

Minutes
Western Piedmont Council of Governments
Bimonthly Policy Board Meeting
Tuesday, September 24, 2019
Whitnel Pentecostal Holiness Church, Lenoir NC

Members Present:

Barbara Pennell, Chair
Bob Floyd, Jr., Vice-Chair
Jill Patton, Secretary
Johnny Berry, Treasurer
George Holleman, Past Chair
Chip Black, At-Large
Wayne Abele, At-Large
Kitty Barnes, At-Large
Larry Yoder
Johnnie Carswell, Alternate
Ronnie Setzer
Mike Labrose
Joie Fulbright
Kyle Hayman, Alternate
Dennis Anthony
Dr. Caryl Burns
David Williams, Alternate
Mike Smith, Alternate
Larry Chapman
Marla Thompson
Forrest Fleming
Jerry Hodge
Rick Justice
Gary McClure
Johnnie Greene, Alternate
Roy Sweezy, Alternate
Amparo Alfaro
Tommy Luckadoo
Malla Vue

Members Absent:

Donald Robinson
Dale Sherrill
Joe Gibbons, At-Large
Ronnie Williams
James Weaver

Local Government/Agency:

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

Catawba
Claremont
Lenoir
Maiden
Brookford

Sheila Perkins	Glen Alpine
Helen Chestnut	Appointed
Casey Pope	Appointed
Elle Engstrom	Appointed
Sara Moses	Appointed

Guests/Others Present:

Mary Carter, Gamewell
Tamara Brooks, Connelly Springs
Sherri Bradshaw, Drexel
Karen Clontz, Sawmills
Randy Feierabend, Cahah's Mountain
Barbara Harmon, Rhodhiss
Kenneth Geathers, Rutherford College

WPCOG Staff Present:

Anthony Starr, Executive Director
Sherry Long, Assistant Executive Director/Director of Community & Regional Development
Ashley Bolick, Director of Administrative Services and Human Resources
Andrea Roper, Finance Director
Wendy Johnson, Director of Workforce Development
Jason Toney, Communications Specialist
Billy Rickles, Code Compliance Program Manager
Brad Moody, Code Enforcement Officer

Call to Order/Welcome

A regular meeting of the WPCOG Policy Board was called to order at 6:43 pm by Chair Barbara Pennell. Chair Pennell thanked the Town of Cahah's Mountain for hosting the meeting. Cahah's Mountain Mayor Ronnie Setzer welcomed the Policy Board to the Town of Cahah's Mountain.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

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

Unfinished Business/Reports

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

Community Economic Development strategy (CEDS) Update

WPCOG Executive Director, Anthony Starr provided implementation highlights of some of the Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) activities during the past year. The CEDS serves as a means to engage community leaders, leverage the involvement of the private sector, and establish a

strategic blueprint for regional collaboration. It was developed through efforts of a committee appointed on November 22, 2016 by the WPCOG Policy Board. The WPCOG revisits the CEDS every five-years as required of all U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) designated Economic Development Districts (EDD). The CEDS Committee met numerous times in 2017 using extensive public input and stakeholder guidance. On September 26th, 2017, the WPCOG Policy Board unanimously adopted the 2017 CEDS with 25 key strategies.

Four modifications to the CEDS are requested regarding the EnVision Center, job creation, housing, and transit. The amendments intend to aid the WPCOG and its local governments and partners with securing infrastructure grants. The CEDS Committee reviewed the proposed addition on September 10, 2019 and unanimously recommends approval.

1. CEDS Workforce Amendment/EnVision Center Initiative

Strategy – Utilizing the concepts outlined in the EnVision Center Initiative, identify and assist individuals in overcoming barriers – such as housing, childcare, transportation, drug-abuse recovery, post-incarceration transition – that are precluding their entry or re-entry into the regional workforce.

