

Minutes
Western Piedmont Council of Governments
Bimonthly Policy Board Meeting
Tuesday, March 22, 2022
HUB Station, Hudson, NC

Members Present:

Jill Patton, Chair
Joseph L. Gibbons, Vice-Chair
George Holleman, Treasurer
Larry Chapman, Secretary
Bob Floyd, Past Chair
Wayne Abele, At-Large
Marla Thompson, At-Large
Johnnie Carswell, Alternate
Ronnie Setzer
Robbie Wilkie, Alternate
Ramona Duncan
Joie Fulbright
Jim Green, Alternate
Dennis Anthony
Barbara Pennell
Dr. Caryl Burns
Tracy Townsend, Alternate
Jim Engelman, Alternate
Chris Jernigan
Ronnie Thompson, Alternate
Beverly Danner, Alternate
Allen Spencer
Kendra Edwards, Alternate
Randy Burns
Helen Chestnut
Tommy Luckadoo
Malla Vue

Members Absent:

Larry Yoder, At-Large
Kelvin Gregory
Mike Labrose
Kitty Barnes, At-Large
Donald Robinson
Dale Sherrill
Sheila Perkins
Ben Honeycutt
Danny Hipps
Jerry Hodge

Local Government/Agency:

Hickory
Lenoir
Taylorsville
Hudson
Town of Cedar Rock
Burke County
Long View
Burke County
Cajah's Mountain
Caldwell County
Connelly Springs
Conover
Conover
Drexel
Gamewell
Granite Falls
Granite Falls
Hudson
Morganton
Morganton
Newton
Rhodhiss
Rhodhiss
Appointed
Appointed
Appointed
Appointed

Alexander County
Brookford
Caldwell County
Catawba County
Catawba
Claremont
Glen Alpine
Hildebran
Maiden
Newton

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| Wayne Annas | Rutherford College |
| Keith Warren | Sawmills |
| Charlie Watts | Valdese |
| Amparo Alfaro | Appointed |
| Erisha Lipford | Appointed |
| Jeanna Price | Appointed |

Guests/Others Present:

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|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Randy Feirerabend | Cajah's Mountain |
| Donald Duncan | Caldwell County |
| Tamara Brooks | Connelly Springs |
| Tom Hart | Conover |
| Sherri Bradshaw | Drexel |
| Jerry Church | Granite Falls |
| Jon Greer | Hudson |
| Barry Mitchell | Hudson |
| Rick Shew | Hudson |
| Ann Smith | Hudson |
| Janet Winkler | Hudson |
| Scott Hildebran | Lenoir |
| Kenneth Geathers, Jr. | Rutherford College |

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
Alison Adams, Director of Community and Regional Planning
Stephanie Hanvey, Director of Regional Housing Authority
Ben Willis, Director of Community and Economic Development
Lucas Bentley, IT Manager
Jason Toney, Communications Specialist
Averi Ritchie, ADA Administrator/Transportation Planner
Elizabeth Hilliard, Executive Administrative Assistant

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 Hudson for hosting. Town of Hudson Mayor, Janet Winkler, welcomed the Policy Board to Hudson.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting were considered. Mr. Joie Fulbright made a motion to approve the minutes from the January 24, 2022 meeting and Mr. Larry Chapman offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business/Reports

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

WPCOG ADA Inventory and Transition Plan

Ms. Averi Ritchie, WPCOG Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Administrator/Transportation Planner, presented the recently completed WPCOG ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. This Plan is required of all local government facilities receiving federal assistance. The Plan serves to protect persons with disabilities by correcting mobility barriers and allowing full access to all programs and services open to the public. This Plan prioritizes mobility barriers for WPCOG as part of an effort to:

1. Plan for the most important facility improvements in conjunction with the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design.
2. Document Approach and Entry Accessibility Barriers (parking lot, sidewalk around building, exterior door pressures, and other exterior elements)
3. Document Interior Facility Accessibility Barriers (any area of the building open to the public)

WPCOG's ADA Transition Plan identifies high, medium, and low priority items. Priority items are based on issues that are non-compliant based on ADA standards. Transition Plans generally advise municipalities to address high priority items first. Items that are not included within standards but could improve accessibility are included as recommendations. Recommendations are not required to be fixed, but are still ranked by high, moderate, or low severity.

Staff requested the Policy Board's approval to release the draft WPCOG ADA Transition Plan for public comment. The Plan requires a 30 day public comment period before adoption. No formal action by the Board is needed at this time.

