

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

**May 26, 2021
Commission Office**

Convened: 10:00 A.M.

Adjourned: 12:00 P.M.

Members In Attendance:

Hon. Debbie Baughman
Hon. Laura Burke
Mrs. Sharon Clapper
Hon. Barry Dallara
Hon. Bruce Erb
Mr. Jim Foster
Hon. Scott Hunt
Mr. Tom Luciano

Ms Beth McGregor
Mr. Donald E. Rhodes, II
Hon. Mark Sather
Hon. Jeff Thomas
Hon. Pamela Tokar-Ickes
Hon. Gerald Walker
Hon. Scott Walls

Others In Attendance:

Mr. Daniel Bowers
Mr. Brandon Carson
Mr. George Gvozdich
Mr. Steven Howsare

Ms Regina Klevan
Mrs. Trudy Mitchell
Mrs. Debbi Prosser
Mrs. Susan Whisler

CALL TO ORDER:

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

MINUTES, March 17, 2021:

A motion was entered by Mrs. Clapper to approve the March 17, 2021, Board of Directors' meeting minutes, as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms McGregor 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 Commissioner Thomas to approve the Accounts Payable/General Fund Ending Balance, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and was unanimously approved.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING REPORT:

Commissioner Walker announced that Commissioner Hunt has accepted the position of Personnel Committee Chair and he turned the meeting over to Commissioner Hunt to report on the actions taken at the Personnel Committee meeting held on Monday, May 17, 2021.

Commissioner Hunt reported that the Committee had reviewed a proposal to provide a one-time salary increase for employees in FY 2022 in percentages based on years of service and also to increase the retirement plan match for employees participating in the program also based on years of service.

Commissioner Hunt then explained that since that meeting was held, Commissioner Baughman, Commissioner Walker and he have had several discussions regarding this action and have decided to re-evaluate the actions taken. A Personnel Committee meeting will be scheduled in the near future and the final results of that meeting will be presented at the July SAP&DC Board of Directors meeting.

Lengthy discussion was held regarding reviewing the starting salaries for positions within SAP&DC's compensation plan in order to ensure the ability to hire individuals to fill mid-management positions that may be lost over the next few years.

SAP&DC FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022 OPERATIONAL BUDGET:

Mr. Thomas Luciano, Chair, SAP&DC Finance Committee, explained that the Finance Committee had met earlier this morning and reviewed SAP&DC's Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Operational Budget. He then turned the meeting over to Mr. Daniel Bowers, Director of Finance.

Mr. Bowers explained that for Fiscal Year 2021-2022, SAP&DC's budget was again prepared and designed through a collaborative effort with all members of SAP&DC's management team. He reported that the process went smoothly due to the hard work and cooperation of all management team members.

Mr. Bowers stated that the budget balances and then provided members with a summary of items included as part of SAP&DC's Fiscal Year 2021-2022 budget.

Mr. Bowers provided members with a power point that summarized the items included as part of SAP&DC's Fiscal Year 2021-2022 budget and provided an overview of the budget. Mr. Bowers also stated that the budget contained a proposed wage increase based on years of service along with an increase to the match provided to employees for their retirement plan, that was approved by the Personnel Committee at their meeting held Monday, May 17, 2021. Since this proposal has not yet received final approval from the SAP&DC Board of Director, the budget could change based on the final decision by the Personnel Committee but is being presented for contingent approval by the Board of Directors.

He explained that the budget is balanced with a projected revenue of \$10,460,466 which represents an overall increase of \$1,585,000 from the 2020-2021 budget.

Mr. Bowers then explained the definition of allocated costs and reviewed the cost allocation plan followed by SAP&DC. He then stated that reviewed those costs that are considered indirect/allocated. He explained that by making some changes in how some of the indirect/allocated expenses are charged (rent, audit, equipment, etc.) including salary allocations (by moving some of these costs to direct charges) and being able to reduce some costs, the indirect/allocated cost percentage was able to be reduced thus holding the net increase to allocated costs \$8,342. Lowering the indirect/allocated costs is something that funding agencies have been looking closely at and requesting over the years.

