

WEST PIEDMONT PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION

MINUTES

of the

August 26, 2021 Meeting

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

(Meeting ID 870 4570 0625, Passcode 459930)

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87045700625?pwd=bXNhQnB5WHFuM2U2eVVwT3RpRHVSdz09>

(Call In Information 1-301-715-8592, 87045700625, 459930)

At 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Leland Mitchell
David Rotenizer

PATRICK COUNTY

Jerry Adams
Clayton Kendrick, Jr.
Denise Stirewalt

DANVILLE

Lee Vogler

ROCKY MOUNT

PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY

Ron Scearce, Vice Chairman
Vic Ingram

MARTINSVILLE

Jennifer Bowles
Kathy Lawson, Treasurer
Ronikka Hannas

HENRY COUNTY

Jim Adams, Chairman
Wes George

ABSENT

Tim Tatum, Franklin County
James Buckner, Danville
Kimberly Walker, Danville
Tommy Slaughter, Henry County
Greg Sides, Pittsylvania County
Lucas Tuning, Rocky Mount

STAFF

Michael Armbrister, Executive Director
Jacob Bullins, Finance Director
Kristie Eberly, Regional Programs Director

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 May 27, 2021 Meeting*
- b. Treasurer's Report – May 31, 2021*
- c. Register of Administrative Reviews Under the Virginia Intergovernmental Review Process – June, July, August 2021*
- d. West Piedmont Planning District Commission Quarterly Report of Activities: State Data Affiliate Center and VEC Business & Industry Data Center Programs – Fourth Quarter, FY2021*

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

5. Consideration of Amended Fiscal Year 2022 Administrative Budget

The Executive Director stated that when the 2022 Administrative Budget was being developed there were several projects that were expected to be under contract but were not at the time. The projects are now under contract and can be added to the budget. Under Revenues, three CDBG planning grants and two housing grants were added which increased the Total Revenues to \$768,549. There are seven possible projects, listed in italics, that are expected to be actual projects in the coming months and when under contract will be added to the budget total. There is also an increase in Expenditures in the Salaries, Employee Benefits and Payroll Taxes line items with the addition of a housing projects position which is being funded for three years through two grants. There is a difference of \$111,618 of Revenues over Expenditures. This will be added to the Reserve Fund to help fund grant administration and project staff next year.

Ms. Stirewalt made a motion, seconded by Mr. Adams, to approve the Amended Fiscal Year 2022 Administrative Budget. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

6. Consideration of Amended Fiscal Year 2022 Strategy Statement and Work Program

The Executive Director stated that the projects that were added to the budget are also added to the Work Program. Under Program Category 8.0 Housing two sub-categories were added, Sub-Category 8.1 Regional Housing Study and Sub-Category 8.2 PDC Housing Production Program. Under Program Category 14.0 Grant Administration the projects that are under contract or anticipated to be under contract have also been added.

Ms. Stirewalt made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mitchell, to approve the Amended Fiscal Year 2022 Strategy Statement and Work Program. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

7. Consideration of the Revised WPPDC Charter

The Executive Director stated that at the last two meetings Mr. Hoback reviewed proposed changes to the WPPDC Charter. At the May 2021 meeting the Board authorized staff to send the proposed changed charter to the local governments with a Resolution of Concurrence. A Resolution of Concurrence has been received from a majority of the local government members and staff recommends final adoption of the revised charter.

Ms. Lawson made a motion, seconded by Ms. Bowles, to adopt the revised WPPDC Charter. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

8. Consideration of WPPDC Telework Policy

The Executive Director stated that staff has been working from home and the office on a mixed schedule for over a year and it has been successful. Some of the staff enjoy working from an alternate location and it has not affected productivity. When staff is back in the office, the telework policy will give staff the option to work one day a week out of the office with the approval of the Executive Director and staff performance under this policy will be reviewed annually by the Executive Director. The proposed policy outlines the requirements and responsibilities for both the

PDC and employee and allows the PDC to terminate the telework agreement if the employee is not meeting expectations.

In discussions with other PDCs, telework has become a benefit and most have adopted a telework policy. When hiring new staff, a telework policy will make the PDC more competitive. Policies from several PDCs were reviewed and this policy is based on the policy adopted by the Thomas Jefferson PDC.

The Chairman stated that the proposed Telework Policy was unanimously approved by the Executive Committee.

Mr. George asked that since the policy is only for 8 hours per week, if the Covid pandemic get worse or another situation arises that staff need to work from home, can the policy be amended to fit the circumstances? The Executive Director stated the policy will not go into effect until staff is back in the office full time. If a situation arises where working from home more hours per week is the safest option, then this policy would be set aside and an emergency policy would be enacted.

Ms. Bowles asked if staff is exposed to Covid will they be allowed to work from home for the two week quarantine period? The Executive Director stated that staff can work from home during a quarantine period.

