

WEST PIEDMONT PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION

MINUTES

of the

November 19, 2020 Meeting

to be held

at the Commission Office

1100 Madison Street, Martinsville, VA

or via

Zoom (Meeting ID 921 2749 2160, Passcode 260797)

<https://zoom.us/j/92127492160?pwd=NktuRmluQzJlMzI4aDE4dGhLZSsydz09>

(Call In Information 1-929-205-6099, 921 2749 2160#, 0#, 260797#)

at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Leland Mitchell
David Rotenizer
Tim Tatum

PATRICK COUNTY

Jerry Adams
Clayton Kendrick, Jr.

DANVILLE

James Buckner
Lee Vogler
Kimberly Walker

ROCKY MOUNT

Ralph Casey

PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY

Vic Ingram
Greg Sides

MARTINSVILLE

Jennifer Bowles
Ronikka Hannans
Kathy Lawson, Treasurer

HENRY COUNTY

Jim Adams, Chairman
Wes George

ABSENT

Clyde DeLoach, Patrick County
Ron Scearce, Vice-Chairman, Pittsylvania County
Tommy Slaughter, Henry County

STAFF

David R. Hoback, Executive Director
Michael Armbrister, Deputy Director
Jacob Bullins, Administrative Assistant
Kristie Eberly, Associate Director
Kathleen McEvoy, Grants Coordinator

GUESTS

Peter Stephenson, Virginia Risk Sharing Association

1. CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

The Chairman established a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 7:02 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 22, 2020 Meeting—WPPDC/M(20)6
- b. Treasurer's Report – July 31, 2020—WPPDC/P(20)51, August 31, 2020—WPPDC/P(20)52, and September 30, 2020—WPPDC/P(20)53
- c. ACKNOWLEDGE Register of Administrative Reviews Under the Virginia Intergovernmental Review Process – October/November 2020—WPPDC/P(20)54

Mr. George made a motion, seconded by Mr. Rotenizer, to approve the consent agenda, as presented. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

5. CONSIDERATION OF RE-ADOPTION OF AMENDED WPPDC AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PLAN FOR 2021—WPPDC/P(20)55

The Executive Director advised that after the Affirmative Action Plan for 2021 was adopted at the October meeting, Ms. Bowles shared an issue of personal concern related to characteristics of ethnicity such as hair and hair styles. The Affirmative Action Plan for 2021 was amended following Ms. Bowles recommendations and should be re-adopted. The Chairman asked Ms. Bowles for any additional comments, and Ms. Bowles thanked the Commission for allowing her to make a recommendation to amend the plan and for being forward thinking with the amendments.

Mr. Buckner made a motion, seconded by Mr. Jerry Adams, to re-adopt the amended WPPDC Affirmative Action Plan for 2021. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

6. CONSIDERATION OF ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING CONTRACTING WITH PANDEMIC RECOVERY & RESILIENCY PLANNING CONSULTANT (RESOLUTION WPPDC 2020-19) – WPPDC/P(20)56

The Deputy Director explained the Commission received six proposals in response to the Pandemic Recovery & Resiliency Plan RFP. Those proposals were scored by a team of economic developers and presidents of the Chambers of Commerce, and the top three firms were invited to interview. The team interviewed the top three firms and scored them again. Thomas P. Miller & Associates ranked first after the interviews were scored. The Deputy Director stated the resolution would authorize staff to negotiate and execute a contract with Thomas P. Miller & Associates. He also stated there is excitement around the district related to this initiative.

Mr. George asked about the purpose of hiring a consultant and what the consultant would provide. The Deputy Director replied the consultant would offer several items, including data collection related to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, public outreach, facilitating discussions with community and regional partners, developing best practices and strategies for economic recovery and resiliency, and development of a dynamic website for the project and long-term economic planning initiatives.

In its earlier session, the Executive Committee recommended approval of the resolution, as presented.

Ms. Bowles made a motion, seconded by Mr. Jerry Adams, to accept the Executive Committee's recommendation to adopt the resolution authorizing contracting with Pandemic Recovery & Resiliency Planning Consultant. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW:

- a. HENRY COUNTY GRANT APPLICATION TO EDA FOR COMMONWEALTH CROSSING BUSINESS CENTRE NATURAL GAS PROJECT—WPPDC/P(20)57

The Deputy Director explained the Commission was supporting the development of an EDA application for Henry County to request \$3,000,000 in grant funds to construct a natural gas delivery system to Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre (CCBC). The total estimated project cost was \$7,800,000 and \$1,500,000 was already secured from the Appalachian Regional Commission. The project would construct 7,840 feet of 8-inch diameter steel pipeline from the Patriot Line to CCBC, a point-of-delivery

station at the tap of the Patriot Line, an on-site regulator station at CCBC, and 9,563 feet of 4-inch steel pipe in an on-site distribution system. The project will allow CCBC to be certified as the only Tier 5 industrial park in the region and will enable new private investment and creation of 200 jobs. The PER has been completed and the environmental narrative is in process.

