

WEST PIEDMONT PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION

MINUTES

of the

February 22, 2024 Meeting

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

PRESENT

Jim Adams, Chairman, Henry County
Pam Cobler, Henry County
Wes George, Henry County
Doug Perry, Patrick County
Jerry Adams, Patrick County
Kimberly Walker, Danville
Lee Vogler, Vice Chairman, Danville
Kathy Lawson, Treasurer, Martinsville
Aaron Rawls, Martinsville
Joe Martin, Martinsville
David Rotenizer, Franklin County
Ken Bowman, Pittsylvania County
Ralph Casey, Rocky Mount

ABSENT

Brandon Simmons, Patrick County
Tim Tatum, Franklin County
Vic Ingram, Pittsylvania County
Greg Sides, Pittsylvania County
Dr. Gary Miller, Danville

STAFF

Kristie Eberly, Executive Director

(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:

Tyler Lee, Rocky Mount -personal matter
Lucas Tuning, Rocky Mount-personal matter

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 November 22, 2023 Meeting.

*One correction was made that David Rotenizer was in virtual attendance due to problems with the connection via zoom.

b. Treasurer’s Report – October 31, 2023, November 30, 2023 and December 31, 2023

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

4. Support Resolution for Participation in FY 25 TDM Program Grant (Ride Solutions) through the Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation (DRPT)

The Executive Director stated that this is a grant the PDC does every year working in conjunction with the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission and it supports Ride Solutions ride sharing program. The total grant is \$59,000, the PDC is required to provide a 20% match of \$11,800 and the Commission will receive \$47,200 in state funding. This program supports transportation options such as carpooling, public transit and biking which cuts down traffic congestion. The WPPDC Staff recommends that the FY25 grant application be approved.

Mrs. Kathy Lawson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ralph Casey, to approve participation in the FY25 TDM Program Grant (Ride Solutions). Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

5. Executive Director's Report

The Executive Director explained that the Housing Program report has very little change since the meeting in November. Some of the estimated project completion dates have changed due to finding contractors to complete the work. All projects are on schedule and moving forward. The line of credit has not changed since the November meeting.

Broadband construction has begun in Patrick County with over 4,000 feet of underground fiber installed. Once AEP approves permit applications, aerial construction will begin. The WPPDC Pittsylvania VATI 2023 project and the WPPDC East VATI 2023 project are under construction and will be built concurrently with VATI 2022. The West VATI 2023 project is still in the pre-contract phase. The Patrick County ARC Area Development application has been approved and will serve as match for VATI 2023 grant funding.

The WPPDC continues to develop the next component of the Regional Tourism Initiative - Outdoor Recreation. WPPDC applied to the Virginia Tobacco Commission for funding which was approved. This will be used to match a Friends of SWVA ARC application, which is in Washington in final review, for an economic impact study and asset identification.

The Franklin County VDEM HMGP project, which is for a new communications tower in Boones Mill to be used for public safety, were notified that Phase I has been funded. Phase 1 includes upgraded equipment for all their communications towers and engineering for the new tower.

Bi-State Brownfield RLF, which is a partnership between the WPPDC, Piedmont Triad Regional Council and Triangle J Council of Governments, has closed on its first loan in Winston-Salem, NC. The loan is for \$850,000. The RLF had \$1 million and there is \$150,000 still available. For a government or non-profit entity, the funding would be a grant and for a business it would be a loan.

The Regional Housing Assessment and Plan report is almost completed. It is in the graphic design phase which should be completed just after March 1.

The vendor has started work on the Rocky Mount Revitalization CDBG Planning Grant and the public input sessions were held and had high attendance.

The Franklin County RAISE 122 Corridor Study is a joint project of Franklin and Bedford counties. The application in 2023 was not funded and with the grant writing assistance of the PDC the project will be resubmitted in March 2024.

An ARC application is in progress for the Bassett Library Expansion, and it will be submitted in March 2024.

Transportation - Safe Streets and Roads for ALL (SS4A)- This is a new project and the first Working Group meeting will be on March 8. Emails have gone out to potential Working Group members and hoping for a good response. This federal grant will fund development of an Action Plan to identify low-cost but effective safety recommendations in the Danville MPO area that will minimize fatalities and serious injuries.

Danville MPO - MPO Staff are currently working on Transportation Analysis Zones (TAZ) for the Danville MPO area with anticipated completion in early 2024.

Staffing Changes - The Executive Director discussed the resignation of Hannah Powell after being with the Planning Commission for about 90 days and the resignation of Kathleen McEvoy, Community Development Director, and resignation of Tamika Royal, Housing Programs Specialist. The Executive Director announced that the WPPDC has hired Rebekah Morgan as a Community Development Specialist. She started shadowing Kathleen immediately, is a fast learner and will be a good asset to the Commission. The Commission is still looking to fill an opening for a second Community Development Specialist. An offer has been made to a Housing Programs Specialist candidate and she is waiting to see if the offer is accepted.

6. Other Business

The Executive Director reminded the Board of Commissioners about the Virtual Meeting Policy and explained under this new policy meeting attendance is based on the calendar year and states that members can only attend two meetings virtually per year.

The Chairman stated that the next Board of Commissioners meeting will be on March 28, 2024. On April 25, 2024, only the Executive Committee will be meeting. The full Board of Commissioners will be meeting on May 23, 2024. There are no meetings in June.

7. Comments from Commissioners

David Rotenizer asked if the West Piedmont PDC was the only PDC that had a Tourism staff member. The Executive Director thought that to be correct but will verify that for him.

Aaron Rawls stated that regarding the questions from previous meetings about the accuracy of the Weldon Cooper Center data, he has been in contact with them and believes the discrepancies are due to capturing deaths verses births which wouldn't include migration. The Weldon Cooper Center was open to meeting with the localities to for discussions.

Lee Vogler noted that Weldon Cooper Center has consistently underestimated the population for Danville for years. He would welcome the opportunity to discuss this.

There were no other comments from the commissioners.

8. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:19 p.m.



Kristina Eberly
Executive Director