

Keith Warren	Sawmills
Malla Vue	Appointed
Casey Pope	Appointed

Guests/Others Present:

Chris Wall, NC Association of Regional Councils of Government, Remote
Scott Hildebran, Lenoir, Remote
Donald Duncan, Conover, Remote

WPCOG Staff Present:

Anthony Starr, Executive Director, In-person at WPCOG
Sherry Long, Assistant Executive Director, In-person at WPCOG
Ashley Bolick, Director of Administrative Services and Human Resources, In-person at WPCOG
Andrea Roper, Finance Director, In-person at WPCOG
Jason Toney, Communications Specialist, In-person at WPCOG
Stephanie Hanvey, Director of Regional Housing Authority, In-person at WPCOG
Alison Adams, Community & Regional Planning Director
Duncan Cavanaugh, Transportation Planner/Data Technician, Remote
Averi Ritchie, Transportation Planner/ADA Administrator, Remote
Todd Stroup, GIS Analyst, Remote

Call to Order/Welcome and Roll Call

A regular meeting of the WPCOG Policy Board was called to order at 6:00 pm by Chair Bob Floyd. Chair Floyd thanked the board for joining the remote meeting. Chair Floyd asked the board clerk for a roll call. The roll call was completed and names recorded for the meeting minutes. Chair Floyd said that he would ask for a motion for all items requiring board approval at the nominating committee presentation.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting were considered. There were no corrections or questions.

Unfinished Business/Reports

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

NADO Awards Recognition

Mr. Anthony Starr, WPCOG Executive Director provided an overview of three award winning projects as well as staff whom worked on the projects. The National Association of Development Organizations' (NADO) is a Washington, DC-based association that promotes programs and policies that strengthen local governments, communities, and economies through regional cooperation, program delivery, and comprehensive strategies. The association's Aliceann Wohbruck Impact Awards program recognizes regional development organizations and partnering organizations for improving the economic and community competitiveness of our nation's regions and local communities. Award-winning projects were honored during NADO's 2020 Virtual Annual Training Conference, held online October 20-22.

Western Piedmont Council of Governments was honored during the 2020 NADO Conference for the following three awards.

Henry Fork and Jacob Fork Watershed Conservation Plan

On Friday, Feb. 28, the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) and Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina completed the Henry Fork and Jacob Fork Watershed Conservation Plan. The plan, developed by WPCOG over a nine-month research period, ultimately aims to conserve these two aquatic resources while also creating access points for river recreation. With funding support from the N.C. Clean Water Management Trust Fund, Catawba County, Foothills Conservancy, Beaver Foundation and Duke Energy (Piedmont Natural Gas) Foundation, the WPCOG administered the planning, performed detailed analyses of resources and gathered input from stakeholder partners to create the final plan. The planning area covers both rivers' watersheds in eastern Burke and western Catawba counties, between N.C. Highway 18 and the exit for N.C. Highway 10 along U.S. 321. The Henry Fork and Jacob Fork Watershed Conservation Plan, with its priorities and goals, along with the future implementation efforts, will go a long way toward achieving water quality benefits. The identification of priority parcels for conservation and recreation will reduce surface water pollution associated with erosion and stream sedimentation and provide future access for recreational corridors. This plan is not only beneficial for the natural environment, but also for the City of Newton's drinking water intake on the Jacob Fork River near U.S. 321.

Foothills Conservancy and its partners in Catawba County formulated the preliminary study goals which included engaging stakeholders, identifying small focus areas in the study watersheds, compiling data on water quality and natural/historical/cultural resources, reviewing existing public recreation assets in the area, and mapping areas best suited to voluntary conservation activities, like trails and paddling access points.

Stormwater Planning & Administration

The North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality enforces any municipality of a certain size to manage any stormwater runoff within their boundaries. This requirement is based off of a 1972 permit developed under the Clean Water Act, enforced by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency. The management of stormwater is needed to protect our streams that supply our drinking water, ensure environmental health, and work as a major draw for North Carolina's tourism. The correct management of stormwater helps prevent flooding, prevents pollutants from entering our states water bodies, and prevents erosion from damaging one of our most valuable natural resources.

The Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) Stormwater Partnership began in 2010, and conducted education programs on behalf of a few local governments in the region to fulfill the Outreach/Education required in their MS4 Stormwater Permits. As of July 2019 the WPCOG has expanded their Stormwater program beyond the education & outreach programs it started with. In response to stricter DEQ regulations on stormwater runoff management, our program is now designed to fulfill all of the criteria. This program is designed to allow municipalities to comply with DEQ requirements as well as ensure the quality of their local waterways at a very reasonable cost. Currently we are contracted to administer full stormwater programs for all of the municipalities in Caldwell County; including Lenoir, Granite Falls, Hudson, Gamewell, Sawmills, and Cahah's Mountain, as well as Valdese in Burke County, and Conover and Newton in Catawba County. The WPCOG also continues to conduct the outreach and education to the City of Hickory, City of Morganton, Town of Maiden, and the Town of Rutherford College.

The WPCOG stormwater program focuses on the measures required by EPA municipal stormwater permits (NPDES MS4): Education and outreach on stormwater issues, illicit discharge monitoring and enforcement, permitting and inspection of stormwater control structures for new and existing developments, and the

management of good housekeeping procedures to ensure our municipalities themselves are following valuable environmental practices. We want to enable our municipalities to enjoy the benefits of cleaner drinking water, satisfy federal requirements, and reduce the erosion of their waterways.

Hickory Trail Economic Impact Analysis

The Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) worked with City of Hickory staff to determine the economic and demographic potential for the Hickory Trail Project. The resulting Hickory Trail Economic Impact Analysis determined the potential private investment, job growth, new housing development, and population increase that the Hickory Trail system could bring to the City of Hickory over the next 15 years. The Hickory Trail is one of the Crafting Hickory projects that has the potential to transform the city. Following a significant decline in manufacturing jobs and a reduction in the young adult population, the community collaborated on a plan to revitalize and reestablish Hickory as an economic leader of a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) region of 350,000 residents. The strategy, developed with its citizens and businesses, is based on the successes of similar cities and consists of four major components, which include: the City Walk, Streetscapes and Gateways, Riverwalk, and a Class A advanced manufacturing park, now known as Trivium Corporate Center. The project further develops diverse businesses and professional jobs in the City's Central Business District and has already had a positive impact, with a major company headquarters located along its route. The path will also create connectivity to shopping, dining, educational, and medical services for Lenoir-Rhyne University students, residents, and employees.

Chair Floyd congratulated and thanked staff for all their hard work on these and other projects.

Workforce Development Board New Appointments

Ms. Wendy Johnson, Director of Workforce Development requested that the Policy Board appoint Jennifer Nicholes, Human Resource Manager at Siegwerk (Burke County), and Krista Bridgwood, Human Resource Manager at Bemis Manufacturing Company (Caldwell County) to the workforce development board in order to meet the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) board member private sector requirements. Both new board appointments would be for a two-year term beginning July 2020.

Chair Floyd asked for questions, there were none.

Federal/State Post-Election Update

Mr. Chris Wall provided a Federal and State post-election update to the board. Mr. Wall is the lobbyist and advocate for the North Carolina Association of Regional Councils of Governments. Mr. Wall is also a partner and principal with EQV Strategic (eqvstrategic.com). Chris provided his insight about the state of affairs and how it will impact local governments and Councils of Governments in the state. Priorities at both the federal and state level will continue to be education and continued COVID relief. Additionally, at the state and COG association level DOT and transportation issues and project remain high on the priority list. Infrastructure needs in NC are great and DOT has been hit hard recently. With more oversight at the board level, things look hopeful.

Chair Floyd asked for additional questions, there were none.

