

Minutes
Western Piedmont Council of Governments
Bimonthly Policy Board Meeting and Public Hearing
Tuesday, May 22, 2012
Catawba County Agricultural Resources Building

Members Present:

John "Chip" