

Minutes
Western Piedmont Council of Governments
Bimonthly Policy Board Meeting
Tuesday, January 26, 2021
Video/Conference Call Meeting

Members Present:	Local Government/Agency:	In-person/Remote Participation
Bob Floyd, Jr., Chair	Cedar Rock	Remote
Jill Patton, Vice-Chair	Hickory	Remote
Johnny Berry, Secretary	Connelly Springs	Remote
George Holleman, Treasurer	Taylorsville	Remote
Barbara Pennell, Past Chair	Gamewell	Remote
Kitty Barnes, At-Large	Catawba County	Remote
Chip Black, At-Large	Valdese	Remote
Joseph L. Gibbons, At-Large	Lenoir	Remote
Larry Yoder	Alexander County	Remote
Johnnie Carswell, Alternate	Burke County	Remote
Dale Sherrill	Claremont	Remote
Joie Fulbright	Conover	Remote
Kyle Hayman, Alternate	Conover	Remote
Dennis Anthony	Drexel	Remote
Dr. Caryl Burns	Granite Falls	Remote
Ben Honeycutt	Hildebran	Remote
Larry Chapman	Hudson	Remote
Marla Thompson	Long View	Remote
Ronnie Williams	Maiden	Remote
Chris Jernigan	Morganton	Remote
Jerry Hodge	Newton	Remote
Allen Spencer	Rhodhiss	In Person at WPCOG
Amparo Alfaro	Appointed	Remote
Tommy Luckadoo	Appointed	Remote
Helen Chestnut	Appointed	Remote
Erisha Lipford	Appointed	Remote
Jeanna Price	Appointed	Remote

Members Absent:	
James Weaver	Brookford
Mike Labrose	Caldwell County
Donald Robinson	Catawba
Sheila Perkins	Glen Alpine
Ronnie Setzer	Cajah’s Mountain
Gary McClure	Rutherford College
Keith Warren	Sawmills
Malla Vue	Appointed

Randy Burns

Appointed

Guests/Others Present:

Ko Tang Cha-Moses, Martin Starnes & Associates, Remote

Scott Hildebran, Lenoir, Remote

Donald Duncan, Conover, Remote

Sherri Bradshaw, Drexel, Remote

Jerry Church, Granite Falls, Remote

WPCOG Staff Present:

Anthony Starr, Executive Director, In-person at WPCOG

Sherry Long, Assistant Executive Director, In-person at WPCOG

Ashley Bolick, Director of Administrative Services and Human Resources, In-person at WPCOG

Andrea Roper, Finance Director, In-person at WPCOG

Jason Toney, Communications Specialist, In-person at WPCOG

Stephanie Hanvey, Director of Regional Housing Authority, In-person at WPCOG

Call to Order/Welcome and Roll Call

A regular meeting of the WPCOG Policy Board was called to order at 6:00 pm by Chair Bob Floyd. Chair Floyd thanked the board for joining the remote meeting and the first meeting of 2021. Chair Floyd asked the board clerk for a roll call. The roll call was completed and names recorded for the meeting minutes. Chair Floyd said that he would ask for a motion for all items requiring board approval at the nominating committee presentation.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting were considered. There were no corrections or questions.

Unfinished Business/Reports

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

Recognition of New Board Member

Chair Floyd recognized the newest member of the Western Piedmont Council of Governments Policy Board, Ms. Erisha Lipford. Ms. Lipford is an appointed delegate from Caldwell County and she works at Caldwell UNC Health Care. Chair Floyd thanked Ms. Lipford for her willingness to serve on the board.

Audit Presentation

Ms. Ko Tang Cha-Moses, Senior Manager, Martin Starnes & Associates, CPA, thanks the board for allowing Martin Starnes & Associates to complete the WPCOG fiscal year audit for 2019-2020. The annual audit of the WPCOG financials is required by law and various regulations of funding entities. Ms. Cha-Moses informed the board that Martin Starnes would be issuing an unmodified opinion of the WPCOG financial statements, meaning that all WPCOG financial statements are presented, in all material respects, in accordance with applicable financial

reporting standards. Additionally, Ms. Cha-Moses thanked WPCOG Finance Director, Andrea Roper and staff for their cooperation during the audit. Ms. Cha-Moses reviewed the following financials.

