

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

Convened: 10:00 A.M.

Adjourned: 11:00 A.M.

Members in Attendance:

Hon. Deb Baughman
Mr. Rick Strait
Mr. Jay Cessna
Mrs. Sharon Clapper
Hon. Bruce Erb
Hon. Scott Hunt
Mr. Thomas Luciano

Hon. Laura Burke
Ms. Beth McGregor
Hon. Barry Dallara
Hon. Jeff Thomas
Hon. Pamela Tokar-Ickes
Hon. Gerald Walker
Hon. Scott Walls

Others in Attendance:

Mr. Daniel Bowers
Mr. Dustin Starr
Mr. George Gvozdich
Mr. Steven Howsare
Ms. Regina Klevan

Mr. Lee Slusser
Mrs. Debbi Prosser
Mrs. Jennifer Sklodowski
Mrs. Renee Best
Mrs. Trudy Mitchell

CALL TO ORDER:

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

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Commissioner Walls then asked if there were any public comments. Hearing none, the meeting continued without comment.

MINUTES:

A motion was entered by Commissioner Walker to approve the September 20, 2023, Board of Directors meeting minutes, as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. McGregor and was unanimously approved.

FY 2022-2023 SAP&DC SINGLE AUDIT PRESENTATION:

Mr. Thomas Luciano, Chairman, introduced Mr. Dustin Starr of Maher Duessel, who then presented a detailed overview of SAP&DC's Financial Statement/audit for Fiscal Year 2022-2023.

Mr. Starr provided a summary of the audit procedures and financial statements and reviewed documents that were included in the packet. Mr. Starr stated that Maher Duessel's responsibility as the independent auditor is to provide an opinion on the financial statements in which an unmodified opinion was provided. There was no need to modify the opinion due to all reports being clean, and there were no audit findings/issues during the course of the audit.

Mr. Starr reported that the documents are in draft but are ready to finalize as soon as they are approved by the Board. There were no significant changes to the documents from the prior year, no new accounting, policies, or estimates during the year that had any significant impact for FY 2022-2023.

Mr. Starr stated that the audit process went smoothly due to the diligence and timely assistance provided by SAP&DC staff. There were no corrected or uncorrected misstatements found within the financial statements. Upon finalization, Maher Duessel will obtain the Management Letter stating that all information is factual and complete. He then reviewed the summary of results and reported that there were no findings or issues found within the Financial Statements, Government Auditing Standards, or Uniform Guidance.

Mr. Starr referred to Form 990 and stated that it is important for all Board members to be included on this form. Any Board members who served during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023, should be listed on the form. Mr. Gvozdich spoke of a pending change that may be necessary to Schedule O (Part VI, Section C, Line 18 and 19) regarding the Right-to-Know language and Mr. Starr will work with him on those updates.

Mr. Luciano stated that the Finance Committee met before the Board of Directors meeting and reviewed the audit. The Finance Committee approved the audit and has recommended that the Board of Directors approve the audit as presented.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Dallara to approve SAP&DC's Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Audit and submission of SAP&DC's Form 990 following review by the Board of Directors and contingent upon any comments/concerns being received by December 1, 2023, and those changes being made. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Clapper and was unanimously approved.

Mr. Daniel Bowers reported that a draft copy of 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 1, 2023.

FINANCE REPORT:

Mr. Daniel Bowers, Director of Finance, presented and reviewed the Accounts Payable and Bank Account Summaries and reported no changes to the information provided. The Bank Account Summaries indicate the typical ebbs and flows of the General Account, Money Market Account, LED, and SBFF loans.

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

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR AUDIT SERVICE FOR FY 2024 DISCUSSION

Mr. Bowers explained that SAP&DC is required under State guidelines to go through a Request for Qualifications process for audit services every three years. This is the second contract that Maher Duessel had with SAP&DC for those services. Mr. Bowers provided background on the process and stated that SAP&DC had a rule in which a firm could not retain a contract after two concurrent three-year periods. However, after review and discussion, SAP&DC decided to remove that requirement which would allow Maher Duessel to bid on the next RFP that would be issued. SAP&DC did require Maher Duessel to change managing partners on the engagement in the event they chose to bid on the RFP.