EDA Cares Act Grant Story Book Mapping

Ms. Alison Adams, Director of Community and Regional Planning, presented a work plan for a regional story book mapping project funded by EDA Cares Act. A portion of the funds obtained by WPCOG through the EDA Cares Act

Grant will be used to develop a mapping application over the next year-and-a-half, that displays recreational experiences, places of interest, agriculture opportunities and gathering spots throughout Alexander, Burke Caldwell, and Catawba counties. This application will utilize ESRI GIS software and its ArcGIS Online platform to create the Storybook. The Storybook is a combination of text, interactive maps, and other multimedia content. Destinations and pedestrian amenities will be selectable items throughout the map. Each selection will include a write-up as well as pictures, drone footage or plans. Information for proposed destinations will include information such as but not limited to– contacts, webpage, hours, future project information, amenities and updates. The legend will make it clear to users as to which destinations are existing and which are proposed. The goal is to show opportunities for citizens (current and future) and tourists to exercise and experience recreational opportunities, events, places to visit to buy fresh produce, beer, wine and experiences within the region. This application will serve as a tool for future funding opportunities, local municipality land-use and transportation planning, as well as citizen and tourist engagement. Improving quality of life will coincide with economic development and business recruitment goals. This may also serve as a tool to bring additional features/ opportunities to the region by pointing out gaps or ideal locations.

WPCOG has plans to collaborate with partners throughout the region to collection information, obtain input and buy-in, as well as branding/marketing the tool. The next steps are to engage partners throughout the region in the specific categories below. The schedule is as follows:

Recreation (January 2021)

- Existing parks, sports fields, trails, trailheads
- Future parks and trails

Places of interest (May 2021)

- Landmarks, historic sites, other
- Local arts, museums, libraries
- Downtowns
- Locations of major events, fairs, festivals

Agriculture (September 2021)

- Family farms, produce stands, local growers, markets

Gathering spots (January 2022)

- Dining areas, galleries, breweries/wineries, outfitters/bike shops

A mid-project and final project presentation will be made to the policy board.

Landlord Incentives

Ms. Stephanie Hanvey, WPCOG Regional Housing Authority Director, presented a new landlord incentive program that will be used for a limited time during first quarter of 2021 to hopefully increase the number of landlords participating in the RHA programs. During this difficult time of COVID, HUD awarded housing authorities extra administrative funding to help with the increased costs of administering housing programs. With the NC Governor’s moratorium on evictions, many tenants believe that they are not required to pay their portion of the rents even if no income has been lost. This is definitely not the case, but it has caused tenants to not pay their rent portions and landlords are struggling to make their mortgage payments on their units. The consequence to the RHA is that many landlords are no longer wanting to be landlords at all because this has caused a financial hardship for them.

In an effort to increase the number of participating landlords, the RHA plans to implement a Landlord Incentive Program using the extra administrative funding beginning January-March 2021 and wants to make the policy board aware of the program.

The RHA will be giving \$500.00 to any new landlord willing to participate in the Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program. Referral incentive of \$50.00 will also be given to any current landlord who refers a new landlord to the program.

Landlord Incentive – January, February, March 2021

- Beginning January 1 to run through March 31, 2021
- \$500.00 for new landlords
- Landlords must complete RFTA, pass inspection and be willing to complete a 1 year contract.
- New landlords can only receive the 500.00 incentive one time.
- Projected spending \$4,500.00 – \$9,000.00 for all three months

Referral Incentive for Current Landlords – January, February, March 2021

- Beginning January 1 to run through March 31, 2021
- \$50.00 for any current landlord who refers a new landlord to our program
- Current and new landlords must both sign an agreement attesting to the referral
- To receive the referral funds, the new landlord has to complete the entire process – complete RFTA, pass inspection, sign contract and be willingly to participate through the first year contract.
- Projected spending \$300.00 – \$900.00

Staff wants to make the board aware of the Landlord Incentive Program that is plan for implementation beginning January-March 2021. No board action is necessary.

