

Western Piedmont Council of Governments
Bimonthly Policy Board Meeting
Tuesday, March 26, 2013
Hudson Uptown Building

Members Present:

Chip Black, Chairman
Bob Smyre, Vice-Chairman
Mary Bess Lawing, Treasurer
Wayne Abele, Past Chairman
Barbara Pennell, At-Large
Bruce Meisner, At-Large
Mike Labrose
Bob Floyd
Nicky Setzer
Johnny Berry
Don Beal
Kyle Hayman, Alternate
Benny Orders
Christine Abernathy
Trudy Simpson, Alternate
Dr. Caryl Burns
Karen Robinson
Larry Chapman
Ron Stillwell
Vernon Moyer
Dr. Alfred Hamer
Forrest Fleming, Alternate
Rick Justice
Wayne Annas
Trena Kirby
Charlie Taylor
Jerry Hodge

Local Government:

Valdese
Maiden
Newton
Burke County
Gamewell
Hickory
Caldwell County
Cedar Rock
Claremont
Connelly Springs
Conover
Conover
Drexel
Glen Alpine
Glen Alpine
Granite Falls
Hildebran
Hudson
Lenoir
Long View
Morganton
Morganton
Rhodhiss
Rutherford College
Sawmills
Non-Elected
Non-Elected

Members Absent:

Darrell Robertson, Secretary
Kitty Barnes, At-Large
George Holleman, At-Large
Jeff Hendron
Sue Noblitt

Alexander County
Catawba County
Taylorsville
Catawba
Brookford

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Others/Guests Present:

Betty McCall, Glen Alpine Planning Board
Janet Winkler, Hudson Town Commissioner
Phil Church, Auditor
Connie South, Cahah's Mountain Town Manager
Donald Duncan, Conover Town Manager
Jeff Morse, Valdese Town Manager
Mary Carter, Gamewell Town Clerk
Jeff Wilson, Sawmills Town Councilman
Todd Clark, Newton City Manager

WPCOG Staff Present:

H. DeWitt Blackwell, Jr., Executive Director
Anthony Starr, Assistant Executive Director
Doug Laffon, Finance Director
Sherry Long, Community Development Director
Vicky Abernethy, Section 8 Housing Specialist
Mary Thomas, Section 8 Housing Specialist
Dana Roberts, Administrative Services Manager

Call to Order/Welcome

A regular meeting of the WPCOG Policy Board was called to order at 6:45 pm by Chairman Chip Black. Hudson Town Commissioner Janet Winkler welcomed the group and introduced Town officials. Chairman Black also introduced Caldwell County's new Policy Board delegate, Mike Labrose, and the new WPCOG Assistant Executive Director, Anthony Starr.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

There were no additions or corrections to the minutes of the November meeting and they were unanimously approved on motion by Mr. Abele and second by Mr. Beal.

Unfinished Business/Reports

There was no unfinished business.

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New Business

FY 2011-12 Audit Presentation

Phil Church with Lowdermilk Church & Co., LLP, reviewed highlights from the FY 2012 audits in the areas of General Fund-Administration, Workforce Investment Act, Aging, Section 8 Housing and Capital Projects-New Facility. The audit was submitted to the Local Government Commission and approved with a clean, unqualified opinion. Mr. Church said copies of the audit were also shared with Policy Board members, local governments, and various funding agencies. He was asked why the value of the new WPCOG building was not shown in WPCOG Assets, to which he replied because the WPCOG budgets on a modified accrual system. There were no further questions or necessary actions.

FY 2013 Audit Contract Approval

Mr. Laffon asked the Board to approve a contract with Lowdermilk Church & Co., LLP, to perform the FY 2013 audit. Lowdermilk Church & Co., LLP has performed the WPCOG's single audit for the past eight years. The auditor submitted a quote reflecting a \$350 increase over the \$29,500 cost of the previous year's audit.

Mr. Beal made a motion to contract with Lowdermilk Church & Co., LLP, for the FY 2013 audit at a cost of \$29,850. The motion was seconded by Mr. Setzer and approved unanimously.

Section 8 Annual and Five-Year Housing Plans

Vicky Abernethy, Interim Section 8 Housing Director, told the Board that the WPCOG is required by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to adopt annual and five-year housing plans related to operation of the Section 8 program. This year the WPCOG was required to prepare and adopt an annual plan for the period July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014. A public hearing and Resident Advisory Board was held this day and no changes were recommended.

