

Minutes
Western Piedmont Council of Governments
Bimonthly Policy Board Meeting
Tuesday, September 28, 2021
City of Claremont Fire Department Headquarters, Claremont, NC

Members Present:

Bob Floyd, Jr., Chair
Jill Patton, Vice-Chair
Johnny Berry, Secretary
George Holleman, Treasurer
Barbara Pennell, Past Chair
Wayne Abele, At-Large
Joseph L. Gibbons, At-Large
Kitty Barnes, At-Large
Larry Yoder
Johnnie Carswell, Alternate
Ronnie Setzer
Mike Labrose
Dale Sherrill
Joie Fulbright
Kyle Hayman, Alternate
Dr. Caryl Burns
Larry Chapman
Marla Thompson
Chris Jernigan
Jerry Hodge
John Stiver, Alternate
Allen Spencer
Amparo Alfaro
Helen Chestnut
Erisha Lipford
Malla Vue
Randy Burns
Tommy Luckadoo
Jeanna Price

Members Absent:

James Weaver
Donald Robinson
Dennis Anthony
Sheila Perkins
Vacant

Local Government/Agency:

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

Brookford
Catawba
Drexel
Glen Alpine
Rutherford College

Keith Warren
Chip Black, At-Large

Sawmills
Valdese

Guests/Others Present:

Mary Carter, Gamewell
Randy Feierabend, Cahah's Mountain
Jason Brown, Claremont
Scott Hildebran, Lenoir
Shawn Brown, Claremont
Wendell Lawrence, SERDI
Jim Youngquist, SERDI

WPCOG Staff Present:

Anthony Starr, Executive Director
Sherry Long, Assistant Executive Director/Director of Community & Economic Development
Ashley Bolick, Director of Administrative Services and Human Resources
Andrea Roper, Finance Director
Wendy Johnson, Director of Workforce Development
Alison Adams, Director of Community & Regional Planning
Jason Toney, Communications Specialist
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 Bob Floyd. Chair Floyd thanked the City of Claremont for hosting. City of Claremont Mayor, Shawn Brown, welcomed the Policy Board to Claremont.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting were considered. Mr. Joie Fulbright made a motion to approve minutes from the July 27, 2021 meeting and Mr. Larry Chapman offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business/Reports

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

Nominating Committee Appointments

Board Chair Floyd announced appointments to the nominating committee. Each year at the September Policy Board meeting, four Policy Board members are asked to serve on a 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.

Kitty Barnes – Catawba County Commissioner
Wayne Abele – Burke 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.

One-Stop Memorandum of Understanding

Ms. Wendy Johnson, Workforce Development Board Director, presented the One Stop Partner Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). As a requirement of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Public Law 113-128, the local Workforce Development Board, with the agreement of the Chief Elected Official, shall develop and enter into a Memorandum of Understanding between the local Workforce Development Board and the One-Stop Partners, concerning the operation of the One-Stop delivery system on an annual basis, and the required Infrastructure Funding Agreement, which is Attachment F in the MOU.

Staff requested the final approval from the Policy Boards for the required One Stop Partner Memorandum of Understanding, which includes the Infrastructure Funding Agreement.

Ms. Jill Patton made a motion that the Board approve the One Stop Partner Memorandum of Understanding, which includes the infrastructure funding agreement as proposed. Ms. Kitty Barnes offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Workforce Development Board Appointment

Ms. Johnson requested that the Board appoint Patrick McClure, Business Enterprise Manager, at Material Return, in order to meet one of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) board private sector openings, representing Burke County.

Mr. George Holleman made a motion that the Board appoint Patrick McClure to the Workforce Development Board for a staggered two-year term beginning September 28, 2021 – June 30, 2023. Mr. Larry Chapman offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Section 8 Mainstream Voucher Application Intake/Waiting List

Ms. Stephanie Hanvey, Regional Housing Authority (RHA) Director informed the board of staff's intention to open the Section 8 Housing Mainstream Voucher waiting list for new applications beginning Monday, November 1, 2021. Since November of 2018, the Regional Housing Authority has been

awarded a total of 246 Mainstream Vouchers. These vouchers serve the disabled population between the ages of 18-62. Currently, the RHA has approximately 161 of the 246 Mainstream Vouchers utilized with approximately 83 available for use. The Regional Housing Authority's Section 8 Housing Program has exhausted its waiting list for this demographic as of September 2021. Staff would like to begin accepting new applications for the Mainstream Voucher rental assistance program only so that a new list can be started. Notice will be published in the local newspapers on/after October 1, 2021. Notice will also be published on the WPCOG's website and on our social media beginning on/after October 1, 2021. The Regional Housing Authority plans to accept new applications beginning Monday, November 1, 2021 and the application period will remain open as long as we have available vouchers left to fill.

