

**SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

**November 18, 2020**

**Commission Office**

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

**Adjourned: 11:45 P.M.**

**Members in Attendance:**

Hon. Randy Bunch (via Zoom)  
Ms Laura Burke (via Zoom)  
Mr. Jay Cessna (via Zoom)  
Mrs. Sharon Clapper (via Zoom)  
Hon. Barry Dallara (via Zoom)  
Hon. Colleen Dawson (via Zoom)  
Hon. Bruce Erb  
Hon. Scott Hunt  
Mr. Jim Foster (via Zoom)  
Hon. Josh Lang (via Zoom)

Mr. Tom Luciano (via Zoom)  
Ms. Beth McGregor (via Zoom)  
Hon. Mark Sather (via Zoom)  
Hon. Jeff Thomas (via Zoom)  
Hon. Pamela Tokar-Ickes (via Zoom)  
Hon. Stuart Ulsh (via Zoom)  
Hon. Gerald Walker  
Hon. Scott Walls (via Zoom)  
Mr. Arthur Wilkin (via Zoom)

**Others in Attendance:**

Mr. Daniel Bowers  
Mr. Brandon Carson  
Mr. George Gvozdoch  
Mr. Steven Howsare  
Mr. Jeff Kent

Mrs. Trudy Mitchell  
Mrs. Deborah Prosser  
Ms Deborah Shaffer  
Mr. Dustin Starr  
Mrs. Susan Whisler

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Commissioner Erb, SAP&DC Board President, called the meeting to order at 10:00 A.M.

**MINUTES, SEPTEMBER 16, 2020:**

A motion was entered by Mrs. Clapper to approve the September 16, 2020 Board of Directors meeting minutes, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ulsh and was unanimously approved.

**PRESENTATION OF FY 2020 SAP&DC SINGLE AUDIT:**

Mr. Daniel Bowers, Director of Finance, introduced Mr. Jeff Kent and Mr. Dustin Starr of Maher Duessel, who then provided a summary overview of SAP&DC's Financial Statement/audit for Fiscal Year 2019-2020.

Mr. Kent began by stating that the audit process went smoothly even in the virtual environment due to the diligence and assistance of SAP&DC staff. He then introduced Mr. Dustin Starr who provided an overview/summary of the audit procedures and financial statement. Mr. Starr also stated that the audit process went very smoothly due to the cooperation and assistance provided by SAP&DC staff. Mr. Starr further stated that the audit resulted in “unqualified opinion”, with no findings.

Regarding the Management Letter, Mr. Starr simply pointed out that currently with so much work being conducted virtually it has become even more important to invest in cyber security education. Mr. Starr stated that he can provide a list of firms that offer cyber security education to Mr. Bowers.

Mr. Bowers reported that a copy of the Form 990 will be provided to all Board members for comment prior to filing. Comments are due back to Mr. Bowers no later than Friday, December 4, 2020.

A motion was entered by Mr. Luciano to approve SAP&DC’s Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Audit and submission of SAP&DC’s Form 990 following review by the Board of Directors and contingent upon no comments/concerns being received prior to December 4, 2020. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wilkin and was unanimously approved.

Mr. Bowers reminded members that the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 audit was the third year that Maher Deussel conducted SAP&DC’s Single Audit.

He further explained that SAP&DC is required under State guidelines to go through a Request for Qualifications process for audit services every three years. That process was started in the Spring/Summer of 2020 to ensure it was completed in a timely manner. Following advertising for Request for Proposals, only one response was received, that being from Maher Deussel. Mr. Bowers is unsure why no additional proposals were received, but SAP&DC have been pleased with the services provided by Maher Deussel. Currently the cost for SAP&DC’s audit is \$22,500. Maher Deussel proposed a reduced cost of \$20,500 for FY 2021; for FY 2022 the cost was set at \$21,500 and for FY 2022 the cost was set at \$22,500, keeping us at the current cost. The length of multi-year contracts is limited to (3) three years. No multi-year contracts may be extended past this three-year period without being re-bid through the normal competitive process. Under SAP&DC’s Accounting

Policies once an existing auditing firm has had (6) six consecutive year contracts, they may not re-bid during the cycle immediately following that sixth-year contract.

The proposal for SAP&DC's audit services from Maher Deussel will be provided to SAP&DC's Board members prior to the January 2021 annual meeting for review and final approval.

**FINANCE REPORT:**

Mr. Daniel Bowers, Director of Finance, presented and reviewed the Accounts Payable and Bank Accounts Summary included in the Board packet and reported no changes to the information provided.

