

**SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING  
March 15, 2023  
Commission Office**

**Convened: 10:00 A.M.**

**Adjourned: 11:30 A.M.**

**Members In Attendance:**

Hon. Randy Bunch  
Hon. Laura Burke  
Mr. Jay Cessna  
Mrs. Sharon Clapper (via Zoom)  
Mr. James Foster (via Zoom)  
Hon. Alan Frederick  
Hon. Bruce Erb  
Hon. Scott Hunt  
Mr. Thomas Luciano

Ms Beth McGregor (via Zoom)  
Mr. Donald Rhodes (via Zoom)  
Hon. Mark Sather  
Mr. Rick Strait (via Zoom)  
Hon. Jeff Thomas  
Hon. Pamela Tokar-Ickes (via Zoom)  
Hon. Stuart Ulsh  
Hon. Gerald Walker  
Hon. Scott Walls

**Others In Attendance:**

Mr. Daniel Bowers  
Mr. George Gvozdich  
Mr. Steven K. Howsare  
Ms Regina Klevan

Mr. Brandon Peters  
Ms Deborah Shafer  
Mrs. Jennifer Sklodowski  
Ms Tina Taylor

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Commissioner Walls, President, called the meeting to order at 10:00 A.M.

Commissioner Walls announced to members that unfortunately, former Commissioner Dean Fluke had passed away earlier this morning.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Commissioner Walls asked for any public comment; none was heard.

**MINUTES, January 18, 2023:**

A motion was entered by Commissioner Thomas to approve the January 18, 2023 Board of Directors' meeting minutes, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Walker and was unanimously approved.

**FINANCE REPORT:**

Mr. Daniel Bowers, SAP&DC Director of Finance, presented the Accounts Payable/General Fund Ending Balance, reviewed some of the larger expenses and reported no changes to the information submitted. He also provided a summary of available Commission funds and reported that SAP&DC remains in a good cash position.

A motion was entered by Mr. Luciano to approve the Accounts Payable/General Fund Ending Balance, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Erb and was unanimously approved.

Mr. Bowers stated that a Finance Committee meeting will be held at 9:00 AM on Wednesday, May 24, 2023, immediately prior the SAP&DC Board of Directors meeting in order to present and review the FY 2023-2024 operational budget.

Mr. Tom Luciano, SAP&DC Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair, reported that the audit for SAP&DC's FY 2022-2023 is scheduled as the final audit to be conducted by Maher Duessel under SAP&DC's current auditor selection policy. Mr. Luciano, however, stated that there is now movement in the accounting/audit industry toward rotation of supervisory audit staff rather than a complete change of audit firms. This movement is due to studies indicating that mandatory firm rotation would represent a significant change in practice and would increase costs and cause disruptions for companies. These studies also show that audit failures come at a much higher rate during the first three years of an audit engagement, indicating a significant learning curve in the first three years of the engagement for the external auditor.

He continued by explaining that much of SAP&DC's current policy was crafted from the Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA) guidelines. However, the WIOA guidelines provide a provision for requesting a waiver of this requirement as long as the WIOA local board does not have control over the selection of the firm. Although WIOA funds are a piece of the audit SAP&DC controls the selection of the audit firm for the single audit; the WIOA local board has no control over the selection process.

Therefore, it is recommended that SAP&DC's Auditor Selection Policy be revised by changing the requirement that "an existing audit firm that has had six consecutive year contracts may not re-bid during the cycle

immediately following that sixth-year contract” to “audit firms may continually participate in the audit selection process following their three-year engagement as long as a plan is presented for partner rotation”. He emphasized that removing the six-year limitation does not guarantee the incumbent firm will remain as the firm of choice even if they submit the lowest quote and Requests for Quotations will still be performed every three years.

A motion was entered by Mr. Luciano to amend the SAP&DC Auditor Selection Policy to continually allow audit firms to participate in the audit selection process following their three-year engagement as long as the audit firms presents a plan for partner rotation. The motion was seconded by Mr. Cessna and was unanimously approved.

**GREENWAYS MINI-GRANT ROUND 8.1 AWARDS:**

Mr. Brandon Peters, Director, PC&D Division, reminded members that several months ago projects were approved for Round 8 of the mini-grant program. However, \$20,000 of the awarded funds were still available. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) would not allow that full amount to carry forward, but, were willing to accept the submission of more projects under Round 8 funds.

Mr. Peters then presented a project for recreational improvements to the Northern Cambria South Park for consideration. The project total cost is \$160,107 with \$17,818 being requested through the mini grant program. This would then leave approximately \$3,800 which may be carried into the Round 9 mini grant program.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Bunch to approve submission of the Northern Cambria South Park Improvements project to DCNR for Round 8 consideration. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and was unanimously approved.

Mr. Peters then reported that DCNR is requesting SAP&DC submit two new applications for funding. The first was for our Southern Alleghenies Mini Grant program Round 9 (the solicitation for projects has already been sent and applications should start being received soon) and then an application for Round 10 mini grant funding will also be submitted.

Other projects for DCNR funding were also discussed and DCNR requires a signed resolution for submission of any and all projects requesting funding.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Frederick to approve submission of and authorize Mr. Steven Howsare, SAP&DC Executive Director, as the signatory on all required DCNR resolutions. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Thomas and was unanimously approved.