3rd Amendment of the FY 2020-2021 Budget

Ms. Andrea Roper, Finance Director, presented the 3rd Amendment of the 2020-2021 Budget reflecting a total budget of \$21,931,966 and an operating budget of \$8,061,248 which represents an increase of \$17,031 from the September 22, 2020 budget amendment.

The 3rd Amendment of the 2020-2021 Budget include:

- Environmental Protection decreased \$15,196 to reflect actual FY21 expected expenditures.
- Community and Regional Planning increased \$11,923 due to the addition of two new projects.
- An increase of \$22,567 in Economic Development due to the addition of a new building reuse project and additional EDA CARES expenses.
- Group insurance increased \$33,934 to reflect additional costs due to the added positions for the new environmental health partnership.
- The rent/lease-building expense line increased \$162,700 due to the environmental health partnership lease with Caldwell County and the reallocation of the Conover Station lease payments.
- Mortgage/Occupancy costs decreased \$92,700 due to the reallocation of the Conover Station lease payments to the rent/lease-building expense line.
- Supplies increased \$20,340 due to the purchase of supplies and new computers for the environmental health partnership positions.

- An increase in advertising/subscriptions due to the renewal and purchase of software for the environmental health partnership.
- Capital Outlay-Equipment increased \$12,941 due to the anticipated purchase of a vehicle for the environmental health partnership.
- Contingency decreased \$114,386 due to funds being reallocated to other expense lines and to better align with actual costs in the current fiscal year.
- OPEB Trust Allocation decreased \$36,056 due to increased fringe benefit costs.
- All other changes to the expenditure lines reflect normal program needs.

Staff requests Policy Board to review and approve the third Amendment of the 2020-2021 Budget.

Chair Floyd asked for questions, there was none. Chair Floyd asked if there was a motion on the previous board items.

Catawba Career Center Lease Renewal – Conover Station

Mr. Anthony Starr, WPCOG Executive Director, presented lease renewal agreement to the board for the Catawba Career Center – Conover Station. In 2015, the Policy Board approved leasing a portion of Conover Station to locate the NCWorks Career Center for Catawba County. The lease included 6,888 square feet of space for exclusive use for our Workforce Development program for the operation of an NCWorks Career Center. The lease also included non-exclusive space such as the hallways, restrooms, large meeting spaces, parking, etc.

The lease term was for an initial period of five years with an option to renew the lease for an additional five years. The current lease cost is \$7,725 per month or \$13.45 per square foot annually. The lease agreement may be renewed at the option of the WPCOG for at a monthly rate of \$8,311 per month or \$14.48 per square foot annually. The renewal option must be exercised 90 days prior to expiration of the first 5-year term. The term ends on March 18th, 2021 and notice of renewal must be given by mid-December, 2020. Staff consulted with a real estate professional who indicated the lease rate is on the low end of market rates for this class of space.

Earlier this year, the Executive Committee discussed the idea of creating a regional career center on the main campus of the WPCOG. Some initial work was done but the COVID-19 Pandemic impacted WPCOG operations and much seems uncertain about the future needs of office space. The pandemic revealed the operation of a regional career center is certainly feasible. However, more time is needed to determine the availability of state funding to pay for the debt service for a new regional career center and first acquiring a mobile workforce development vehicle is recommended.

If the WPCOG decides to move ahead with building a regional career center, the terms of the lease provide for a one-year notice of cancellation due to funding issues. It seems this clause in the agreement applies to the funding situation of the Workforce Development program.

Staff and the Executive Committee recommend approval of the lease extension.

