

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

**March 17, 2021**

**ZOOM/Commission Office**

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

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

**Members In Attendance:**

Hon. Debbie Baughman (via Zoom)  
Hon. Laura Burke (via Zoom)  
Mr. Jay Cessna  
Mrs. Sharon Clapper (via Zoom)  
Hon. Barry Dallara (via Zoom)  
Hon. Colleen Dawson (via Zoom)  
Hon. Bruce Erb  
Mr. Jim Foster (via Zoom)  
Hon. Alan Frederick (via Zoom)  
Hon. Scott Hunt

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

**Others In Attendance:**

Mr. Daniel Bowers (via Zoom)  
Mr. Brandon Carson  
Deputy Secretary Steve D'Ettorre (via Zoom)  
Mr. Neil Fowler (via Zoom)  
Mr. Steven Howsare

Ms Regina Klevan (via Zoom)  
Mrs. Trudy Mitchell (via Zoom)  
Mrs. Debbi Prosser (via Zoom)  
Ms. Deborah Shaffer  
Mrs. Susan Whisler (via Zoom)

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Commissioner Walker, President, called the meeting to order at 10:00 A.M. He then introduced Mr. Donald Rhodes, newly appointed At-Large Member. Mr. Rhodes thanked everyone for their support and stated his interest in being part of the organization and meeting everyone in person in the future.

**MINUTES, January 20, 2021:**

A motion was entered by Commissioner Erb to approve the January 20, 2021 Board of Directors' meeting minutes, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Clapper 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.

Mr. Bowers also stated that he has begun the Fiscal Year 22 budget process. The budget will be prepared and presented at the May 26, 2021 meeting.

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

**BUSINESS LENDING SERVICES:**

Mrs. Trudy A. Mitchell, Director, Business Lending Services, presented and reviewed the actions taken by the Loan Review Committee.

The application for Hoff Enterprises, Inc. was approved, as presented. The application is now presented to the Board of Directors for concurrence.

Mrs. Mitchell then presented the list of applications under the Economic Development Administration's (EDA) Cares funding: two from Bedford County, one from Cambria County and two from Somerset for a total of \$615,775. She reminded member that SAP&DC was granted \$4 million in funding from EDA last year with two years to allocate the funds. SAP&DC is on track to meet that goal within a year. All "Cares" applications were also approved as presented and are now presented for Board of Directors concurrence.

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

Mrs. Mitchell presented a resolution of support for the request to release the Economic Development Administration's (EDA) federal interest in the Commission's Revolving Loan Fund and to the commitment of

continued lending activities in support of the economic development purposes of the Public Works and Economic Development Act (PWEDA) for SAP&DC Board of Directors approval/adoption.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Erb to approve/adopt the resolution supporting the request to release the Economic Development Administration's (EDA) federal interest in the Commission's Revolving Loan Fund and to the commitment of continued lending activities in support of the economic development purposes of the Public Works and Economic Development Act (PWEDA). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Thomas and was unanimously approved.

### **GREENWAYS MINI-GRANTS ROUND 8 RESOLUTION:**

Mr. Brandon Carson, Director, Planning and Community Development Division, reported that SAP&DC is again requesting DCNR funding for a eighth round of the Greenways Mini-Grant Program. As in the past, the program will advance the priorities identified in the Southern Alleghenies Regional Greenways and Open Space Network Plan as well as the Southern Alleghenies Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. A resolution is required as part of the application packet. SAP&DC is requesting \$200,000 for Round 8.

A motion was entered by Mrs. Clapper to approve the DCNR Resolution required for Round 8 of the Greenways Mini-Grants Program, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and was unanimously approved.

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

Mr. Brandon Carson 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. Two projects requesting federal financial assistance were presented as consistent with the Commission's overall Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

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

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

Mrs. Susan Whisler, SAWDB Director, reported that the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board (SAWDB) and its partners have completed the drafting of the 2021-2024 Regional and Local Plans and they have been out for the required 30-day public comment period, which ended March 13, 2021. No public comments were received, but comments were received from several of the SAWDB partners, the Economic Development Agencies, which were incorporated into the plan prior to the release for public comment. The next step is for the plans to be discussed at an open meeting, which will occur on Tuesday, April 23, 2021 at the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board meeting. The SAWDB is required to approve submission of the plans. Once approved by the SAWDB the plans will then be submitted to the Department of Labor and Industry for review and approval. Mrs. Whisler requested approval by the Board of Directors for submission of the plans to the Department of Labor and Industry.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Tokar-Ickes to approve submission of the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Boards' 2021-2024 Regional and Local Plans to the Department of Labor and Industry. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and was unanimously approved.

## **EARN PROGRAM REPORT:**

Ms Regina Klevan, EARN Program Director, reported that the EARN program has continued to be provide job readiness services to TANF recipients. Remote services have been a challenge due to many participants lacking internet services and/or devices to join online classes. Additional laptops and/or tablets were purchased and are lent out to participants, as needed. Staff has also worked to identify sources of low-cost internet service. Job placements and work experience opportunities have been limited due to closings and lack of day care slots.

