

SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING

January 17, 2024

Blair County Convention Center, Altoona, PA

Convened: 10:44 A.M.

Adjourned: 12:15 P.M.

Members in Attendance:

Hon. Deb Baughman
Hon. Randy Bunch
Hon. Laura Burke (via Zoom)
Mr. Jay Cessna
Mrs. Sharon Clapper (via Zoom)
Hon. Steven Wible
Hon. Tom Chernisky
Mr. Jim Foster
Hon. Scott Hunt
Hon. Keith Rager
Hon. Hervey Hann

Ms. Erin Abel
Ms. Beth McGregor
Mr. Donald Rhodes
Mr. Rick Strait
Hon. Jeff Thomas
Hon. Pamela Tokar-Ickes
Hon. JR Winck
Hon. Scott Walls
Hon. Michael Stiles
Hon. Brian Fochtman
Hon. Patrick Reeder

Others in Attendance:

Mr. Daniel Bowers (via Zoom)
Mr. George Gvozdich
Mr. Steven Howsare
Ms Regina Klevan
Ms. Tina Taylor
Mr. Alex Belenz (via Zoom)
Mr. Nathan Reigner

Mr. Lee Slusser
Mrs. Debbi Prosser
Mrs. Renee Best
Mrs. Jennifer Sklodowski
Mr. Mark Kane (via Zoom)
Mr. Peter Kotses (via Zoom)

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Walls, SAP&DC Board President, called the meeting to order at 10:44 A.M and introductions were made.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Commissioner Walls called on Mr. George Gvozdich, the Commission's General Counsel, to conduct the election of officers for 2024. Mr. Gvozdich explained that under SAP&DC's By-laws the positions of President and Vice-President must be filled by County Commissioners, and the positions of Treasurer and Secretary may be filled by any member of the Board of Directors.

Mr. Gvozdich then requested nominations for the position of SAP&DC President.

Commissioner Thomas nominated Commissioner Walls for the position of SAP&DC President. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bunch. Hearing no further nominations, the position of SAP&DC President was declared as being filled by Commissioner Walls through acclamation.

Mr. Gvozdich requested nominations for the position of SAP&DC Vice-President.

Commissioner Rager nominated Commissioner Hunt for the position of SAP&DC Vice President. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Tokar-Ickes. Hearing no further nominations, the position of SAP&DC Vice-President was declared as being filled by Commissioner Hunt through acclamation.

Mr. Gvozdich requested nominations for the position of SAP&DC Treasurer.

Commissioner Burke nominated Mr. Rhodes for the position of SAP&DC Treasurer. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt. Hearing no further nominations, the position of SAP&DC Treasurer was declared as being filled by Mr. Rhodes through acclamation.

Mr. Gvozdich requested nominations for the position of SAP&DC Secretary.

Commissioner Hann nominated Commissioner Bunch for the position of SAP&DC Secretary. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt. Hearing no further nominations, the position of SAP&DC Secretary was declared as being filled by Commissioner Bunch through acclamation.

At this time, Mr. Gvozdich turned the meeting over to Commissioner Walls.

REPLACEMENT FOR MR. THOMAS LUCIANO

Commissioner Walls made the request to appoint Ms. Erin Abel, Sheetz, Inc. Accounting Manager, as a regional member-at-large to replace Mr. Thomas Luciano, Sheetz, Inc., who is leaving the Board due to retirement.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Bunch to nominate Ms. Erin Abel for the position of regional member-at-large on the SAP&DC Board of Directors. The motion was seconded by Mr. Foster and was unanimously approved.

Mr. Steven Howsare welcomed Ms. Abel to the SAP&DC Board of Directors. Ms. Abel thanked the Board for the opportunity and is looking forward to serving on the Board of Directors.

Commissioner Walls then presented the 2024 Board of Directors and asked if there were any revisions or changes needed. Hearing none, the 2024 Board of Directors was considered accepted.

EXECUTIVE, FINANCE, PERSONNEL COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS FOR 2024

In accordance with the Commission's By-Laws, nine members are appointed to each of SAP&DC's three Standing Committees: Executive, Finance, and Personnel. The appointments were presented, and Commissioner Walls asked if there were any changes or revisions.

