

Minutes
Western Piedmont Council of Governments
Bimonthly Policy Board Meeting
Tuesday, May 26, 2026
Ro Huffman Center, Drexel, NC

Members Present

Randy Burns, Chair
Larry Yoder, Vice Chair
George Holleman, Treasurer
Larry Chapman, Secretary
Joseph Gibbons, Past Chair
Mike LaBrose, At-Large
Jill Patton, At-Large
Ronnie Setzer
Bob Floyd
Dale Sherrill
Johnny Berry
Joie Fulbright
Brenda Powell, Alternate
Dennis Anthony
Barbara Pennell
Tracy Townsend
Ben Honeycutt
Ralph Prestwood, Alternate
Allen Bumgarner
Phyllis Pennington, Alternate
Allen Spencer
Carroll Hoyle
Kimberly S. Brown Alternate
Keith Huffman
Amparo R. Alfaro
Mark Transou
Tommy Luckadoo
Tonia Stephenson
Wes Christopher

Members Absent

Cole Setzer, At-Large
Chris Jernigan, At-Large
Josh Lail, Alternate
Kelvin Gregory
Jeff Brittain, Alternate
Lloyd Robbins, Alternate
Donald Robinson
Carroll Yount, Alternate

Local Government/Agency

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

Local Government/Agency

Catawba County
Morganton
Alexander County
Brookford
Burke County
Cajah's Mountain
Catawba
Catawba

Barbara Beatty, Alternate
Ramona Duncan, Alternate
Ron Lackey, Alternate
Chad Wykle
Kevin Herron, Alternate
Ritch Bolick, Alternate
Charlotte Williams, Alternate
Mike Smith, Alternate
Jim Engelman, Alternate
Holly Crafton-Lay
Fore Rembert, Alternate
Ronnie Thompson, Alternate
Beverly Danner
Scott Gilleland, Alternate
Kendra Edwards, Alternate
Yates Jensen, Alternate
Bobby Mosteller
Joe Wesson, Alternate
Rexanna Lowman, Alternate
Erisha Lipford
Helen Chestnut

Catawba County
Connelly Springs
Gamewell
Glen Alpine
Glen Alpine
Granite Falls
Hickory
Hildebran
Hudson
Maiden
Maiden
Morganton
Newton
Newton
Rhodhiss
Rutherford College
Sawmills
Sawmills
Valdese
Appointed
Appointed

Guests/Others Present

Randy Feierabend
Bill Carroll
Bonnie Caudle
Scott Hildebran
Arnita Dula
Scott Coe
David Harmon
Jennifer Yount
Steve Garrison

Cajah's Mountain
Drexel
Gamewell
Lenoir
Hickory
Drexel
Drexel
Drexel
Governor's Office - Grow NC

WPCOG Staff Present

Anthony Starr, Executive Director
Alison Alexander, Assistant Executive Director
Sarah Watson, Administrative Services Manager / Clerk to the Board
Andrea Roper, Director of Finance
Sarah Evitt, Director of Area Agency on Aging
Stephanie Hanvey, Director of Regional Housing Authority
Charity Patterson Hamber, Director of Workforce Development
Averi Ritchie, Director of Transportation Planning
Lucas Bentley, IT Manager
Tasmin Mack, HR Manager

Max Charles, Management Intern

Call to Order/Welcome

A regular meeting of the WPCOG Policy Board was called to order at 6:35 pm by Chair Burns. Chair Burns thanked the Town of Drexel for hosting.

Introductions

Introductions were made by everyone in attendance.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting were considered. Mr. Larry Yoder made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 24, 2026, meeting and Ms. Jill Patton offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business/Reports

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

RHA Cost Saving Measures

Ms. Stephanie Hanvey, Regional Housing Authority Director, stated the WPCOG RHA received the 2026 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Renewal Funding Award on May 8, 2026. Based on current factors, including RHA per unit cost (PUC), utilization, attrition, and leasing rates, the RHA is currently projecting to end 2026 at 80% voucher utilization with 103.5% budget expended. HUD has cautioned Public Housing Authorities (PHA) that there will be limited funds to assist PHAs who over expend their budget authority.