Workforce Development Board Appointments

Ms. Sherry Long, WPCOG Assistant Executive Director, presented a request on behalf of the Workforce Development Board to the Policy Board to appoint Kimberly Propst, Apprenticeship Coordinator, Catawba Valley Community College, in order to meet the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) board membership to meet the Labor or Apprenticeship or Community Based Organization, or Organizations addressing needs of eligible youth category.

Staff requested the Policy Board to appoint Kimberly Propst, to the Workforce Development Board membership for a two-year term.

Mr. Larry Chapman made a motion to appoint Kimberly Propst to the Workforce Development Board for a staggered two-year term, April 2022 – July 2024. Mr. George Holleman offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Local Government Assistance Regarding the State and Local Government Fiscal Recovery Funds

Ms. Sherry Long, WPCOG Assistant Executive Director stated the WPCOG is offering technical assistance

to local governments with development, implementation and reporting of Local Government Fiscal Recovery Funds received from US Treasury. The funds have restricted uses, examples of eligible projects include:

- **Responses to the negative economic impacts of the public health emergency-** including health insurance subsidies, paid sick and family leave, as well as making affordable housing development, childcare, early learning services, and services to address learning loss available to any impacted household.
- **Responses to the disproportionate public health and economic impacts of the pandemic in certain communities-** investments in disproportionately impacted communities, including investments in neighborhoods that promote improved health and safety outcomes, services to address vacant or abandoned properties, and assistance to small businesses.
- **Responses to restore and bolster government employment-** local governments can increase employment by up to 7.5% above the recipient's pre-pandemic baseline employment level, funding for employees that experienced pay reductions or were furloughed, maintaining current compensation levels to prevent layoffs, and worker retention incentives.
- **Governmental services to the extent of revenue loss-** Treasury is permitting local governments to claim a standard allowance of up to \$10 million, not to exceed their total award allocation. A local government that plans to use the standard allowance will make a one-time election and report it to Treasury through the reporting portal. If choosing this election the local government may use the funds for government services. These funds can also be used as match for many state and federal grants.
- **Investments in broadband infrastructure-** In North Carolina you can use the funds for modernization of cybersecurity for local government systems.
- **Investments in water and sewer infrastructure-** typical infrastructure projects and certain dam and reservoir rehabilitation projects, some stormwater projects, private well projects and projects that remediate lead in the water.
- **Project Administration-** funds can be used to contract with a Council of Governments to assist in the local government with the program.

Approval of Regional Housing Authority (RHA) Annual Administrative Plan

Ms. Stephanie Hanvey, Director of Regional Housing Authority, presented the Annual Plan Amendments. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires all public housing agencies (PHAs) to prepare and adopt Annual and 5-Year agency plans. This year we are required to prepare and adopt an Annual Administrative Plan (July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023). HUD prescribes a standardized plan format for PHA plans, which provides very brief information relating to the day-to-day operations of the program. Due to COVID, HUD has made some plan suggestions on policies and procedures to make things less burdensome on our tenant population. New policies and procedures on the voucher briefings and inspections have been updated and the RHA has incorporated those into the 2022-2023 RHA Administrative Plan. In 2021, the RHA was awarded thirty new Emergency Housing Vouchers to serve the homeless and would be homeless population. HUD has enacted new policies and procedures to govern this new program. These plans provide public information about the way that the RHA's housing programs are operated and afford opportunities for client and public review and input. The public

hearing was held at 9:00am on Monday, March 22, 2022. Upon board approval, the RHA Annual Administrative Plan is due in the Greensboro HUD office no later than April 15, 2022.

Staff requested that the board approve the RHA's Annual Administrative Plan for the fiscal year (July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023). These amendments will be sent to HUD by April 15, 2022.

Mr. Joie Fulbright made a motion that the policy board approve the RHA's Annual Administrative Plan for 2022 to be submission to HUD by April 15, 2022. Mr. Joe Gibbons offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Regional Housing Authority Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Action Plan Amendments

Ms. Stephanie Hanvey, Director of Regional Housing Authority, presented the WPCOG Administrative Plan proposed Changes 2022. In April of 2019, the Regional Housing Authority staff updated our complete FSS Action Plan. Housing authorities are required to send any administrative plan amendments to HUD annually. The proposed amendments are attached for board approval. Staff would like to send these amendments to HUD with the RHA's Annual Administrative Plan amendments. Staff would like these amendments to become effective with the RHA's Administrative Plan for the fiscal year July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023. The public hearing for the RHA's Administrative Plan was held at 9:00am on Monday, March 22, 2022. Upon board approval, the RHA's Annual Administrative Plan and the FSS Action Plan are due in the Greensboro HUD office no later than April 15, 2022.

