

WEST PIEDMONT PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION

MINUTES

of the

December 5, 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 (V)
Jerry Adams, Patrick County
Lucas Tuning, Rocky Mount
Clayton Kendrick, Patrick County
Nick Mitchell, Franklin County(V)
David Rotenizer, Franklin County
Tim Tatum, Vice-Chairman, Franklin County
Ken Bowman, Pittsylvania County
Dillard Jones, Pittsylvania County
Vic Ingram, Pittsylvania County

ABSENT

Lee Vogler, Danville
Joe Martin, Martinsville
Aaron Rawls, Martinsville
Kathy Lawson, Treasurer, Martinsville
Doug Perry, Patrick County
Tyler Lee, Rocky Mount
Dr. Gary Miller, Danville

STAFF

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

Wes George, Henry County-Personal matter
Nick Mitchell, Franklin County-Personal matter

1. Call to Order and Welcome

The Chairman established a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

The Chairman asked Mr. Vic Ingram to introduce Mr. Dillard Jones the new representative from Pittsylvania County to the West Piedmont PDC Board of Commissioners.

2. Regional Forum Opportunity – Comments from Public

There were no comments.

3. Consent Agenda

- a. ***Confirmation of Minutes of the October 24, 2024 Meeting.***
- b. ***Treasurer's Report – June 30, 2024, July 31, 2024 and August 31, 2024***

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

4. Presentation of the Auditor's Report to the Commission for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2024-Creedle, Jones & Associates, P.C. (Hardcopies will be mailed when available.)

The Chairman noted that the draft audit report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, from Creedle, Jones and Associates had been received verifying with the Finance Director, Mr. Jacob Bullins, who confirmed that it was received the previous day. Mr. Bullins noted that the financial statements were correct with no issues and that everything present in the document was accurate. The draft report indicated no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. Mr. Bullins made note that the Commission revenue increased by \$40,240.

The staff recommends the commission vote to tentatively accept the draft report pending feedback from members by December 16, 2024. Mr. Ken Bowman made a motion, seconded by Mr. David Rotenizer. Upon the vote, the motion passed unanimously.

5. Staff Spotlight-Rebekah Morgan, Community Development Specialist

The Chairman introduced Mrs. Rebekah Morgan, West Piedmont PDC's Community Development Director. Mrs. Morgan provided an update on various projects, grants, and community partnerships including completed grants, ongoing projects with comprehensive plans, business development center, park improvements, awarded grants with flood mitigation, broadband and opioid programming. Mrs. Morgan also touched based on pending grant applications and participation in community partnerships and events.

- *Martinsville Park Plan-Completed
- *Rocky Mount North Main Planning Grant-Completed
- *Martinsville Fayette Street Planning Grant-Anticipated closing by end of year
- *Patrick Co & Henry Co Comprehensive Plans-Under Contract
- *Patrick County Business Development Centre-Under Contract
- *PDC received a \$880 grant from Community Foundation for installation of a bike wash station and a high-low shower bike trails at Woolwine Park in Patrick County.
- *Chatham Water Infrastructure Planning Project-under construction

Various grants that have been awarded but are not under contract thus far:

- *Franklin County-awarded \$1.2 million from FEMA for College flood mitigation project
- *Stuart Downtown Revitalization-Currently in pre-contract phase; \$1.7 million received from ARC/CDBG with the PDC retaining the work
- *Patrick County ARC broadband-Pre-contract stand-by phase, \$700,000 received
- *Martinsville MiNet awarded \$700,000 from ARC-In pre-contract phase
- *Piedmont Community Services-Awarded \$500,000 from ARC INSPIRE grant to continue opioid programming-Pre-contract phase
- *DRBA-\$107,000 received from Tobacco Commission for master planning, upgraded commercial materials and access point signs for marketing infrastructure planning for

Southern Virginia Blueways system for trail expansion.