Increase in Applicable Payment Standards

Ms. Stephanie Hanvey presented a proposed increase in the applicable payment standards. In August, HUD published an increase in the new Fair Market Rents for 2022. Payment standards for efficiency, one, two, three, four and five bedroom units need to be increased to help make those units more affordable for our tenants. In 2021, Fair Market Rents went down which created a burden on many families that were searching for housing. Many prospective tenants have been unable to find affordable housing and must submit numerous requests before being approved. Landlords are complaining because there is an enormous amount of paperwork involved with the normal request process and the denials are causing them to have to submit paperwork several times.

The goal of the RHA is to help as many families as possible in the communities while maximizing the funding that HUD allows. With the increase in the Fair Market Rents in 2022 and the ability to increase our local payment standards, it will greatly assist families to find housing that is affordable to them. The board has been provided the increase in the payment standards for approval.

Ms. Jill Patton made a motion that the Board approve the increase in the applicable payment standards to become effective October 1, 2021. Ms. Kitty Barnes offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

3rd Amendment of the FY 22 Budget

Ms. Andrea Roper, Finance Director, presented the 3rd Amendment of the 2021-2022 Budget reflecting a total budget of \$20,009,556 and an operating budget of \$7,373,355 which represents an increase of \$326,476 from the August 24th, 2021 budget.

The 3rd Amendment of the 2021-2022 Budget includes:

- An increase in General Government due to a new financial services contract set to begin in January 2022.
- Transportation has an increase in revenue to reflect actual contract amounts.
- Environmental Protection decreased to reflect actual contract amounts.
- An increase in Community Development to include additional construction work for housing projects and additional funding for the Unifour Consortium program.
- Community and Regional Planning increased \$226,226 to reflect several new projects and the addition of a new code enforcement position.
- Economic Development increased to reflect anticipated expenses for the EDA CARES

grant.

- A decrease of \$9,238 in Regional Public Housing to align with actual FSS reserve funding. Reserves are expected to be completely spent during the current fiscal year as required by HUD.
- Workforce Development increased \$29,495 due to additional funding for business services, career center services and other adjustments to personnel costs.
- A decrease of \$155,031 in fund balance appropriated due to the addition of new project and contractual work. The remaining fund balance appropriated is for the carryover of planning projects that were not finished at the end of the previous fiscal year and funds for the Piedmont Radar Project Study.
- Workforce Development revenue funds increased \$25,000 to reflect additional funding from the NC Department of Commerce.
- Compensated absences increased \$24,119 due to better reflect anticipated staff usage.
- Contractual increased due to the housing projects in Community Development.
- An increase in printing to provide vaccine outreach in Aging.
- Rent/Lease-Building increased due to additional funding received in Workforce Development.
- Contingency increased \$69,400 due to the additional of several new projects.
- OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) Trust Allocation decreased \$31,920 due to an increase in compensated absences and other fringe benefit costs. This amount will vary depending on the availability of funds throughout the fiscal year.
- An increase of \$36,939 to the transfer to capital reserve fund expense line is due to the reduction in indirect personnel costs and additional indirect funds generated by the additional salary amount. This amount will vary depending on the availability of funds throughout the fiscal year.

Staff requested that the Policy Board review and approve the third amendment of the 2021-2022 budget.

Ms. Kitty Barnes made a motion that the Policy Board approve the 3rd amendment of the 2021-2022 budget as presented. Mr. Wayne Abele offered a second. The motion was passed unanimously.

Executive Director's and Staff Report

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

- WPCOG assisted Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority/DBA Greenway with their Executive Director Search. The Greenway Board of Directors appointed their new executive director on September 2, 2021.
- WPCOG is assisting Caldwell County with their search for a new County Manager. Interviews are complete and an announcement could occur soon.
- The WPCOG hired two new code enforcement officers and two part-time positions are open for applications (housing inspector and IT technician).

