

**Minutes**  
**Western Piedmont Council of Governments**  
**Bimonthly Policy Board Meeting**  
**Tuesday, July 26, 2016**  
**Conover Station, City of Conover**

**Members Present:**

George Holleman, Chairman  
Larry Yoder, Vice-Chairman  
Barbara Pennell, Secretary  
Bob Floyd, Jr., Treasurer  
Robert Smyre, Past Chair  
Johnny Berry, At-Large  
Wayne Abele, At-Large  
Chip Black, Past Chairman  
Colleen Anderson, Alternate  
Dale Sherrill  
Joie Fulbright  
Kyle Hayman, Alternate  
Dr. Caryl Burns  
Vernon Tarlton, Alternate  
Larry Chapman  
Ben Willis  
Ronnie Williams, Alternate  
Forrest Fleming  
Jerry Hodge  
Rick Justice  
Gary McClure  
Wayne Annas, Alternate  
Dale Lingerfelt, Alternate  
Amparo Alfaro  
Mary Bess Lawing  
Tommy Luckadoo  
Merlin Perry  
Nicky Setzer

**Local Government/Agency:**

Taylorsville  
Alexander County  
Gamewell  
Cedar Rock  
Maiden  
Connelly Springs  
Burke County  
Valdese  
Catawba  
Claremont  
Conover  
Conover  
Granite Falls  
Hickory  
Hudson  
Lenoir  
Maiden  
Morganton  
Newton  
Rhodhiss  
Rutherford College  
Rutherford College  
Sawmills  
Non-Elected  
Non-Elected  
Non-Elected  
Non-Elected  
Non-Elected

**Members Absent:**

Kitty Barnes, At-Large  
Vacant  
Cheryl Pritchard  
Mike Labrose  
Donald Robinson

Catawba County  
Brookford  
Cajah's Mountain  
Caldwell County  
Catawba

Benny Orders  
Jimmy Wakeford  
Jill Patton  
Barbara Lowman  
Vernon Moyer  
Rick Justice  
Jeff Wilson  
Pat Hatley  
Deborah Ashley-Smith

Drexel  
Glen Alpine  
Hickory  
Hildebran  
Long View  
Rhodhiss  
Sawmills  
Non-Elected  
Non-Elected

**Guests/Others Present:**

Catherine Renbarger, Claremont  
Donald Duncan, Conover  
Don Beal, Conover  
Mark Canrobert, Conover  
Lee Moritz, Jr., Conover  
Chris Reed, Conover  
Mary Carter, Gamewell  
Joe Gibbons, Lenoir  
Scott Hildebran, Lenoir  
Christopher Todd, Sawmills  
Seth Eckard, Valdese  
Ben Turnmire, Valdese

**WPCOG Staff Present:**

Anthony Starr, Executive Director  
Sherry Long, Assistant Executive Director  
Andrea Biddix, Finance Director  
Stephanie Hanvey, Regional Housing Director  
John Marshall, Director of Planning and Transportation  
Wendy Johnson, Workforce Development Director  
Jason Toney, Communications Specialist  
Kim Duncan, Community Development Administrator  
Leah Martin, Senior Planner  
Amanda Wallace, Administrative Assistant

**Call to Order/Welcome**

A regular meeting of the WPCOG Policy Board was called to order at 6:45 pm by Chairman George Holleman. Chairman Holleman introduced Lee Moritz, Jr., Mayor of Conover, who welcomed the Board and thanked them for visiting the City of Conover.

### **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Minutes of the previous meeting were considered. Mr. Chapman made a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Fulbright offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Unfinished Business/Reports**

There was no unfinished business.

### **New Business**

#### NCHFA Awards and Staff Recognition

Ms. Long, Assistant Executive Director, announced that the WPCOG was recently recognized by the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency for their participation with the Hardest Hit Fund. Since the program's inception in late 2010, the WPCOG has provided mortgage assistance to 751 homeowners totaling \$12.9 million. Laurie Powell and Kim Duncan are the WPCOG staff for this program. At this year's conference, five awards were given across the state and WPCOG received two of those five.

