

WEST PIEDMONT PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION

MINUTES

of the

May 23, 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
Jerry Adams, Patrick County
Kathy Lawson, Treasurer, Martinsville
Lee Vogler, Vice Chairman, Danville
Joe Martin, Martinsville
David Rotenizer, Franklin County
Tim Tatum, Franklin County
Lucas Tuning, Rocky Mount
Ralph Casey, Rocky Mount
Dr. Gary Miller, Danville (V)
Ken Bowman, Pittsylvania County
Vic Ingram, Pittsylvania County
Tyler Lee, Rocky Mount (V)
Nick Mitchell, Franklin County

ABSENT

Aaron Rawls, Martinsville
Doug Perry, Patrick County

STAFF

Kristie Eberly, WPPDC, Executive Director
Sean Campbell, WPPDC Housing Program Director
Jacob Bullins, WPPDC Finance Director
Rebekah Morgan, Community Development Specialist

Chasta White, Housing Programs Specialist
Amanda Gray, Tourism & Marketing Specialist

GUEST

Dr. Shannon Hair-Danville Community College

(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:

Dr. Gary Miller, Danville-Personal matter
Mr. Tyler Lee, 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. Mr. Bowman introduced Mr. Shannon Hair, Danville Community College, who was observing as a possible citizen member representing Pittsylvania County. Mr. Tatum introduced Mr. Nick Mitchell who is a new Board member from Franklin County.

2. Regional Forum Opportunity – Comments from Public

There were no comments.

3. Consent Agenda

- a. ***Confirmation of Minutes of the March 28, 2024 Meeting.***
- b. ***Treasurer’s Report – February 28, 2024 and March 31, 2024***
- c. ***Register of Administrative Reviews Under the Virginia Intergovernmental Review Process-April and May 2024***

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

4. Introduction of New Staff

The Executive Director noted that the West Piedmont PDC has had some changes in staff over the last few months. She welcomed three of the PDC’s new staff to introduce themselves to the Board.

Ms. Amanda Gray has been with the WPPDC since September 2023 and is the Tourism & Marketing Specialist. Ms. Gray spoke about a few of the projects that she has been working on which include The Moonshine Heritage Trail, Life In SOVA, Grown in SOVA, and leading the Health Advisory Committee.

Ms. Rebekah Morgan introduced herself as the new Community Development Specialist. She has a background in park management and worked at Fairy Stone Park as an Assistant Park Manager. She is currently working on CDBG projects with Town of Rocky Mount and Town of Boones Mill, CDBG and ARC projects for the Patrick County Business Development Center and the Town of Stuart with Downtown Revitalization and the City of Martinsville with their Parks Plan and Fayette Street Corridor Planning Grant. The Executive Director mentioned she received positive feedback from DHCD on the excellent work that Rebekah was doing through an application that was submitted for the MiNet expansion.

The Executive Director introduced Chasta White as the new Housing Program Specialist. She worked for the City of Danville for several years as a Housing Development Specialist. Currently working on Pine Hall Project in the City of Martinsville as well as a Price Grant that is subjected to bringing in \$13 million into the West Piedmont area for redevelopment, rehabilitation and mobile home parks.

5. HUD Preservation & Reinvestment Initiative for Community Enhancement (PRICE) Grant

Mr. Sean Campbell explained that there is an opportunity from HUD for \$235 million dollars worth of funding from the Preservation & Revitalization of Manufactured Housing with the WPPDC looking to apply for about \$13 million. The grant monies would be used for infrastructure and rehabilitation on manufactured home units in mobile home parks. WPPDC set aside \$6 million for manufactured home rehab with the remaining balance to be used for infrastructure ranging from septic and wells, municipal water, sewer, installing new water systems, well and septic replacement, lighting, paving, and bringing in broadband. Rental assistance could be available under specific situations. WPPDC would have around \$800,000 in salary, fringe and indirect costs for 6 years in the housing department. Local governments have been contacted and are on board. This potentially could impact 150 individual units and 25 mobile home parks throughout the region.

The Executive Director mentioned during the Executive Committee meeting April 2024, that the City of Martinsville had two lots for sale on Fayette Street and Beaver Street with limited time on purchasing. The Executive Board took action to approve the purchase option. Mr. Campbell explained that the Executive Committee had approved signing an Option to Purchase agreement with the City of Martinsville to acquire 7 lots on Fayette and Beaver Street. The option was so that we can apply for funding to do pre-development work. The agreed upon price was a total of \$7.00 and we have one

year to purchase. The reason for the predevelopment work was to determine if the property was viable for development. If it is, we intend to use the Acquire Renovate Sell program through DHCD to create housing for homeownership opportunities targeting residents at or below 80% of the area median income.