Mr. Bowers also explained that by being diligent with the costs associated with SAP&DC's benefits and contracted services such as copier and postage lease expenses increases to these items have never exceeded the budgeted rates.

Mr. Bowers then requested approval of SAP&DC's Fiscal Year 2021-2022 budget with the understanding that the approval does not bind the SAP&DC Board of Directors to the pending Personnel Committee actions.

A motion was entered by Mr. Luciano to approve SAP&DC's Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Operational Budget, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Clapper 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 applications for Mark & Megan Frederick and Adam & Amy Hileman were approved, as presented, and are 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: one from Cambria County, one from Blair County, one from Fulton County and four from Somerset for a total of \$883,700. All applications were approved, as presented, and are now presented to the Board of Directors for 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.

REGIONAL BROADBAND UPDATE:

Mr. Brandon Carson, Director, Planning & Community Development Division, reported that things related to broadband are moving quickly. New opportunities for broadband funding are being "pushed out" weekly. The staff is working diligently to take advantage of these opportunities.

He reminded members of the initial funds provided to the Alleghenies Broadband, Inc. along with \$300,000 grant that was secured for a fixed wireless pilot project. The project targeted rural areas in Bedford, Huntingdon, and Somerset counties. An RFP was issued, and two responses were received from a firm operating in Huntingdon County. Unfortunately, they did not propose any projects in the targeted areas. However, two projects were proposed, one in the Butler Knob area (to serve approximately 3,000 potential customers) located in Huntingdon County and one in the Fort Littleton area (to serve approximately 2,200 potential customers) located in Fulton County.

The Alleghenies Broadband, Inc. (ABI) is meeting later today to discuss both of these proposals. If approved, services for these two areas are slated to begin in the early fall. With the development of the pilot project, ABI has been actively working to develop a Master Plan for deploying internet services to underserved portions of

the region. The Plan outlines a strategy (three tiers) that includes equipment for fixed-wireless, proposed new towers in the areas that lack vertical assets to support wireless services, fiber to the home and small cell technology solutions. As a next step, ABI is developing a Request for Proposals (RFP) that will serve as a “regional call for projects” that can be supported through a variety of state and federal grant programs, including the American Rescue Plan. Projects received through the RFP process will be vetted and included as part of the Master Plan, which will become a fluid listing of deployments needed to target underserved areas with reliable, high-speed internet service.

Bedford County was selected to begin the process due to the fact that it already had a provider that has been doing phenomenal work in the area, Mr. Dwayne Zimmerman, through his firm, Crows Nest Broadband. Plans are for ABI to, hopefully, partner with Crow’s Nest Broadband. Mr. Zimmerman assisted with the initial Master Plan work and identification of projects for Bedford and will do the same for Blair County; Upward Broadband will assist in Huntingdon and Fulton Counties and will work with several providers for Somerset and Cambria Counties. It is hoped that each of the counties will consider utilizing some of the American Rescue funds received for investment in ABI and the work being done to bring fixed wireless into the underserved areas in their individual county. Application has been made for funds through the Appalachian Regional Commission to assist with the construction of new towers and awards are expected within the next few months. Mr. Carson presented and reviewed the Regional Broadband Needs Request for Proposals and requested approval to release an RFP for projects in the region.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Thomas to approve releasing an RFP for a “regional call” for projects. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Dallara and was unanimously approved.

GREENWAYHS MINI-GRANT PROGRAM – ROUND 7 AWARDS:

Mr. Carson reported that the Greenways Mini-Grant Program is funded through the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and is administered by SAP&DC. The program is intended to provide funding for projects that support implementation of the goals related to conservation, recreation, alternative transportation, and economic development as identified in the Southern Alleghenies Greenways and Open Space Network Plan and Southern Alleghenies Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

Mr. Carson presented and briefly reviewed a summary of the applications received for Round 7 of the program. The Planning Advisory Committee met previously to score/rank the submissions and are recommending that funds be awarded accordingly.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Tokar-Ickes to approve the Greenways Mini-Grant Program applications, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and was unanimously approved.

RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE PLAN CONTRACT AWARD:

Mr. Carson reported that the Economic Development Administration has provided SAP&DC with funding to complete a regional recovery and resilience plan in response to the recent pandemic. A Request for was advertised and eight proposals were received for consideration. The plan will study the effects of COVID-19 on the Southern Alleghenies Region and will serve as a guide for future disaster recovery efforts. It will also inform SAP&DC on how the Region can achieve long-term economic resilience and growth.

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee met to score/rank the proposals and oral interviews were conducted. The CEDS Committee recommends the contract be awarded to Points Consulting. The proposal addressed the scope of work, offered to assist in the implementation phase of the Recover and Resilience Plan and will be completed within the period of performance. The total cost will be \$74,480 and funding for this effort is available through a grant with the Economic Development Administration (EDA).

A motion was entered by Mr. Foster to approve awarding the Regional Recovery and Resilience plan contract to Points Consulting, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Thomas and was unanimously approved.

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) RESOLUTION:

Mr. Bandon Carson, Director, Planning & Community Development, explained that the Economic Development Administration (EDA) requires the Commission's Board of Directors to certify that, through its meetings, there has been opportunity to review and act upon proposed EDA programming. Accordingly, a resolution in support of SAP&DC's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy planning process and the activities undertaken by the SAP&DC for the Southern Alleghenies Region is now presented for approval.

A motion was entered by Mrs. Clapper to approve the Resolution in support of SAP&DC's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy planning process and the activities undertaken by the SAP&DC for the Southern Alleghenies Region. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Baughman 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 Walls to approve the Projects Under Executive Order 12372, as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms McGregor and was unanimously approved.

SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD REPORT:

Mrs. Susan Whisler, SAWDB Director, explained that each May the region's Chief Elected Official, who is also the President of the Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission's Board of Directors, takes action to reappoint members to the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board (SAWDB). She then presented information listing each member's name and required membership and requested approval to reappoint all members listed.

A motion was entered by Mrs. Clapper to approve the reappointment of the SAWDB members, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Tokar-Ickes and was unanimously approved.

Mrs. Whisler also presented several additional items which required approval by the Southern Alleghenies Board of Directors.

- Appointment of Wade Baumgartner to the SAWDB as an organized labor representative. He is filling the seat currently occupied by Rick Thompson, who will retire at the end of this year. Both Mr. Baumgartner and Mr. Thompson are members of the Regional Council of Carpenters.

A motion was entered by Mrs. Clapper to approve the appointment of Mr. Wade Baumgartner to the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Tokar-Ickes and was unanimously approved.

- Approval of a contract extension for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I subcontractors, which includes Goodwill of the Southern Alleghenies serving Bedford, Blair, and Cambria Counties; Employment and Training, Inc. serving Huntingdon and Fulton Counties; and Tableland Services serving Somerset County.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Erb to approve the contract extension for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I subcontractors, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Baughman and was unanimously approved.

- Approval to continue to contract with Goodwill of the Southern Alleghenies, Employment and Training, Inc., and Tableland Services for their role as the region's One-Stop Operator. The SAWDB conducted a competitive RFP process and the only proposal received was from the current operator. It was reviewed and received high scores. Total contract cost is \$20,000 and all funding is used to promote the PA CareerLink sites through digital marketing and outreach.

A motion was entered by Mrs. Clapper to approve contracting with Goodwill of the Southern Alleghenies, Employment and Training, Inc., and Tableland Services, as the One-Stop Operator. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Walls and was unanimously approved.

Mrs. Whisler reported that a cut of 13.5% is expected in Workforce funding, however, due to the diligence and careful spending decisions by the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board there is carryover money available to assist in covering this loss.

OTHER BUSINESS & INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

Mr. Steven Howsare, SAP&DC Executive Director, reported that recently the Alleghenies Angel Fund invested \$100,000 along with "sidecar investments" totaling \$2.2 million in a new business with plans to locate in Blair County. This investment is expected to result in the creation of 300 new jobs.

He then reminded members that the next SAP&DC Board of Directors meeting will be held Wednesday, July 21, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT:

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

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Hunt

Secretary