Following advertising for Request for Proposals, only one response was received, that being from Maher Duessel. Mr. Bowers shared that many smaller firms are getting bought up by larger firms and the profit margin is not in there for the larger firms to continue doing this type of work.

Mr. Bowers then reviewed Maher Duessel's yearly cost proposal: \$27,000 for FY 2024, \$28,600 for FY 2025, and \$30,200 for FY 2026. Prior to Maher Duessel getting the contract for their first engagement for FY 2018 and the four fiscal years prior, SAP&DC was paying \$30,000 for auditing services. Maher Duessel offers very reasonable costs for a quality product, and they meet SAP&DC's timelines in addition to being available throughout the fiscal year.

Mr. Bowers stated that the Finance Committee voted to approve the selection of Maher Duessel and has recommended that the Board of Directors approve Maher Duessel as the Audit Service for FY 2024 with two option years.

A motion was entered by Mr. Luciano to approve the selection of Maher Duessel as the Audit Service for FY 2024 with two option years. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Erb and was unanimously approved.

SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Mrs. Jennifer Sklodowski, Director, Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board (SAWDB), provided an update on the activities undertaken by the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development. There was a SAWDB meeting held on November 14th that included two presentations from program providers in the region. Ms. Judy Lutz represented E & T of Huntingdon and gave a recap of their Title I summer youth program and activities funded through the Business Education Partnership Grant. Ms. Mindy Rickabaugh from Goodwill of the Southern Alleghenies provided an overview of the reSTART program. This grant was awarded to the Southern Alleghenies region in June in the amount of \$800,000 from the PA Department of Labor & Industry, and it covers all six counties in our region. Title II providers provided an update at the meeting and shared that they had 383 learners with 15,921 attendance hours for the 2022-23 year. There were 69 individuals earning their high school equivalency.

Mrs. Sklodowski reported that the SAWDB was a sponsor of the area's first regional workforce symposium. Mr. Brad Burger from Goodwill of the Southern Alleghenies and Mrs. Jill Reigh, staff to the SAWDB, did an outstanding job preparing and presenting this prosperity ecosystem to our region. Presenters gave an overview of an opportunity for understanding the needs for an artificial intelligence landscape for our region's employers. There will be more impactful discussion opportunities moving forward.

Mrs. Sklodowski shared that the Bedford County PA CareerLink® move was successful and staff have received positive feedback from the community regarding the location and services. Mr. Jay Cessna stated that the PA CareerLink® center is happy with the new location, and they are entering into negotiations to go beyond the six-month initial agreement.

Mr. Steven Howsare stated that a copy of Mr. Brad Burger's Workforce Symposium presentation will be sent out to all Board members.

CIRCUIT RIDERS FOR 9-11 TRAIL ARISE APPLICATION

Mrs. Debbi Prosser, Director of Business Development, shared an update on the 9-11 Trail ARISE application and provided a brief summary of the project. This project would require the creation of circuit riders in the four

counties that include that trail in the region. There is a regional outdoor recreation industry study being wrapped up, and Mrs. Prosser made a request to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) to modify the study so that could serve as the peer-to-peer study for all counties. The goal was to allow the counties to have a team of circuit riders across the region and use federal dollars to pay the obligation the county level must pay. Unfortunately, DCNR wants to keep their current peer-to-peer study process but are open to counties working together to perform the studies so that only one consulting firm would need to be hired. Mrs. Prosser stated that the ARISE application is still being worked on and will be focusing mainly on trail construction.

REGIONAL GREENWAYS MINI-GRANTS PROGRAM, ROUND 9.1 AWARDS

Mr. Lee Slusser, Director, P&CD Division Director, reported that under a July 1, 2022 contract with DCNR, SAP&DC announced a supplemental round of the Southern Alleghenies Regional Greenways Mini-Grant Program in August to distribute the remaining \$52,000 from the ninth round that was awarded on July 19, 2023.