Staff requested that the Policy Board approve the 2022 RHA's Family Self-Sufficiency Action Plan Amendments for the fiscal year-(July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023). These amendments will be sent to HUD by April 15, 2022.

Mr. George Holleman made a motion that the Policy Board approve the RHA's Family Self-Sufficiency Action Plan Amendments. Mr. Larry Chapman offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

7th Amendment of FY 2021-2022 Budget

Ms. Andrea Roper, Director of Finance, presented the Budget Summary Sheets for the 7th Amendment of the 2021-2022 Budget reflects a total budget of \$20,938,242 and an operating budget of \$7,581,886 which represents an increase of the total budget from the January 25, 2022 budget amendment of \$297,737.

The 7th Amendment of the 2021-2022 Budget includes:

- Environmental Protection decreased \$12,500 due to the postponement of project work.
- Increase in Community Development due to additional staff expense and contractual work conducted for urgent repair grants.
- Community & Regional Planning increased due to the addition of new code enforcement contracts and new planning technical assistance contracts.
- Decrease of \$22,319 in Economic Development due to the allocation of staff salary expense to Community Development.
- Aging increased due to a new dementia care contract with Wake Forest University.
- Chargeable salaries decreased due to the increase in compensated absences (sick leave &

vacation leave) and personnel changes.

- Increase in printing and decrease in fuel due to the Aging department vaccine outreach expected expenditures.
- Increase in supplies due to unspent aging provider funds and needed aging supplies for the region.
- Advertising/Subscription increased to cover the costs of advertisements for the vaccine outreach grant.
- Increase in contingency due to the new dementia care contract.
- Transfer to Capital Reserve decreased due to the decrease in chargeable salaries, reducing indirect revenues, and an increase in indirect staff expenses.
- Fund Balance Appropriated increased \$2,430 due to an increase in the match for EDA and ARC.
- Fund Balance Appropriated – Previous Year Fringe Funds increased due to the decrease in chargeable salaries and increase in compensated absences.
- Aging Special Revenue Fund increased \$174,316 to better reflect actual anticipated expenditures including additional funding for supplemental nutrition programs.
- Burke River Trail Project Special Revenue Fund established due to a new grant administered by the state.

Staff requested the Policy Board to review and approve the 7th Amendment of the 2021-2022 Budget.

Mr. Larry Chapman made a motion that the Policy Board approve the 7th Amendment of the 2021-2022 Budget as proposed. Mr. Larry Luckadoo offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

1st Reading of the FY2022-2023 Budget

Ms. Andrea Roper, Director of Finance, presented the Budget Summary Sheets for the 1st Reading of the FY2022-2023 budget which reflects a total budget of \$21,013,086 and an operating budget of \$7,777,258 which represents an increase of the total budget from the January 25th, 2022 budget amendment of approximately .02% or \$372,581.

Some key parts of the budget are uncertain at this time and that is normal for the first reading. The 1st Reading of the FY2022-23 Budget includes:

- 64 full and part-time staff positions.
- WPCOG dues rate increased by \$.024 per capita plus dues increases for the MPO as approved by the Board in January.
- Financial Administration Services for two local governments and one local non-profit.
- Town planning services for 8 local governments.
- Long Range Planning services for 8 local governments.
- Code Enforcement services for 11 local governments.
- Administration of several new community & economic development projects (building reuse, infrastructure, economic development, etc.).
- The budget includes a plan approved by the Executive Committee to respond to increasing staff

turnover and higher inflation. The plan includes a 2% cost of living adjustment (with a minimum \$1,000 increase) for all staff in July and an average merit increase of 3.75% effective in January 2023.