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

b. PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY GRANT APPLICATION TO EDA FOR WATER AND WASTEWATER IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT—WPPDC/P(20)58

The Deputy Director explained the Commission was writing an EDA application for Pittsylvania County to request up to \$1,300,000 to improve critical water and wastewater infrastructure in the county. The total estimated project cost was \$2,600,000 and the county was identifying potential matching funds. The project included upgrades at six of the most critical pump stations, addressing deficiencies at the remaining pump stations, and replacing the Brockway pump station with new gravity sewer infrastructure. The project would retain over 500 jobs at several industrial parks and sites and add new sewer service at two industrial sites at Cane Creek Industrial Park. The PER and environmental narrative have been completed.

Mr. Sides made a motion, seconded by Ms. Lawson, to make favorable comment on the proposed EDA project. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Before moving forward with the agenda, the Chairman introduced and welcomed new WPPDC staff member, Kristie Eberly, Associate Director. The Executive Director explained Ms. Eberly's employment background and relevant experience with regional planning organizations, EDA, and grant writing and management. Ms. Eberly stated she was thrilled to join WPPDC and was looking forward to working in the district.

The Executive Director also welcomed a guest, Peter Stephenson with Virginia Risk Sharing Association. Mr. Stephenson explained he was just sitting in on the meeting to keep a pulse on the region. He recently attended the meeting of the New River Valley Regional Commission and wished the Commission a happy Thanksgiving.

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

a. DANVILLE MPO

The Executive Director announced the Danville MPO would focus the next study on the Piney Forest Road Corridor, a 2.6-mile length of road from Franklin Turnpike south to Holt Garrison Parkway. He explained there was a history of accidents in the corridor with several bad intersections and geometry. Some intersections had a high PSI, potential for safety improvements, which would be advantageous for future VDOT funding requests. There was a recent fatality at the intersection of Piney Forest Road and Ashe Street. The corridor also included opportunities to improve transit, pedestrian crossings, and multi-modal trails. The Danville MPO would meet in early December to consider the final cost proposal from the consultant, EPR.

b. REGIONAL PLANNING UPDATES – HAZARD MITIGATION, PANDEMIC RECOVERY & RESILIENCY, CEDS

The Deputy Director provided a brief update on the three on-going planning projects. He stated the Hazard Mitigation Plan is on schedule and a contract with Dewberry should be executed by late November to early December. Contract negotiations would begin soon with Thomas P. Miller & Associates to further the Pandemic Recovery & Resiliency Planning process. Finally, the CEDS update was on schedule with the CEDS Working committee scheduled to meet on November 23. The Deputy Director announced that Kristie Eberly would be taking over leadership on the CEDS update with support from Mr. Armbrister.

c. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET REQUESTS

The Executive Director noted that staff had received a request from Franklin County for the FY 2022 budget. The request was due in December and the amount would remain the same for the upcoming fiscal year. He expected the Pittsylvania County request would arrive soon with the remaining requests in early 2021. Staff would respond to the requests as received.

d. CHRISTMAS OFFICE SCHEDULE

The Executive Director indicated there would not be a lot of business going on during the holidays and reminded the Committee that the PDC followed the state holiday schedule. He respectfully requested that the PDC office be closed from December 24th to January 1st in observance of the Christmas and New Year holidays. He added that PDC staff had agreed to use annual leave for the additional days. The office would reopen on Monday, January 4, 2021.

In its earlier session, the Executive Committee recommended approval of the Christmas Office Schedule, as presented.

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

e. PERSONNEL AND OFFICE SCHEDULE

The Executive Director notified the Commission that staff continued to maintain altered work schedules in response to COVID-19. Recently, he implemented a rotating schedule to limit the number of staff in the office to no more than three staff members per floor. Staff were working from home when not in the office. He stated there are masks and cleaning products around the office to encourage safety, and all staff wear masks when in common office areas. The Chairman thanked the Executive Director for being conscientious of staff health and safety.

f. ON CALL CONSULTANT PROJECTS UPDATE

The Executive Director stated to-date, 10 on-call consultant contracts had been executed in the amount of \$350,000. Two additional on-call projects were pending for projects in Pittsylvania County and Martinsville. He reminded the Commission that the on-call program did not generate revenue for the WPPDC; however, it offered an added value to member local governments and eased the burden of local staff.

g. GRANT COORDINATION/PROJECT OUTREACH

The Deputy Director stated the Grant Coordinator, Kathleen McEvoy, was doing an excellent job reaching out to communities to develop projects. He also identified two grants that the WPPDC will administer if funded. The first grant was an ARC INSPIRE grant that would expand the Piedmont Community Services Board Community Recovery Program to include Patrick County. The second grant was an EDA application for Pittsylvania County to make critical water and wastewater infrastructure improvements. The Deputy Director asked Ms. McEvoy to discuss the projects she was working on.