Metrics – Assist 50 screened applicants each year to participate in the program, Achieve funding for the EnVision Center Initiative

Responsible Parties – WPCOG Staff, WPCOG Regional Housing Authority, Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board, NC Commerce

2. CEDS Economic Development Amendment/Job Creation

Strategy – Work with federal, state and local officials to assist existing businesses with expansions while also recruiting new companies to the region in order to further the growth of diverse, well-paying jobs across a broad spectrum of industries.

Metrics – The creation of at least 250 new jobs each year, Increased diversification of industries (manufacturing and nonmanufacturing) in the region, Wage growth higher than the rate of inflation

Responsible Parties – WPCOG Staff, Economic Development Commissions, Local Governments, NC Commerce, Economic Development Partnership of NC, Appalachian Regional Commission, Economic Development Administration

3. CEDS Housing Amendment/Housing Vouchers

Strategy – Work with community and regional partners, along with HUD, to expand the housing choice voucher options for the area and alleviate the waiting list of qualified program applicants.

Metrics – Secure at least 100 more housing vouchers in the Western Piedmont Region by 2022

Responsible Parties:

HUD, WPCOG Regional Housing Authority, area nonprofits and community groups

Exploring transit services in Caldwell County

Housing market has improved but the number of vacant houses has increased since 2015.

4. CEDS Transportation Amendment/Public Transportation

Strategy – Promote the development of a comprehensive, affordable public transportation network in order to better serve individuals who face financial or logistical hardships within the contemporary mode of transportation throughout the region.

Metrics – Maintain Burke County transit routes, Promote additional fixed-flex routes in Catawba and Alexander counties. Explore fixed-flex route possibilities in Caldwell County.

Responsible Parties – Greenway Public Transportation, Greater Hickory MPO, local governments, nonprofits, public/private partnerships, NCDOT and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

Ms. Kitty Barnes made a motion that the Policy Board approve the recommended additions to the CEDS as presented. Mr. Jerry Hodge offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Regional Code Enforcement Services Update

WPCOG Code Compliance Program Manager, Billy Rickles provided an updated on the regional code enforcement program. On December 11, 2018, the Regional Code Compliance Program was set in place to provide services to the local governments. On January 2, 2019, the program was up, running and in full effect covering six local governments. WPCOG employed one code enforcement officer running a mobile office covering all six local governments. By May 1, 2019, the program covered ten local governments. By July 1, 2019, WPCOG Code Compliance Program established an ADA Title II Compliance Program and an Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination Program. These programs allow WPCOG to employ two Code Enforcement Officers, an ADA Coordinator, and a Stormwater Administrator, and provide for the purchase of four vehicles to accommodate the local government's needs.

WPCOG Code Compliance Program staff has been working to see that the local government's needs are met in each of the new program areas. Some accomplishments include:

- Participation from sixteen local governments
- Hiring qualified people for the positions the new programs created
- Purchased four vehicles, equipment, and software
- Trained and certified new employees
- Wrote and adopted a model uniform municipal code/ordinances
- Designed and created an in-house software application to streamline the code enforcement process
- Abated fifteen manufactured homes at no cost to the local governments
- Abated four uninhabitable residential homes at no cost to the local governments
- Abated fifty-three vehicles from properties at no cost to the local governments
- Handled over six-hundred municipal code violations since January 2, 2019

Currently, sixteen local government are participating in the new programs.

Mr. George Holloman asked if the new WPCOG cars are marked or easily identifiable. Mr. Rickles answered that yes, the WPCOG cars are all marked with the WPCOG Code Compliance logo.

Mr. Rickles introduced Mr. Brad Moody WPCOG's second Code Enforcement Officer. Mr. Moody previously worked at the Caldwell County Sherriff's office as well as the Department of Public Safety. He is currently working on his Masters of Public Administration with Appalachian State University.

2nd Amendment of FY 2019-2020 Budget

Andrea Roper, WPCOG Finance Director presented the 2nd Amendment of the 2019-2020 WPCOG Budget that reflects a total budget of \$20,723,512 and an operating budget of \$7,303,175 which represents an increase of the total budget from the July 23, 2019 budget amendment of \$690,472.

