

WEST PIEDMONT PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION MINUTES

of the
March 26, 2020 Meeting

held at the
Commission Office
1100 Madison Street, Martinsville, VA
at 6:35 p.m.

PRESENT

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Leland Mitchell
David Rotenizer via Phone

PATRICK COUNTY

Clayton Kendrick

HENRY COUNTY

Jim Adams, Chairman

MARTINSVILLE

Kathy Lawson, Treasurer
Jennifer Bowles via Phone

PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY

None

DANVILLE

Fred Shanks
Lee Vogler

ROCKY MOUNT

Ralph Casey via Phone

ABSENT

Tim Tatum, Franklin County
Tommy Slaughter, Henry County
Wes George, Henry County
Clyde DeLoach, Patrick County
Jerry Adams, Patrick County
Ron Searce, Vice-Chairman, Pittsylvania County
Vic Ingram, Pittsylvania County
Greg Sides, Pittsylvania County
Kimberly Walker, Danville
Ronikka Hannans, Martinsville

STAFF

David Hoback, Executive Director
Leah Manning, Deputy Director (By Phone)
Jacob Bullins, Administrative Assistant/Bookkeeper (By Phone)

1. **Call to Order and Welcome**

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. and welcomed all. Due to the COVID-19 state of emergency across the Commonwealth, some members joined by conference call. The Chairman advised that, due to Virginia Freedom of Information Act requirements, only those present in person could vote; those on the phone would be unable to vote during the meeting, but could offer comments on any Board items. These minutes reflect that no action was taken by any members participating by telephone.

2. **Regional Forum Opportunity – Comments from the Public**

There were none.

3. **Points Arising from Previous Meetings**

There were no points from previous meetings to be discussed.

4. **Consent Agenda Items:**

a) **Confirmation of Minutes of the February 27, 2020 Meeting—WPPDC/M(20)1**

b) **Treasurer's Report – January 31, 2020—WPPDC/P(20)3 and February 29, 2020—WPPDC/P(20)12**

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

THE BOARD:

Voted unanimously to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

5. **Consideration of Approval of the 2020 Annual Report of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy of the West Piedmont Planning District—WPPDC/P(20)13; Resolution WPPDC 2020-3**

The Planning District Commission staff had worked with local government administrators and staffs, local economic and workforce development organizations, CEDS Committees, and other key stakeholders to develop the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy--2020 Annual Report** to maintain the region's eligibility for receipt of funding through the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration. Developed using the publication entitled "Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Content Guidelines: Recommendations for Creating an Impactful CEDS" published in January 2015 by the Economic Development Administration, the document included a list of regional economic development goals and prioritized projects approved and submitted by the individual local governing bodies of the Planning District. In addition, the report included the following chapters: *Development Strategy, The District and Its Economy, Resiliency, and Implementation Plan*, along with a Regional Vision, SWOT Analysis, and Regional Profile. In accordance with EDA's Regulations and Guidelines, the CEDS included an Evaluation Component, previously approved at the February 27, 2020 Board meeting, which set forth a Program Evaluation for April 1, 2019 – March 31, 2020 and an Implementation Plan for April 1, 2020 – March 31, 2021. This component would serve as an evaluation tool for the implementation/action plan set forth in the document. A supplemental document was developed to accompany the 2020 CEDS and included key elements from the full report such as the goals and strategies, the top two project priorities for each locality, and the regional report card, to name a few.

The Deputy Director recognized that this marked the close of the 30-day public comment period through the public participation process, noting there were no comments from the general public. However, she indicated there were a number of comments received from the Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC) who had reviewed the Transportation section and submitted significant changes in support of upcoming Smart Scale projects in the region. In addition, she noted only a few minor revisions by staff to incorporate recent activities from the past month. Public notices had been advertised in the local newspapers within the region as well as distribution and availability of the 2020 CEDS in local government offices and the main branches of local libraries across the district. In addition, the 2020 Annual Report was posted on the PDC's website at www.wppdc.org.

