

# WEST PIEDMONT PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION MINUTES

of the  
December 5, 2019 Meeting

held at the  
Commission Office  
1100 Madison Street, Martinsville, VA  
at 7:00 p.m.

## PRESENT

### FRANKLIN COUNTY

Tim Tatum

### HENRY COUNTY

Jim Adams, Chairman  
Tommy Slaughter  
Wes George

### PATRICK COUNTY

Rickie Fulcher, Vice-Chairman  
Jerry Adams

### PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY

Ron Searce  
Greg Sides

### DANVILLE

Fred Shanks  
Kimberly Walker

### MARTINSVILLE

Kathy Lawson, Treasurer  
Ronikka Hannans

### ROCKY MOUNT

Ralph Casey

## ABSENT

Leland Mitchell, Franklin County  
Karl Weiss, Patrick County  
Ben Farmer, Pittsylvania County  
Lee Vogler, Danville  
Jennifer Bowles, Martinsville

## STAFF

David R. Hoback, Executive Director  
Leah Manning, Deputy Director  
Jacob Bullins, Administrative Assistant  
Joe Bonanno, Regional Planner

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME**

The Chairman established a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., welcoming all.

**2. REGIONAL FORUM OPPORTUNITY—COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC**

There were no comments.

**3. POINTS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

There were none.

**4. CONSENT AGENDA**

**a. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 24, 2019 MEETING—WPPDC/M(19)5**

**b. TREASURER’S REPORTS: JULY 31, 2019—WPPDC/P(19)50, AUGUST 31, 2019—WPPDC/P(19)51, SEPTEMBER 30, 2019—WPPDC/P(19)52, and OCTOBER 31, 2019—WPPDC/P(19)53**

**c. ACKNOWLEDGE REGISTER OF ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEWS UNDER THE VIRGINIA INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS – NOVEMBER 2019—WPPDC/P(19)54**

Mrs. Lawson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Slaughter, to approve the consent agenda, as presented.

Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

**THE BOARD:**

Voted unanimously to approve the consent agenda, as presented.

**5. DISCUSSION AND CONSIDERATION OF FCC BROADBAND BLOCK GRANT LETTER AND STATE BROADBAND FUNDING—WPPDC/P(19)55**

The Executive Director advised that the PDC had received two requests from Commonwealth Connect for consideration in regard to broadband. He explained that the Commonwealth Connect was a state-led coalition of more than 100 organizations with the common goal of promoting the advancement of high speed, affordable broadband service across Virginia. The first request was consideration of support for increased state broadband funding through the Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) program. The second request was a letter of support to consider block granting federal funds to Virginia via the Federal Communication Commission (FCC). The block granting funds would be in lieu of distribution through federal programs, with the VATI program having demonstrated its effectiveness in understanding local dynamics and proven efficiency in delivering services of more than \$25 million to connect over 71,000 homes/businesses within 2 years. In comparison, the FCC’s Connect America Funds awarded \$84.5 million in Virginia to connect only 32,600 homes/businesses over the next 10 years. He further noted precedence had been set for this request with the state of New York having received block grant funds from the FCC.

Mrs. Lawson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Casey, to support both requests. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

**THE BOARD:**

Voted unanimously to support both requests for increased state broadband funding and the letter of support for FCC block granting funds.

**6. UPDATES AND REPORTS ON WPPDC REGIONAL PROJECTS/STAFF ACTIVITIES RELATED TO:**

**a. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION (EDA): CEDS**

The Deputy Director provided an overview of the CEDS Committee meeting of November 15<sup>th</sup>, noting further review of the CEDS Input Session information to ensure pertinent points were incorporated in the Goals and Strategies as well as the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis. She reported that work on the 2020 Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was well underway; localities were in the process of developing project priority lists for the annual update to be submitted by the end of the year. She mentioned Chapter 2 (The District & Its Economy) would continue to be updated and the Working Committee would meet again in late January to complete review of this progress. The CEDS would be presented at the February 2020 Board meeting and, subsequently for consideration of approval at the March meeting.

