCOG continues the search process for the Long View town manager position and the Brookford police chief. Staff are also assisting Hildebran for the search for a new town attorney. Work is also beginning to assist Hickory with the selection of a new city attorney and Greenway Public Transportation with the selection of a new executive director.
- The WPCOG recently completed a staff leadership training event. It was a day-long event that was very productive and aimed to improve everyone’s ability to lead and manage people.

Area Agency on Aging (AAA)

- The AAA solicited for contractors interested in providing the following chore services: house cleaning, deep cleaning, landscaping, and pest control. Staff received 3 bids.

Community & Economic Development (CED)

- WPCOG CED staff has written or assisted with 8 (eight) Rural Transformation Grants, 3 (three) CDBGs, 3 (three) Building Reuse, and 3 (three) NCDEQ Volkswagen Settlement grants requesting over \$12 million for the region.
- On November 9th, three local governments in the region were notified they received funding from the NC Department of Commerce Rural Economic Development Division CDBG Neighborhood Revitalization program totaling \$6,694,044. Newton received \$950,000 to renovate Center High School Community Center, Alexander County received \$645,044 to assist the Sterling Road neighborhood with housing and street improvements, and Granite Falls received \$4,999,000 to replace decaying water and sewer lines.

Community & Regional Planning

- The Town of Cahaj's Mountain Planning Board met to review the final zoning ordinance.
- The Town of Hudson Council approved the final draft of the Comprehensive Plan.
- The Town of Long View Council approved the final draft of the Land Use Plan.
- Staff completed and presented renderings for the Town of Hildebran Comprehensive Plan.

Finance

- Finance and HCTDA staff continue to work with auditors on the FY22 audit. The audit is expected to be complete by the end of the month and will be up for consideration at the Policy Board meeting in January 2023.

Regional Housing Authority (RHA)

- The Annual Landlord meeting was held on Thursday, November 17, 2022 at 9 am for all current and interested landlords. There were 40-50 landlords who attended.

Workforce Development

- Staff have been quite busy with various items in the four county region.

There are currently several vacancies in the Finance, Regional Housing Authority, and Administrative Departments. Ms. Ashley Bolick was recognized as the new Director of Economic Development for Caldwell County. The Policy Board was reminded of the reception in honor of Ms. Ashley Bolick on Wednesday, November 30th, at 4:00 pm.

Ms. Alison Adams stated the Community and Regional Planning Department has a GIS Technician position that will be filled by a gentleman from the Raleigh-Cary area. The planning department is working on digital inclusion with the state as well as NC State's Department of Emerging Issues. Funding has been received and the planning department will be writing individual plans for all four counties. They will be reaching out to obtain more information. A kickoff meeting has already be held

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and good feedback was received. Policy Board members may receive an email requesting additional information for the digital inclusion plans.

Next Meeting

The next Policy Board meeting is scheduled for January 24, 2023 with the location to be announced.

Adjournment

Chair Patton adjourned the meeting at 7:15 pm.