

WEST PIEDMONT PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION

MINUTES

of the

May 25, 2023 Meeting

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

PRESENT

Jim Adams, Chairman, Henry County
Wes George, Henry County
Jerry Adams, Patrick County
Clayton Kendrick, Patrick County
Denise Stirewalt, Patrick County
Ralph Casey, Rocky Mount
Lucas Turning, Rocky Mount
Tyler Lee, Rocky Mount
Kimberly Walker, Danville
Kathy Lawson, Treasurer, Martinsville
Aaron Rawls, Martinsville
Joe Martin, Martinsville
David Rotenizer, Franklin County
Ron Scarce, Pittsylvania County
Greg Sides, Pittsylvania County

ABSENT

Tommy Slaughter, Henry County
Lee Vogler, Vice Chairman, Danville
Dr. Gary Miller, Danville
Tim Tatum, Franklin County
Vic Ingram, Pittsylvania County

STAFF

Michael Armbrister, Executive Director
Kristie Eberly, Regional Programs Director
Olivia Garrett, Regional Programs Specialist

GUESTS

Jennifer Bowles

(V) = Virtual Attendance

In accordance with the ***West Piedmont PDC Remote Electronic Participation and All-Virtual Meeting Policy***, members attended virtually for the following reasons:

No Commissioners attended this meeting virtually.

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. Consent Agenda

a. *Confirmation of Minutes of the March 23, 2023 Meeting*

b. *Treasurer's Report – February 28, 2023 and March 31, 2023*

c. Register of Administrative Reviews Under the Virginia Intergovernmental Review Process-April and May 2023

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

4. Staff Spotlight: Olivia Garrett

The Executive Director stated that for Board Members to get better acquainted with staff members and the work they are doing, he will be asking each staff member to give a short presentation at upcoming board meetings.

Mrs. Olivia Garrett, Regional Program Specialist, is working on several projects:

- Town of Chatham received an ARPA grant from the Virginia Department of Health, Office of Drinking Water for about \$3.5 million dollars for waterworks improvement and connections. Mrs. Garrett is responsible for hosting and managing monthly progress meetings with the Town, VDH and Dewberry, reviewing requisitions, complete quarterly reports and making sure the project is on track for completion. Dewberry is in the design phase and hoping to be about 50% complete by summer 2023, construction is expected to be start Spring 2024 with completion by Spring 2025.
- The Town of Hurt has an upcoming project with FPAP funding through the Office of Drinking Water and the WPPDC will be providing labor compliance and an asset management plan.
- The Health Advisory Committee is an informal committee comprised of health oriented groups, area hospital's top level administrators and community colleges. The committee focuses on relationship building and information sharing. Through this the group has identified a need for increasing and improving the health workforce in our area. The WPPDC was introduced to Dr. John Creasy, the Executive Director for Southern Virginia Partnership for Health Science Careers and has become the fiscal agent for that group. They have been awarded a \$130,000 grant from the Clyde Moore Foundation and are currently working on a Go Virginia Grant. Next meeting slated for August 24, 2023, at Danville Community College that will include a tour of the college campus and what their Health Sciences program offers.
- A periodic release of the Legislative Newsletter and putting together the Annual Legislative Agenda, reaching out to local Legislators and meeting with them individually and explaining what the WPPDC plans and priorities are for the upcoming year.
- The Plant Southern Piedmont Natives Campaign, which is part of a statewide initiative and has been successful in other areas such as the Eastern Shore, Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia. The Southern Virginia Region is comprised of 18 counties and the campaign promotes and showcases the need for native plants and discourages the use of invasive species. There are currently two projects in our area. Piedmont Arts are in the construction phase of a Pollinator Path that will be located behind the Piedmont Arts building and through Art Garden with the long term plan to advance across to Mulberry Road and past the Natural History Building and the YMCA and connect to the Silver Bells Trail. The second project is in the early stages with the Lester Group who is celebrating their 125th Anniversary by building a 125th Anniversary Park including a trail where there will be space for a garden as well.
- Life in SOVA – Development continues to make this a marketing hub where tourist coming to this area have questions about what activities that there are to do or places to go, they can go to this website to see what the region has to offer. Examples being Agritourism/Agribusiness, and the adding of the Moonshine Heritage Trail and Outdoor Recreation.
- Moonshine Heritage Trail is a partnership of Patrick, Franklin and Floyd Counties. The project has received a \$5,500 grant from Virginia Tourism Grant with Patrick and Franklin Counties providing most of the match. The first steps in the project will be branding and logo and

securing different stops along the trail. A 15 person Steering Committee has been established to guide the project.

5. Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission Application for the Establishment of a Regional Outdoor Recreation Development Program

The Executive Director stated that the Commission is working with the Friends of Southwest Virginia on the Outdoor Recreation Development Program because two of the localities, Patrick and Franklin Counties, fall in the Southwest Virginia area. These two counties will also be included in Southern Virginia so this will allow them to be marketed twice. The application for project funding to the Virginia Tobacco Commission requires a resolution from the WPPDC Board. Staff recommendation is for the Board approval of submission of the Virginia Tobacco Commission application and to authorize the Executive Director as the authorized agent for the funding.

Mr. David Rotenizer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Jerry Adams, to approve the submission of the Virginia Tobacco Commission Application and to authorize the Executive Director the authorizing agent to receive funding. Upon vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

6. Consideration of Proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Administrative Budget

The Executive Director reviewed the proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Budget and noted changes from the FY2023 budget.

Revenues:

- Under Commonwealth of Virginia, item 6 VDH- Office of Drinking Water, there is a \$9,000 increase to administer VDH grant funds. This has been a slow process but we are now working with the Towns of Chatham and Hurt and Pittsylvania County.
- Under Local Governments, items 8-13 have zero funding due to the projects having closed within the current fiscal year with no anticipated funding in the next fiscal year. Many of those were planning grant activities so we are now submitting implementation grants and do expect additional funding for those projects once approved. Under items 20-22, WPPDC East, West and Pittsylvania VATI Grants, the West Piedmont Commission was awarded all three VATI FY2023 applications and secured 33% at the state level of \$1.3 million. Under item 22, are potential projects for FY2024 included Ferrum CDBG Planning Grant, Town of Stuart Downtown CDBG, Town of Boones Mill Downtown CDBG, Town of Hurt VDH Administration, Town of Chatham Housing Rehab CDBG Planning Grant, Town of Chatham Downtown CDBG Planning Grant, DHRA Housing Production CDBG Planning Grant. These potential grants are listed with the anticipated income if approved but are not added in the total.
- Under Federal, items 5 & 6 Appalachian Regional Commission Critz Comm and EDA Agritourism/Agribusiness Projects are projects that have closed out with no anticipated revenue from those projects. Item 9 ARC READY LLD Grant, is an opportunity that the Appalachia Regional Commission created for PDC's and LDD's (Local Development Districts). When funding was announced, and there is no match requirement, of up to \$100,000 for each PDC, WPPDC applied. WPPDC was the first to be awarded funding. This is a one-time grant and will be awarded on July 1, 2023, so that it falls into the new fiscal year. The funds will be split in half utilizing half in FY2024 and the other half of the funding in FY2025. Potential projects are Franklin/Patrick EDA EAA Grant, Franklin/Bedford RAISE Grant, Patrick ARC Broadband Grant and Town of Stuart Downtown ARC.
- Under Other, potential projects are VH ARS Program Planning Grant which we are anticipating applying for in July and Southern Virginia Partnership for Health Science Career for which WPPDC will be serving as the fiscal agent.

Operating Expenditures:

- The increase in Salaries, Employee Benefits, and Payroll Taxes includes a 5% increase for staff and a new staff position of a Housing Rehab Specialist whose salary is unfunded but will be creating revenue when started.

- All new computers for staff
- Travel has increased for staff in Rural Leadership Program
- Housing Program Equipment is the capital purchase of a XRF Analyzer (lead gun) which will allow the WPPDC Housing Department to do lead testing on our rehab projects and will allow us to also work with the Department of Social Services by providing lead risk assessments and providing those services at a flexible reduced cost of about \$1,000 per household with a quick turnaround. Sercap has also requested West Piedmont to be their contractor. It is anticipated that the lead gun will be paid off in 1 to 1.5 years.

The proposed budget projects Revenues of \$1,101,053 and Operating Expenditures of \$1,041.357 with a remaining balance of \$39,696 for the Reserve Fund.

The Proposed Fiscal Year 2023 Budget was recommended for adoption by the Executive Committee at their meeting in April.