Mr. Howsare stated that each county submitted who they wanted to represent on each committee; changes can be made at any time if needed.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Baughman to approve the Standing Committee members, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bunch and was unanimously approved.

DESIGNATION OF ADVISORY COMMITTEES AND APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS FOR 2024

A list of SAP&DC's Advisory Committees and proposed members for each of the Advisory Committees was presented for approval by the SAP&DC Board of Directors.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Hunt to approve the Advisory Committee designations and appointments for calendar year 2024, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Thomas and was unanimously approved.

MINUTES, NOVEMBER 15, 2023

A motion was entered by Commissioner Baughman to approve the November 15, 2023, Finance Committee and Board of Directors minutes, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fochtman and was unanimously approved.

FINANCE REPORT

Mr. Daniel Bowers, SAP&DC Director of Finance, presented and reviewed the Accounts Payable and Bank Account Summaries and reported no changes to the information submitted. He reviewed the status and balances of the Commission's Bank Accounts and reported that the SAP&DC bank account balances are as expected for this time of year. The General Fund took a downward swing through the last quarter of the calendar year which

is common toward the end of a quarter. Mr. Bowers reported that the Money Market Account is made up of Greenways Funds that are yet to be distributed, EARN Performance Funds, and the General Fund unrestricted money. The LED Fund and SBFF Fund are two local loan funds that are not currently covered by federal regulations.

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

ALLEGHENIES OUTDOORS: MOVING THE RECREATION ECONOMY FORWARD PRESENTATION

Mrs. Debbi Prosser, Director of Business Development, provided background on the creation of the Alleghenies Outdoors Plan. She reported that the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development gave the region a special grant under the guidelines that a one-time project was to be done while collaborating across the region with economic development agencies. The economic development agencies in the Alleghenies region decided to look at the existing outdoor recreation industry as well as potential opportunities for growth. After speaking with many consultants, the decision was made to engage with the SE Group as they have a good national perspective and would be able to provide the strengths and weaknesses in our region.

Mrs. Prosser introduced Mr. Nathan Reigner who is the Director of the PA Office of Outdoor Recreation and has been working with SAP&DC throughout this process. She then turned the meeting over to Mr. Alex Belenz, SE Group Project Manager, to share the presentation.

Mr. Belenz introduced members of the SE Group in attendance: Mr. Mark Kane and Mr. Peter Kotses.

Mr. Belenz shared information on the Alleghenies Outdoor Plan and SEI Group's process and noted that they view outdoor recreation in a broad sense and also in an interrelated sense. Outdoor recreation is seen not only from the perspective of activities themselves but also the interrelationship between outdoor recreation and the communities and businesses in the region. Outdoor recreation is a large industry in Pennsylvania overall. The growth in outdoor recreation is outpacing overall economic growth. Within the Alleghenies region, the SEI Group identified approximately 250 businesses that are directly involved in either providing outdoor recreation services or providing a recreational experience.

Mr. Belenz stated that there is a broader role in how outdoor recreation can become a tool for attracting and retaining businesses, ensuring that there is a regional workforce, keeping residents in the region, greater quality of life, regional identity, and an alignment with state initiatives.

There are three pillars of an outdoor economy: destinations, businesses, and communities. It is important to think about who is participating in outdoor recreation and how that is resulting in some sort of economic improvement. In terms of collaboration, there are a diverse set of stakeholders and actions with a need to understand everyone's roles. There are many people in the region who are doing similar work and have a similar set of needs and challenges. Some challenges include maintaining trails where volunteers are needed, in addition to acquiring funding to maintain a standard of quality for the trails in the region.

Mr. Belenz shared a detailed overview of the Alleghenies Outdoors Plan that includes four major outcomes. The SE Group looks to define what the regional outdoor economy is currently and understand the strengths and weaknesses in addition to areas of opportunity. This plan will also provide strategies, principles, and actions for a broad audience of stakeholders in addition to setting the stage for regional collaboration. This plan will be for anyone who is looking to lean into outdoor recreation for communities and economic development.

