

**SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING  
March 20, 2024  
Commission Office, Altoona, PA**

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

**Adjourned: 11:10 A.M.**

**Members in Attendance:**

Hon. Deb Baughman  
Hon. Randy Bunch  
Hon. JR Winck (via Zoom)  
Mr. Jay Cessna  
Mrs. Sharon Clapper  
Hon. Michael Stiles (via Zoom)  
Mr. Jim Foster (via Zoom)  
Hon. Scott Hunt  
Hon. Brian Fochtman  
Hon. Hervey Hann

Ms. Erin Abel  
Ms. Beth McGregor (via Zoom)  
Mr. Donald Rhodes  
Mr. Rick Strait (via Zoom)  
Hon. Jeff Thomas  
Hon. Pamela Tokar-Ickes  
Hon. Scott Walls  
Hon. Patrick Reeder  
Hon. Amy Webster  
Hon. David Kesslering

**Others in Attendance:**

Mr. George Gvozdich  
Mr. Steven Howsare  
Ms Regina Klevan  
Mrs. Trudy Mitchell

Mrs. Debbi Prosser  
Mrs. Renee Best  
Mr. Jim Walker  
Mr. Lee Slusser

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

**MINUTES, JANUARY 20, 2024**

A motion was entered by Mrs. Clapper to approve the January 20, 2024 Board of Directors minutes, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and was unanimously approved.

**FINANCE REPORT**

Mr. Steve Howsare, SAP&DC Executive Director, presented and reviewed the Accounts Payable and Bank Account Summaries. He reviewed the status and balances of the Commission's Bank Accounts and reported that there was nothing out of the ordinary other than the DCED Grant Workshop expense of \$9,650.70. The SAP&DC hosted this workshop at the request of the DCED, and it was a was a very successful event.

Mr. Howsare reviewed the account balances and noted that SAP&DC is in an overall better financial position than in January. Most of this is due to getting caught up with state and federal monies that were owed to SAP&DC which is the reason the General Account is at approximately \$353,000. All other activity was based on regular loan disbursements or payments that were received.

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

### **SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD (SAWDB)**

Mr. Jim Walker, Workforce Development Specialist, shared that the 2023 Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board Annual Report was submitted to the state on February 2, 2024; this report was included in the meeting packet. The report highlights the region's top accomplishments, success stories, and best practices achieved throughout PY'23 in workforce development. Also included in the report are quarterly snapshots of deliverables that occur at the PA CareerLink® centers that contain information on the number of employers reached out to, number of recruitments, and number of individuals that visit the centers.

Mr. Walker reported that the Workforce Development Board for the Southern Alleghenies region met on Tuesday, February 13, 2024, with the Young Adult Council meeting taking place a week prior. Both meetings had presentations from the Youth Refuge Network, Tableland Services, Inc., and AmeriCorps Vista. The next SAWDB meeting will be held on May 14, 2024 at 9:00 AM at the Somerset Country Club. Mr. Terry Wiltrout, Chair of the Pennsylvania State Workforce Development Board, will be participating in the meeting.

Mrs. Clapper shared that she spoke at the Somerset Chamber Leadership Program where she talked about all of the programs that fall under the Business Education Partnership Grant and how exciting it is to be a part of those activities that help youth in determining their career paths.

### **EARN PROGRAM**

Ms. Regina Klevan, EARN Program Director, provided an update on the EARN program and shared that they have served over 400 TANF recipients so far this year. They continue to receive a high number of referrals in addition to seeing an increased number of food stamp only recipients coming to the program. There are more participants coming on site for services as opposed to remote. The lack of childcare continues to be a major barrier in our area.

Ms. Klevan reported that she has been conducting quarterly reviews of the contractors; the reviews are going well with no major findings. One recommendation that was made was for the contractors to tighten up their

safeguarding of their incentives and laptops that are lent out to clients. The clients must bring their devices in more often for periodic security checks.

Ms. Klevan recently received results of the 2022 and 2023 monitoring from the state. Goals were met for timely assessment, IEP completion to capture barriers and goals, license counselor meetings, six-month job retention, timely action on referrals, timeliness of data entry, and accurate and complete documentation.

The Department of Human Services requests that a human centered approach be taken as opposed to only looking at the numbers. The approach is called Gradual Engagement, which helps to look at the actual client and what their barriers are, which leads to better success.

The LMC that oversees the EARN program will be meeting later this month to look at approving the contracts for contractors into the new program year.

### **COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY UPDATE**

Mr. Lee Slusser, Director Planning & Community Development, shared that this year the SAP&DC Planning Division is required to develop a new Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the six-county region; this is completed every five years. The new CEDS will address the years from 2025 to 2029 and will be completed by the end of the calendar year.

Mr. Slusser presented an overview and background of the CEDS document that involves outreach to various groups. SAP&DC must have an up to date CEDS before the EDA will fund projects in the region. Goals of the 2020-2024 CEDS were also reviewed in detail.

Mr. Slusser provided a current list of the CEDS Committee members and noted that representation is needed from Fulton County, labor unions, community organizations, and the utilities sector. Information was shared on background studies pertaining to the population of each county, gross domestic product by county, and combined gross domestic product for SAP&DC. Information was also provided regarding housing units and census studies.

Mr. Slusser shared that SAP&DC has been hosting smaller grant workshops as part of the Community Capacity Program. If anyone is interested in holding workshops in their county, please let him know.

