

**SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING  
July 17, 2024  
Commission Office**

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

**Adjourned: 11:20 A.M.**

**Members In Attendance**

Mr. Jim Foster  
Hon. Laura Burke  
Hon. Patrick Reeder  
Mrs. Sharon Clapper  
Hon. JR Winck  
Hon. Scott Hunt  
Mr. Donald Rhodes III  
Hon. Pam Tokar-Ickes  
Mr. Jay Cessna

Ms. Beth McGregor  
Hon. Keith Rager  
Ms. Erin Abel  
Hon. Deb Baughman  
Hon. Scott Walls  
Hon. Jeff Thomas  
Hon. Hervey Hann  
Hon. Mike Stiles

**Others In Attendance:**

Mr. Steve Howsare  
Mrs. Rebecca Canavan  
Mr. George Gvozdich, Jr.  
Mrs. Renee Best  
Ms. Regina Klevan

Mr. Lee Slusser  
Ms. Tina Taylor  
Ms. Lindsay Baer  
Mrs. Jennifer Sklodowski

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

**MINUTES, May 22, 2024**

A motion was entered by Mr. Foster to approve the May 22, 2024, Board of Directors' meeting minutes, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Thomas and was unanimously approved.

**FINANCE REPORT**

Mrs. Rebecca Canavan, Director of Finance, presented the Accounts Payable list of invoices that were paid in May and June in addition to the General Fund Ending Balance. She noted that there was nothing unusual that was paid; the Bank Account Summaries included the normal operations of the Commission.

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.

### **THE SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES GREENWAYS AND OPEN SPACE NETWORK PLAN**

Ms. Lindsay Baer, Regional Advisor for DCNR, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, presented an overview of the Community Conservation Partnerships Program in addition to speaking on the importance of updating the Southern Alleghenies Greenways Plan. Ms. Baer covers a twelve-county region and stated that the Southern Alleghenies region is struggling the most due to her position being vacant for several years.

Ms. Baer reported that the Bureau has provided over 8,000 projects since 1995; unfortunately, the concentration is in the Pittsburgh and Philadelphia areas. More rural areas do not see as many DCNR grants and Ms. Baer would like to see that change in the Southern Alleghenies region.

Ms. Baer stated that DCNR funds site development plans, park developments, tree plantings, trail projects, and partnership grants to name a few. They fund municipalities, municipal agencies, non-profit organizations, pre-qualified land trusts, and for-profit entities. There are multiple pots of funding, and each pot can fund different things. The non-profit funding is a very small amount and is therefore extremely competitive. Regarding matching requirements, most projects require a 50/50 match (\$1 for \$1), and there are different options available for grant funding. An in-kind match is allowed with no specific amount required; time and materials can also be donated.

There is a new Grants Customer Service portal, [DCNR Portal \(pa.gov\)](https://www.pa.gov/DCNR/portal), where there is information available on applying for and managing all DCNR grants. There are also walkthrough videos available for specific grant opportunities.

Ms. Baer reviewed the eligible project types in detail: planning, trails, small community, community and watershed forestry, acquisition, development, river conservation, and partnerships.

Ms. Baer shared that DCNR is requesting that Southern Alleghenies apply for funding this January; the next round of funding opens in January and closes at the beginning of April. The request is for Southern Alleghenies to come into DCNR for a planning grant to update their 17 year old Greenways Plan. They like for all plans to get updated between five to ten years. Ms. Baer reviewed the process as to how funding is allocated. An updated Greenways Plan is important for applicants to score higher and therefore will have a better chance of

receiving funding. Mr. Lee Slusser, Director of Planning & Community Development, shared the current Greenways Plan with the Board members; it is also available on the SAP&DC website.

Mr. Steve Howsare, SAP&DC Executive Director, noted that counties are always looking for grant funding and asked if there are other areas to get a match from to make the process easier. Ms. Baer stated that LSA (Local Share Account) and DCED could be used as a match; she encourages smaller areas to use Community Foundation Funding.

Ms. Baer spoke of ATV funding; if anyone is interested let her know. There is a fall round and a spring round of funding.

The Mini-Grant Program is needed in the region because it supports DCNR in the projects and awards. SAP&DC has administered nine rounds of mini grant funding across 49 projects, totaling over \$1 million dollars. Some recent projects were reviewed in detail.

### **EARN PROGRAM**

Ms. Regina Klevan, EARN Program Director, provided an update on the EARN (Employment Advancement and Retention Network) Program and shared that the EARN budget was approved by the Local Management Committee. SAP&DC employs six Case Managers to serve EARN participants.

Ms. Klevan reviewed the breakdown in the allocation of subcontractors and provided a brief overview of the program. The program serves individuals referred by the county assistance offices who receive TANF cash assistance, and there is also a certain percentage of individuals who receive food stamps. Paid Work Experience is underutilized; Ms. Klevan would like to see more use of this in serving clients as well as Credentialing. The goals for the program are to help mitigate numerous participant barriers and to help people in a 12-month retention period after they get placed. They work with many local agencies to partner in providing services.