Mr. Belenz then discussed their process that involves business and recreational asset inventory, an engagement process, and an iterative process to develop strategies and recommendations. He discussed strengths and opportunities in the recreation economy in the Alleghenies region. There is a unique terrain that supports a diverse array of outdoor recreation experiences. A major advantage is the proximity of these recreational experiences to communities in the region. There is also an ongoing interest and investment in trail development. Regional weaknesses and challenges were discussed that include trail stewardship capacity, regional promotion, lack of state funding, competition from other regions, and a large and dispersed region.

Mr. Belenz shared the desired outcomes of this plan: increased participation in outdoor recreation by residents and visitors, improved quality of life that encourages residents to stay in the area, trails and infrastructure are built to a high quality and well maintained, the recognition of the region as a recreational go to destination, and a regional collaboration. The plan has identified five principles for moving the recreation economy forward: be strategic, be a destination, be welcoming, be collaborative, and be champions. There are key long-term regional coordination actions included in the plan that include regional trails stewardship collaboration and regional promotion of the outdoor economy.

Mr. Reigner spoke of how SAP&DC has been demonstrating leadership around the development of the outdoor economy. Outdoor recreation is an industry in the Commonwealth, and it is a critical part in our economic development. Another key factor is the infrastructure of outdoor recreation; the infrastructure for an outdoor economy goes well beyond trails. It includes all of the businesses that support trail users and growing an outdoor economy in the region. The contribution that outdoor recreation makes to youth and workforce retention and attraction in addition to remote worker attraction is important to retaining graduates after

graduation. There is a need for greater coordination and strategic thought in this area; the state is trying to give cover and momentum in the outdoor recreation industry in the region.

Commissioner Walls expressed the need to capitalize on the economic benefit. During COVID, Raystown Lake in Huntingdon County had close to two million visitors; there is a need for more hospitality to handle the influx.

Mr. Reigner discussed the system of volunteer stewardship that worked well many years ago but there has been a shrinkage in many civil institutions; reinvigorating the volunteer-based stewardship organizations will not be a successful model. There is a need to acknowledge the economic value that outdoor assets provide to communities and determine the revenue model for generating that value. Mr. Reigner is focusing on trying to grow trail planners, designers, and builders and to provide incentives for businesses to be involved with trail stewardship. Mechanisms are needed to fund ongoing trail maintenance, and this will require some experimentation.

Commissioner Tokar-Ickes discussed the redevelopment of the GAP Trail which is the biggest redevelopment project in Somerset County's history. There is a lot of money to build new trails, but there is no money to maintain them. This will be the key to the success of the trail system in the region. She would like the state to encourage DCNR to look at funding opportunities for trail maintenance.

BUSINESS LENDING SERVICES

Ms. Tina Taylor, Business Lending Program Manager, presented and reviewed four loan applications that were submitted to and reviewed by the Commission's Loan Review Committee: Flair of Country & Event Planning, LLC, Halose Realty, LLC, Huntingdon Country Club, Inc., and Ole Misty Hollow Farm, LLC.

All applications, as presented, were approved by the Loan Review Committee, for submission 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 Bunch and was unanimously approved with Mr. Rhodes abstaining from Halose Realty, LLC.

UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM

Mr. Lee Slusser reported that the Southern Alleghenies Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) specifies the work program that SAP&DC's transportation planning staff will perform for the next fiscal year that includes tasks, responsibilities, and deliverables. Although UPWPs usually cover two years, PennDOT has asked

SAP&DC to do a one-time, single-year UPWP in the interests of organizational efficiency. Because the Southern Alleghenies Rural Planning Organization (RPO) is staffed with SAP&DC personnel, the entire board must approve the UPWP.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Tokar-Ickes to approve the UPWP, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Clapper 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 three 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 Bunch to approve the Projects Under Executive Order 12372, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Thomas and was unanimously approved.

OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Walls reminded members to complete and return the Annual Affirmation of Compliance and Disclosure Form as soon as possible.

The next meeting of the SAP&DC Board of Directors is scheduled for Wednesday, March 20, 2024, beginning at 10:00 A.M.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 12:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Randy Bunch

Secretary