WESTERN PIEDMONT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

**FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS
 JUNE 30, 2020**

GENERAL FUND	
Total Assets	\$ 2,413,952
Total Liabilities and Deferred Inflows	660,239
Fund Balance	1,753,713
Total Revenues	6,138,097
Total Expenditures	6,132,184
Total Transfers	-
Net Change in Fund Balance	5,913

BUILDING GENERATOR PROJECT	
Total Assets	\$ 10,328
Total Liabilities and Deferred Inflows	-
Fund Balance	10,328
Total Revenues	-
Total Expenditures	63,462
Total Transfers	-
Net Change in Fund Balance	(63,462)

WIOA	
Total Assets	\$ 216,289
Total Liabilities and Deferred Inflows	209,750
Fund Balance	6,539
Total Revenues	1,242,161
Total Expenditures	1,240,781
Total Transfers	-
Net Change in Fund Balance	1,380

AGING	
Total Assets	\$ 787,348
Total Liabilities and Deferred Inflows	776,274
Fund Balance	11,074
Total Revenues	2,993,616
Total Expenditures	2,993,361
Total Transfers	-
Net Change in Fund Balance	255

SECTION 8	
Total Assets	\$ 1,020,438
Total Liabilities and Deferred Inflows	370,601
Fund Balance	649,837
Total Revenues	5,264,593
Total Expenditures	5,146,123
Total Transfers	-
Net Change in Fund Balance	118,470

OPEB PENSION TRUST	
Total Assets	\$ 90,019
Total Liabilities and Deferred Inflows	-
Net position	90,019
Total Revenues *	90,019
<i>* employer contributions</i>	
Net Change in Fund Balance	90,019

AGENCY FUNDS	
	CASH
FUTURE FORWARD	\$ 149,918
SISTER CITIES	30,271
SE4A	9,986
NC4A	14,953
	<u>\$ 205,128</u>

Ms. Cha-Moses said that they would be submitting to the Local Government Commission (LGC) the completed audit by the end of the week.

Mr. Chip Black asked if it was unusual for the audit presentation to be done in January for the year ending June 30, 2020. Ms. Cha-Moses answered that because of the COVID-19 pandemic the LGC extended the deadline for completed audits to January 31, 2021 and that the WPCOG audit would not be considered late.

4th Amendment of FY 2020-2021 Budget

Ms. Andrea Roper, Finance Director, presented the 4th Amendment of the 2020-2021 Budget reflecting a total budget of \$21,504,659 and an operating budget of \$7,633,941 which represents a decrease of \$427,307 from the November 24, 2020 budget amendment.

The 4th amendment of the 2020-2021 Budget includes:

- Transportation and Environmental Protection decreased \$48,430 and \$373,535, respectively, due to the delay of the environmental health partnership. The project is expected to begin next fiscal year.
- Community and Regional Planning decreased \$11,002 due to the delay of a drone project.
- Salaries, retirement and group insurance decreased due mainly to the delay of the environmental health partnership.
- Contractual increased \$55,859 in order to cover a temporary contract employee to assist with the additional CARES Act work in the Area Agency on Aging Department.
- Travel decreased due to the reduction in travel because of the pandemic.
- The rent/lease-building expense line decreased \$70,000 due to the delayed environmental health partnership lease with Caldwell County.
- Supplies decreased \$44,546 due to the delay of the environmental health partnership and to help offset the cost of the temporary contract employee in the aging department.
- Capital Outlay-Equipment decreased \$18,067 as a result of the delay to purchase a vehicle for the environmental health partnership.
- Contingency decreased \$34,893 due to funds being reallocated to other expense lines and to better align with actual costs in the current fiscal year.
- OPEB Trust allocation decreased \$35,777 due to the loss of fringe funding because of the reduction in salaries.
- All other changes to the expenditure lines reflect normal program needs.

Staff requests Policy Board to review and approve the fourth amendment of the 2020-2021 Budget.

Chair Floyd asked for questions, there was none.

FY2021-22 WPCOG Assessments for Local Governments

Mr. Anthony Starr, WPCOG Executive Director presented proposed dues assessments for fiscal year 2021 – 2022 to the board. Each year, the WPCOG assesses dues to its local governments per its charter and bylaws. The proposed assessments for FY22 reflect a 0.5% increase in population and a total increase of required assessments of 5.45%. The total increase is primarily attributed to the required match increase for MPO federal funds.

The general assessments rate is increased from 80 to 81 cents per capita to adjust for annual inflation. With the population increase, this generates an increase of \$5,316.19.

