

WEST PIEDMONT PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES
of the
August 27, 2020 Meeting

held at the Commission Office
1100 Madison Street, Martinsville, VA
or via

Zoom (Meeting ID 996 6898 5830, Passcode 144689)
<https://zoom.us/j/99668985830?pwd=dWtVeS9mNWtITUV4WEc5LzJvdHpxZz09>
(Call in Information 1-929-205-6099, 996 6898 5830#, 1#, 144689#)
at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Leland Mitchell
David Rotenizer

PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY

Ron Scearce, Vice-Chairman
Greg Sides

HENRY COUNTY

Jim Adams, Chairman
Wes George

DANVILLE

Lee Vogler
Kimberly Walker

PATRICK COUNTY

Clayton Kendrick, Jr.
Jerry Adams
Clyde DeLoach

MARTINSVILLE

Kathy Lawson, Treasurer
Jennifer Bowles

ROCKY MOUNT

None

ABSENT

James Buckner, Danville
Tommy Slaughter, Henry County
Tim Tatum, Franklin County
Ronkka Hannans, Martinsville
Vic Ingram, Pittsylvania County
Ralph Casey, Rocky Mount

STAFF

David R. Hoback, Executive Director
Leah Manning, Deputy Director
Michael Armbrister, Associate Director/Senior Planner
Jacob Bullins, Administrative Assistant
Joe Bonanno, Regional Planner

1. Call to Order and Welcome to Guests

The Chairman established a quorum and called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. He stated the Executive Committee met prior to the Commission meeting and he explained that the Commission is using new equipment to facilitate Zoom attendees. He asked that all members and staff attending via Zoom unmute themselves prior to speaking.

The Chairman welcomed Michael Armbrister, new Associate Director/Senior Planner, and asked Mr. Armbrister to introduce himself to the Commission.

2. Regional Forum Opportunity - Comments from the Public

There were none.

3. Points Arising from Previous Meetings

There were none.

4. Consent Agenda

a. Confirmation of Minutes of the May 28, 2020 Meeting--WPPDC/M(20)3 and July 8, 2020--WPPDC/M(20)4

b. Treasurer's Report: May 31, 2020--WPPDC/P(20)31

c. Register of Administrative Reviews Under the Virginia Intergovernmental Review Process - June, July, August 2020--WPPDC/P(20)32

d. Quarterly Report of Activities: State Data Affiliate Center & VEC Business & Industry Data Center Programs - Fourth Quarter, FY 2020--WPPDC/P(20)33

Mrs. Lawson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Vogler, to approve the Consent Agenda items as presented. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

THE BOARD:

Voted unanimously to approve the Consent Agenda items as presented.

5. CONSIDERATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE BUDGET AMENDMENT--WPPDC/P(20)34

The Executive Director provided an overview of the proposed administrative budget amendment included in the agenda packet. He noted the addition of the EDA CARES grant funding in the amount of \$120,372, as well as the increase in total expenditures of \$170,225. Increased expenditures were due to the addition of the Associate Director/Senior Planner and Grant Coordinator staff positions and costs related to the EDA CARES grant project, including supplies, computer-related costs, and travel. The Executive Director explained part of the computer-related costs included the purchase of a license for JobsEQ from Chmura Economics and Analytics. This cloud-based data software would be extremely valuable, and a user license would be provided to each of the member local governments. The Executive Director explained the \$42,210 deficit would be a one-year expense related to the planned staff transition as two employees are retiring. He added that the Commission enjoyed a strong financial position, and reserve funds would be used to cover the deficit.

At its earlier session, the Executive Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the Board approve the Fiscal Year 2021 Administrative Budget Amendment as presented.

Mrs. Lawson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Rotenizer, to approve the Fiscal Year 2021 Administrative Budget Amendment as presented. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

THE BOARD:

Voted unanimously to approve the Fiscal Year 2021 Administrative Budget Amendment as presented.

6. CONSIDERATION OF REVISED WORK PROGRAM AND STRATEGY STATEMENT--WPPDC/P(20)35

The Associate Director stated that due to the amended budget and addition of the EDA CARES grant funding, the annual work program and strategy statement required a revision. To properly account for and report on the EDA CARES grant funds, the staff recommended adding two new subcategories under the Economic Development work element. Subcategory 7.8 would be used for Pandemic Recovery and Resiliency Planning activities and 7.9 would be used for activities related to the Grant Coordinator, including technology and the JobsEQ software.