A motion was entered by Mr. Luciano to approve the Accounts Payable and Bank Accounts Summary, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Walker and was unanimously approved.

**BUSINESS LENDING REPORT:**

Mrs. Trudy Mitchell, Business Lending Director, presented and reviewed two loan applications that were submitted to and reviewed by the Commission's Loan Review Committee: DelGrosso Foods, Inc. and Ridgeline Gunsmithing.

Mrs. Mitchell also presented a list of six applications for EDA Cares Act funding which were all approved by the Commission's Loan Review Committee. The EDA Cares Act requires that funding "must be out the door" within two years. Thus far SAP&DC has had 13 applications approved for EDA Cares Act funding so Mrs. Mitchell believes this the requirement for utilizing EDA Cars Act monies within two years can be reached.

All applications, as presented this date, were approved by the Loan Review Committee for submission to the Board of Directors for concurrence.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Thomas to concur with the actions taken by the Loan Review Committee, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Clapper and was unanimously approved.

**ALLEGHENIES BROADBAND, INC. UPDATE:**

Mr. Brandon Carson, Director, Planning & Community Development, reported that Alleghenies Broadband, Inc. (ABI) held its first Board of Directors meeting on October 14, 2020. ABI has filed a petition with the PUC to have ABI not be treated as a government agency with respect to deploying projects and to not be required to go through the right of first refusal with incumbents. This petition came together “nicely” due to working with Mr. Tom Stuart acting through a legal firm in Harrisburg.

A list of ABI board members along with several press releases were provided for the information of SAP&DC Board members.

Mr. Carson further announced that the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) has recently awarded ABI its first initial pilot grant for three wireless projects that were identified in the region.

At its first meeting, ABI Board members elected Commissioner Thomas as the interim Chair. The second meeting is scheduled for tomorrow and a full slate of officers will be elected. Commissioner Thomas reported that since receiving its 501(c) (3) designation the First Energy Foundation has already “reached out” and requested that ABI apply for funding. Mr. Carson reported that another funding opportunity through the USDA Connected Communities Program is also available. Applications for the USDA funding are due December 23rd and will be for an ABI fiber project. Staff is working diligently to identify projects that will benefit from this funding in order to meet the submission deadline date.

At the recently held ABI Board meeting action was also taken on a Professional Services Agreement between Alleghenies Broadband, Inc., and Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission (SAP&DC). This agreement is to formalize and make clear the relationship between ABI and Southern Alleghenies; that, they are two distinct entities. This agreement will then permit SAP&DC to utilize funding received through its EDA Cares Act grant award to assist ABI with those costs associated with the formation and start-up of ABI. The initial term of the contract is six months with an option to extend, as needed.

Commissioner Walker thanked all those involved for the time and effort that they have put into the formation of ABI.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Hunt to approve the Professional Services Agreement between Alleghenies Broadband, Inc and Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Walker and was unanimously approved.

Commissioner Thomas thanked SAP&DC for its support of ABI and stated that ABI is expected to become a self-funded independent entity at some time in the near future; although, it will likely still count on some expertise/services from SAP&DC. However, currently there is still a need for some financial support for start-up costs associated with ABI such as insurance, etc. Therefore, Commissioner Thomas requested consideration by each county to provide a one-time payment of \$3,000 to assist in covering operational start-up costs associated with formation of ABI. A memo outlining this request will be sent to SAP&DC County Board members. Those interested in committing financial support should contact either Commissioner Thomas or Mr. Carson.

**LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN – HIGHWAY SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM:**

Mr. Carson asked the Somerset County Commissioners to provide updated information on Route 219 funding. Commissioner Walker announced that on a phone call held November 9, 2020 with the PA Secretary of Transportation the Corridor N study was presented along with a request for \$6 million in funding for the engineering and design study for Route 219. The PA Secretary of Transportation unexpectedly announced their commitment to providing the \$6 million for the Route 219 engineering/design study.

Commissioner Tokar-Ickes thanked everyone for their support and assistance in receiving this important/crucial funding. Commissioner Dawson also thanked everyone and stated that she is looking forward to seeing this funding on the Transportation Investment Program list in the near future.

Commissioner Walker specifically recognized Mr. Brandon Peters, SAP&DC Transportation Program Manager, for his time and efforts that were vital in getting this valuable funding for Route 219.

