

WEST PIEDMONT PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION

MINUTES

of the

May 27, 2021 Meeting

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

(Meeting ID 952 4737 7400, Passcode 442804)

<https://zoom.us/j/95247377400?pwd=QitKc0VsTW1iUnJ2aVBleWFMZFU0dz09>

(Call In information 1-301-715-8592, 952 4737 7400#, 0#, 442804#)

At 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Leland Mitchell
David Rotenizer
Tim Tatum

PATRICK COUNTY

Clayton Kendrick, Jr.

DANVILLE

Kimberly Walker

ROCKY MOUNT

Ralph Casey

PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY

Ron Searce, Vice Chairman
Greg Sides

MARTINSVILLE

Jennifer Bowles
Kathy Lawson, Treasurer

HENRY COUNTY

Jim Adams, Chairman
Wes George
Tommy Slaughter

ABSENT

Jerry Adams, Patrick County
James Buckner, Danville
Lee Vogler, Danville
Vic Ingram, Pittsylvania County
Ronikka Hannans, Martinsville
Denise Stirewalt, Patrick County

STAFF

David R. Hoback, Executive Director
Michael Armbrister, Deputy Director
Jacob Bullins, Administrative Assistant
Kristie Eberly, Associate Director
David Rakes, Cartographer/Planning Technician

1. Call to Order and Welcome

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

2. Regional Forum Opportunity – Comments from Public

There were no comments.

3. Points Arising from Previous Meetings

There were none.

4. **Consent Agenda**

- a. *Confirmation of Minutes of the March 25, 2021 Meeting – WPPDC/M(21)2*
- b. *Treasurer’s Report – March 31, 2021 – WPPDC/P(21)18 and April 30, 2021 – WPPDC/P(21)19*
- c. *West Piedmont Planning District Commission Quarterly Report of Activities: State Data Affiliate Center and VEC Business & Industry Data Center Programs – Third Quarter, F2021 – WPPDC/P(21)20*

Mr. Rotenizer made a motion, seconded by Ms. Bowles, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

5. **Intergovernmental Review: AeroFarms Danville LLC, USDA RD Rural Business Cooperative Service Funding – WPPDC/P(21)21**

The Associate Director reported that an intergovernmental review request was received from AeroFarms Danville LLC. Their proposed project includes a building of 140,000 square feet for a vertical growing, year-round aeroponic facility and is projected to create 92 jobs. They have requested a \$25 million loan from USDA Rural Development. Staff is recommending Board approval.

Mr. George made a motion, seconded by Ms. Lawson, to approve the Intergovernmental Review for AeroFarms Danville LLC. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

6. **Proposed Fiscal Year 2022 Strategy Statement and Work Program – WPPDC/P(21)22**

The Deputy Director stated the same process as has been used in prior years was used to develop the Draft Work Program/Strategy Statement, review of the current program and evaluation of upcoming projects to determine what changes are needed.

The key changes for FY2022 are:

- Under Program Category 2.0: Regional Planning, the addition of sub-category 2.13 – Historic Preservation Promotion and Assistance. This was a recommendation from Commission member, Mr. Rotenizer and he assisted in developing the objective and description. Based on some of the work that the WPPDC is now doing with downtown revitalization, staff felt this sub-category was needed.
- Addition of Program Category 14.0: Grant Administration. Projects that the WPPDC will be administering will be added as sub-categories. The first project to be added is 14.1 the ARC INSPIRE project with Piedmont CSB for their recovery program expansion in Patrick and Henry counties.

At the April 22, 2021, meeting, the Executive Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the Board approve the Fiscal Year 2022 Strategy Statement and Work Program.

Ms. Lawson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Rotenizer, to accept the Executive Committee’s recommendation to approve the Fiscal Year 2022 Strategy Statement and Work Program. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

7. **Proposed Fiscal Year 2022 Administrative Budget – WPPDC/P(21)23**

The Deputy Director reported that while the budget is consistent from year to year, there are a few changes for FY2022.