Mr. Shanks requested that two items be added under the Transportation Project Priorities to include the intersection of West Main Street at the railroad crossing for safety and congestion issues and the Route 86 corridor from Hillsborough, NC to the City of Danville as a significant corridor for freight and economic development. Staff noted this information for inclusion.

Both the CEDS Committee and the CEDS Working Committee had unanimously approved the 2020 CEDS at the February 12, 2020 meeting, with a recommendation that the Board approve it as well.

Mrs. Lawson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mitchell, to approve with the noted changes referenced above, Resolution WPPDC 2020-3 for the 2020 CEDS Annual Report. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

THE BOARD:

Voted unanimously to approve by resolution (copy attached) and with noted changes, the 2020 CEDS Annual Report for submission to the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration.

6. Consideration of Resolution of Approval for Scope of Work for the Rural Transportation Planning Assistance Program for FY 2021--WPPDC/P(20)14; Resolution WPPDC 2020-4

The Executive Director reported that staff had prepared a draft Scope of Work that needed to be submitted along with a project budget, cover letter, and resolutions to serve as the Commission's application for funds under the basic assistance portion of the Virginia Department of Transportation's Rural Transportation Planning Program (RTPP) and that the Commission's review and input on the Scope of Work, evidenced by a resolution, was required for the application. The amount of VDOT funds available to the PDC for FY 2021 was a reported \$58,000, with a 20% match, or \$14,500, required by the PDC. A resolution to authorize applying for funds had been approved at the October Board meeting. Further, he provided an overview of projects to be undertaken under this program which included activities requested by VDOT such as Smart Scale regional meetings, regional/state planning activities, technical assistance to local government members and VDOT, and implementation of the Ride Solutions program in the region. In addition, he noted that typically the TTAC Committee would have made a recommendation to approve, but the meeting was cancelled due to the urgent health crisis. He advised that the Scope of Work had been provided to the TTAC members and VDOT staff for review, but no additional comments had been received.

Mr. Shanks made a motion, seconded by Mr. Vogler, to adopt Resolution WPPDC 2020-4, approve the Scope of Work and submission of the application, and to provide the necessary matching funds for the FY 2021 Rural Transportation Planning Assistance Program. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

THE BOARD:

Voted unanimously to adopt a resolution (copy attached) as presented as well as approve the Scope of Work, approve submission of an application, and to provide the necessary matching funds.

7. Consideration of Approval of DRPT Master Agreement for TDM Operating Assistance Grant--WPPDC/P(20)16

The Executive Director acknowledged that the PDC was in receipt of the Master Agreement from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), following the awarded grant funds resulting from the application submitted in February. He explained that the Ride Solutions Initiative was funded through this program and, in the past, the funding had been received through the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission. However, he acknowledged that the WPPDC would be a direct grant recipient for FY 2021; the total project amount was \$66,000, with a required 20% match of \$13,200 from the PDC and \$52,800 in DRPT funding.

Mrs. Lawson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Vogler, to accept the DRPT Master Agreement for the TDM Operating Assistance grant as presented. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

THE BOARD:

Voted unanimously to accept the DRPT Master Agreement for the TDM Operating Assistance grant as presented.

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

a) Regional Rural Long-Range Transportation Plan Update

The Executive Director reminded the Board that Joe Bonanno, the PDC's regional planner, had developed the Regional Rural Long-Range Transportation Plan update and provided an overview at the February meeting. He reported that April 9th would mark the end of the 30-day public comment period and that Mr. Bonanno had received some comments. He advised that Mr. Bonanno would present the final Plan at the next meeting for the Board's approval. He further noted that the draft Plan was available to assist with Smart Scale applications across the region.

b) Associate Director/Senior Planner Hiring Update

The Executive Director informed the Board that staff had revised the Senior Planner position advertisement to reflect the revisions discussed at last month's meeting. The advertisement had been modified as suggested to incorporate the Associate Director description as part of the position. He specified that the position would be advertised in the Roanoke Times, Richmond Times Dispatch, and Greensboro News & Record once again, as well as through the VAPDC, VACo, VML, APA, VEC and other previous locations. He stated that the application deadline would be May 1st. The Chairman suggested that, given the current health urgency, the deadline may need to be extended.