At its earlier session, the Executive Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the Board approve the Fiscal Year 2021 Revised Work Program and Strategy Statement as presented.

Ms. Bowles made a motion, seconded by Mr. Vogler, to approve the Fiscal Year 2021 Revised Work Program and Strategy Statement as presented. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

THE BOARD:

Voted unanimously to approve the Fiscal Year 2021 Revised Work Program and Strategy Statement as presented.

7. Discussion of Legislative Letter Review for Upcoming General Assembly--WPPDC/P(20)36

The Executive Director referenced the 2020 legislative program and letter that was included in the meeting package. He noted that staff wanted to give the Board, local administrators and officials sufficient time to review

and comment on any modifications, requesting that Board members provide additional input in the coming weeks to include any changes, deletions, etc. He recommended that last year's letter format be continued –being concise with only one to two pages, narrow in scope, and focused on priorities of regional significance. Once input had been gathered, the Executive Director indicated the draft letter would be circulated for review.

Ms. Bowles recommended support for school resource officers be included in the 2021 legislative program. The Executive Director stated this issue was one that impacted all localities in the district and exactly the type of input and recommendation needed for the legislative program update. Mr. Vogler stated his support of Ms. Bowles recommendation. The Chairman asked board members to email recommendations to the Executive Director.

THE BOARD:

Discussed potential items of interest and noted this information.

8. INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW: Patrick Henry Community College Grant Application to EDA for Welding Lab Expansion Project—WPPDC/P(20)37

The Executive Director advised that Patrick Henry Community College was seeking a \$458,296 grant from the EDA CARES Act program to purchase equipment for expansion of their welding lab. The college obtained a \$224,000 matching grant from the Virginia Tobacco Commission. He advised the equipment was necessary for the renovated lab facility funded through grants from the Harvest Foundation and Virginia Tobacco Commission, a \$3.8 million project. The expansion of the welding lab was a result of the success of the welding program, held from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm daily to accommodate as many students as possible. There were 66 students on the waiting list for the program, and this expansion would more than double the number of welding booths from 16 to 45.

Mrs. Lawson made a motion, seconded by Mr. George, to make favorable comment on the proposed EDA CARES Act project. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

THE BOARD:

Voted unanimously to make favorable comment on the proposed project.

9. Updates and Reports on WPPDC Regional Projects/Staff Activities Related to:

a. Danville MPO Consultant-led Studies/Projects

The Executive Director announced the completion and adoption of two on-going MPO transportation studies. The first was the U.S. 58 West Access Management Study, which looked at the corridor from west of Piedmont Drive in Danville to Long Circle Road at the western boundary of the MPO. This study looked at poorly spaced median crossings, intersections with a history of accidents, and commercial businesses with multiple entrances that contributed to safety issues. The second project was the five-year update of the Long-Range Transportation Plan, a requirement of the Federal Highway Administration and Virginia Department of Transportation. This plan update was necessary to keep projects in the region eligible for federal funding and maintained the MPO certification for state and federal funds. The Executive Director stated the Long-Range Transportation Plan could be viewed at www.danvillempo2045.com or at www.wppdc.org.

b. Berry Hill Connector Road

The Executive Director stated that in 2018, the MPO submitted a \$33 million Smart Scale application to create a 2-mile direct link from the U.S. 58 Bypass at the Oak Ridge Farms interchange to the Southern Virginia Megastore at Berry Hill. The application was recommended for Smart Scale funding by VDOT staff; however, it was ultimately funded by 58 Corridor funds. Since approval by the Commonwealth Transportation Board two years ago, the project had been progressing through the design process, and earlier this month a virtual public hearing was held to receive public comment and input. The project was scheduled to be advertised for bids in 2022, with a project completion date of May 2025. The Executive Director thanked Mr. Bonanno for his work on the grant application.