Ms. Abernethy gave an overview of the Section 8 Plan and asked the Board to authorize Chairman Black to sign a form certifying compliance with PHA Plans and Related Regulations (HUD 50077).

Mr. Smyre made a motion authorizing Chairman Black to sign the certification form. A second was offered by Mr. Meisner and the motion passed with a unanimous vote.

First Reading of the FY 2013-14 Budget

Mr. Laffon reviewed the proposed budget of \$15,726,683 and explained major increases or decreases from the previous year's budget. He noted that planned projects and funding amounts are based on the best information available and any changes or funding cuts will be better reflected in the second reading and adoption of the budget at the May 28 meeting.

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Mr. Laffon discussed how the WPCOG uses local government dues to match several grant programs. The current gap in local administration costs including matching fund requirements is negative \$43,778. Current positive contingencies in the budget in some of the program funds make the overall contingency a smaller negative amount. Any unfunded amounts at the fiscal year end decrease the fund balance. He said that as long as state funds and other less restrictive forms of revenue to aid in the use of matching funds continue to be reduced, it will be an annual challenge to avoid reductions in the fund balance. The WPCOG attempts to limit negative financial impacts on local governments and is current maximizing the use of local funds as matching funds for many grant programs.

Following a brief discussion, Mr. Beal made a motion to approve the FY 2014 budget as presented on first reading. The motion was seconded by Ms. Lawing and approved unanimously.

Chairman Black said that the audit showed net changes in the fund balance of approximately \$100,000. He noted that those funds were used to match grants and projects the WPCOG administers in the region. He said the \$43,778 shortfall causes some concern and there should be some discussion as to how to resolve the issue. Chairman Black also stressed the importance of Policy Board members taking the time at their respective city and county board meetings to inform them of WPCOG services and activities.

Program Updates

Mr. Blackwell spoke about proposed legislation, SB 127/HB356, which realign several state agencies into common regional administrative divisions. The proposed boundaries would split the region by placing Burke County in a separate region from Alexander, Caldwell and Catawba Counties. The NC Department of Commerce may recommend realigning workforce development areas to match the seven regional economic partnership boundaries, while other reports suggest that the state may eliminate the regional economic partnerships altogether. Other legislation, SR 147/HR 55, supports the realignment of workforce development areas with the regional council boundaries to promote greater efficiency in the administration of the Workforce Investment Act.

Mr. Blackwell asked the Policy Board to adopt a resolution calling on the Governor and General Assembly to utilize the boundaries of the WPCOG region and other COG regions when designating any new boundaries for the provision of workforce development, transportation, or environmental programs and other state or federal programs and resources.

A motion was made by Mr. Smyre and seconded by Ms. Lawing to adopt the attached resolution. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Morse asked that a copy of the resolution be shared with local governments so they could ask their boards to adopt similar resolutions.

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Mr. Blackwell then spoke about the WPCOG conference center and gave examples of how the room is being used by local, state and federal groups. More than 500 people have met in the room in the last five months.

Mr. Blackwell shared an update on housing assistance, which includes homeownership, reverse mortgage and foreclosure prevention counseling, as well as MPP (Mortgage Payment Program) loans. Interesting facts indicate the number of foreclosure starts in the region dropped by 1% in 2012, first-time homebuyers continue to enter the housing market but at a much slower pace, and there continues to be a great need for reverse mortgage counseling for older homeowners.

Mr. Blackwell noted that the Greenway bus shelter project is 50% complete. The annual Western NC Air Quality Conference will be held June 14 at Lenoir-Rhyne University. The WPCOG received notification from NADO that the WPCOG would receive an excellence in transportation award for our air quality program.

Mr. Starr noted staff had held 32 reverse mortgage sessions in the last few months. Senior games are scheduled for April 19 – May 17. Aging staff is training new senior center directors in Alexander and Burke Counties. A web site team has been working to refresh the WPCOG web site, making it more relevant. Interviews for a new Section 8 Housing Director will begin soon and the new director should be introduced at the May meeting.

Other Business

Bimonthly Financial Report

Chairman Black directed any questions about the Bimonthly Financial Report to Doug Laffon.

Next Meeting

The Town of Rutherford College will host the next meeting of the WPCOG Policy Board on May 28.

Adjournment

Chairman Black expressed appreciation to the Town of Hudson for hosting the meeting. Then, there being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:44 pm.