## **MINI-GRANT RESOLUTION**

Mr. Lee Slusser reported that SAP&DC is applying for a DCNR C2P2 Grant for \$200,000 on April 3, 2024. The grant funds will be used to fund Round 11 of the Southern Alleghenies Mini-Grant Program in 2025. The match from the awarded projects will be used as SAP&DC's match for the grant. SAP&DC applied for a large sum of money from DCNR which was handed out to recreation trail projects in the Southern Alleghenies. Since 2014 SAP&DC has awarded 48 projects totaling over \$1M.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Baughman to approve the application for the DCNR C2P2 Grant totaling \$200,000, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and was unanimously approved.

## **EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROJECTS**

Mr. Lee Slusser stated 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 five projects requesting federal financial assistance were presented, reviewed, and noted as consistent with the Commission's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

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

Commissioner Hunt commended Mr. Slusser and Mr. Zack Lee, Community Development Program Manager, for all of their assistance in working on the Emergency Life Saving Grant. There were 30 projects that were funded nationwide; Cambria County received \$2M in funding.

## **BUSINESS LENDING SERVICES**

Mrs. Trudy Mitchell, Director Business Lending Services, presented and reviewed three loan applications that were submitted to and reviewed by the Commission's Loan Review Committee: Aaron Z. & Arlene H. Fox, Merle M. & Priscilla S. Fox, and John A. & Mary Ella Zimmerman.

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 Mrs. Clapper and was unanimously approved.

## **RAYSTOWN LAKE UPPER CORNERS ECO-ADVENTURE LODGE CONCEPT**

Mrs. Debbi Prosser, Director Business Development, reported that the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau is requesting that SAP&DC support a letter to the Army Corps of Engineers to support the exploration of developing an Eco-Adventure Lodge concept at Raystown Lake Resort. This would include accommodations, recreation facilities, commercial attractions, outfitter services, and retail amenities with the exception of a courtesy dock. The facility would function as a vendor on Raystown Lake much Like Seven Points Marina and Raystown Lake Resort.

Mrs. Prosser provided additional background on the project and shared that the Army Corps has a piece of property called Upper Corners that they have been interested in developing. The Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau has been in talks with the Army Corps to determine how to go about getting this property developed. The Army Corps process is to perform a marketing study to see what should be there, what it should look like, and what they are willing to support. They will then look for potential developers and vendors. The Army Corps' recommendation is to identify every activity that they can potentially see at the location. The Visitors Bureau is asking SAP&DC to support the Army Corps in beginning the marketing study process.

Mrs. Prosser spoke of some of the challenges in marketing this property. Raystown Lake does not allow alcohol, and the Army Corps does not allow long term housing; nobody can stay there more than three weeks at a time. Another challenge is they do not want more boat docks or launches added due to the traffic on the lake already. This project would allow people to tie up their boats without docks. To become handicapped accessible the Army Corps needs to put a courtesy dock in.

Discussion focused on issues encountered when working with the Army Corps in the past and the difficulties in getting approval for several projects. Upper Corners is the only area on the lake designated for commercial development and high-density recreation. Without dock access it restricts accessibility to the area. There is a lot of traffic on the lake, especially on weekends and holidays. Mrs. Prosser stated that the hope is that some allowances will be made later in the project.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Thomas to approve the support of the Raystown Lake Upper Corners Eco-Adventure Lodge proposal as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Cessna and was unanimously approved.

## **SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SERVICES MID-YEAR REPORT**

Mrs. Debbi Prosser stated that SAP&DC offers a number of business assistance services; she provided a mid-year progress report that outlines the goals and results that were achieved. She reviewed ARC PREP

Performance Summaries for 2023-2024 in addition to Goal Description results for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> quarters. Export, Government Procurement, and Marketing Outreach results were also reviewed in detail. Surveys are sent to businesses yearly; there was a very strong response rate with a high percentage of satisfaction.

Mrs. Prosser reviewed the Startup Alleghenies goals and results. These are partnerships with the county based economic development organizations and the Coaches. This funding was received through SBA that was a Community Navigator Program, and it will end on May 31, 2024. Mrs. Prosser shared that the Coaches have already surpassed every one of their goals.

Mrs. Prosser shared information on the Engage Program that is under the Department of Community and Economic Development which is a proactive outreach to businesses. SAP&DC receives a grant and subcontracts this money out to the county based economic development agencies who are paid \$1,000 for each company visit. Data was reviewed regarding issues impacting companies' growth with workforce being the biggest issue. Companies are then referred to various providers who can help with their issues.

Mrs. Prosser shared information on Startup Alleghenies funding. The money from SBA ends on May 31, 2024, but there is Alleghenies Marketplace funding available. She shared information on the Alleghenies Marketplace and the plans to increase sales and improve the website. Ms. Christa McGeary and Mr. Matt Reckner (Huntingdon County Coach and Somerset County Coach), are taking the lead and will work with merchants to improve their stores and focus on process improvement. The two agencies that support these Coaches will have ongoing funding through March 2025. JARI submitted a letter of intent and if successful, this will help support the Coaches moving forward. Bedford County has submitted a grant request through Senator Casey to support a Coach for two years; Blair County does not have funding lined up yet.

Mr. Rhodes commended Mrs. Prosser for the high survey response and the positive customer satisfaction results.

### **THE ALLEGHENIES OUTDOORS – MOVING THE RECREATION ECONOMY FORWARD PLAN**

Mrs. Debbi Prosser stated that the Alleghenies Outdoors plan is finalized; a copy of the plan was provided to Board members. The plan is also available on the SAP&DC website. The Steering Committee that worked on developing the plan will be meeting on March 22, 2024 to discuss implementation strategies and moving forward.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Steve Howsare stated that the next meeting of the SAP&DC Board of Directors is scheduled for Wednesday, May 22, 2024, beginning at 10:00 A.M. The Finance Committee will meet prior, beginning at 9:00 A.M. to review the budget.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:10 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Randy Bunch

Secretary