Mr. Carson reminded members of the announcement at the September SAP&DC Board of Directors meeting regarding SAP&DC's intent to utilize \$50,000 in extended Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) funds to identify Highway Safety Improvement projects for inclusion in the Long-Range Transportation Plan. An RFP was solicited early this year, but no responses were received. The UPWP funds were recently extended from

the last PennDOT UPWP work order and must now be expended by March 31, 2021. The RFP was then resolicited with a focus made on distribution to qualified engineering firms. It was advertised from October 21, 2020 to November 12, 2020. One response was received that being from the French Engineering firm with whom SAP&DC has worked previously. It is recommended that the contract be awarded to French Engineering in the amount of \$49,997.92, as presented.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Tokar-Ickes to award the HSIP contract to French Engineering in the amount of \$49,997.92, as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms McGregor and was unanimously approved.

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

Mr. Carson presented and provided information on requests for funding under Executive Order 12372.

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. Those projects requesting federal financial assistance, as presented, are consistent with the Commission's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Walker to approve the Projects Under Executive Order d12372, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and was unanimously approved.

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

Mrs. Susan Whisler, Director, Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board (SAWDB), reported that the region's PA CareerLink® sites have been physically open since mid-June. Foot traffic at the sites has been lower than pre-COVID but is starting to build. Many customers are seeking assistance with their unemployment compensation. Mrs. Whisler provided members with a report of initial unemployment claims by county and industry for review.

### **EARN PROGRAM REPORT:**

Ms Regina Klevan, Director, EARN Program, reported on recent activities associated with the EARN Program. EARN priorities have changed from a work-first model to one emphasizing career pathways and the needs of

the whole family. Program goals include a one-year job retention phase after TANF cash closure and a wage goal of at least \$2.00 over minimum wage.

Due to the sweeping program changes and new requirements, the allocation for the Southern Alleghenies region has increased to \$2,641,231 and changed from being a partially performance-based to a full cost reimbursement agreement.

The SAP&DC case management staff has increased from three to five in order to accommodate the increased program requirements and changes in eligibility.

Ms Klevan further noted that while the coronavirus pandemic has presented unique challenges in providing program services to EARN participants this year services have never been shut down, but rather have been provided remotely and continuously through the shutdown. Laptops/notebooks have been purchased with program funds for clients in need and those without Internet access have the option to complete paper instructional packets. All contractors and staff have been adapting well to the new challenges.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

Mr. Steven Howsare, SAP&DC Executive Director, reported that Mr. George Gvozdich, SAP&DC Solicitor, has agreed to continue to represent the Commission as both its general counsel and revolving loan program legal counsel for Calendar Year 2020 at the same rate as in 2020, that being \$15,000 for each function. Mr. Howsare noted Mr. Gvozdich has been counsel with SAP&DC since the mid-1980's.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Walker to approve retaining Mr. George Gvozdich as SAP&DC's general legal counsel and revolving loan program legal counsel at the rate of \$15,000 for each function, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and was unanimously approved.

Mr. Howsare reminded member that the January 20, 2021 Board meeting will serve as the Annual Reorganization meeting. Due to COVID the meeting will be held virtually via Zoom instead of at a county site. Traditionally officers are changed every two years. Therefore, members are asked to consider names for nomination.

Mr. Howsare provided members with a copy of SAP&DC's staff Holiday list for 2021 and the SAP&DC Board of Directors meeting schedule for 2021.

Mr. Carson announced that SAP&DC has hired Mr. Dustin Bishop for the position of Disaster Recovery Coordinator. He will begin his employment December 1, 2020.

Mr. Carson then further reported that he was approached by the Blair, Cambria, Fulton and Huntingdon Conservation Districts about a DEP County wide Action Plan (CAP) which will need to be completed by September 30, 2021. They expressed interest in SAP&DC serving in the capacity of grantee/convener similar to the role undertaken for Alleghenies Ahead. Grant funding of up to a maximum of \$100,000 through DEP is available for this effort. Telephone calls with the four conservation districts and DEP regional reps were held last week to discuss specifics. Following that call the four conversation districts have asked SAP&DC to serve as the grantee to complete and submit the application for funding. A consultant would be hired to complete the work plan, but SAP&DC staff will also work cooperatively with the consultant and the four county conservation districts on this effort.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Thomas to approve SAP&DC serving in the capacity of grantee for the Blair, Cambria, Fulton and Huntingdon County Conservation Districts for a \$100,000 grant from DEP for a County Wide Action Plan. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Erb and was unanimously approved.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 11:45 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Josh Lang

Secretary