6. Adoption of the 2024 Regional Priorities for the Virginia Block Grant

The Executive Director spoke about the PDC informing DHCD what our priorities are and what applications will be submitted. Regional Priorities make a difference in the scoring. The scoring system is based on points and is as follows. Priority 1 will receive 50 points, priority 2 will receive 30 points and priority 3 will receive 15 points. The localities want the priorities matching to the applications that are going to be submitted. This year the PDC will be doing Comprehensive Community Development, Economic Development, Business District Revitalization, Housing & Housing Rehabilitation are a priority 1. Public Infrastructure & Community Service Facilities are a priority 2. The PDC is aware of 2 CDBG applications that are going to be submitted. One from the Town of Boones Mill for implementing their Downtown Revitalization plan and the other application is from the Town of Rocky Mount, who is also implementing a Downtown Revitalization plan.

The staff requests that the Board of Commissioners approves these priorities so that they can be submitted to DHCD. Mr. Vogler made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bowman to approve the Adoption of the 2024 Regional Priorities for the Virginia Block Grant. Upon vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

7. Consideration of Amended FY 2024 Administrative Budget

The Executive Director explained that over the course of the year there had been a few changes. During the last budget revision, the Stuart Comprehensive Plan was not included, and payment was received for a plan update. Patrick ARC Broadband Grant was listed, delayed and will now begin in 2025. The new FY 2024 Budget revenue is now \$1,151,803. Changes in staff over the last year with salaries, benefits, payroll taxes as well as in the increase in contract fees with Michael Armbrister for continuing to manage Vati Programs brings the Expenditures to \$1,036,180. Receipts and disbursements totaling \$98,323.00 will go into the Commission Reserve.

Mr. Tatum made a motion, seconded by Mr. George, to approve the amendment of the FY 2024 Administrative Budget. Upon vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

8. Consideration of Proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Administrative Budget

The Executive Director noted several changes to the FY 2025 Operating Budget:

Commonwealth of Virginia- DHCD had an increase of \$25,000 for FY25 for funding that made it through both the General Assembly and the Governor's budget negotiations. All PDC's in Virginia will be receiving an additional \$25,000 in FY25 and FY26. VDOT MPO PL Funding will be increased by \$17,648 for the following year. Due to changes in Census numbers. The 2020 Census numbers are now being used and that increased the amount for MPO. The DHCD Regional Housing Inventory grant of \$35,000 is a new grant for the Housing Department. They will be taking inventory of available lots for development throughout the Region. The information will then be put into a database and will have mapping included so that each locality can locate available space for development.

Local Governments- Stuart Comprehensive plan has been completed. Pine Hall CDBG Housing Rehabilitation is still active. All VATI Grants are still active. There are two CDBG grants for Martinsville Uptown and Rocky Mount that are active with each allowing \$2,000 in administrative funds.

Federal-ARC has increased funding to \$868.00 for FY 2025. USDA Rural Development grant will end in June. Patrick County Business Development ARC Grant for FY 2025 is for \$35,000. ARC Ready LDD Grant was a one-time grant for \$100,000. SCRC Grant was awarded last fall receiving \$16,000. Patrick ARC Broadband Grant was recently awarded \$10,000 for project management for Administration.

Other-Danville Regional Foundation Housing Initiative funding to support for Housing Specialist position which ended in FY2024. The Harvest Foundation Housing Initiative funding for Housing Specialist has ended. Virginia Housing's Regional Housing Study has been completed. The YMCA Listening Tour was a one-time project and there was no funding for FY2025.

Total Revenues for the PDC totaled \$1,414,351. Salary increases and 1 open position for the PDC included a staff increase of 3% for FY2025. Total Operating Expenditures total \$1,099,636. Receipts and Disbursements totaling a projected \$314,715 will be deposited into Commission Reserve fund at the end of FY2025.

The Chairman noted that the Executive Committee approved the Fiscal Year 2025 Administrative Budget by a unanimous vote.

Mr. Jerry Adams made a motion, seconded by Mr. George, to approve the Proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Administrative Budget. Upon vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

9. Consideration of Proposed Work Program for Fiscal Year 2025

The Executive Director explained that the Annual Work Program goes hand in hand with the budget. Very little has changed over the years. An addition was made to the Program Sub-Category 8.1 PDC listing the Housing Development Program. Projects are always updated as needed.

Mr. Rotenizer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Tatum, to approve the Proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Work Program. Upon vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

10. Consideration of Fiscal Year 2025 Calendar

The Executive Director noted the meeting dates for the FY2025 Calendar.

Mrs. Lawson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Vogler, to approve the Fiscal Year 2025 Calendar. Upon vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

11. Executive Director's Report

The Executive Director noted that there was not much change in the Housing Initiative. The three Danville-Pittsylvania County Habitat for Humanity projects have been delayed slightly. The Landmark Asset Services project that had been delayed is now underway and is scheduled to be completed in May.

