

WEST PIEDMONT PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION MINUTES

of the
May 28, 2020 Meeting

held at the
Commission Office
1100 Madison Street, Martinsville, VA
OR by
Zoom Meeting/Call In
(Meeting ID: 968 6606 1233, Password: 624144)
(Call In Information 1-929-205-6099, 968 6606 1233#, 1#, 624144#)
at 6:30 p.m.

PRESENT

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Leland Mitchell
David Rotenizer

PATRICK COUNTY

Clayton Kendrick

HENRY COUNTY

Jim Adams, Chairman

MARTINSVILLE

Kathy Lawson, Treasurer
Jennifer Bowles

PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY

Ron Scarce, Vice-Chairman

DANVILLE

Fred Shanks
Lee Vogler
Kim Walker

ROCKY MOUNT

Ralph Casey

ABSENT

Tim Tatum, Franklin County
Tommy Slaughter, Henry County
Wes George, Henry County
Clyde DeLoach, Patrick County
Jerry Adams, Patrick County
Vic Ingram, Pittsylvania County
Greg Sides, Pittsylvania County
Ronikka Hannans, 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 6:30 p.m. He noted that, due to the Governor's orders in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, some members were in attendance via Zoom.

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 March 26, 2020 Meeting—WPPDC/M(20)2

b. Treasurer's Report: March 31, 2020—WPPDC/P(20)17 and April 30, 2020—WPPDC/P(20)18

c. West Piedmont Planning District Commission Quarterly Report of Activities: State Data Affiliate Center and VEC Business & Industry Data Center Programs – Third Quarter, FY 2020—WPPDC/P(20)19

d. Register of Administrative Reviews under the Virginia Intergovernmental Review Process – April/May 2020—WPPDC/P(20)20

Mr. Shanks made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Lawson, 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. Proposed Fiscal Year 2021 Strategy Statement and Work Program—WPPDC/P(20)21

Board members had received a copy of the proposed Strategy Statement and Work Program for the Commission's activities for Fiscal Year 2021 in their meeting package. The Work Program consisted of eleven (11) basic work program elements: Regional Planning; Local Planning Assistance; Regional Metropolitan Planning Organization Activities; Regional Transportation Planning Program; Environment; Economic Development; Housing; Public Safety; Public Services-Education-Cultural Opportunity; Community Relations/Citizen Participation; and basic Management and Administration of the Commission's daily activities. Each of the eleven basic work program elements was further subdivided into 'program sub-categories,' which provided the details of efforts under each work element.

The Executive Director informed the group that the proposed Strategy Statement and Work Program had been prepared from the previous Fiscal Year 2020 Work Program after consultation with WPPDC advisors, member jurisdictions, and the WPPDC Work Program and Budget Committee, plus consideration for any new efforts requested by the General Assembly, state departments, and state agencies. He noted that this was comprehensively broad to accommodate any new work items and indicated that only a few minor changes were proposed to reflect any necessary updates; there were no new categories or sub-categories proposed. Once the budget and work program were approved, staff could then produce a table with details on staffing and financial aspects of projects that would show estimated man-months total for each basic element, total direct personnel cost, other direct costs (including travel, fringe benefits), and indirect costs (i.e., overhead cost) calculated and totaled to summarize a cost per element.

At its May 20, 2020 session, the Executive Committee had voted unanimously to recommend that the Board approve the Fiscal Year 2021 Strategy Statement and Work Program as presented.

Mrs. Lawson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Shanks, to accept the Executive Committee's recommendation. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

THE BOARD:

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

6. Proposed Fiscal Year 2021 Administrative Budget—WPPDC/P(20)22

The Executive Director provided an overview of the proposed Administrative Budget for Fiscal Year 2021, noting the detailed breakdown of projected revenues and expenditures by line item; this had been used as the basis for development of the Fiscal Year 2021 Annual Strategy Statement/Work Program also on the agenda for the Board's consideration. This operating budget anticipated total revenues of \$531,120, total operating expenditures of \$523,477, and a subsequent operating net income of \$7,643. With the new budget proposal, in comparing Fiscal Year 2020 to Fiscal Year 2021, he noted that the Commission had maintained the current local funding rate of 55 cents per capita, level funding in state income, an increase of \$22,592 in federal funding due to revisions in the RIDE Solutions program, and a \$3,000 decrease in interest income. When comparing the difference in expenditures over revenues for the two years, there was a net increase/loss of \$1,927. No salary increases for staff had been included in the proposed budget; however, the Executive Director recommended an increase on the Commission's retirement contribution for up to 5% of individual staff member's salary, noting this would provide a more sustainable path to retirement for employees and it would enhance benefits to make WPPDC more competitive in attracting new employees and retaining current employees. Lastly, the Executive Director indicated the \$7,643 surplus would go toward capital improvement projects and that the budget may have to be adjusted accordingly for any cuts due to the current economic situation.

At its previous May 20, 2020 session, the Executive Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the Board approve the Fiscal Year 2021 Administrative Budget as presented.