- A group insurance increase (\$40,323) reflecting a projected health insurance increase of 10%. We usually do not receive quotes until early May for FY23 and this number will be adjusted at that time.
- The decrease of \$135,722 in contractual is attributed to the Burke
- Transit projected ending in FY22.
- Supplies decreased \$19,466 mainly due to the reduction in pandemic supplies in the Aging department.
- Capital Outlay decreased \$14,927. Excluding transfers to the Capital Reserve Fund, no major equipment purchases are planned at this time.
- Contingency decreased \$82,501 due to those funds being utilized in the FY 22-23 budget.
- OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) Trust Allocation increased \$84,963 due to the expected decrease in compensated absences from FY22. This allocation may increase with the availability of funds.
- Aging Special Revenue Funds increased due to ARPA funding.
- Increase in the Burke River Trail Project Special Revenue Fund due to the ongoing grant administered by the state.
- Anticipate establishing a special revenue fund for the FY23 portion of \$4.5 million appropriation from the state for capital improvements.
- The proposed budget includes approximately \$121,502 in anticipated contracts for FY23. This amount is \$32,463 higher than the FY22 anticipated contracts amount at this time last year. The unfunded areas at this point are within the Community & Economic Development Department.
- Fund Balance Appropriated-Previous Year Fringe Funds decreased due to the expected exhaustion of funds in FY22.
- The fund balance allocated increased \$6,185 due to higher ARC & EDA match amounts.

Staff requested Policy Board to review and approve the First Reading of the FY2022-23 Budget.

Mr. Bob Floyd made a motion that the Board approve the 1st Reading of the FY2022-23 Budget as proposed. Mr. Larry Chapman offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

Executive Director's and Staff Reports

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

Administration

- WPCOG completed the search process for the city manager for **City of Conover**. Tom Hart, the new city manager, started work on March 14, 2022. Tom Hart was in attendance and was welcomed.

- WPCOG is assisting the City of Newton with their search for a new City Manager. An announcement of a new city manager is expected before the Policy Board meeting.
- WPCOG staff are considering the development of a supervisor training program for local governments. Staff conducted a survey of the region's managers about content suggestions for the program.
- RSVP Now: WPCOG Annual Meeting will be held at the Hickory Metro Convention Center on Thursday, March 31 at 6 pm. Staff is hard at work planning for this special event as well as the 2021 Annual Report. Over 325 have registered.
- Staff is working with the NC Division of Emergency Management to work on the study to improve weather radar service for our region. The state budget included a provision to require the completion of the plan by May 1, 2022. The state is not engaging NC State University to complete the technical analysis as we planned. It may be prudent to ask the General Assembly to appropriate funds to the WPCOG to achieve this study (cost is about \$58,000).
- The General Assembly appropriated \$4.5 million to the WPCOG for capital projects. Rep. Adams secured the appropriation with the intent to improve the rail corridor from Hickory to Lenoir. Staff has met with state leaders (including the Speaker's Office, Rep. Adams, NCDOT Rail Division, and Federal Transit Administration) and local leaders to begin work on the project.

Community & Economic Development (CED)

- Community and Economic Development staff are currently administering seventy-eight (78) grants for local governments.
- **Burke County** received a \$200,000 Building Reuse grant funded by NC Commerce in February for Meritor. The company will invest \$4,000,000 and create 25 new, full-time jobs.
- **Burke County** also received \$659,850 from the Golden LEAF Foundation to install sewer lines in the Burke County Industrial Park to serve the first company to locate in the park. At least 100 jobs will be created.

Community & Regional Planning

Planning:

- The WPCOG is beginning work on the creation of a digital inclusion plan in partnership with the Dogwood Health Trust.

Natural Resources:

- Staff are working with **Gamewell and Caldwell County** to begin the stream restoration project in the town park. The General Assembly appropriated funds for this project.

Workforce Development

- At the request of NC Governor Roy Cooper, the NCWorks Commission (the state workforce development board) and its Governance and System Alignment Committee have begun a realignment and re-designation study of the local workforce development boards. The NCWorks Commission Committee, Governance & System Alignment is doing the study to make a recommendation and there are many possible scenarios that could exist, including no changes. Once the recommendation is made, the committee's work is done.

TimeLine:

- A draft MOU with the study methods, recommendations and guiding principles has been developed and is out for public comment.
- <https://www.nccommerce.com/documents/ncworks-commission-draft-memorandum-workforce-development-board-system-alignment-study>
- <https://www.nccommerce.com/documents/presentation-information-data-workforce-development-board-system-alignment-study>. (public comment time frame was February 21, 2022, through March 7, 2022)
- A special meeting to review the draft MOU and public comments is set for March 31 (virtual)
- The NCWorks Commission/commerce is making phone calls to elected officials to gauge their interest in realignment.

Next Meeting

Thursday, March 31, 2022, WPCOG Annual Meeting will be held at Hickory Metro Convention Center at 6:00 pm.

The next Policy Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 24, 2022 and will be hosted by Catawba County.

Adjournment

Chair Patton adjourned the meeting at 7:30 pm.