Ms. Klevan shared information on a pilot program that is being operated by the Center for Community Action in Blair County to deploy tablets to clients for them to be able to work remotely as well as to use on site. It allows for more individualized instruction and also allows them to see in real time what the clients are doing.

Commissioner Baughman asked if there are any broadband issues with the tablets. Ms. Klevan stated that hot spots are used and occasionally there will be an issue for clients in the more rural areas.

Commissioner Walls questioned if there is Paid Work Experience funding available. Ms. Klevan noted that there is funding available, but during COVID the sites that normally participated did not want to have additional people on site. It continues to be a challenge getting people on site, but they are working on this issue.

### **BUSINESS LENDING SERVICES REPORT**

Ms. Tina Taylor, Business Lending Program Manager, presented and reviewed the actions taken by the Loan Review Committee. Ms. Taylor reported that there were six projects approved since the last Board of Directors meeting.

Ms. Taylor reviewed the list of applications and projects in detail. All applications were approved unanimously by the Loan Review Committee, as presented, and are now presented to the Board of Directors for concurrence.

A motion was entered by Mr. Rhodes to concur with the actions taken by the Loan Review Committee, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Tokar-Ickes and was unanimously approved.

### **SAXTON TRAIL CONNECTIVITY STUDY AWARD**

Mr. Lee Slusser, Director Planning & Community Development, reported that the Saxton Borough lies between the termini of three regional trails: the Huntingdon and Broad Top (H&BT) Rail Trail, the Terrace Mountain Trail, and the Huntingdon and Broad Top Mountain Railroad Trail. Seeking to connect these trails to each other through Saxton making Saxton a trail town hub, SAP&DC successfully acquired a \$45,000 planning grant from PaDCNR on October 5, 2023, to be matched \$30,000 from Bedford County and \$15,000 from SAP&DC. To develop the Saxton Trail Connectivity Study, SAP&DC issued an RFP for qualified trail planning consultants on June 7, 2024. One consultant, GAI Consultants, Inc., of Cranberry Township, PA responded with a proposal costing \$90,000. GAI Consultants previously completed the design for phases 5 and 6 of the H&BT Trail. The proposal was reviewed by Mr. Slusser.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Baughman to approve awarding the Saxton Trail Connectivity Study contract to GAI Consultants, Inc., as presented. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Clapper and was unanimously approved.

### **SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES REGIONAL GREENWAYS MINI-GRANT PROGRAM**

Mr. Lee Slusser stated that under the terms of an April 2024 grant contract with PaDCNR for \$150,000, SAP&DC announced the tenth round of the Southern Alleghenies Regional Greenways Mini-Grant Program in March 2024.

A summary of the four applications received to date was included in the meeting packet and reviewed by Mr. Slusser. On June 12, 2024, the SAP&DC Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) recommended that the Board of Directors approve all of these applications and leave the application window open for future applications on a first come, first served rolling basis to utilize the remaining \$81,626 of the PaDCNR grant for any projects that might come in.

Mr. Steve Howsare stated that the Bedford Joint Municipal Authority Project was the only project that was not funded last round and they were encouraged to reapply.

A motion was entered by Mr. Foster to approve the Regional Greenways Mini-Grant Program applications, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Thomas and was unanimously approved.

### **APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION FY 2025 INVESTMENT PACKAGE**

Mr. Lee Slusser reported that formerly, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) required that an annual “investment package” be submitted each August. ARC no longer requires this submission; however, SAP&DC staff are still providing the package to the Board of Directors for their information and to allow for any questions they may have. Mr. Slusser reviewed the current ARC projects and potential applicants with whom SAP&DC is working with.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Tokar-Ickes to approve the Appalachian Regional Commission Investment Package for FY 2025, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Clapper 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 nine 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 Commissioner Hunt to approve the Projects Under Executive Order 12372, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Thomas and was unanimously approved.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Howsare spoke of the Greenways Plan update and the estimated cost of updating the plan. Ms. Baer stated that SAP&DC will need to issue an RFP to consultants to get a cost estimate. It is possible that ARC funding or PennDOT funds could be used. The projected timeline to update the plan along with securing the required matching funds could take 9 to 12 months. If all the counties split the match, letters of commitment are required. The funds are not needed until January 2026.

- Next SAP&DC Board of Directors Meeting: September 18, 2024 at 10:00 AM.

A motion was entered by Mrs. Clapper to go into Executive Session to discuss current litigation. The motion was seconded by Mr. Cessna and was unanimously approved.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Thomas to come out of Executive Session. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Clapper and was unanimously approved.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was entered by Mrs. Clapper to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Thomas and was unanimously approved.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:20 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Randy Bunch

Secretary