Revenue from the Commonwealth of Virginia will increase \$6,942 due to an increase in funding of \$14,000 from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and a decrease in funding from VDRPT Rideshare of \$7,058 due to the pandemic. Under Local Governments Items 8 through 12 are projects that have been applied for but have not been awarded or if awarded, contract negotiation is not complete. The amount of grant administration

for these projects will be added to the budget when determined. From Federal sources, the Economic Development Administration (EDA) CARES funding is a two-year grant and will end in FY2022. The WPPDC will be providing grant administration for Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) INSPIRE grant project which includes \$1,500 of administration. Due to the current rates, Interest Income is decreased by \$7,800. Total Revenues are budgeted to be \$651,799 which is an increase of \$10,270 compared to FY2021.

Expenditures include a proposed 5% increase for staff as there was no increase in FY2021 and member jurisdictions and the state are also proposing a 5% increase. Overall, there is a decrease in Salaries, Employee Benefits and Payroll Taxes due to the retirement of the Executive Director. Computer Related Costs will decrease \$7,000 as several computers were purchased in the prior fiscal year. Dues will increase \$4,800 as staff is proposing the WPPDC join the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) and Southeast Regional Directors Institute (SERDI) and American Planning Association (APA) dues for two staff members. Equipment will decrease \$7,000 as this had been budgeted in FY2021 for conference table and chairs. Total Expenditures are budgeted to be \$595,130 which is a decrease of \$73,366 compared to FY2021.

The difference in revenue over expenditures is \$56,669. Of this amount, \$26,967 will repay the reserve fund from the staff transition. Some funds will be used for proposed capital projects such as the replacement of a HVAC unit and repaving the front parking lot and to support the Grant Coordinator position after the CARES grant ends.

The Executive Director stated that he supported the Deputy Director's efforts to increase revenue through grant administration as the budget will not be as strong when the CARES Act funding ends.

At the April 22, 2021, meeting, the Executive Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the Board approve the Fiscal Year 2022 Administrative Budget.

Mr. George made a motion, seconded by Ms. Bowles, to accept the Executive Committee's recommendation to approve the Fiscal Year 2022 Administrative Budget. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

8. Consideration of the Revised WPPDC Charter – WPPDC/P(21)24

The Executive Director stated that some clarification updates to the WPPDC Charter, which was last revised in 1973, were discussed at the March meeting and staff recommended several changes. The Commission directed staff to provide a revised copy and a redline copy for review. The most significant change is the deletion of Article 2, Section 1 which is in direct conflict with Article 1, Section 2 regarding how the Commission appoints members. It has been clarified to state two elected officials and one citizen member from each community. Article 6 now specifically states that to be a member of the WPPDC the locality has to have a population of 3,500 or more which is consistent with the Code of Virginia for PDCs. It was also added that the WPPDC annually elects a Treasurer. Before the Commission can vote on these changes, a resolution from a majority of the member jurisdictions is required.

Ms. Lawson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Rotenizer, to approve the amendments to the WPPDC Charter and request a resolution approving the proposed changes from member jurisdictions. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

9. Consideration of Audit Services Proposals – WPPDC/P(21)25

The Executive Director stated that the contract for audit services ended with the completion of the FY2020 audit. Proposals were solicited for three years of audit services and two proposals were received from Dunham, Aukamp & Rhodes, who is the current auditor, and Robinson, Farmer, Cox Associates. The proposals were reviewed by Mrs. Lawson, Mr. Hoback, Mr. Armbrister and Mr.

Bullins and they are recommending Dunham, Aukamp & Rhodes as this firm has done good work in past years, they understand the financial operations of the Commission and their fee is lower.

At its earlier session, the Executive Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the Board accept the proposal from Dunham, Aukamp & Rhodes for audit services.

Mr. George made a motion, seconded by Mr. Sides, to accept the proposal from Dunham, Aukamp & Rhodes for audit services. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

10. Consideration of Policy for the WPPDC On-Call Consulting Program – WPPDC/P(21)26

The Executive Director stated that the On-Call Consulting Program was developed to save time on consulting services procurement in emergency situations. There are currently agreements in place with Dewberry Engineering and EPR. The program has been in place since 2012 and it would be beneficial to have a written policy for the benefit of the PDC, jurisdictions and contractors. Staff has drafted a policy for review and are recommending a cap at \$125,000 for an individual consulting contract and an aggregate total cap of \$2 million over the 5-year contract period. The cap can be exceeded, with proper documentation from the requesting locality, in the case of a public health or safety emergency. The cap would be for any project requests after the effective date of the policy. The recommended caps are based on input from other PDCs and is compliant with the Virginia Procurement Act.