c. Regional Smart Scale Applications

Mr. Bonanno outlined the six Smart Scale applications recently submitted by the WPPDC. Applications in the Salem District included: 1) U.S. Route 220 and Iron Ridge Road Intersection Improvements in Franklin County, which would convert the four-way intersection to a restricted crossing U-turn or RCUT. The base cost was \$6,203,314 and the total estimated cost with inflation was \$11,550,283; 2) Pedestrian Improvements in the Town of Stuart, which included approximately 1,570 linear feet of sidewalk along Wood Brothers Drive. The base cost was \$511,326, and the total estimated cost was \$953,836; and 3) U.S. 58 Business and Dogwood Drive Intersection Improvements in Henry County, which included construction of new right turn lanes and access management. The base cost was \$1,348,042, and the total estimated cost was \$2,494,016. Applications in the Danville MPO included: 1) Mount Cross Road Roundabout, which would convert the traditional four-way intersection at Mount Cross Road and Dimon Drive to a roundabout with 14-foot lanes, 160 linear feet of sidewalk, and 60 linear feet of pedestrian crosswalk to connect to a multi-use trail. The base cost was \$8,437,763, and the total estimated cost was \$16,515,763; 2) Berry Hill Connector Road Extension, which included upgrading 2.3 miles of existing two-lane road to four-lane road from the western terminus of the Berry Hill connector road to Oak Hill Road. The base cost was

\$15,000,000, and the total estimated cost was \$31,313,000; and 3) Enhancements to Kentuck Road, which included upgrading approximately one-half mile of Kentuck Road north from the Eagle Springs Road intersection and adding turn lanes to Ringgold Industrial Parkway to improve industrial traffic patterns. The base cost was \$6,545,314, and the total estimated cost was \$11,443,662.

d. Martinsville Southern Connector Environmental Impact Study

The Executive Director stated that earlier this year the Commonwealth Transportation Board approved a recommended new alignment of U.S. 220 from the North Carolina border to the U.S. 58 Bypass in and around the existing Joseph Martin Highway interchange. The project was currently in the public comment phase for the Environmental Impact Statement that was developed by VDOT staff and other state and federal agencies. A public comment meeting was scheduled for September 1, 2020 from 3:00 pm to 7:00pm at Jack Dalton Park in Collinsville. The meeting would be held outside for proper social distancing requirements. The environmental impact statement would be completed in November with a final determination on the project scheduled for January 2021. The project cost was estimated to be between \$600 and 700 million.

e. VTRANS (Statewide Transportation Plan) Update

The Executive Director stated that the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) adopted the VTRANS mid-term transportation needs in 2019 for the Commonwealth of Virginia and referenced a handout that included the adopted list. At the beginning of 2020, the CTB directed the staff of the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIP) to prioritize the identified mid-term transportation needs. This process would take place through the remainder of 2020, and virtual workshops would be held to obtain stakeholder outreach. Participation in the workshops would be important to ensure prioritization of local projects for funding.

f. EDA Cares Grant Update

The Associate Director updated the Board regarding EDA CARES grant funding that was approved and officially announced on Monday, August 24, 2020. The funding would be used to hire a consultant to lead the development of a Pandemic Recovery and Resiliency Plan. The planning process would evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on the region and its economy and develop strategies to recovery from the pandemic's impacts and build resiliency into the regional economy. An RFP for professional services would be advertised on Sunday, August 30, with an early December target date to have a firm under contract. The planning process would begin in early January 2021. The funding would also be used to hire a grant coordinator to assist local governments and regional organizations with grant writing, administration, and reporting. Initially, this position would focus on COVID-19 recovery projects and transition to assisting with implementation of the pandemic recovery and resiliency plan. Staff would be working to make the grant coordinator a permanent staff position.

g. Staff Positions Update

The Associate Director updated the Board on the status of two open staff positions, the Associate Director/Program Administrator and Grant Coordinator. To date, 21 applications had been submitted for the Associate Director position and 6 for the Grant Coordinator position. Application review would begin around September 9, 2020. Both positions were advertised on several websites, including VAPDC, VACO, and Indeed.com, and in the Roanoke Times and Martinsville Bulletin.