To address the budget constraints, HUD recommends PHAs implement cost savings measures to reduce the per unit cost. The RHA plans to take the following actions:

- Increase minimum rent – increase the minimum rent for zero-income households from \$0 to \$50
- Adjust subsidy standards – HUD regulations allow two people per bedroom. Reasonable accommodations will still be considered
- Zero income meetings – hold quarterly in-person meetings with households claiming no income
- Restrict Mainstream Portability – HUD will allow PHAs to limit voucher transfers to areas with higher payment standards
- Reduce project-based vouchers – reduce the number of committed project-based vouchers that remain unused
- Conduct inspections every other year – for units that consistently pass inspection and at the discretion of the RHA Director/inspector team
- Reduce payment standards – The RHA will review the 2027 Fair Market Rents when they are published in the fall of 2026 and the PHA may reduce our payment standards at that time.

These actions will allow the RHA to continue leasing vouchers to new households to increase voucher utilization, while reducing the amount of housing assistance payment paid per household, allowing the RHA to remain within its budget authority. The RHA will bring details back to the board on some of these if board approval is required.

No board action was requested, as this item was for informational purposes only.

Charlotte IBT Update

Mr. Anthony Starr, Executive Director, stated in 2024, Charlotte Water filed a notice of its intent to request an increase from 33 million gallons per day (MGD) up to 63 MGD regarding the water it transfers from the Catawba River Basin to the Rocky River Basin, a tributary of the Yadkin/Pee Dee River.

Interbasin transfers (IBTs) are regulated and approved by the state through the Environmental Management Commission (EMC) within the NC Department of Environmental Quality. At the request of local governments, the WPCOG is coordinating our region's response.

The WPCOG uses a steering committee consisting of staff from counties and certain municipalities (water producers) within the five-county coalition. At the board's direction and with local government support, the WPCOG hired teams for lobbying, legal and engineering, and public relations to represent the interests of our coalition.

Work continues regarding this initiative. Mr. Starr provided an update on this issue regarding:

- Potential legislation to extend and expand the moratorium on large IBTs
- Recent meeting with the City of Charlotte about the IBT
- Letters to the NC Collaboratory
- Drought implications for the IBT
- Status of the Catawba Wateree Water Management Group Integrated Water Resources Plan and Model Access
- Recent media coverage including news stories aired on WBTV

Charlotte is expected to publish its environmental impact statement (EIS) in late 2026 or early 2027. Submission of its EIS to the EMC allows Charlotte to proceed with requesting its very large IBT increase after the moratorium ends. It is possible the NC General Assembly will extend the moratorium and study deadline.

No board action was requested, as this item was for informational purposes only.

2nd Reading of the FY2026-27 Budget

Ms. Andrea Roper, Finance Director, stated that the 2nd Reading of the FY2026-27 budget reflects a total budget of \$50,572,926 and an operating budget of \$12,429,691 which represents a decrease of the total budget from the March 24, 2026 budget of approximately .83% or \$425,125.

Some key parts of the budget are uncertain at this time and that is normal for the second reading. The 2nd Reading of the FY2026-27 Budget includes:

- 77 full and part-time staff positions.
- WPCOG dues rate reflect no increase and remain at 98.1 cents per capita along with no increase for the required match for MPO as approved by the Board in January. Inflation increased 2.7% from December 2024 to December 2025, representing no increase.
- Financial administration services for two local governments and one local non-profit.
- Town planning services for 10 local governments.
- ADA planning services for 3 local governments.
- Code enforcement services for 16 local governments.
- Administration of several new community & economic development projects (disaster relief, infrastructure, home outreach, economic development, etc.).
- GASB 87 – Indirect Leases reflects the future value of lease payments funded with indirect funds.
- The budget includes an average merit increase of 3.75% effective in January 2027.
- A group insurance increase, reflecting a rate increase of 8%.
- Salaries and retirement decreased due to personnel changes within the planning department.
- The increase in contractual is attributed to contractors for housing projects for urgent repair and single-family rehabilitation grants.
- Advertisement/Subscriptions increased due to software costs within transportation and planning departments.
- Increase in contingency due to project funds anticipated to be utilized in FY27.
- Compensated Absence Liability decreased \$26,000 due to a decrease in fringe funds generated by salaries. The Compensated Absence Liability allocation may increase with the availability of funds. Funding the compensated absences liability improves the net position of the WPCOG.
- Increase in the Aging Special Revenue Fund (SRF) due to additional sustenance grant funding (PEAS program).
- HUD Housing Vouchers Fees & Services SRF increased to reflect additional administrative costs.
- Increase in the WIOA SRF due to an increase in administrative costs.
- Valdese Public Housing SRF increased to reflect additional administrative and unit maintenance costs.
- The Capital Reserve Fund decreased by \$101,287 due to transfers from the General Fund. A decrease in generated indirect funds are the result of the decrease in budgeted salaries.
- The proposed budget includes approximately \$272,058 in anticipated contracts for FY27. This amount is \$111,264 less than the FY26 anticipated contracts amount at this time last year. The unfunded areas at this point are within the Community and Regional Planning Department. A number of new projects are anticipated but not yet finalized.