Mr. Shanks made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Lawson, to accept the Executive Committee's recommendation. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

THE BOARD:

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

7. Consideration of EDA Funding through the CARES Act Recovery Assistance Program—WPPDC/P(20)23; Resolution WPPDC 2020-5

The Deputy Director advised that staff proposed applying for EDA funds through the CARES Act Recovery Assistance Program. She indicated the PDC would apply for a total of \$265,000 to develop a pandemic recovery and resiliency plan and to hire a new grants person to assist localities and other agencies in response to the current economic situation. Approximately \$125,000 would be allocated to hire a qualified consultant to develop the pandemic recovery plan that would augment the 2020 CEDS. Further, she stated that the remaining \$140,000 would be utilized to hire a grants coordinator/administrator for the two-year grant period and purchase necessary equipment for the new personnel. She noted there was no required match for the funds which had to be expended by September 2022.

At its May 20th session, the Executive Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the Board approve the notice of intent to apply for EDA funding as discussed and noted.

Mr. Mitchell made a motion, seconded by Mr. Casey, to accept the Executive Committee's recommendation and approve Resolution WPPDC 2020-5, authorizing the PDC's intent to apply for EDA CARES Act funding. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

THE BOARD:

Voted unanimously to approve Resolution WPPDC 2020-5, authorizing the PDC to apply for EDA CARES Act funding as noted. [Copy attached]

8. Consideration of the Regional Rural Long-Range Transportation Plan—WPPDC/P(20)24; Resolution WPPDC 2020-6

The Executive Director reminded the Board that staff had been working on the update of the Regional Rural Long-Range Transportation Plan in conjunction with VDOT, local government staffs, and other key stakeholders. He stated the Plan would assist local governments in applying for projects through the upcoming Smart Scale round. Mr. Bonanno provided an overview of the plan which ranked transportation priorities and included recommendations for each locality. He noted a few revisions from VDOT for the Arterial Preservation Plans for U.S. 220 and 29. He further discussed a recommendation for park and ride lots at Chatham, Gretna, and Hurt to accommodate riders of the Danville Transit System bus route along U.S. 29.

Mr. Shanks made a motion, seconded by Mr. Vogler, to adopt Resolution WPPDC 2020-6, with noted recommended changes. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

THE BOARD:

Voted unanimously to approve Resolution WPPDC 2020-6, with recommended changes as discussed and noted. [Copy attached]

9. INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW: Patrick Henry Community College EDA Build to Scale Application to Support Entrepreneurship and Accelerate Company Growth—WPPDC/P(20)25

The Executive Director notified the attendees that Patrick Henry Community College (PHCC) was submitting an EDA Build to Scale grant application for \$151,000 to purchase equipment and other supplies for expansion of the IDEA Center and Fab Lab for the existing entrepreneurial program. In conjunction with the Longwood University Small Business Development Center, the Martinsville Henry County Economic Development Corporation, the Martinsville Henry County Chamber of Commerce, and Senior Core of Retired Executives (SCORE), the project would support entrepreneurship and assist companies with growth opportunities. At a total cost of \$318,070, \$167,070 in matching funds would be provided by the PHCC Foundation and collaborating partners.

Mrs. Lawson made a motion, seconded by Ms. Bowles, to make favorable comment on the proposed application. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

THE BOARD:

Voted unanimously to make favorable comment on the proposed application.

10. Updates and Reports on Regional Projects/Staff Activities:

a. Danville MPO Transportation Studies

The Executive Director briefed the Board on the two MPO transportation studies conducted by the consultant, EPR. The first was the Long-Range Transportation Plan update, required every 5 years. He noted the multimodal plan would be completed in August 2020 and explained that the Plan had two key components – the constrained project list and the vision list, with a horizon year of 2045. He indicated the updated plan would be presented to the MPO Policy Board at the next meeting. The second study involved the update of the Route 58 West Access Management Study, first conducted in 2012. This project comprised 8 intersections, from Piedmont Drive to Long Circle Road, just west of the City near Brosville. He specified completion by the fall and added that this would assist with Smart Scale project prioritization.

b. Smart Scale Projects

The Executive Director advised PDC staff was providing assistance with a number of Smart Scale applications, with 7 pre-applications being submitted. He added that there were 3 MPO project applications and 4 being submitted through the PDC for various localities' projects. Staff would provide technical assistance for other applications throughout the region, with each locality submitting at least one application. Further, he noted the August 1st application deadline.

c. Martinsville Southern Connector

The Executive Director reminded the Board about the Commonwealth Transportation Board approving Alternative C as the preferred route for the proposed Martinsville Southern Connector. He noted that the scheduled March 2020 public hearing was postponed due to the COVID-19 situation. The Executive Director acknowledged that the draft Environmental Impact Study (EIS) would be available for public review and comment until June 19th. He reported that the final EIS was anticipated for completion in November and FHWA would issue a record of decision in January 2021.

d. On-Call Consultant Program

The Executive Director discussed the value-add service provided by the PDC for the On-call Consultant services, which allowed member localities to participate under the regional contract. He stated this service was geared more toward procurement for lower cost projects and that a total value of approximately \$86,000 in contracts had been realized during the calendar year, with 4 added since January.