h. EDA Grant Applications

The Deputy Director provided information on three EDA grant applications submitted for CARES Act and Disaster Supplemental program funding. Applications were submitted for Franklin County, the City of Martinsville, and the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research. Three more EDA applications were underway for Patrick Henry Community College, Henry County for PER services at Commonwealth Crossing, and Pittsylvania County for sewer infrastructure upgrades.

i. DHCD Annual Report

The Deputy Director provided an update on the DHCD Annual Report, a requirement under the Virginia Regional Cooperation Act. The report provided an overview of the tasks and activities completed by WPPDC staff during the past fiscal year. The report would be completed and submitted prior to the September 1, 2020 deadline to ensure eligibility to receive annual funding of approximately \$76,000. She noted that the report was available for review upon request.

j. Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

The Associate Director stated the five-year update of the regional Hazard Mitigation Plan was underway. An RFP for professional services was advertised on August 21, 2020. Proposals would be due September 16, with a target to have a firm under contract by the end of October. The RFP was developed with input from FEMA and reviewed by VDEM prior to advertising. A full planning schedule would be developed once a firm had been procured.

k. High Hazard Potential Dams (HMP Amendment)

The Associate Director stated that WPPDC staff attended a FEMA webinar on June 29, 2020 about grant funding for High Hazard Potential Dams (HHPD). HHPDs are those dams that have the potential to cause at least one fatality if they fall. It was determined that a Hazard Mitigation Plan amendment to include HHPD specific information was needed to ensure potential HHPD grant applications from the district would be eligible. An HHPD addendum was drafted and submitted to FEMA and VDEM for review. The addendum was approved by VDEM on August 20, and FEMA provided additional feedback to be included in the Hazard Mitigation Plan five-year update. Noted were 2 HHPDs in Franklin County, 4 in Pittsylvania County, and 12 in Henry County, all regulated by Virginia. Also noted was one HHPD in Pittsylvania County and two in Patrick County regulated by federal agencies.

l. State Water Resources Plan Update

The Executive Director reported that the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality was in the process of completing a five-year update of the state water resources plan. The state plan would assemble information received from individual localities, including demand projections, water use data, and similar information. The information would be analyzed, and models developed for surface water and ground water resources. The 2020 plan would build upon previous work and evaluate impacts of climate change on the state water supply. A draft of the plan would be available for public comment toward the end of 2020. DEQ would be holding a webinar on September 10 for local government administrators, planners, and utility managers. WPPDC would be assisting with local research and coordination with utility offices.

m. FY 2020 Audit

The Executive Director explained that the FY2020 audit was in process. He noted that a considerable amount of staff work went into the audit preparation. Mr. Bullins was the lead on this work and had been preparing documents for the auditor to review. The auditor was scheduled to be at the WPPDC office on September 23 and 24, 2020 to complete onsite work, and the audit report would be provided at the October meeting. The Executive Director thanked Mr. Bullins for his good work on the audit each year.

THE BOARD:

Noted these informational reports.

10. Other Business and Reports

The Chairman presented a resolution of appreciation in recognition of Fred Shanks of the City of Danville for his dedicated service on the Board of Commissioners.

Mrs. Lawson made a motion, seconded by Ms. Bowles, to approve the resolution of appreciation. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

THE BOARD:

Voted to approve the resolution of appreciation for Mr. Fred Shanks.

11. Comments from Commissioners

Mr. Rotenizer asked about a page in the agenda packet that referenced Martinsville Historic District GIS. The Executive Director responded that the page referenced a data request completed by WPPDC staff.

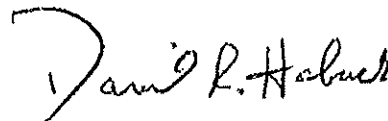
Mr. Rotenizer also thanked the Executive Director for his assistance with a letter of support provided for a Department of Historic Resources application submitted by Franklin County.

Ms. Bowles offered congratulations to Dr. Talley, Superintendent of Martinsville City Public Schools, for being named Secretary/Treasurer of the Virginia Association of School Superintendents.

The Chairman noted that this was the last meeting before Ms. Manning retired from the WPPDC. He thanked her for over 20 years of excellence in her various roles on the staff and extended his sincere appreciation for her service. Ms. Manning received a round of applause from the Board. She thanked the Board for the kind words of appreciation.

12. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.



David R. Hoback
Executive Director