

**SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING
July 16, 2025
Commission Office**

Convened: 10:00 A.M.

Adjourned: 12:10 P.M.

Members In Attendance:

Mr. Jim Foster (via Zoom)
Hon. Randy Bunch
Mr. Jay Cessna
Hon. Patrick Reeder
Hon. Hervey Hann (via Zoom)
Hon. JR Winck
Hon. Scott Hunt
Hon. Brian Fochtman
Hon. Amy Webster

Ms. Beth McGregor (via Zoom)
Hon. Mike Stiles (via Zoom)
Hon. David Kessling
Hon. Deb Baughman (via Zoom)
Hon. Pamela Tokar-Ickes
Hon. Scott Walls
Mr. Donald Rhodes III (via Zoom)
Hon. Keith Rager
Hon. Jeff Thomas (via Zoom)

Others In Attendance:

Mr. Steven Howsare
Mrs. Rebecca Canavan
Mr. George Gvozdich, Jr.
Mr. Matt Bjorkman
Mrs. Jennifer Sklodowski
Mr. Zack Lee

Ms. Emily Hite
Ms. Tina Taylor
Mr. Lee Slusser
Mrs. Renee Best
Mr. John Eberhardt

CALL TO ORDER:

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

PUBLIC COMMENT:

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

MINUTES:

A motion was entered by Commissioner Bunch to approve the May 28, 2025 Finance Committee and Board of Directors meeting minutes, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rager 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. The change in balances for the General Account, Money Market Account, LED, and SBFF were due to receivables that were received. She noted that there were no concerns and nothing unusual was paid; the Bank Account Summaries include the normal operations of the Commission.

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

SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD (SAWDB):

Mrs. Jennifer Sklodowski, Director of Workforce Development, shared that during the July 8th Executive Committee meeting, a new concept was introduced that has the potential to become a best practice in the region: “Employer Insights - Informing Workforce Development Strategy”. This initiative was designed as a collaborative model that brings the region’s employers to the table by meeting with members of the Executive Committee. The goal is to better align our workforce strategies with real-time, local labor market needs. Each session provides employers the floor to share their current hiring needs, skill gaps, and upcoming industry trends. This will enable our training and education partners to adjust and adapt their programming in response.

Mrs. Sklodowski reported that the SAWDB remains in a strong financial position. This stability allows them to continue investing in the programs and partnerships that serve the region's workforce needs.

Mrs. Sklodowski stated that in June, the SAWDB petitioned the Commonwealth to add three occupations to the High Priority Occupations (HPO) list for the region: Airfield Operations Specialist, Elementary School Teacher, (except Special Education), and Special Education Teacher - Kindergarten and Elementary. All three occupations were approved and will appear on the region's HPO list for the next three years. The Nursing Assistant occupation was also added to the 2025 HPO list. The list will be officially released by the end of the month and will remain in effect from August 1, 2025 through July 31, 2026.

EARN PROGRAM:

Ms. Emily Hite, Director of EARN Program, provided an update on the EARN Program. The program continues to see an increase in the number of participants across all six counties. There was a total of 189 participants for the region. There continues to be an increase in referrals: since June 1st the program has received 67 referrals across the region.

Ms. Hite shared that they are now fully staffed with Case Managers. Once the new Case Manager is trained, the hiring process will begin for the new Program Monitor position.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM UPDATE:

Mr. Zack Lee, Director of Business Development, provided an update on State PREP Impact results. As of the end of the third quarter many goals and metrics have been met. They are on target to meet and exceed many of the goals.

Mr. Lee shared information on a State PREP special initiative proposal that was submitted. The current contract has been extended until June 2026 and there will be level funding added to the current contract. However, there was unused funding recovered from the previous fiscal year, so additional funding will be distributed to each of the PREP regions for special initiative projects. Mr. Lee met with all of the PREP partners to discuss how the additional funding could be utilized. In the proposal to DCED, they included the revival of The Alleghenies branding and website. This will include the hiring of a website developer to build out the website in addition to hiring a professional videographer to build a library of assets (trail photos, newsletters, events, etc.) for the region. Also included in the proposal is the purchase of virtual tour equipment and a subscription service to conduct virtual tours.

Mr. Lee reported that the APEX Accelerator program has expanded their service region to include Cambria, Indiana, and Somerset counties. JARI will be one of the subcenters moving forward.

Mr. Lee shared that the Governor's Office of Transformation and Opportunity Regional Forum will be held at the Blair County Convention Center on July 17th. This will be a regional forum to discuss permitting and regulatory reform.

BUSINESS LENDING SERVICES REPORT:

Ms. Tina Taylor, Director of Business Lending Services, presented the actions taken by the Loan Review Committee. Ms. Taylor reported that there were two 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 Commissioner Tokar-Ickes to concur with the actions taken by the Loan Review Committee, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Webster and was unanimously approved.

LOAN RESTRUCTURING REQUESTS SUBMITTED TO PIDA:

Ms. Taylor presented and reviewed the two loan restructuring requests that were submitted to PIDA. These loans were previously approved by the Board of Directors.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Reeder to approve the loan restructuring requests, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rager and was unanimously approved.

PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE:

Mr. Lee Slusser, Director of Planning and Community Development, provided an update on several FY 2025 ARC applications and awards:

- Riverview Business Center Expansion Access Project: This project included a traffic signal and turning lanes on US 522. The application was drafted by SAP&DC. Based on a Traffic Impact Study that was done, PennDOT limited further growth of the industrial park until the addition of a traffic signal was completed. The award amount was \$2.8 million dollars towards a \$3 million dollar project; this was the largest local access road project that Pennsylvania has ever funded. The project will enable IFC Services and the Cabinetworks Group to complete planned expansions and create at least 250 new jobs.