Mr. George made a motion, seconded by Mr. Rotenizer, to approve the WPPDC Telework Policy. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

9. Intergovernmental Reviews:

a) Pittsylvania County's USEPA Community-Wide Brownfields Coalition Assessment Grant

The Regional Programs Director stated that this was submitted by Pittsylvania County for an EPA grant to conduct environmental site assessments at one site in each of the towns of Chatham, Gretna, Hurt and two sites in Pittsylvania County. The project total is \$600,000.

Ms. Lawson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Adams, to give favorable comment to Pittsylvania County's USEPA Community-Wide Brownfields Coalition Assessment Grant application. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

b) Pittsylvania County – EDA ARPA Public Water and Sewer Infrastructure Critical Improvements

The Regional Programs Director stated that the project will upgrade water and sewer infrastructure including Cane Creek Centre and Ringgold East industrial parks. The project total is \$2,800,000.

Ms. Bowles made a motion, seconded by Ms. Lawson, to give favorable comment to Pittsylvania County EDA ARPA Public Water and Sewer Infrastructure Critical Improvements application. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

c) City of Martinsville's USDA Reservoir Emergency Generator Project

The Regional Programs Director stated that the project is for an emergency generator to continue the flow of water from the reservoir to the water pumps in the event of a power outage. The project total is \$123,000.

Ms. Lawson made a motion, seconded by Ms. Bowles, to give favorable comment to Pittsylvania County EDA ARPA Public Water and Sewer Infrastructure Critical Improvements application. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

d) WPPDC's Regional Agritourism and Agribusiness Development Program EDA Application

The Regional Programs Director stated that this is a new program. The application is for an economic impact study, an inventory of the agritourism assets in the region and development of a website to market the businesses. The application is for \$115,000.

Mr. Rotenizer made a motion, seconded by Ms. Stirewalt, to give favorable comment to WPPDC's Regional Agritourism and Agribusiness Development Program EDA Application. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

10. Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission Application for the Establishment of a Regional Agritourism and Agribusiness Development Program

The Regional Programs Director stated that this is the same project as the EDA application and will be used as match for EDA funding. The EDA funding cannot be used for marketing and this application supports the creation of the website and marketing of the businesses. The application is for \$80,000.

Mr. Rotenizer made a motion, seconded by Ms. Lawson, to approve the Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission Application for the Establishment of a Regional Agritourism and Agribusiness Development Program. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

11. Executive Director's Report

The Executive Director stated that he has made a change to a written Executive Director's Report and will not review the whole report but will highlight some key items.

The WPPDC Housing Initiative is a three-part approach, applications to the Danville Regional Foundation and the Harvest Foundation will fund a housing initiative staff person, the \$2 million award from Virginia Housing for a three-year housing production projects and the application to Virginia Housing for a regional housing assessment and plan. A housing focused staff person has been hired and is currently working on two projects. It is anticipated that the funding for the regional housing assessment and plan will be approved in the next few months.

The WPPDC is going to be the applicant on two broadband applications with the ISP, Riverstreet Networks. The applications will go outside of the West Piedmont footprint and have been discussed with the other PDCs. The West Piedmont PDC West application is Carroll, Patrick, Henry and Franklin counties and the West Piedmont PDC East application is Pittsylvania, Bedford, Campbell and northern Charlotte counties. The goal of these projects with the Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) is universal coverage with fiber to the home and where not feasible, fixed wireless. The projects are estimated to be \$118 million and \$60 million. There may be a third application for Patrick and Carroll counties.

The Pandemic Recovery and Economic Resiliency Plan (PRRP) and the Hazard Mitigation Plans are almost completed. The draft PRRP will be presented to the committee on September 9 with the final draft completed the end of September. The Hazard Mitigation Plan was presented to the committee on August 5 and is going to FEMA and VDEM for review.

In the next few months the 5-year update of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy will be starting, which will complement the PRRP, and an update of the Regional Strategic Plan which is required for PDCs in the Code of Virginia.

The Executive Director noted the list of projects that staff has been working on recently and praised their efforts on behalf of local governments and community partners.

If Board members have any suggestions for the annual legislative program, let Mr. Armbrister know.

EDA has six ARPA funding opportunities available now and the WPPDC region is eligible to apply for this funding. Any local governments considering applying should contact the PDC for assistance.

The WPPDC Personnel Policy has not been updated since 2016. Staff has begun the review process and a draft will be presented at a future Executive Committee meeting. Also, staff job descriptions and titles were outdated and have been updated.

The Executive Director recognized the efforts of Tracy Meade, WPPDC Office Manager, in leading the effort to clean out and reorganize the WPPDC files and office spaces. Her efforts have opened two additional office spaces and created new staff workspaces.

12. Other Business

There was none.

13. Comments from Commissioners

Ms. Bowles stated that she really appreciated the new format of the Executive Director's Report.

Ms. Stirewalt commended the staff and is impressed by the work they are doing.

14. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m.



Michael Armbrister
Executive Director