Regional Broadband Projects-There are now over 460 miles of route fiber installed in Pittsylvania, Bedford and Charlotte counties with construction starting soon in the rest of the counties. Connections to homes in Pittsylvania and Charlotte counties have started with over 3,346 serviceable passings and over 414 current subscribers. Construction has started on West VATI has started in Franklin, Henry and Patrick counties with Appalachian Power working on making ready for aerial fiber installation. Appalachian Power and River Street are continuing to work closely to finish engineering for the full build. Construction has started on the Patrick County Charter project with over 4.1 miles of underground and aerial fiber installed.

The WPPDC Pittsylvania VATI 2023, WPPDC East VATI 2023 and WPPDC West VATI 2023 projects are under contract and are being built concurrently with respective VATI 2022 projects. The Patrick County ARC Area Development application has been approved and WPPDC is assisting the county with pre-contract items. That grant will serve as the county's match for VATI 2023 grant funding.

Regional Tourism Initiatives-Staff continues to develop the next component of the Regional Tourism Initiative-Outdoor Recreation. Friends of SWVA are leading this project and their ARC application for an economic impact study and asset identification has been approved. WPPDC has received funding from the Virginia Tobacco Commission which will be used as match for Patrick and Henry Counties and the City of Martinsville. The RFP for the project was released about May 15 with a due date of June 30, 2024.

Staff Project List- The Executive Director noted just a few changes. The Regional Broadband VATI Projects 2024 received one challenge that was disputed. The Regional Housing Assessment and Plan has been completed and is now available on the WPPDC Website. The Mountain Spirit Trail (Moonshine Heritage Trail) Project Partners-Patrick, Franklin and Floyd counties logo unveiling was on April 30, 2024, with Channel 10 news and several newspapers in attendance. A Moonshine Heritage Tail website is currently being put together. Future expansion is anticipated into other counties. P&HCC Food Pantry and Voucher Program application was not awarded. Martinsville MiNet Expansion ARC Power application has been submitted.

Transportation-The Executive Director spoke about Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) 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. The first Working Group meeting was held on March 8, 2024. Joe Bonanno and EPR, the project consultant, attended the Danville Health Fair to talk about the study and ask for attendees to complete the survey. The plan is expected to be completed in September or October of 2024, at an estimated cost of about \$171,000. MPO Staff is working on updating the Transportation Analysis Zones (TAZ) for the Danville MPO Area. TAZs form the basis of the transportation modeling process, which helps to determine future regional traffic flows. Joe Bonanno is working with VDOT and its consultant, AECOM and should be completed in 2024.

WPPDC Office & Administrative-The WPPDC is still advertising for a Community Development Specialist. Possibility of having to readvertise on Indeed.

12. Report of Nominating Committee for Fiscal Year 2025 & Election Officers

The Chairman spoke about the Nominating Committee also serving as the Executive Committee and offered to take any nominations to step into the Chairman's position. The Nominating Committee at the last meeting, nominated Jim Adams-Chairman, Kathy Lawson-Treasurer, and Tim Tatum-Vice Chairman.

A motion was made to accept the Executive Committee nominations by Mrs. Lawson, seconded by Mr. Vogler. Upon vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

13. Other Business

The Executive Director was approached by DHCD about a VATI 2022 grant that was given to Dinwiddie County. At the present time, it is not under contract and meets up with two other counties that are in the VATI East program, Nottoway and Amelia. The ISP that is working on Dinwiddie is River Street, who is also working on the other two counties. There is another ISP involved, RuralBand, and they will only be working on about 6% of the project and RiverStreet will be taking care of the remainder. DHCD would like the PDC to take over the Administration on this grant and handle the reporting and financial management portions. It is a \$6,893,000.00 grant for River Street and \$633,000 grant for Rural Band with \$20,000 Administrative Management to the PDC. This will add roughly 11 hours to the contract for Michael Armbrister.

Mr. Tatum made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Lawson to approve the additional DHCD grant location to be added into the VATI East program. Upon vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

14. Comments from Commissioners

The Chairman mentioned mileage reimbursement had increased in the last couple years. Jacob Bullins and David Rakes investigated the car lot on the possibility of purchasing a vehicle. Mr. Bullins put together a list of vehicles with their pros and cons that would work for the WPPDC Office. The possibility of life expectancy on an office vehicle could last 7 to 8 years. The West Piedmont would check on the possibility of local government tags to save on cost.

A motion was made to authorize purchase and not to exceed over \$35,000 including the purchase of a company vehicle, taxes and tags by Mr. George, seconded by Mrs. Lawson. Upon vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

There were no other comments from the Commissioners.

15. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:54 p.m.



Kristina Eberly
Executive Director