At its earlier session, the Executive Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the Board adopt the WPPDC On-Call Consulting Program Policy.

Mr. Sides made a motion, seconded by Mr. Casey, to adopt the WPPDC On-Call Consulting Program Policy. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

11. Updates and Reports on WPPDC Regional Projects/Staff Activities

a. Piney Forest Road Corridor Study

The Deputy Director stated that the Danville MPO has initiated a study on the Piney Forest Road Corridor, a 2.5-mile length of road from Franklin Turnpike south to Holt Garrison Parkway. EPR is the consultant for the study, and they are near completion of Phase 1, including data collection, assessment of the crash data, assessment of access road spacing and have identified multi-modal improvement opportunities. The findings were presented to the MPO Board on March 22 and a public meeting was held on April 27. WPPDC staff has worked with VDOT and EPR to develop a Metro Quest interactive survey, which has had over 475 responses to date, and EPR will analyze the survey data this summer. Phase 2 of the study will start in late summer which will include on-site work and the opportunity for public input.

b. Update on Regional Planning Projects

The Deputy Director reported that there are two regional planning projects underway. The Pandemic Recovery and Resiliency Plan is an economic development plan based on the impact of the pandemic on the regional economy. Thomas P. Miller & Associates, the consultant working on the project, was on-site last week and met with local leaders and toured some facilities. The next step will be talking with businesses and industries for their input. There is also a branding component to the project. The Branding Committee has been meeting and determining the direction of this part of the project. The branding consultant will be on site during the summer to capture videos and developing content for the new quality of life website that will promote the region to people who want to relocate. The first public meeting was held on April 29 with limited public participation. There is also a survey, available on the WPPDC website, but there have only been 14 responses to date.

The Hazard Mitigation Plan is also underway, and Dewberry is the consultant working on the project. They will complete the second round of Local Planning Team meetings next week to finalize hazard identification and risk assessment in each community and reviewing mitigation strategies. A public meeting was held on May 4 with limited public participation. There is also an interactive survey, available on the WPPDC website, but there have only been 11 responses to date.

The Associate Director reported that the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) update will be starting in July. As part of the preparation, staff will be reviewing the CEDS Committee membership and determine if members would like to continue to participate. Suggestions for new members that are business owners or minority representatives would be appreciated.

c. WPPDC Housing Initiative

The Deputy Director notified the Board that staff has developed a new housing initiative to improve the housing conditions in the region. The PDC was approached by Virginia Housing and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership about being the facilitator of a regional housing study. An application for \$120,000 will be submitted to Virginia Housing tomorrow for the study and we will be working with Virginia Tech's Center for Housing Research.

The PDC applied to the Danville Regional Foundation for funding to create a housing planner position. The request has been funded and an application will be made to the Harvest Foundation for matching funds. This position will aid in applying for and administering housing rehabilitation and housing production grants from the Department of Housing and Community Development, Virginia Housing and other sources.

Virginia Housing has developed a new program, the Planning District Commission Housing Development Program and are encouraging all PDCs to apply for this non-competitive grant program. WPPDC will be eligible for a \$2 million grant for housing production to build 20 affordable housing units over the three-year grant period. This will probably be accomplished through the WPPDC awarding grants to local organizations who will build the units. The grant will allow for the hiring of a staff person to manage the program.