Nominating Committee Report

Nominating Committee Chair, Wayne Abele presented the nominating committee report to the board. Committee Chair Abele was appointed by board Chair Bob Floyd at the September 22 Policy Board meeting to serve as Nominating Committee Chair for 2020. The purpose of this committee was to recommend officers and appointed

delegates for 2021. The committee included representatives from each county, two representing cities and two representing counties. Mr. Abele represented Burke County, Kitty Barnes, represented Catawba County, Larry Chapman from Hudson, and Mayor George Holleman from Taylorsville. The committee unanimously agreed to recommend to the following persons for positions beginning January 1, 2021. They include:

Chair: Bob Floyd	At-Large: Wayne Abele
Vice Chair: Jill Patton	At-Large: Kitty Barnes
Secretary: Johnny Berry	At-Large: Chip Black
Treasurer: George Holleman	At-Large: Joe Gibbons
Past Chair: Barbara Pennell	

Appointed Policy Board Delegates:
 Erisha Lipford, Term ends December 2022
 Tommy Luckadoo, Term ends December 2022
 Helen Chestnut, Term ends December 2022
 Amparo Alfaro, Term ends December 2022

Forum Representative: Wayne Abele
 Alternate Forum Representative: Kitty Barnes

Committee Chair Abele submitted the proposed slate of officers and appointments to the board on behalf of the Nominating Committee.

Chair Floyd thanked Mr. Abele and the members of the Nominating Committee for their work. Board Chair Floyd asked for questions before asking for a motion from the board. There were no questions.

Ms. Jill Patton made a motion that the board approve and adopt the minutes from the September 22, 2020 meeting, 3rd Amendment of the FY 2020-2021 Budget, Catawba Career Center Lease Renewal and the nominations as presented by the Nominating Committee. Mr. Joe Gibbons offered a second. A roll call vote was called by Chair Floyd.

Larry Yoder	Yes	Bob Floyd	Yes	Jill Patton	Yes
George Holleman	Yes	Barbara Pennell	Yes	Marla Thompson	Yes
Wayne Abele	Yes	Dr. Caryl Burns	Yes	Ronnie Williams	Not Present
Johnny Berry	Yes	Larry Chapman	Yes	Jerry Hodge	Yes
Dennis Anthony	Yes	Joseph L. Gibbons	Yes	Casey Pope	Not Present
Sheila Perkins	Not Present	Allen Spencer	Yes	Helen Chestnut	Yes
Ben Honeycutt	Yes	Keith Warren	Not Present	Amparo Alfaro	Yes
Chris Jernigan	Yes	Kitty Barnes	Not Present	Tommy Luckadoo	Yes
Gary McClure	Yes	James Weaver	Not Present	Randy Burns	Yes
John "Chip" Black, Jr.	Yes	Donald Robinson	Not Present	Jeanna Price	Yes
Mike Labrose	Not Present	Dale Sherrill	Not Present	Malla Vue	Not Present
Ronnie Setzer	Yes	Joie Fulbright	Yes		

The motion passed.

Outgoing Board Member Recognition

Chair Floyd took a moment to thank appointed delegate Casey Pope for her service over the last two years.

Staff Updates

Mr. Anthony Starr reviewed the Executive Director's Report outlining both current and upcoming projects by department.

- The WPCOG office remains closed to the public except by appointment.
- Some staff continue to telework but all staff work at least two days per week in the office.
- AAA had 472 attend an Adult Children of aging Parents (ACAP) virtual caregiver symposium featuring Teepa Snow.
- Ombudsmen continue to work with facilities, county health departments, residents and families on COVID outbreaks in facilities.
- Community and Economic Development staff are currently administering 68 grants for local governments.
- The Community & Regional Planning department is currently doing 160-D rewrites for Cahah's Mountain, Gamewell and Rutherford College.
- Final fieldwork continues for the FY19-20 WPCOG audit.
- On November 17, HUD awarded an additional 75 mainstream vouchers to the WPCOG. Since November of 2018, WPCOG has been awarded a total of 246 Mainstream Vouchers. The new total of vouchers is 1,330.

Adjournment

Chair Floyd reminded the board of the next meeting scheduled for January 26, 2021 then he adjourned the meeting at 7:00 pm.