

**SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING  
September 17, 2025  
Commission Office**

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

**Adjourned: 10:50 A.M.**

**Members In Attendance:**

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

Ms. Beth McGregor  
Hon. Laura Burke  
Mrs. Sharon Clapper  
Hon. Deb Baughman (via Zoom)  
Hon. Jeff Thomas  
Hon. Scott Walls  
Mr. Donald Rhodes III  
Ms. Erin Abel

**Others In Attendance:**

Mr. Steven Howsare  
Mrs. Rebecca Canavan  
Mr. George Gvozdoch, Jr.  
Mrs. Renee Best  
Mr. Zack Lee

Ms. Emily Hite  
Mrs. Trudy Mitchell  
Mr. Lee Slusser  
Mr. Matt Bjorkman

**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 Mrs. Clapper to approve the July 16, 2025 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 July and August in addition to the General Fund Ending Balance. The SMART Grant invoice for \$300,000

was for a lot of equipment that was purchased on the grant, so there was almost \$500,000 moved from the money market account to pay that invoice. SAP&DC has received payment for that invoice and that money has been moved back into the money market account. Mrs. Canavan noted that this was the only significant invoice paid.

Mrs. Canavan shared that the audit with Maher Duessel has begun and should be completed by the next Board meeting on November 19<sup>th</sup> for the audit report to be approved.

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

#### **BUSINESS LENDING SERVICES REPORT:**

Mrs. Trudy Mitchell, Business Lending Services, presented the actions taken by the Loan Review Committee and reported that there were three projects approved since the last Board of Directors meeting and one project that is considered a loan restructuring.

Mrs. Mitchell reviewed the list of applications and projects in detail. She noted that the Biddle Family Partnership project is considered a loan restructuring and was previously approved in 2023; the information included in the meeting packet is for informational purposes only.

All applications were approved unanimously by the Loan Review Committee, as presented, and are now presented to the Board of Directors for approval.

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

#### **COMPUTER EQUIPMENT PURCHASE FOR EARN PROGRAM STAFF:**

Mr. Steven Howsare, Executive Director, stated that an electronic ballot was sent to the Executive Committee in July requesting approval to purchase computer equipment for EARN staff. Approval for the purchase was received, and now the purchase needs to be ratified as it exceeded Mr. Howsare's level of authority. SAP&DC follows a schedule to replace computers at least every five years as money is available. All electronic votes will also be made part of the permanent record.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Fochtman to concur with the authorization to purchase new computer equipment for EARN staff, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Thomas and was unanimously approved.

### **PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE:**

Mr. Lee Slusser, Director of Planning and Community Development, provided an update on activities taking place in the planning department:

- The CEDS is a comprehensive regional economic development strategy that is required and governed by the US EDA and is used to make sure that there is a unified, coordinated, and researched actual strategy for driving economic development in the region. The planning department is currently updating this plan that was completed and adopted by the Board of Directors on December 4, 2024. Mr. Slusser then reviewed the goals of the CEDS plan for economic development: growing the economy, workforce, infrastructure, community development, health, and resilience. There will be a CEDS meeting on September 29<sup>th</sup> to review the proposed updates; the amended document will be presented at an upcoming Board of Directors meeting for adoption. They are still working with the other LDDs and EDDs in Pennsylvania to develop a data dashboard. The CEDS contains the biggest single collection of social economic, jobs, education, and data of any planning document in the region; it can be found on SAP&DC's website. [Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy \(CEDS\) - Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission](#)
- ARC Local Access Roads, FY 2026 - The Paper Mill Road Industrial Site Reuse and Connectivity Project seeks \$3 million dollars for an access road project which is part of a \$12 million dollar investment to build an industrial park. There is already a lot of interest in this project because there is not a tremendous amount of industrial park space available in the area.
- ARC Area Development, FY 2026 - The New Enterprise Rural Electric Cooperative is seeking \$678,745 to replace a wooden substation in Waterside that serves most of the Southern Cove area.
- Broad Top Area Medical Center tentatively seeks \$1 million dollars to purchase five dental offices in rural areas where dentists are retiring and are unable to find a buyer.
- The Kris Krieger Foundation with BEAL Counseling and Consulting is seeking \$244,163 to help people who are in substance abuse situations rejoin the workforce.

- Entry Level Defense Manufacturing Initiative from JARI is seeking \$500,000 to provide unemployed and underemployed adults with skills for immediate employment in the defense manufacturing industry.
- ARC Area Development, FY 2026 - The Breezewood Redevelopment Plan seeks \$139,327 for a planning project to study existing conditions and market demands. There will be three feasible redevelopment scenarios prepared with cost estimates and economic impacts.