Franklin County will be holding a Housing Summit for builders next week and PDC staff is working with them on some surveys to help the county remain in contact after the summit.

d. Grants Update

The Deputy Director reported that the Grant Coordinator, Kathleen McEvoy, and Associate Director, Kristie Eberly, have written or assisted with several grants for local jurisdictions since the March meeting. This includes two Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) planning grants and two more are in progress, three CDBG Coronavirus projects were submitted and awarded, an ARC POWER application for Patrick County, a Virginia Department of Health Drinking Water Fund application for Boones Mill, assisted with two applications to the Citizens Institute for Rural Design, assisted with an application to Virginia Main Street for Rocky Mount, working on an EDA application for Pittsylvania County and submitted applications to AARP, Virginia Outdoors Foundation, Kubota Foundation, Reynolds Foundation and Keeping Virginia Beautiful with a total submission amount of over \$1.5 million. The Grant Coordinator also led a grant writing workshop in Patrick County with about 30 attendees and looking hold workshops in other communities. The Grant Coordinator position is funded through a CARES Act grant.

e. T-TAC Advisory Committee Membership Recommendation

The Executive Director explained that the T-TAC Advisory Committee meets 3-4 times per year to review various planning projects and exchange information, especially with Virginia

Department of Transportation, on transportation projects. He would like the Board to consider integrating some citizen members of the Commission into the T-TAC Committee to educate them on transportation projects and to meet the citizen component of the committee.

f. **West Piedmont Health District Targeted Map**

The Executive Director stated that the West Piedmont Health District asked the PDC to create a map showing COVID vaccines in Martinsville and Henry County. Cartographer, David Rakes, who worked on this project, took census track boundary data and overlaid it on a map of the county that health staff can use to determine areas lagging in participation.

g. **Danville-Pittsylvania Road Map**

The Executive Director reported that the PDC has produced promotional road maps with points of interest and graphics for all localities except Danville-Pittsylvania area. There is interest now in doing one and staff is discussing and have provided an example of the Patrick County map.

12. **Report of Nominating Committee for Fiscal Year 2022 & Election of Officers**

The Chairman reported that Executive Committee discussed the Election of Officers at the April 22 meeting and the need for a smooth transition with the upcoming retirement of Mr. Hoback. It is the recommendation of the Executive Committee that the same slate of officers, consisting of Chairman Jim Adams, Vice Chairman Ron Searce and Treasurer Kathy Lawson, be presented. The Chairman asked if there were any other nominations and there were none.

Ms. Bowles made a motion, seconded by Mr. George, to accept the Nominating Committee's recommended slate of officers as presented. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

13. **Appointment of Grievance Officer for Fiscal Years 2022 and 2023**

The Deputy Director stated that every two years a Grievance Officer is appointed. Mr. Fred Gehrke has served in that role for several terms and has agreed to continue to serve if appointed.

At its earlier session, the Executive Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the Board appoint Mr. Gehrke to serve as Grievance Officer for another two-year term.

Ms. Lawson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Casey, to appoint Mr. Gehrke to another two-year term as Grievance Officer. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

14. **Appointment of New WPPDC Executive Director Effective July 1, 2021**

The Executive Director stated that when he decided to retire last year, the search process began so that staff would be in place before his retirement. Mr. Armbrister was hired in June 2020 and since then he has met or exceeded performance expectations. The Executive Director recommended that Mr. Armbrister be appointed Executive Director effective July 1, 2021.

At its earlier session, the Executive Committee voted unanimously to recommend that Mr. Michael Armbrister be appointed Executive Director effective July 1, 2021.

Ms. Rotenizer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Casey, to appoint Mr. Armbrister Executive Director effective July 1, 2021. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

15. **Other Business**

The Executive Director stated that Ms. Jennifer Bowles of Martinsville has been nominated to serve on the Board of Directors of the Virginia Association of Planning Districts.

The Deputy Director stated that broadband is still an important topic in the region. There is a meeting with three of the counties next week and depending on the outcome, the PDC may be submitting a regional application to Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI).

Mr. Casey announced that the hospital in Rocky Mount is starting on a new wing of the hospital.

Mr. Rotenizer noted that the Blue Ridge Parkway Association had its annual meeting today. This is a very important part of our region and he wanted to share the new map with the Commission members. He also wanted to thank the PDC for including historic preservation on the work plan.

The Chairman read a resolution for the Board's consideration to acknowledge the service of Mr. David Hoback to the West Piedmont PDC. Mr. Scearce made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mitchell, to adopt the resolution for Mr. David Hoback's service to the West Piedmont PDC. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously. Several Board members thanked Mr. Hoback for his service and wished him well in retirement.

16. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.



Michael Armbrister
Executive Director