- September 11th National Memorial Trail: Garrett: The application was drafted by RASC with guidance from SAP&DC. The award amount was \$930,319 towards a \$1.8 million dollar project. Sidewalks will be constructed through Garrett in addition to a 1.25-acre trailhead and 1.8 miles of a new off-road trail. Three businesses will be created, and two businesses will be improved.
- Closing Rural Healthcare Workforce Gaps, 17 Street: The application was drafted by Delta Development with guidance from SAP&DC. The award amount was \$1 million dollars towards an \$8.7 million dollar project. A multi-tenant medical facility with an on-site nursing school will be built. There will be 41 healthcare jobs created, and 600 patients will be served annually.
- Bedford County Housing Initiative - Reducing Barriers to Workforce Development: The award amount was \$100,000 towards a \$200,000 project. The project involves the preparation of planning, engineering, and design documents for a residential subdivision within the Bedford County Business Park III.

Mr. Lee reviewed a few projects that did not receive funding in addition to FY 2025 Area Development and LAR candidates. ARC Area Development and LAR pre-applications are due by July 18th.

Commissioner Thomas and Commissioner Walls thanked Mr. Slusser and his team for their hard work on the Huntingdon County Award.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROJECTS:

Mr. 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 twenty 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 Webster to approve the Projects Under Executive Order 12372, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rager and was unanimously approved.

EMERGENCY LIFE SAVINGS THROUGH MULTI-MODAL MOBILITY PROJECT (ELSa-M3):

Mr. John Eberhardt, Managing Director at ATA Aviation, delivered a presentation on the ELSa-M3 project and provided background information in addition to an update on the project.

This effort started with the Cambria County Commissioners working with SAP&DC a few years ago to pursue a USDOT SMART Grant. The premise of this project is to be a pilot for a six-county rollout for automated drone dispatch to be integrated with 911 centers. When a call comes into 911, it will automatically send a message to the software to cue the drone up for dispatch with a target dispatch time of less than 60 seconds. The drone will have a box that includes a defibrillator, EpiPen, Narcan, a bleed kit, and Oral glucose. The dispatcher will send the drone in addition to an ambulance. In some cases, lifesaving aid will be delivered before an ambulance arrives.

Mr. Eberhardt reviewed the program goals and objectives. The project is trying to prove that drones can be integrated and delivered safely as part of an emergency medical response in addition to being competitive with an ambulance in terms of saving time. Data is currently being collected to determine the costs of operating and running the service.

Mr. Eberhardt provided an update on the project rollout. Stage 1 is starting in the Greater Johnstown Urbanized Area. For this type of pilot, it is an ideal location. There are twelve transportation disadvantaged census tracts, eight low food access areas, and three medically underserved areas. The pilot should be going live within the next few weeks. There is the potential for annual harm reduction to 413 individuals, over 40 lives saved, and \$3.9 million dollars in annual cost savings. Stage 2 will include the remaining SAP&DC region. It is projected with the rollout of Stage 2 that 15,000 dispatches will be avoided annually, over 250 lives saved annually, \$25 million dollars in annual savings, and an estimated 67% five-year total internal rate of return.

Discussion centered on how drones will be dispatched when there are other public safety drone programs in place. Dispatch will be coordinated at the county and regional levels. It is a public system that will support both public and private operations. Part of the purpose of the infrastructure in the system is that everybody is sharing everyone else's position, flight plans, etc. The goal of this program is not to replace public safety drones, but to create the infrastructure and to enable automated drone operations.

Mr. Eberhardt stated that it will take 60 to 100 technician jobs to run and operate the drones at a regional level. The drones will be spread throughout the six counties based on population data to maximize coverage. The local 911 centers will determine who will dispatch the drones, and there will need to be personnel who oversee this.

Discussion focused on liability issues and who would be negligent and bear the responsibility if the 911 caller administers the drugs incorrectly or fails to use the medical device correctly. The equipment that is being dispatched is all self-administrable per FDA guidelines, and the equipment falls under the Good Samaritan Laws. The way the equipment will be dispatched follows the existing Cambria County 911 dispatch script. Policies are being worked on regarding how to roll out this infrastructure.

Mr. Eberhardt reviewed the roll out timeframe. It takes approximately two days to get the data and work with each county's GIS and roughly three months per county to roll out. They will use public facilities as much as possible, which will alleviate paying additional fees. There are websites available to check for project updates: www.drone814.com and www.pa-fix.com.

Mr. Eberhardt stated that this is a multi-state collaborative; there is a 36 state working group that are working on similar projects, and Pennsylvania is one of the leading states in this group. The goal is for this to be part of a group of states and localities that are putting out the next generation infrastructure for aviation. Pennsylvania will be one of the handful of places in the country that can support some of this technology due to having the infrastructure in place.

Commissioner Hunt shared that live testing, dispatching, and calls are taking place in Cambria County this week. The plan is to expand this program into the remaining Southern Alleghenies region.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Bunch to go into Executive Session to discuss pending litigation. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rager and was unanimously approved.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Rager to come out of Executive Session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Webster and was unanimously approved.

OTHER BUSINESS:

- Commissioner Hunt reminded members that the next SAP&DC Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 17, 2025, beginning at 10:00 A.M.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:10 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. JR Winck

Secretary