The assessments also include the required match for the MPO per federal and state requirements. The federal funding for the MPO is increasing 15.9% for FY21-22 and thus increases the required match for local governments, an increase of \$21,445 from the current fiscal year. The significant increases in work for the MPO make the increase justified and necessary to fulfill the required update to the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) in light of the following factors:

- FY2021-2022 is the most work-intensive year for the 2050 update, due to the extensive outreach and data collection done at the beginning of a Plan update.
- The NCDOT funding crisis has forced a re-prioritization of existing needs, when past updates largely could expand upon already funded needs.
- With tighter funding comes tougher choices, which requires more surveying and analysis to help inform tough decisions.
- Our recent Federal Certification strongly recommended the next MTP update expand its resiliency considerations and environmental justice analysis.
- Travel demand model inputs must be updated from the 2020 Census and decide transportation analysis zone changes.

The assessment table shows all the assessments including the required Water Resources dues, no increase in those dues, and optional dues for Sister Cities. If you would like to join Sister Cities and have not recently paid those dues, contact Anthony Starr or Ashley Bolick for assistance.

Decrease in Regional Housing Authority(RHA) Applicable Payment Standards

Ms. Stephanie Hanvey, WPCOG Regional Housing Authority Director, presented new payment standards issued by HUD. The Public Housing Program with HUD determines the amount of assistance provided to clients through publishing a schedule of fair market rent rates based on the housing type. Those rates directly affect the payment standards that housing authorities use for providing rental voucher assistance. In October 2020, HUD published a decrease in the new fair market rent rates for our region for 2021. Those rates were to take effect in October 2020. Typically, fair market rents increase each year. However, this year, they decreased. This decrease caused our current payment standards for one and two bedroom units to be higher than the HUD fair market rent rates allowable percentages. HUD regulations require the WPCOG to lower its one and two bedroom payment standards.

RHA staff and many other housing authorities across the country felt that lowering the payment standards for our tenants would create a burden on new and existing tenants by lowering the amount of rental assistance provided. The RHA requested a re-evaluation of our fair market rents and HUD granted an extension of three months. This allowed us to continue using the 2020 payment standards while we evaluated options for our new and current tenant population.

HUD allows housing authorities the option to do surveys to amend the fair market rent rates. These surveys typically cost approximately \$60,000.00 to \$75,000.00 and often not enough information is collected to produce a favorable result. RHA staff is considering dividing the WPCOG jurisdiction into several small area fair market rent areas by zip codes. This would allow us to use different payment standards in different zip codes based on the fair market rent for that area.

Staff wanted to make the board aware that the WPCOG RHA is now being required by HUD to decrease our payment standards to the 2021 rates governed by the fair market rent rates that were published in October 2020. HUD regulations allow housing authorities ninety days to begin using updated payment standards. Therefore, these payment standards were effective January 1, 2021. RHA staff continues to work with HUD regarding the possibility of utilizing Small Area Fair Market Rents in some of the regions zip codes to help make the decrease less burdensome to tenants.

Mr. Chip Black asked what, if any, impact the Regional Housing Authority has had due to the COVID eviction moratorium. Ms. Hanvey answered that the RHA has seen minimal impact but that the RHA did receive additional CARES Act funding to assist in non-payment situations due to the COVID pandemic.

Mr. Dennis Anthony asked if the change in payment standards would affect only new tenants or both current and new tenants. Ms. Hanvey answered that the new payment standards would be applied to all new tenants and that the RHA had two years to adjust current tenants’ payment standards to the new rates.

Chair Floyd asked for a single motion for the items requiring board action, the approval of the minutes, audit presentation, 4th amendment of the FY 2020-2021 budget and FY 2021-2022 dues assessment.

Ms. Jill Patton made a motion that the board approve and adopt the minutes from the November 24, 2020 meeting, accept the audit report as presented, approve the 4th Amendment of the FY 2020-2021 Budget as proposed and approve the FY 2021-2022 assessments as presented. Mr. Joe Gibbons offered a second. A roll call vote was called by Chair Floyd.

Larry Yoder	Yes	Bob Floyd	Yes	Jill Patton	Yes
George Holleman	Yes	Barbara Pennell	Yes	Marla Thompson	Yes
Johnnie Carswell, Alt	Yes	Dr. Caryl Burns	Yes	Ronnie Williams	Yes
Johnny Berry	Yes	Larry Chapman	Yes	Jerry Hodge	Yes
Dennis Anthony	Yes	Joseph L. Gibbons	Yes	Erisha Lipford	Yes
Sheila Perkins	Not Present	Allen Spencer	Yes	Helen Chestnut	Yes
Ben Honeycutt	Yes	Keith Warren	Not Present	Amparo Alfaro	Yes
Chris Jernigan	Yes	Kitty Barnes	Yes	Tommy Luckadoo	Yes
Gary McClure	Not Present	James Weaver	Not Present	Randy Burns	Not Present
John “Chip” Black, Jr.	Yes	Donald Robinson	Not Present	Jeanna Price	Yes
Mike Labrose	Not Present	Dale Sherrill	Yes	Malla Vue	Not Present
Ronnie Setzer	Not Present	Joie Fulbright	Yes		

The motion passed.