The first award, the **Excellence Award**, recognized the organization with the lowest return rate and highest approval rate from April 1, 2015 – May 31, 2016. WPCOG staff submitted 104 applications with a 94% approval rate and a file return rate of 15%. Staff has averaged assisting 115 clients each year since the program was established.

The second award, the **Underwriters Choice Award**, recognized an individual chosen by the NCHFA Underwriting staff. All of the underwriters were asked to nominate a counselor that stuck out. One where pending conditions were rarely an issue, one that understands policies and procedures first hand and provides applications that are an underwriters dream. The underwriters selected our own Kim Duncan for this award.

Ms. Duncan stated how grateful she is to work for WPCOG. She loves what she does for a living and loves having the ability to help so many others during difficult times in their lives.

#### Regional Housing Policy Changes

Ms. Hanvey, Regional Housing Director, presented an overview of recent policy changes.

Effective August 1, 2016 WPCOG Regional Housing Authority will adopt the following policies:

- **Inspections Costs:** HUD states the PHA may charge a reasonable fee to owners for re-inspections in two situations: when the owner notifies the PHA that a repair has been made but the deficiency has not been corrected, and when the time for repairs has elapsed and the deficiency has not been corrected.
- **WPCOG Policy:** The PHA will not charge a fee for failed re-inspections.
- **Social Security Numbers:** HUD states if an applicant's family includes a child under 6 years of age who joined the household within the 6 months prior to the date of voucher issuance, an otherwise eligible family may be admitted to the program and the family must provide documentation of the child's SSN within 90 days of the effective date of the initial HAP contract. A 90-day extension will be granted if the PHA determines that the participant's failure to comply was due to unforeseen circumstances and was outside of the participant's control.

- **WPCOG Policy:** The PHA will grant one additional 90-day extension if needed for reasons beyond the applicant's control, such as delayed processing of the SSN application by the SSA, natural disaster, fire, death in the family, or other emergency.
- **Value of Assets and Asset Income:** For families with net assets totaling \$5,000 or less, the PHA may accept the family's declaration of asset value and anticipated asset income. However, the PHA is required to obtain third-party verification of all assets regardless of the amount during the intake process and at least every three years thereafter.
- **WPCOG Policy:** For families with net assets totaling \$5,000 or less, the PHA will accept the family's self-certification of the value of family assets and anticipated asset income when applicable. The family's declaration must show each asset and the amount of income expected from that asset. All family members 18 years of age and older must sign the family's declaration. The PHA will use third-party documentation for assets as part of the intake process, whenever a family member is added to verify the individual's assets, and every three years thereafter.
- **STREAMLINED ANNUAL REEXAMINATIONS:** HUD permits PHAs to streamline the income determination process for family members with fixed sources of income. While third-party verification of all income sources must be obtained during the intake process and every three years thereafter, in the intervening years the PHA may determine income from fixed sources by applying a verified cost of living adjustment (COLA) or rate of interest.
- **WPCOG Policy:** The PHA will streamline the annual reexamination process by applying the verified COLA or interest rate to fixed-income sources. The PHA will document in the file how the determination that a source of income was fixed was made. If a family member with a fixed source of income is added, the PHA will use third-party verification of all income amounts for that family member. If verification of the COLA or rate of interest is not available, the PHA will obtain third-party verification of income amounts. Third-party verification of fixed sources of income will be obtained during the intake process and at least once every three years thereafter.

Mr. Smyre made a motion that the board approve the new streamlining policies effective August 1, 2016. Mr. Abele offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

#### Workforce Development Board Reappointments

Ms. Johnson, Workforce Development Director, presented information regarding reappointment of seven current Workforce Development Board members for another two-year term. The following individuals' terms are expiring and are eligible for reappointment.