Staff requested the Policy Board to hold the required public hearing, receive any public comments, and adopt the attached budget ordinance.

Mr. Randy Burns moved the Board open the public hearing. There were no public comments. Chair Burns closed the public hearing.

Mr. Larry Yoder moved to adopt the budget ordinance and FY2026-27 Budget as presented, and Mr. Larry Chapman offered a second. Motion passed unanimously.

9th Amendment of the FY2025-26 Budget

Ms. Andrea Roper, Finance Director, stated the 9th Amendment of the FY2025-26 budget reflects a total budget of \$52,057,068 and an operating budget of \$12,504,362 which represents an increase of the total budget from the April 28, 2026 budget adoption of \$744,585.

The 9th Amendment of the 2025-2026 Budget includes:

- Community Development decreased to reflect contracts delayed by HUD funding and other actual program expenses expected for FY26.
- Community & Regional Planning decreased to reflect actual project work for the current fiscal year.
- Economic Development increased to reflect disaster recovery funds being utilized in FY26.
- Fund Balance Appropriated increased to recognize revenue match for an ARC grant.
- Salaries, retirement & group insurance decreased due to personnel changes across multiple departments.
- Contractual expenditure decreased to reflect actual costs within the aging department.
- Capital Outlay increased due to the anticipated purchase of a drone accessory.
- Contingency increased to account for anticipated expenditures related to projected funding needs during the current fiscal year.
- Compensated Absence Liability and OPEB Trust Allocation Trust decreased due to a decrease in fringe funds generated from salaries.
- An increase in the Transfer to Capital Reserve Fund increased to allocate indirect contingency.
- Special Revenue Fund – HUD Housing Vouchers Fees & Services increased by \$800,000 to ensure sufficient budget for HAP payments to landlords.
- Special Revenue Fund – Disaster Recovery decreased to reflect actual expenses for the current fiscal year.

Staff requested the Policy Board review and approve the Ninth Amendment of the 2025-2026 Budget.

Ms. Jill Patton moved the Policy Board approve the Ninth Amendment of the 2025-2026 Budget as proposed and Mr. Larry Yoder offered a second. Motion passed unanimously.

Alexander, Burke and Caldwell County Urgent Repair Program (URP) 2027 Assistance Policy/Procurement and Disbursement Policy

Ms. Alison Alexander, Assistant Executive Director, presenting on behalf of Director of Community and Economic Development Mr. Ben Willis, stated that the WPCOG has been awarded \$330,000 by the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency ("NCHFA") under the 2027 cycle of the Urgent Repair Program ("URP2738"). This program will be used to provide urgent repair funds to twenty-two (22) homes scattered throughout all towns, cities and municipalities in Alexander, Burke and Caldwell County in the 2026/2027 and 2027/2028 fiscal years. This program provides funds to assist very-low and low-income households with special needs in addressing housing conditions which pose imminent threats to their life and/or safety or to provide accessibility modifications and other repairs necessary to prevent displacement of very-low and low-income homeowners with special needs such as frail elderly and persons with disabilities and veterans. Roofs, HVAC systems and porches are mainly addressed. Project will begin August 1, 2026, and will be closed out by February 15, 2028.

The assistance is in the form of a forgivable loan up to \$15,000 per home. The NCHFA requires certain procedures and policies for the grant and these policies require adoption by the Policy Board. The Assistance Policy explains what the program requirements are and how the program will operate during the funding cycle. The Procurement & Disbursement Policy provides procurement and disbursement guidelines.

Staff requested the board review and approve the 2027 Alexander, Burke and Caldwell County URP 2027 Assistance Policy and the Procurement & Disbursement Policy.