SAP&DC staff advertised a supplemental round of mini grants in August with a deadline to respond by September 29, 2023. There were four applications received: the Quemahoning Trails Phase III, the Shuster Way Heritage Trail North Extension, the TOPP Technical Assistance project, and the Jonathan Love Memorial Park Upgrades. An overview of the projects were included in the meeting packet. Mr. Slusser reported that the Planning Advisory Committee met on November 6th to review the applications, and it is recommended that the Board approve the award of \$15,000 to the Bedford County Development Association and \$30,000 to the Stoneycreek-Quemahoning Initiative. SAP&DC staff will submit a request to DCNR to roll the \$7,000 remaining balance to next year's grant which will be in addition to \$150,000 in new grant funds that will be available.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Baughman to approve the Regional Greenways Mini-Grants Program Awards, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and was unanimously approved.

RIVERVIEW BUSINESS PARK TRAFFIC IMPACT STUDY

Mr. Lee Slusser reported that there are safety and capacity concerns with access to the Riverview Business Park in Shirley Township, Huntingdon County. To apply for Appalachian Regional Commission Local Access Roads funds, a traffic impact study (TIS) must first be performed. The Southern Alleghenies RPO budgeted \$30,000 to perform this study. On October 2, 2023, RPO staff advertised for a traffic engineering consultant to perform a

TIS on the intersection of Croghan Pike and Lenape Drive with proposals due back to SAP&DC by October 31st. SAP&DC staff reviewed and ranked the proposals, and it is recommended that the Board approve the contract to Trans Associates of State College.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Thomas to approve awarding the Riverview Business Park Traffic Impact Study to Trans Associates. The motion was seconded by Mr. Luciano and was unanimously approved.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROJECTS:

Mr. Lee Slusser 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 two projects requesting federal financial assistance were presented and reviewed and noted as consistent with the Commission's 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 Hunt and was unanimously approved.

BUSINESS LENDING REPORT:

Mrs. Trudy Mitchell, Business Lending Director, presented and reviewed four loan applications that were submitted to and reviewed by the Commission's Loan Review Committee: BEHE Brothers Brewing Co., Biddle Farm Partnership, LP, CVD Enterprises, LLC, and TSKM Enterprises., LLC.

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

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

EARN REPORT:

Ms. Regina Klevan, EARN Program Director, reported on activities in the EARN program. The program serves those individuals receiving cash assistance helping them overcome barriers in the unemployed and maintain

employment. The Southern Alleghenies EARN program continues to have one of the highest enrollment rates across Pennsylvania right behind Philadelphia and Pittsburgh areas.

Ms. Klevan stated that they continue to work on barrier reduction with childcare being a major barrier. There is an increased emphasis on individuals working towards their high school equivalency, which continues to be a challenge.

Ms. Klevan then reported that this year she started performing quarterly reviews with contractors. The reviews will be looking at service provision, curriculum, progress toward barrier mitigation, onsite vs. remote activity, incentives, statistics, and documentation. There is still a struggle with getting clients on site as opposed to remote activity; there will be \$50 gift cards given to clients who show up on site for enrollments.

Ms. Klevan acknowledged the case managers for doing a great job in addition to the Local Management Committee who are very involved and helpful in terms of overseeing the program.

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 2024 with no requested increase or adjustment, that being \$15,000 for each function.

A motion was entered by Mr. Cessna 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 Mrs. Clapper and was unanimously approved.

Mr. Howsare provided Board members with a copy of SAP&DC's staff Holiday list for 2024 and the SAP&DC Board of Directors meeting schedule for 2024.

Mr. Howsare reminded members that the January 2024 Board meeting is scheduled for January 17, 2024, and will serve as the Annual Reorganization meeting. A decision on a location for the meeting will be made and members will be notified of the location. The new Board member orientation will be held prior to the Board of Directors meeting.

Mr. Howsare recognized Commissioner Erb, Commissioner Walker, Commissioner Ulsh, and Commissioner Dallara and thanked them for their contributions to the Board.

Mr. Howsare then reported that Mr. Luciano will be retiring but will continue to serve on the Board until a replacement is found. Commissioner Walls shared his appreciation for Mr. Luciano's time and commitment to the Board.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 11:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Hunt

Secretary