### **EARN PROGRAM REPORT:**

Ms Regina Klevan, EARN Program Director, explained that the EARN program serves those who receive TANF assistance. These are the hardest to serve and the goals of the program are to assist the clients to help them mitigate any barriers with the end result being they find jobs and maintain employment.

She then provided an update of Department of Human Services continuing priorities and planned upcoming revisions, including: the extension of current contracts through 2025, continuation and strengthening of the program advising model and provision of technical assistance, continuing to solicit feedback from managers and frontline staff to “measure what matters” rather than just look at numbers, updating and revising some of the performance measures to reflect topline outcomes, strengthening and measuring referrals to outside support resources in community-based organizations and continuing with the human-based approach that began prior to Covid.

She further stated that the number of clients being served in our six-county region continues to “soar”. Currently there are 190 clients in Cambria County, 45 in Blair, 25 in Somerset, 15 in Huntingdon and 3 in Bedford/Fulton. Also, due to the cutbacks in the SNAP program, the number of food stamp only clients is increasing substantially. Ms Klevan also referenced the housing situation in Cambria County that is contributing to the high number of clients moving here from the Philadelphia area in order to get their housing voucher and then leaving once they receive a voucher.

### **SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD REPORT:**

Mrs. Jennifer Sklowdoski, SAWDB Director, reported that the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board (SAWDB), met on February 14, 2023. At this meeting a case assignment report provided by the PA

Department of Labor and Industry was reviewed. The Southern Alleghenies region served 246 out-of-school youth; the highest within the 23 Pennsylvania regions.

Mrs. Sklodowski also reported that the modified Regional and Local plans along with other required documents were submitted to the State on February 23, 2023. Currently, providers and staff to the SAWDB are working on preparing an application for submission of the 7<sup>th</sup> Business Education Partnership Grant for the region. Applications are due by March 16, 2023.

She then provided a report providing a comparative analysis of 2022 CareerLink staff assisted job seeker services. This report compares the total individuals and services conducted by CareerLinks in our region against those in Philadelphia, Lancaster and Pittsburgh. The SAWDB is extremely proud that our numbers outperformed the other areas.

#### **ALLEGHENIES AHEAD ON HOUSING-REGIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY:**

Mr. Peters reported that the Southern Alleghenies Regional Housing Study, “*Alleghenies Ahead on Housing*” was recently completed. It is now ready for review and discussion, including identifying implementation strategies. The completed final strategy and its executive summary were provided to all members present. A lengthy discussion was then held regarding the final report and the strategy for moving forward. Mr. Peters requested approval for Southern Alleghenies to move forward by adopting its strategy for implementation.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Hunt to approve Southern Alleghenies Commission to move forward with its implementation strategy. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Erb and was unanimously approved.

What remains to be done now is to determine county plans for adoption of the overall strategy, as well as individual county profiles. He then presented and reviewed the report and executive summary.

#### **ARC POWER TA CONSULTANT SELECTION-RATIFICATION OF MEMORANDUM VOTE:**

Mr. Peters explained that SAP&DC in conjunction with Pennsylvania’s Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) office, is expanding its Appalachian Regional Commission POWER Technical Assistance program, which provides technical assistance services to potential and current applicants of various ARC programs,

including the Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) Initiative, Area Development and INSPIRE. Funding for this effort is available through a \$150,00 grant from ARC and the work will be completed prior to November 30, 2023.

An RFQ was issued and SAP&DC received seven proposals. After reviewing the proposals received, SAP&DC and the Pennsylvania ARC office are recommending five consultants to provide the technical assistance at a fixed hourly rate. Due to needing a decision prior to the March 15, 2023 Board of Directors' meeting, a memorandum vote was conducted and received unanimous approval. That vote now requires ratification at this regularly scheduled board meeting.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Thomas to approve ratification of the approved memorandum vote for the ARC POWER TA program consultants, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Walker and was unanimously approved.

#### **EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROJECTS:**

Mr. Peters explained that SAP&DC is designated by the Federal Office of Management and Budget (under E.O. 12372) to review requests for Federal financial assistance within its six-county service area for concurrence with relevant regional planning documents. The projects requesting federal financial assistance were presented and reviewed and noted as consistent with the Commission's overall Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Walker to approve the Projects Under Executive Order 12372, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bunch and was unanimously approved.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS & INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

Mr. George Gvozdich updated members of the progress on the Right to Know legal proceedings that were filed by the Community Watchdog Group. He will keep members updated as more information is received.

Commissioner Thomas explained that he recently met with Mr. Howsare and became aware that the Commission's vehicle had not yet been replaced and that this asset was decreasing in value especially due to the number of miles on the vehicle. He recommended that the vehicle be replaced.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Thomas to approve replacing the Commission's vehicle in an amount not to exceed \$45,000. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Frederick and was unanimously approved.

Commissioner Walls and Mr. Howsare presented Commissioner Walker with a plaque in recognition of his service to the communities and citizens of the Southern Alleghenies Region. Commissioner Walker expressed his gratitude to members for their trust and support during his two year tenure as the President of the SAP&DC Board of Directors.

The next SAP&DC Board of Directors meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 24, 2023, beginning at 10:00 AM. A Finance Committee meeting to review SAP&DC's 2023-2024 Operational Budget will be held prior to the Board of Directors meeting and will begin at 9:00 AM.

At this time, Commissioner Walker called for an Executive Session to discuss a personnel issue.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Randy Bunch  
Secretary