Marty Waters, Owner, Marlin Chemical – Caldwell County

Elaine Lockhart, VP, Continuing Education & Workforce Development, CCC&TI – Caldwell County

Bill Burton, President/Owner, Jack Sipe Construction – Catawba County

Glenn Privette, Director of Human Resources, Leviton Manufacturing Inc – Burke County

Wayne Abele, Owner, Abele's Family Restaurant – Burke County

John Wiley, Owner, Concept Frames – Catawba County

Crystal Glenn, Executive Director, Workforce Development Innovation Center – Catawba County

Mr. Black made a motion to reappoint the seven current Workforce Development Board members for another two-year term. Mr. Fulbright seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

#### Workforce Development Board New Appointees

Ms. Johnson also presented two resignations to the Workforce Development Board.

Due to organizational changes of responsibility at Goodwill Industries NW, current Workforce Development Board member Mary Patton is resigning, and Goodwill Industries NW recommends Malla Vue, District Director for Catawba, Caldwell, Burke, Alexander and Iredell counties, be appointed to the Workforce Development Board.

Due to organizational changes of responsibility at Western Piedmont Community College, current board member Lee Kiser is resigning and WPCOG recommends Atticus Simpson, Vice President for Workforce and External Affairs.

Mr. Smyre made a motion that the board accept the resignations of Mary Patton and Lee Kiser and to appoint Malla Vue and Atticus Simpson to the Workforce Development Board for the remainder of the unexpired terms. Mr. Abele offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

#### Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update

Mr. Starr presented information to the Policy Board about the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) update. The WPCOG serves as the Economic District (EDD), as designated by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). The EDA requires that we maintain and update our Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy every 5 years. The current CEDS was approved in 2012 and must be updated and submitted to the EDA by October 2017. WPCOG staff is starting the initial preparations for updating the CEDS.

The 2012 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy had four main goals:

- Goal 1: Build on the region's competitive advantage and leverage the marketplace.
- Goal 2: Establish and maintain a robust regional infrastructure.
- Goal 3: Create revitalized and vibrant communities.
- Goal 4: Develop healthy and innovative people.

Mr. Starr stated that there were a number of strategies for each of these goals and he would be glad to e-mail them to anyone who requests that information.

A key measure of our regional efforts is the amount of public and private investment. Since 2012, we have obtained 96 grants for our region that total at least \$35,800,506. This also leveraged additional local match and private investment of \$58,956,653 for a combined public and private investment of \$94,757,159.

The 2012 CEDS performance measures the following:

- Number of unemployed persons in the region, which has gone from 19,086 in 2012 to 7,784 in 2016.
- Total jobs in the region, which was around 139,000 in 2011 and has gone up to over 144,000 in 2015.
- Manufacturing jobs in the region, which has increased from almost 37,500 in 2011 to almost 40,000 in 2015.
- Construction jobs in the region, which has decreased from around 3,550 in 2011 to a little over 3,400 in 2015.
- Healthcare jobs in the region, which have remained relatively steady over the last 4 years. As the current population continues to get older, jobs in this area will continue to grow.
- Jobs in education, which have decreased from around 11,000 in 2011 to a little over 10,200 in 2015. Mr. Starr noted that this decrease was due to state and local budget cuts, as well as more students going to privately funded schools and a loss in the younger demographics.
- Positions in trade (wholesale and retail) have steadily increased since 2011, as have other service positions in the region.
- Public Administration jobs in the region have dropped by 250 positions because of economic impacts in the region.
- Number of business establishments in the region has decreased by 4% since 2011, but Mr. Starr pointed out that this indication is lagging. The economy is improving, but this number takes a little more time to catch back up.
- Percentage of population aged 25 or older with a high school diploma or equivalent has grown 1.7% since 2011. Graduation rates are higher because students are less likely to drop out to get a factory job. As the older population passes away, the base of the population is more educated.
- Percentage of population aged 25 or older with a four-year degree or higher in the region has remained around the same since 2011.
- Community college students enrolled in the region has decreased significantly, which is a measure of success since most of those students have most likely returned to the workforce.
- Percentage of students graduating high school in 4 years is above the state average. Caldwell and Burke Counties have had a significant increase in graduation rates.
- Percentage of students passing both math and reading end of grade tests is above the state averages, except for Catawba County, which is just below average. Part of this is from changes in state tests, an area that has a great opportunity for improvement.
- Average weekly wages in the region have grown from \$658 in 2011 to \$721 in 2015.
- Poverty rates for the region in children (0-17) went from 26.6% in 2011 to 28.4% in 2014, while poverty rates for all individuals went from 18.4% to 18.9%.
- Foreclosures in the region have decreased from 1,723 in 2011 to 970 in 2015.
- Regional median housing values have risen from \$117,000 in 2011 to \$124,300 in 2014.
- Median gross rent for the region has increased slightly from \$625 in 2011 to \$652 in 2014.
- Regional resident population growth started at 365,997 in 2011, took a dip to 364,786 in 2013, then rose to 366,073 in 2015.