Ms. McEvoy stated she was working to develop a regional Main Street how-to presentation for the cities and towns in the district. She was also working on a project in Rocky Mount to establish a co-working space and community commercial kitchen and a project in Martinsville to provide collaboration and technical support to the YMCA and Boys & Girls Club.

h. NEW PDC INFORMATIONAL FLYER

Ms. McEvoy explained that there are community partners who did not know what services the WPPDC offered. She developed the informational flyer to explain those services and help our partners know when to contact us for assistance. The Chairman added that he was pleased with the work Ms. McEvoy was doing to expand the WPPDC Facebook profile and send out weekly informational emails. He asked

Commissioners to contact staff if they had not received those emails. Mr. Rotenizer stated that he was pleased with the weekly Opportunity Tracker that Ms. McEvoy sends.

i. FALL 2020 PDC NEWSLETTER

The Executive Director notified the Commission that the Fall 2020 newsletter had been released and encouraged the Commissioners to read through the newsletter and share it through their networks. The Chairman added that Commissioners should share any local news with staff to be included in the next quarterly newsletter. The Executive Director thanked Joe Bonanno for his work to develop the quarterly newsletter.

j. MARTINSVILLE SOUTHERN CONNECTOR

The Executive Director explained the Martinsville Southern Connector project would improve US Route 220 from the North Carolina border to the Joseph Martin Interchange. The improvements would follow a new route and VDOT had spent 18 months completing an environmental impact statement for the project. The environmental review process was winding down with final public comments due by October 30, 2020. VDOT and FHWA were preparing the final environmental impact statement, which would receive one additional 30-day public comment period followed by final permitting by regulatory agencies. The real hurdle of the project would be securing the \$600 million needed for construction; however, the completion of the environmental review was not an insignificant feat.

9. ESTABLISHMENT OF PER CAPITA CONTRIBUTION RATE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022

The Executive Director discussed the per capita contribution, noting that staff recommended level funding for localities, based on the 2010 Census population figures with the rate of 55 cents per capita for FY 2022. He also discussed the possible need to consider increasing the rate for FY 2023 based on the new Census 2020 population figures and a need to support the Grant Coordinator position.

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

Ms. Walker made a motion, seconded by Mr. George, 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.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

The Executive Director referenced a letter from VDOT and the Commonwealth Transportation Board regarding the Six-Year Plan. A new Six-Year plan was not adopted and VDOT would focus on maintaining the projects in the current pipeline to keep them funded and on schedule. VDOT may backfill funding using some unobligated revenue sharing funds. The letter was for information only.

11. COMMENTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Mr. George asked about the status of the Berry Hill Connector Road. The Executive Director stated that the project was funded, and the construction advertisement date would be in 2022 or 2023. The construction at the Berry Hill intersection with US Route 58 was a separate project funded through the first round of Smart Scale applications.

Mr. Mitchell announced that Franklin County's water tank on US Route 220 was showcased in County News. The water tank features Franklin County on one side and Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge on the other side. The Executive Director stated Franklin County was also recognized recently by VACO.

Mr. Rotenizer recognized the recent improvements to the WPPDC social media presence, and stated Kathleen was doing a great job keeping it updated. He also complimented Mr. Bonanno for his work on the Complete Streets project and welcomed Ms. Eberly to the WPPDC. Finally, he asked about the status of the

Native Plants project and suggested the WPPDC digitize all reports from the beginning of WPPDC to add to the website to commemorate the 50th anniversary.

The Chairman congratulated all Commissioners who were recently elected or re-elected to their local government positions. He asked Ms. Bowles to comment on Martinsville's Five Points Revitalization project. Ms. Bowles stated the project was identified through a housing summit attended by the Harvest Foundation and others. During the summit, the need for quality, affordable workforce housing was stressed. Ms. Lawson added the project is a public-private partnership that will result in 12 single family homes and 15 townhomes in an area of the city where blight was removed previously through a CDBG grant. The project received \$500,000 from Virginia Housing that would fund the necessary infrastructure for the homes and reduce the purchase prices.

The Executive Director wished a happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas to the Commissioners and advised the Commission would not meeting again until February 2021.

12. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

David R. Hoback
Executive Director