Mr. Carroll Hoyle moved to approve the Alexander, Burke, and Caldwell County Assistance Policy and the Procurement & Disbursement Policy as proposed, and Mr. Keith Huffman offered a second. Motion passed unanimously.

Workforce Development Board Appointments

Ms. Charity Hamber-Patterson, Workforce Development Director, requested the Policy Board reappoint eight current Workforce Development Board members for another two-year term. The following individuals' terms are expiring and are eligible for re-appointment.

- Glenn Privette, HR Director, Leviton Manufacturing – Burke County
- Dr. Paul Holden, Regional Director, Partners Health Management – Burke and Catawba Counties
- Jennifer Nichols, HR Manager, Siegwerk EIC, LLC. – Burke County
- CJ Tharper, Owner, Charm Food Services – Catawba County
- Randy Childres, Teamsters Local 61 Member – Burke County
- Robin Ross, Vice President for Talent Development/K64 – Catawba Valley Community College – Catawba County
- Dr. Brandy Dunlap, Dean of Public Services and Transportation, Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute – Caldwell County
- Malla Vue, District Manager, Goodwill Northwest North Carolina – Caldwell County

Staff also requested the Policy Board appoint Christy Massagee, Owner of Master Tech Auto and Sandra Torres, owner of Bella Skinn+Waxx, to meet two of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) board private sector small business openings, both representing Catawba County, along with Dr. Cindy Davies, Vice President of Academic Affairs at Western Piedmont Community College, to meet the WIOA Higher Education opening, previously held by Dr. Joel Welch, President of Western Piedmont Community College.

Staff requested the Policy Board re-appoint the eight current Workforce Development Board members for another two-year term, along with Christy Massagee, Sandra Torres, and Dr. Cindy Davies to Workforce Development Board membership for a two-year term from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2028.

Mr. Joe Gibbons moved to re-appoint the eight current members for another two-year term and appoint to a first term Christy Massagee, Stephanie Reeves, and Cindy Davies to the Workforce Development

Board for a two-year term from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2028. Ms. Jill Patton offered a second. Motion passed unanimously.

Local Area Workforce Development Plan Update

Ms. Charity Hamber-Patterson, Workforce Development Director, stated that The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act requires each local Workforce Development Board to develop and maintain a four-year local area plan outlining how workforce services will be delivered within the region. The current four-year plan was submitted in May 2024.

In North Carolina, local area plans are reviewed annually and updated as needed to ensure alignment with changing workforce priorities, policies, economic conditions, and local service delivery needs.

The Program Year 2026 Local Area Plan Update will:

- Cover the period of July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027
- Include updates to local strategies, policies, and workforce initiatives
- Ensure continued alignment with the North Carolina Unified State Plan
- Maintain compliance with federal requirements outlined under WIOA

The draft PY26 Local Area Plan Update was posted for public comment on May 12, 2026, on the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board website at westernpiedmontworks.org and will remain available for public comment for 30 days.

This annual update process helps ensure the local workforce system remains responsive, compliant, and aligned with state and federal workforce development priorities.

No board action was requested as this item was for informational purposes only.

Other Business

Executive Director's and Staff Reports

Mr. Anthony Starr, Executive Director, highlighted the following items in his Executive Director's Report which was included in the agenda packet.

- A Certificate of Occupancy was received for the building expansion last week. A ribbon cutting ceremony will take place on June 19th, 2026 at 9:30 am with an open house to follow.
- The Administration Department is conducting a manager search for the Town of Wilkesboro.
- The Administration Department has also completed a Pay & Classification Study for the Town of Hudson.
- Emergency Management has been working to implement the Beehive Application, which is an AI tool that streamlines hours of work for scenario planning tasks manually. This will affordably enable local governments to conduct table-top exercises to prepare for disasters and emergencies.
- Final audit was completed for Hickory Housing Authority. We should have the information ready to present at the July policy board meeting.
- Max Charles started as a management intern. He is a Clemson student and Hickory native.

Next Meeting

The next Policy Board meeting will be Tuesday, July 28, 2026 and will be hosted by Catawba County.

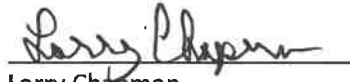
Adjournment

Chair Burns thanked the Town of Drexel for their hospitality. Meeting was adjourned at 7:17 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy Burns", written over a horizontal line.

Randy Burns
Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry Chapman", written over a horizontal line.

Larry Chapman
Secretary