The update must be completed by October 2017, and the Policy Board will appoint a CEDS Committee. We plan to provide a graphic heavy, shorter document that conveys the message quickly. There is a planned emphasis of conversations with key partners and stakeholders, with

limited committee meetings planned. The Policy Board will be requested to appoint the committee in November, with its first meeting in January 2017.

#### FY 16-17 Budget Amendment

Mr. Starr reviewed a budget amendment to the FY 2016-17, which increases by \$108,180 for a total budget of \$15,366,428.

The first amendment increases and decreases revenues and expenditures in several areas to accommodate new projects and new revenue allocations for Environmental Protection and Economic Development that are different from budget adoption.

Key elements in this proposed budget amendment include:

- Increased (\$135,000) Environmental Protection revenues associated with additional funding for the Western Piedmont Septic System Repair Program.
- Decreased (\$85,000) Community Development revenues to reflect increases and decreases in several contracts.
- Increased (\$7,100) Community and Regional Planning revenues due to the Burke Data Project amount increasing.
- Increased (\$36,000) Economic Development revenues associated with the start-up of the Fonta Flora project for Morganton, the new PEDS economic development project, and administration assistance for a new sewer project for Claremont.
- An increase (\$9,371) in Regional Public Housing to reflect recent increase in administration revenues from HUD.
- Increased (\$9,172) Area Agency on Aging Services to reflect increase in the Family Caregiver Support Program.
- Decrease (\$2,580) in Workforce Development to reflect compensated absences and salary adjustments.
- Chargeable salaries increased and compensated absences decreased due to compensated absence adjustments.
- Contingency increased \$49,784 in Transportation, Community and Regional Planning, and Economic Development due to improved revenues and these funds may be held for use at a later date, once needed.

Mr. Smyre made a motion that the board approve the first amendment to the 2016-2017 Budget as proposed. Mr. Black offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

#### Other Business

Mr. Holleman reminded the board that the next scheduled meeting would be on Tuesday, September 27 and would be hosted by Connelly Springs.

#### Staff Reports

Mr. Starr announced that Ms. Ashley Bolick, Director of Human Resources and Clerk to the Board, had her son, Luke on Sunday.

Mr. Starr also announced that he and Mr. Dee Blackwell had been through town manager applications for the Town of Rhodhiss. Mr. Starr and Mr. Blackwell will meet with the Rhodhiss council next week and then interview in a few weeks.

Mr. Starr encouraged visitors who had not toured Conover Station to stay after the meeting. Ms. Wendy Johnson will be happy to give a tour of the NCWorks Career Center. Mr. Starr expressed appreciation of the City of Conover to help serve Catawba and Alexander Counties.

Mr. Starr encouraged local governments to call Erin Schotte with any parks and recreation needs, and Johnny Wear with any clean water management needs.

Mr. Marshall announced the Water Quality Conference on August 4 and the Air Quality Conference on August 5, both at Lenoir Rhyne University. There is a link on the COG website to register.

Mr. Marshall also reminded members to call him with any projects to submit to the Transportation board.

Ms. Long stated that eight ARC grants are being submitted this week. Five of those are for downtown wi-fi, and we should know if they were approved in October.

#### Adjournment

Mr. Black made a motion that the meeting adjourn at 7:35 pm and the motion was seconded by Mr. Smyre. The motion passed unanimously.