Mr. Howsare stated that Congress passed some additional funding several years ago and this will be the last year for it. The state had additional funding, so this year they increased the amount that you could apply for, and SAP&DC submitted as many applications as they could.

- Mr. Slusser reviewed the ARC POWER applications that were submitted. This program is for coal impacted communities and is traditionally more competitive with larger awards. SAP&DC was encouraged to send in as many applications as possible with many of the projects being workforce related. The deadline to submit applications is October 22<sup>nd</sup>. The Commonwealth provides money through ARC to help applicants fill out a POWER application, and that program is run by SAP&DC for the entire state.

Mr. Matt Bjorkman, Transportation Program Manager, reported that SAP&DC is on a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) year and should be adopting the 2027 to 2030 TIP in June 2026 and will go into effect in October 2026. A meeting was recently held with all of the counties to discuss local priorities, as well as any local structures that might get programmed on the TIP. There will be about one structure per county which is on par with the last TIP. There is a significant number of carryover projects that will be on the TIP. The district should have their draft TIP and spreadsheets with all of the allocated funds completed by December; it will then go to SAP&DC to start work on the planning document. Any finalization that the district has will be presented to the transportation committees.

Mr. Bjorkman reported that the draft application period for the Transportation Alternative Set-Aside Program was September 5<sup>th</sup>, and the state is currently reviewing those applications. This is to be completed before December 31<sup>st</sup> which is the final application deadline.

Mr. Bjorkman stated that they have begun working on the Long Range Transportation Plan and the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. For the Long Range Transportation Plan, they have reached out to several stakeholders from RPO counties to serve on SAP&DC's Steering Committee. It is a 30-month planning

process, so a kickoff meeting will be scheduled within the next few weeks to start the clock. The Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan will be updated next winter; the Board will be updated as progress is made. The US DOT Smart Grant is nearing the end of period performance in December, but they have until the end of January to finish closing out with the US DOT. This grant is for the drone medical delivery service in Johnstown, and they are expecting to get the NOFO for stage two which will be opened up in the fall. SAP&DC has already started working with consultants to start developing the application. In terms of funding, they are looking for \$14 million dollars spread out over a 36-month period which would make it more of a regional project. The medical delivery service went live on August 21<sup>st</sup>, but there were no active flights on active calls.

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

Mr. Bjorkman reviewed details of the Mini-Grant Program projects that were received. There was approximately \$50,000 dollars available, and funding was recommended for three projects:

- Diamond Boulevard Greenspace Engineering and Design Project – Requested \$12,500. This project would develop a master site plan for the existing playground area and adjacent wooded land. The scope of work includes conceptual layouts, ADA compliant site development drawings, detailed cost estimates, and coordination with utilities and environmental features.
- Trail Development Technical Assistance & Engineering Support – Requested \$15,000. This project will enable the applicant to acquire the knowledge and data needed to successfully execute trail improvement projects, identify future funding opportunities, and obtain engineering information that is needed to move forward with the TOPP Trail development.
- Cassville Borough Re-Beautification Project - Requested \$5,767.88. This project includes a renovation of the Cassville Community Park to overhaul the electrical infrastructure of the property.

There was \$18,000 in funding still available that was awarded to Garrett Borough Little League and was to be used for various amenities around the field. Their priorities have since changed due to severe flooding, and they are now working to retool their scope of work.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Bunch to approve awarding the applications received for Regional Greenways Mini-Grant program funding, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rhodes and was unanimously approved with Commissioner Hunt abstaining from the Southmont Borough vote.

### **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 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 Walls and was unanimously approved.

### **OTHER BUSINESS:**

Mr. Howsare shared that Mr. Jim Walker, Workforce System Operations Specialist, will be retiring on October 31<sup>st</sup>. Mrs. Clapper shared that she has worked with Mr. Walker for thirty years and he is a tremendous asset to the organization and will be truly missed. Mr. Walker is always extremely helpful and knows all of the programs and guidelines and goes above and beyond to help everyone.

Mr. Howsare stated that the Community Capacity Grant will be ending at the end of December. SAP&DC has been looking at potential options to continue funding this position, but nothing has worked out so far. There is a good possibility that a position will be eliminated in mid-January.

- Mr. Howsare reminded members that the next SAP&DC Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 19, 2025, beginning at 10:00 A.M. The Finance Committee meeting will be held prior to the Board of Directors meeting and will begin at 9:15 A.M.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:50 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. JR Winck

Secretary