**b. APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION: ANNUAL ADMINISTRATIVE PLANNING GRANT AND FUNDING UPDATE**

The Executive Director updated the Board regarding submission of the 2020 ARC Annual Administrative Planning Grant for \$40,908, with approximately \$17,500 in PDC matching funds, for a total of nearly \$58,500. In addition to the STEM Academy program held annually in Oak Ridge, TN for middle and high school students, he acknowledged the upcoming new program for high school students interested in entrepreneurship; this would be held in Pittsburgh, PA and based on the same STEM program model. He further noted one ARC application to be submitted by the Harvest Foundation for a childcare project in Martinsville and Henry County. The PDC would continue its work in monitoring ARC’s programs and funding for future grant opportunities.

**c. DANVILLE MPO PROJECTS**

The Executive Director reported that work was continuing on the MPO’s 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan update, as required by FHWA and VDOT to be updated every 5 years. He noted one big component of the plan called for robust public participation in guiding the planning process. For this update, the MPO set up an

informational table at the Danville Food Truck Rodeo. Mr. Bonanno indicated approximately 80 to 90 people participated in the survey, noting parking issues, bicycle/pedestrian issues, and other comments that made for a successful event.

**d. RURAL REGIONAL LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

The Regional Planner, Mr. Bonanno, discussed the continued progress on the Rural Long-range Transportation Plan update, noting project ranking tools utilized, review of the VTRANS 2045 draft needs, consideration of multimodal transportation needs, and innovative intersection designs. He added that the project list and recommendations had been sent to VDOT staff for review and the demographics section was almost complete. Further, he stated the plan would be complete by March/April 2020 in time for the upcoming Smart Scale application round.

**e. U.S. 220 AND U.S. 29 ARTERIAL PRESERVATION STUDY PUBLIC MEETINGS**

The Executive Director indicated VDOT had held informational meetings the previous month regarding the Arterial Preservation Program to improve traffic flow and safety issues along Routes 220 and 29. He noted the program would allow capacity for future growth. He advised that on Route 29, VDOT primarily proposed the R-Cut design for intersection improvements. For Route 220, he mentioned changes in traffic signals utilizing a 3-phase signal approach.

**f. HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN**

The Executive Director informed the Board that the PDC would be holding its annual meeting with the public safety director and Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) staff to assist with preparation of the PDC's annual report to VDEM and FEMA. It was noted that this was a required component of the region's Hazard Mitigation Plan.

**g. IALR EDA PUBLIC WORKS GRANT APPLICATION**

The Deputy Director reported that staff was assisting the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR) with an EDA Public Works application in the amount of \$2.5 million. The funding would assist with capital equipment dedicated for workforce training and manufacturing optimization at the Institute's new Center for Manufacturing Advancement facility in Danville. The project would serve the IALR footprint as well as Halifax and Mecklenburg counties, and eventually disseminate to the entire GO Virginia Region 3 area.

**h. FRANKLIN COUNTY EDA APPLICATION FOR DISASTER SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING**

The Deputy Director notified the Board that staff was in the process of assisting Franklin County with an application through EDA's Disaster Supplemental Program that assists communities impacted by Presidentially-declared disasters. With the EDA funding, the project would provide assistance for further development of the Summit View Business Park.

**i. WPPDC SOCIAL MEDIA**

The Executive Director advised the Commission was utilizing its Facebook account to share positive comments regarding the region. This followed comments/input provided at the CEDS Input Session for concerns to reflect a more positive image for the district. He requested that Board members "like" the PDC's Facebook page and share with others.

**j. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET REQUESTS**

The Executive Director noted that staff had received requests from Franklin and Pittsylvania counties for the FY 2021 budgets. The requests were due in December and the amounts would remain the same for the upcoming fiscal year. He acknowledged that Franklin County's request had been submitted and Pittsylvania County's request would be submitted before the end of the year.

**k. CHRISTMAS OFFICE SCHEDULE**

The Chairman reminded the Board that the PDC followed the state holiday schedule and the Executive Committee had approved the Executive Director's request to close the office from December 23<sup>rd</sup> to January 2<sup>nd</sup>, since the office was quiet during that time. The Executive Director noted staff had agreed to take annual leave for the additional days that were not state holidays.