e. EDA Grant Assistance

The Deputy Director reported that staff had realized an increase in requests for grant assistance due to the COVID-19 impacts within the region. She noted that the PDC was providing assistance with a number of grant applications through the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). These included the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research's EDA CARES Act application for \$2.5 million to purchase equipment for the Industry 4.0 Program, and the Franklin County application for funding assistance to construct a connector road at Summit View Business Park through EDA's Disaster Supplemental Program. She added that staff had begun working with Danville for site development assistance at the Coleman property to advance economic development opportunities and assistance to Patrick Henry Community College in conjunction with Martinsville, Henry County, and the Harvest Foundation for the early childhood education center that would provide workforce training as well as quality childcare services for approximately 200-225 children.

f. VDEM Hazard Mitigation Grant Update

The Executive Director indicated that a five-year update of the Multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan would be required by April 2022. He noted that staff had received an award of \$112,000 in funding through VDEM to assist with this effort that would soon get underway. He added that the total project would be about \$150,000, with \$37,000 to be provided as in-kind from the PDC and participating local governments.

g. Native Plants Initiative

The Deputy Director mentioned that, since last July, staff had been working with state agencies – DGIF, DEQ, DCR, and other stakeholders to initiate the Southern Piedmont Native Plant (SPNP) campaign. The SPNP area covered 18 counties; however, she noted that the West Piedmont region would serve as a pilot area. Further, she advised native plants provide support for wildlife habitat, environmental benefits, and potential ecotourism opportunities. To date, the PDC had been working with master naturalist Kathy Fell, the Blue Ridge Soil and Water Conservation District, local government partners, and many others. She also indicated that the initiative included installation of demonstration gardens throughout the region, a social marketing campaign with public awareness and informative workshops, promotion of native plant availability at local nurseries, and development of a Native Plant Guide. The Deputy Director noted that this program would be introduced to the remaining areas within the Southern Piedmont Region and that best practices would be shared with neighboring PDCs and localities. She stated that this project was both an environmental initiative and economic development with ecotourism and outdoor recreational activities to boost tourism opportunities within the region.

h. Associate Director/Senior Planner Hire Update

The Executive Director reported that the PDC had received 15 applications, which had been narrowed to 7 preferred candidates. Based on the May 20th Executive Committee meeting, he indicated that the Selection Committee consisted of Mrs. Lawson, Mr. Adams, Ms. Manning, and the Executive Director to conduct the interviews in the next week or so and make a final selection for the position.

i. Staff Work from Home Status

The Executive Director advised that staff continued to work remotely when possible and come in as necessary during the ongoing pandemic. He noted there were two staff calls ins daily to provide staff activity updates and detailed tasks. Further, he recognized that staff coordinated schedules to limit the number of persons in the office at one time and that productivity remained consistent. Lastly, he stated that the PDC may begin exploring options to phase in personnel on a rotation basis, depending on what other agencies do.

j. Office Technology Upgrades

The Executive Director informed the Board that two workstations had recently been replaced. He noted that the systems were at least 5 years old and had to be replaced in order to upgrade to Microsoft Windows 10 platform. He also acknowledged that the Commission had a Zoom subscription to schedule virtual meetings and would purchase a large smart-screen TV to assist in this effort to help address the ongoing COVID-19 situation. Even after a return to normalcy, he anticipated online meetings to continue as a way of conducting business into the future.

k. WPPDC 50th Anniversary Update

The Executive Director recalled that in previous discussions of the PDC's 50th anniversary, a celebration was being planned with a large dinner event in September. However, due to the ongoing pandemic, such large events were being put on hold for the foreseeable future. He suggested that the celebration could be revisited at a later time, even if it occurred next year. However, for the time being, staff had discussed developing a professionally prepared promotional piece to highlight the PDC's history, what the PDC does, and to mark the occasion of the organization's 50th anniversary.

THE BOARD:

Noted these Informational reports.

11. Report of Nominating Committee for Fiscal Year 2021; Election of Officers

As Chairman of the Nominating Committee, Mr. Adams advised that it had been the consensus of the Committee to present the slate of officers to the Board for their consideration and also to seek other nominees, if any, from the Board. On behalf of the Committee, Mr. Adams presented the following slate of officers for Fiscal Year 2021: Jim Adams, Chairman; Ron Searce, Vice-Chairman; Kathy Lawson, Treasurer.

The floor was opened for additional nominations and none were made. Mr. Shanks then made a motion, seconded by Mr. Rotenizer, to close the nominations. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously. Mr. Shanks made a motion, seconded by Mr. Kendrick, to accept the slate of officers by acclamation as presented by the WPPD Nominating Committee. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

THE BOARD:

Unanimously elected the following officers for Fiscal Year 2021: Jim Adams (Henry County), Chairman; Ron Searce (Pittsylvania County), Vice-Chairman; Kathy Lawson (Martinsville), Treasurer.

12. Other Business

The Chairman mentioned the next Board meeting would be held in August and added that he appreciated the attendance of Board members at the meetings.

13. Comments from Commissioners

There were none.

14. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:54 p.m.


David R. Hoback
Executive Director

Attachments