This year participant numbers have significantly increased and program requirements have changed increasing case manager responsibilities. Therefore, additional case management staff is being hired to help manage the higher caseloads, particularly in Cambria County. SAP&DC was provided additional funding in the Commonwealth's budget this year which has allowed for the hiring of additional staff.

## **AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN OF 2021:**

Commissioner Walker called on Mr. Carson to report on the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. Mr. Carson stated that the Counties should have started to receive information on the American Rescue Plan, the latest

stimulus plan, which was signed into law last week. In order to get a quick start on this funding Mr. Carson has recently been having discussions with the Board of Commissioners and a number of consultants to try to plan for utilization of the significant amount of stimulus funding that is expected to come into the region. The major difference between this round of stimulus funding and the first round is that the dollars can be used over a longer period; the guidance shows that it can potentially be used through December 31, 2024. That allows more time to plan for any broadband investments that the Counties may be interested in considering during this round of funding. He reminded members that during the previous round of funding some dollars were leverage for broadband, but with the quick turn-around time it became impossible to accomplish everything that was needed.

Commissioner Thomas reported that Alleghenies Broadband, Inc. (ABI) recently received a favorable ruling from the Public Utility Commission (PUC). With Alleghenies Broadband now up and running during this round of funding it allows the Commissioners to identify broadband service areas and projects needed in their individual counties and the earmark available funding to allot for the work. It would then be the responsibility of Alleghenies Broadband to take care of all the logistics.

Mr. Carson followed up by explaining that the PUC has granted provisional approval to the Alleghenies Broadband's Competitive Access Provider application. This allows Alleghenies Broadband to provide broadband services in the State of Pennsylvania. Assuming everything goes as plans, formal approval should be forthcoming at the next PUC meeting. As a Competitive Access Provider, ABI, is not viewed as a government entity so the "right of first refusal" does not apply; meaning, ABI would not need to get permission from any incumbent providers before deploying services in an area. The model/structure developed for ABI is not intended to directly provide service to the end user; ABI's role is to "champion" the construction of networks through a third party and the networks would then be owned and maintained by ABI and leased to the private sector for provision of service on those lines. ABI is now in a position to have a major impact on broadband service in the region.

#### **DISCUSSION ON COMMONWEALTH BUDGET PROGRAMS:**

Mr. Steven Howsare, Executive Director, introduced Mr. Steve D'Ettorre, Deputy Secretary of Technology & Innovation and Mr. Neil Fowler, Director of Technology & Innovation from the PA Department of Community and Economic Development.

Secretary D’Ettorre thanked everyone for the opportunity to attend this meeting. He further stated that it is vital that communication take place between the Commonwealth and its partners in order to get a better “picture” of what is going on in the region and to provide an opportunity to respond to questions on those important issues. He mentioned that the relationship between DCED and SAP&DC has been very beneficial and advantageous to both. He specifically noted the Start-Up Alleghenies and Venture Capital initiatives.

He stated that the Commonwealth’s Budget for the upcoming year will be “lean”, mostly level funding from the previous year. However, the Governor has proposed a \$1.5 million increase for the PREP network. This is indicative of the importance that the Governor places on the PREP regions and their positive impact on Pennsylvania’s regions.

Mr. Neil Fowler expressed his appreciation of the work that the Local Development Districts do for their regions and acknowledged the excellent relationship DCED has with SAP&DC staff. He further stated that as the Appalachian Regional Commission Program Manager, there is currently a “healthy” balance for any eligible projects that can be “fast tracked” and would like consideration for funding this year. Please submit any eligible projects to Mr. Carson for consideration and submission.

Mr. Steven Howsare, Executive Director, reminded members that at the last Board of Directors meeting it was approved for SAP&DC to provide “side car” investments in projects through the Angel Fund (Venture Capital Initiative) that were deemed a good opportunity. SAP&DC is in the process of finalizing an investment in Inspection Go, a Tyrone firm. He also stated that due to the success of the Angel Fund there is discussion ongoing about starting a second fund as early the end of the year.

Johnstown Area Regional Industries (JARI), a PREP partner, also established a CDFI and has now “lent out” approximately \$1.1 million. JARI, with SAP&DC as the subgrantee, was also able to secure a million-dollar POWER grant to capitalize a microloan program for the Southern Alleghenies region along with funding to SAP&DC to assist with paying for contracted services relative to the Angel Fund.

Mrs. Deborah Prosser, Director, Business Development, stated that in partnership with North East and North West Planning Commissions and SAP&DC’s Angel Fund an application is being prepared for submission to the Economic Development Administration for funding to contract with an individual that has the knowledge and ability to assist entrepreneurs with the follow through needed for the due diligence process. Another

project/application that is being prepared for submission is to help companies with the e-commerce process that has become vital to their survival and success.

**OTHER BUSINESS & INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

Commissioner Walker introduced Commissioner Alan Frederick to the SAP&DC Board of Directors. Commissioner Frederick has replaced former Commissioner Lang who resigned to take another position.

The next SAP&DC Board of Directors meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 26, 2021 beginning at 10:00 AM. A Finance Committee meeting will be held prior to the Board of Directors meeting and will begin at 9:00 AM. A Personnel Committee meeting will also be held beginning at 1:00 PM.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Scott Hunt

Secretary