Mr. Shanks made a motion, seconded by Ms. Walker, to approve the additional time for PDC staff. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

**THE BOARD:**

Noted these informational reports and voted to approve the additional days requested for the PDC's upcoming holiday schedule.

**7. ESTABLISHMENT OF PER CAPITA CONTRIBUTION RATE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021**

The Chairman advised that staff had recommended level funding for localities, based on the 2010 Census population figures with the rate of 55 cents per capita for FY 2021.

In its earlier session, the Executive Committee recommended approval of the per capita rate, as presented.

Mr. George made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Lawson, to accept the Executive Committee's recommendation to approve the per capita rate based on the 2010 Census population figures at the 55 cents per capita rate, as presented. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

**THE BOARD:**

Voted unanimously to accept funding for localities based on the 2010 Census population figures with the 55 cents per capita rate for FY 2021, as presented.

**8. OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman acknowledged Mr. Fulcher had decided not to campaign for an additional term of office, which would end December 31, 2019. In the Executive Committee session, Mr. Scearce had agreed to serve in the interim as Vice-Chairman to fill the unexpired term from January 1, 2020 to June 30, 2020.

Ms. Walker made a motion, seconded by Mr. George, to appoint Mr. Ron Scearce to fill the unexpired term as Vice-Chairman for the Commission. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

**THE BOARD:**

Voted unanimously to appoint Mr. Scearce to fill the unexpired term as Vice-Chairman.

In addition, the Chairman recognized both Rickie Fulcher and Karl Weiss of Patrick County, for their dedicated service to the Commission, noting the Resolutions of Appreciation for each.

Mrs. Lawson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Jerry Adams, to approve the Resolutions of Appreciation for Mr. Fulcher and Mr. Weiss in recognition of their dedicated service to the Commission. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

**THE BOARD:**

Voted unanimously to recognize Mr. Fulcher and Mr. Weiss for their dedicated service by Resolutions of Appreciation.

The Chairman noted the strength of the organization, particularly in discussion of an item from the Executive Committee session held earlier. The Executive Director advised that in the next 12-18 months, he would step back as Executive Director, but would stay on board until a new director could be named. He stated that additional staff (i.e., senior planner) would need to be in place and that the search process would need to begin with the understanding that the selected candidate could advance. He recommended that the process begin in the new year with a search committee being formed and the position advertised in the Roanoke Times, Richmond Times Dispatch, and Greensboro News and Record newspapers. Other resources would be utilized for advertising as well. Board members noted that a succession plan was needed to assist with future transitions.

Following discussion, Mrs. Lawson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Casey, to advertise the position in the noted newspapers to begin the employee search. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

**THE BOARD:**

Voted unanimously to advertise the position in newspapers noted above and begin the employee search.

The Executive Director provided an overview of the proposal for the Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities program through the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). In collaboration with the five Workforce Investment Area Boards, economic development organizations, industry, and training provider partners, an application in the amount of \$2.5 million would be submitted. The proposal would support workforce training for an industry-driven talent development system, expand partnerships, and leverage resources in Virginia's 33 ARC communities.

Mr. Scearce made a motion, seconded by Mr. Casey, to provide a letter of support for the proposed Workforce Opportunity initiative. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

**THE BOARD:**

Voted unanimously to provide a letter of support for the proposed initiative.

Lastly, Mr. Bonanno gave an update of the Ride Solutions Program, noting he had attended a job fair at Patrick Henry Community College on October 10<sup>th</sup> to network with businesses, had met with Results in Stuart to sign up employees, and met with Ameristaff and People Ready staffs. He also acknowledged attendance at the IKEA job fair in November, and upcoming ads that would be in the Danville/Pittsylvania County "Our Town" publication and the Martinsville Chamber magazine to promote the program. He further noted that outreach efforts would be ongoing.

**9. COMMENTS FROM COMMISSIONERS**

There were none.

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

David R. Hoback  
Executive Director