c) State Funding for Virginia PDCs

The Executive Director provided an update of the VAPDC funding request from the General Assembly and noted that the additional \$14,000 in annual funding had been approved for each planning district in the Commonwealth. However, he cautioned that the funding may not come through given the COVID-19 crisis and the potential shortfall in the state's budget.

d) WPPDC VIP Investments Update

As a result of the recent health and financial crisis, the Executive Director updated the Board regarding the Virginia Investment Pool (VIP) investments, stating that the funds were in a stable investment account. He provided handouts regarding the account statements, noting the funds were secure.

e) WPPDC Staff Deployment

The Executive Director advised that, with the current health situation, the office was closed to the public, but staff was working remotely for the most part and only coming in the office on an as needed basis. He recognized that this was being done in order to comply with recent state and federal guidelines to cope with the urgent health pandemic and in an abundance of caution. He added that staff remained accessible and had two conference calls on a daily basis to discuss activities. He further noted that the work and business of the PDC was moving forward with limited disruption given the current circumstances; the situation would continue to be closely monitored and adjusted accordingly.

The Executive Director referenced the COVID-19 handout provided and discussed the PDC's Work from Home Policy as well as the most recent Families First Coronavirus Response Act. He addressed some questions from Board members regarding the new Employer Expanded Family and Medical Leave guidelines as they pertained to this Act.

f) WPPDC FY 20-21 Budget & Work Plan Process/Work Program Outline for Projects for FY 2021

The Executive Director informed the Board that staff was in the process of developing the FY 2020-21 Administrative Budget and Work Plan for FY 2021, which would be presented to the Executive Committee in April and brought before the Board for review and approval in May. He was hopeful that the PDC would be back to somewhat normal operations by the end of May when the budget typically would be adopted, but noted that the Board had until the end of June to act, if necessary.

The Executive Director referenced the list of program elements to be used in development of the Commission's Work Program/Strategy Statement. These projects had been derived from the Scope of Work from the various grants the PDC would be receiving during the upcoming year. Each local government administrator was provided a list of potential work items for their jurisdiction in January; the PDC staff would be flexible if any additional work items may arise during the year. The Executive Director indicated there were no programmatic changes from FY 2020. He indicated that staff would be working with the Executive Committee in April to fully develop the FY 2020-21 Budget and Work Program which would be presented to the full Board in May for consideration of approval.

THE BOARD:

Noted this Information.

9. Appointment of Nominating Committee for Fiscal Year 2021

The Chairman appointed the following Nominating Committee for Fiscal Year 2021: Jim Adams, Henry County; Kathy Lawson, Martinsville; Clayton Kendrick, Patrick County; Fred Shanks, Danville; Ron Searce, Pittsylvania County; Leland Mitchell, Franklin County. Rocky Mount's Executive Committee seat was vacant at the time of the meeting. Mr. Adams was designated as Chairman of the Nominating Committee.

Mrs. Lawson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mitchell, to appoint those designated above as the Fiscal Year 2021 Nominating Committee. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

THE BOARD:

Voted unanimously to appoint the members designated above as the Fiscal Year 2021 Nominating Committee, with Mr. Jim Adams chosen as Chairman of the Committee.

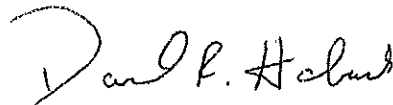
10. Comments from Commissioners

The Chairman asked if the Executive Director had any other items of business, to which he discussed the number of Smart Scale applications for which the PDC staff was providing assistance. The Executive Director stated that staff was more engaged this round than ever before. He reported the PDC would be submitting 3 applications on behalf of the Danville MPO and 4 applications on behalf of local governments. He noted that Mr. Bonanno would play a key role in completing these Smart Scale applications.

Mr. Casey thanked the Board for providing the opportunity to participate in the conference call and to hear the business conducted during the meeting.

11. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:14 p.m.



David R. Hoback
Executive Director