- *Bassett Community Center-awarded \$50,000 for asbestos remediation through the Virginia Brownfield grant. Currently needing about \$200,000 to be able to remediate the entire building. The PDC was awarded \$35,000 to do a market feasibility study on the center from DEQ.
- *Boones Mill Business District Revitalization-submitted for \$860,000-Pending
- *Rocky Mount North Main Business Development Revitalization-\$1 million-Pending
- *Henry County-Submitted for \$50,000 for a planning grant for Bassett Community Center-Pending
- *Patrick County-Applied for asbestos remediation for their PDC building-Pending
- *Planning District Commission-Applied for \$50,000 from Community Foundation serving Patrick County for park up-grades-Pending
- *Blue Ridge Regional Library ARC READY Grants to Grow- LOI has been accepted and the next step is for the full application submittal.
- *ARC Area Development Grants opening in the next couple months
- *Martinsville may apply for CDBG grants for Fayette Street Revitalization
- *MiNet-will potentially apply for ARC Power Grant
- *Soft launch marketing campaign was launched in November for the Dick and Willie Trail
- *Mayo River State Park-Public Input session for their master plan is scheduled for December 16, 2025

6. Per Capita Contribution Rate for Fiscal Year 2026

The Executive Director explained how the per capita contribution rate was calculated. The commission debated using Weldon Cooper Center population estimates versus American Community Survey (ACS) numbers for calculating the contributions, noting a significant difference between the two. Concerns were raised about fairness, accuracy and potential impacts on grant eligibility. The Executive Director explained that the per capita rate would increase by 2 cents, making it .69 cents per citizen in each locality. Last year there was some disagreement over the Weldon Cooper Center numbers versus the American community survey numbers. The latest data we could get from ACS was their estimate for 2018 to 2022. All together it totals roughly 11,000 people. If West Piedmont PDC were to switch to the American Community Survey numbers, that would make a difference for the PDC of another \$7,000 income from the localities. The Board of Commissioners needs to decide whether to continue using Welson Cooper or switch to ACS for FY2027. Staff recommendation is for the 2 cent increase to .69 cents per capita rate.

The board voted to maintain the Weldon Cooper figures for the current fiscal year (FY26) but agreed to further investigate the discrepancies and consult with Weldon Cooper Center and other PDC's before deciding for FY2027. Mr. Tim Tatum made a motion, seconded by Mr. Vic Ingram, to approve the Per Capita Contribution Rate at .69 cents for FY2026. After the vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Welson Cooper Center will be asked to speak at a future Board of Commissioners meeting to discuss population numbers. The Executive Director will send Weldon Cooper's previous presentation slides to PDC Members.

7. Other Business

The Executive Director noted that the PDC has been notified that we have been awarded a grant from Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) for the Moonshine Heritage Trail. This for Phase 2 of the project and the \$2,000 VTC grant will be matched with \$4,000 from the partner localities of Franklin, Patrick and Floyd Counties.

The Executive Director noted that Mr. Michael Armbrister will be stepping back throughout the next six months from some of the VATI workload and Mr. Sean Campbell will be handling the project management until a full-time employee is hired. He will have assistance from Ms. Chasta White, the PDC Housing Specialist, who will be handling the invoicing portion and Mr. Jacob Bullins will be working alongside them. This is a temporary measure until the position is filled, and the new employee is trained. Mr. Armbrister will continue as a consultant, but in a lesser role, until the project is complete because of his knowledge of the project history and the connections he has formed.

Mr. Sean Campbell, Housing Director, announced that there will now be a second round of the PDC Development Grant. Eight PDC's will be awarded \$1 million dollars each for a two-year performance period. WPPDC Housing has already identified projects, and believes it will be a strong application. Mr. Campbell noted that the PDC did very well in the first round.

Mr. Campbell mentioned that STEP, Inc. in Rocky Mount had contacted the PDC to work with them to develop a program funded through a Virginia Housing grant. The program is being created due to Social Services in the Piedmont Regional Office contacting STEP about children being removed from homes because of poor housing conditions. The PDC will be the project consultant and will create the program for STEP. The Virginia Housing grant will pay the PDC to develop the program.

8. Comments from Commissioners

Mr. Vic Ingram and Mr. Ken Bowman made the announcement and informed the Board of Commissioners of an incoming business MicroForce out of Tennessee. MicroForce has a trademark on battery separators and will be manufacturing them in the new facility. It is a \$1.35 billion dollar investment with an average of about 2,000 jobs.

The Chairman mentioned the WPPDC being the drop off for donated food, clothes and other supplies in response to the Hurricane Helene relief efforts. Staff made two trips to Damascus, Virginia delivering to those in need.

There were no other comments from the Commissioners.

9. Adjournment

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



Kristina Eberly
Executive Director