Mr. Jerry Adams made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Kathy Lawson, to recommend that the Board approve the Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2023. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

7. Consideration of Proposed Work Program for Fiscal Year 2024

The Executive Director stated that the Work Program, which connects to the budget, is presented to the Board before the start of each fiscal year and defines the activities and proposed activities for the year. There are not many changes for FY2024 as most of the new programs were added last year.

The key changes for FY2024 are:

- Under Program Categories, there are no new work categories. A sub-category was included for the new ARC READY LDD grant and Housing Rehab Specialist Program. Additional new and possible sub-categories were added under 14.0 Grant Administration

The Proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Work Program was recommended for adoption by the Executive Committee at their meeting in April.

Ms. Kimberly Walker made a motion, seconded by Mr. David Rotenizer, to adopt the Proposed Work Program for Fiscal Year 2024. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

8. Consideration of Fiscal Year 2023 Calendar

The Executive Director stated that as part of the preparation for the new fiscal year he has develop a calendar of Board meeting dates and the closing of the office for the Christmas Holiday so that Board members know the schedule in advance. He noted that the December 7, 2023, is the November/December meeting and will only be held if there is business. The PDC office traditionally close for a week at Christmas, December 25-29 in 2023, and staff generally take annual leave that week or work from home.

Mr. Aaron Rawls made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Denise Stirewalt, to adopt the Fiscal Year 2024 Calendar. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

9. Executive Director's Report

The Executive Director highlighted some projects in the written report provided in the Board meeting packet.

The Executive Director reviewed the Housing Production Project Line of Credit Use Report and highlighted some projects in the written report. The Executive Director noted that Virginia Housing

praised the PDC on its top notch program and staff saying the PDC was in the top 3 PDC's performing with the 2 million grant that was received.

Regional Broadband Project-Installed over 71.7 miles of cable in Pittsylvania and Charlotte counties. West VATI Project - Appalachian Power regulatory process is being pushed to get project going as soon as possible. Patrick County - Charter Communications anticipated to start construction in July 2023.

All three VATI 2023 grant application were awarded to WPPDC receiving \$19.7 million in VATI funds for the 8-county project area, which was 33% of the VATI funding available. Total funding received is \$141.9 million in grants thru the WPPDC for other localities.

WPPDC supported Patrick County with an ARC Area Development grant application to provide VATI 2023 match funding.

Regional Tourism Initiatives-The Regional Agritourism and Agribusiness Program will complete the main phase the month of May with delivery of the economic impact analysis, program action items, and website which is now live, GrowninSova.com. Over the next year, WPPDC will work on marketing and outreach to promote the new agritourism/agribusiness program.

Mike Mercado is the WPPDC new Housing Rehab Specialist and has a background as a contractor and is formerly with the City of Danville. He is working with the Pine Hall Project and is out recruiting contractors for upcoming bids.

10. Report of Nominating Committee for Fiscal Year 2024 & Election of Officers

The Chairman stated that the Executive Committee, which served as the Nominating Committee, has nominated the following slate of officers:

Chairman – Jim Adams
Vice Chairman – Lee Vogler
Treasurer – Kathy Lawson

There were no other nominations from the members.

Mr. Tyler Lee made a motion, seconded by Mr. Joe Martin, to close the nominations for officers for fiscal year 2024. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Jerry Adams made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ralph Casey, that the slate of officers recommended by the Executive Committee be the officers for the Fiscal year 2024. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

11. Appointment of Grievance Officer for the Fiscal Year 2024 and 2025

Mrs. Michelle Via, Human Resources Director for Henry County, has agreed to serve as West Piedmont PDC Grievance Officer for the FY 2024-FY2025 replacing Fred Gherke.

Mrs. Denise Stirewalt made a motion, seconded by Mr. Jerry Adams, to appointment Mrs. Michelle Via as the new Grievance Officer for West Piedmont PDC for FY24-FY25. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

12. Other Business

There was no other business.

13. Comments from Commissioners

Assorted members stated excellent job as always. Mrs. Kimberly Walker with City of Danville was asked to briefly speak on her large announcement press release which was that May 4th was the grand opening for the Center for Housing, Education and Project Development for Martinsville.

14. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. R. Armbrister", written in a cursive style.

Michael R. Armbrister
Executive Director