- Staff are working on suggested persons for the steering committee to develop the next Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the region. The Policy Board should expect to make appointments at its November meeting.
- The regional housing forum on August 27th was a success with about 70 persons in attendance and more viewing the event online. The next forum is planned for February or March concerning affordable housing.
- The AAA received a grant from DHHS for \$65,620 to provide vaccine outreach for homebound older adults. Four existing staff will be working on this project.
- The Wake Forest Baptist Health contract has been received and provides up to \$99,600 for work through March 2023 to provide support for referred caregivers of those caring for someone with dementia.
- Community and Economic Development staff are currently administering seventy-seven (77) grants for local governments.
- Forty-one (41) housing rehabilitations projects are underway.
- Twenty-six (26) homeowners received foreclosure prevention counseling.
- Two N.C. Commerce Building Reuse Grant applications totaling \$875,000 were funded in August. Project Husky II located in Hildebran was awarded \$500,000 and will create 60 new, full-time jobs. Project Wavelength – in Claremont – received \$375,000 and will create 50 new, full-time jobs.
- The Comprehensive/Land Use Plans for Catawba County, Hudson, Longview, and Cahah’s Mountain are set to begin in October. Gamewell is kicking off this month. Cedar Rock and Maiden are also finalizing their schedule to begin work.
- Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority governing board approved the financial services contract with WPCOG at their August board meeting. WPCOG will begin providing financial services in January of 2022.
- The RHA is planning to hire a part-time Housing Inspector due to the increase number of vouchers awarded for our region. We have received many applications and plan to begin interviewing in the next few weeks.
- A virtual call with the Chief Deputy Secretary of Commerce Jordan Whichard, Asst. Secretary of the Division of Workforce Solutions Chet Mottershed (and few others from Commerce), along with WPCOG Board Chair Bob Floyd, Workforce Development Board Chair Josh McKinney, Workforce Development Director Wendy Johnson, and Anthony Starr was held on September 1, 2021.

WPCOG Assessment & Strategic Plan Work Session

Mr. Anthony Starr reviewed the assessment and strategic plan process. As previously communicated, the WPCOG initiated a planning process to assess the performance of the organization and to develop goals for a strategic plan. The WPCOG employed the assistance of the SouthEast Regional Directors’ Institute to manage the process and write the report. The process began in June with the distribution of two surveys. One survey was sent to all Policy Board delegates. The second survey was sent to various regional leaders. Both surveys received strong participation and the responses are overwhelmingly positive.

The next phase of the process included individual stakeholder interviews and focus group meetings. These interviews and meetings occurred during the week of August 16th-20th, 2021. A wide variety of stakeholders were invited and participated to ensure comprehensive feedback for the process.

The final phase includes a work session with the Policy Board during the September 28th, 2021 meeting. During this meeting, the SERDI consultants, Jim Youngquist and Wendell Lawrence, will review the results of the surveys, stakeholder interviews, and focus group meetings, along with their recommendations. The report will be finalized following the guidance and direction from the Policy Board.

SERDI consultant Jim Youngquist thanked the board and staff for allowing SERDI to conduct the assessment. Mr. Youngquist stated that of all the COG's in the 12 state region of SERDI, the WPCOG is in the top 2-3 in that 12 state region and top 3-4 in the country. Mr. Youngquist and Mr. Lawrence presented their findings to the board via a PowerPoint included in minutes. Mrs. Youngquist and Mr. Lawrence reviewed strengths and concerns as well as possible recommendations. Proposed possible recommendations include:

1. Annual Local Government Briefing and Work Session
2. Succession Planning
3. Developing Future Public Leaders through a Regional Effort
4. Expanding the Regional Focus through the WPCOG
5. Marketing the Western Piedmont/Hickory Metro Region

Erisha Lipford, Appointed Policy Board Delegate, suggested adding younger groups to the formation of a "future Public Leaders group" to create buy-in.

Malla Vue, Appointed Policy Board Delegate, suggested adding an action step to the marketing recommendation of identifying who would be marketed too.

Jerry Hodge, Policy Board Delegate, shared about an economic development trip to Rock Hill where he was told that Rock Hill markets themselves as "the best part of Charlotte region".

Adjournment

Chair Floyd reminded the board of the next meeting scheduled for November 23, 2021 and adjourned the meeting at 8:17 pm.