Highlights of the 2nd Amendment of the 2019-2020 Budget include:

- General Government increased \$76,496 due to the addition of the STEMWEST program.
- Community Development increased \$438,763 due to the addition of several single family rehabilitation grants.
- A decrease of \$36,676 in Community and Regional Planning due to the termination of two anticipated projects.
- Economic Development increased \$74,107 to account for several new building reuse projects.
- Area Agency on Aging Services increased \$3,182 due to the addition of the LCA grant and an increase in special events revenue.
- Workforce Development increased \$103,585 due to an increase in infrastructure funding.
- Allocated fund balance decreased by \$58,146 due to Community Development's reduction in anticipated projects and the reallocation of revenues to contractual.
- Workforce Special Revenue Fund increased \$89,761 due to an increase in infrastructure administration funding and numerous minor decreases in program funds.
- Contractual increased \$371,024 due to the addition of the STEMWEST program and several Single Family Rehabilitation projects.
- Travel increased \$25,140 due to the addition of several new projects in Community Development and Economic Development.
- Mortgage/Occupancy increased \$51,273 due to the additional infrastructure funding for the Catawba NC Works Career Center.
- Advertising/Subscriptions increased \$40,231 mostly due to the reallocation of WIOA funds to cover upcoming logo changes.
- Maintenance/Equipment increased \$19,940 due to accounting software upgrades.
- Contingency and Reserve for Future Use increased \$16,735 and \$67,846, respectively, due to the addition of new projects.
- All other changes to the expenditure lines reflect normal program needs.

Staff requests that the Board review and approve the 2nd Amendment of the 2019-2020 Budget.

Mr. Chip Black made a motion that the Policy Board approve the 2nd Amendment of the 2019-2020 Budget as proposed. Ms. Jill Patton offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Workforce Development Board Appointment

Workforce Development Director Wendy Johnson, requested that the Policy Board appoint Jason Lingle to the Workforce Development Board for a two-year term. Mr. Lingle is the Director of Innovative Energy Solutions at Blue Ridge Energy. He would represent Caldwell County and fill a private sector board seat in accordance to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Mr. Larry Chapman made a motion that the Policy Board appoint Jason Lingle to the Workforce Development Board for a staggered two-year term 2019-2021. Mr. Joie Fulbright offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Nominating Committee Appointments

Board Chair Barbara Pennell discussed the role and composition of the WPCOG Policy Board Nominating Committee. Each year at the September Policy Board meeting, four Policy Board members are asked to serve on the Nominating Committee. Under the WPCOG Charter, the Policy Board Chair appoints the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee is responsible for presenting a slate of officers, Executive Committee members and appointed (non-elected) board members for the following year during the November meeting. The Nominating Committee includes a representative from all four counties. Traditionally, two county officials and two municipal officials compose the four-member committee. The following board members have been appointed and have agreed to serve on this year's nominating committee.

Wayne Abele – Burke County Commissioner
Kitty Barnes – Catawba County Commissioner
Larry Chapman – Town of Hudson Commissioner
George Holleman – Town of Taylorsville Mayor

WPCOG Past Board Chair, Kitty Barnes, will serve as the Nominating Committee Chair. Staff will assist with scheduling a committee meeting shortly after the November election.

Staff Updates

Mr. Anthony Starr provided the following staff updates to the board:

- Generator project coming along nicely. The generator was delivered today.
- Economic Development and Housing forums coming up. Please watch your email for registrant information.
- Mr. Starr provided a List of DOT projects that have been delayed due to funding.

Ms. Sherry Long, Assistant Executive Director announced that Erin Schotte, Community & Economic Development Administrator has been selected to participate in the ARC Leadership Institute.

Adjournment

Mr. Larry Chapman made a motion that the meeting adjourn at 7:28 pm and the motion was seconded by Mr. Chip Black. The motion passed unanimously.