Staff Updates

Mr. Anthony Starr reviewed the Executive Director’s Report outlining both current and upcoming projects by department.

- Some staff continue to telework but all staff work at least four days per week in the office.
- To-date there has been no employee-to-employee transmission of COVID at the WPCOG office building.
- The entire Administration team has begun work on this year’s WPCOG Annual Meeting preparations. While it may look different from previous years, it is sure to be an event worth attending. Mark your calendars for Thursday, April 22. More details to come.
- We recently experienced a premature failure of one of our HVAC units for the building. It appears that most of the HVAC units will fail within the next couple of years due to the problems experienced when we moved into the building in 2012. To replace the entire system would cost in excess of \$200,000. Staff is considering options and plans for the eventual replacement of the other 8 units and the control system. More information will be provided at a future date.

- The AAA has used all CARES Act funding for Alexander County and it is expected that funds for Caldwell County will be exhausted by the end of January.
- Community and Economic Development staff are currently administering 72 grants for local governments.
- Currently, 160-D rewrites for Drexel (finished), Cahah's Mountain, Hildebran, Gamewell and Rutherford College are being conducted this month.
- The Annual WNC Air Quality Conference was held on December 11th, 2020 in partnership with Lenoir-Rhyne University. The virtual format operated smoothly with over 126 attendees. The Water Quality Conference held in September gained an additional 230 attendees for a total of 356 persons trained by the events.
- Planning staff has begun providing supervision and hiring of vacant positions for Caldwell County Environmental Health. Indication from DHHS is that administrative updates will be completed later this year. At earliest WPCOG could begin administering full Environmental Health services fall of 2021 or early 2022. Staff have reached out to local legislators about the possibility of local legislation but it is unclear at this time if that will be a viable option.
- The RHA has approximately 1,200 families on the waiting list.
- Workforce Development staff, Leslie Farris and Matthew Xiong, are still doing a great job helping create Virtual Job Fairs for employers. Virtual workshops are planned monthly and job fairs as needed/requested. We are partnering with the City of Hickory to post our workshops and job fair information on their website and in their newsletters. Since July 2020 – December 2020 we have provided 14 virtual job fairs.
- There are currently over 8,000 job opening across the WPCOG region.

Adjournment

Chair Floyd reminded the board of the next meeting scheduled for March 23, 2021 then he adjourned the meeting at 6:43 pm.

**REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION
WESTERN PIEDMONT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
POLICY BOARD**

MEETING DATE: March 23, 2021

SUBJECT: EDA Cares Act Grant Story Book Mapping

PRESENTER: Alison Adams, Community and Regional Planning Director

ATTACHMENTS: None

SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

The Storybook Mapping Project is one of three EDA Cares Act grant projects for the WPCOG. The purpose of the project is to highlight the opportunities and places within the region that promote quality of life to help engage and attract new and retain current workforce talent, industry and business in the region. The purpose also aligns with WPCOG CEDS goals.

Industries that are successful look to locate to areas where employees will want to live, work and play. It saves the companies money from the cyclical pattern of hiring, rehiring and training. They are able to attain quality personnel. The quality of life storybook tool will allow businesses/corporations (future and current) to have a quick access to information to attract future employees. This tool quickly and easily provides drone footage of locations of interest across the region in four major categories.

At the November 24 Policy Board meeting, a demo of the GIS storybook mapping application was shared. The project at that time was in the infancy stages. There are four main areas of focus across Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba counties - recreational experiences, places of interest, agricultural opportunities and gathering spots. Over the course of the last three months there has been an intense focus on the recreational component of the project. Staff met with the Town/City/County Managers and recreational staff throughout the region to obtain feedback and ideas. Staff has taken over 120 hours of drone footage to attach to designated regional locations within the application. We will be reviewing the recreational experiences portion of the storybook map.

The next steps are as follows:
Places of interest (May 2021)
Agriculture (September 2021)
Gathering spots (January 2022)

We will continue to collaborate and engage partners throughout the region in the specific categories to obtain information, receive feedback and ideas, and help market the tool.

Click [here](#) to access a video summary of recreational opportunities within our region.

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

Staff requests the Policy Board to provide feedback and guidance. No formal action by the Board is needed at this time.

Suggested Motion: *None*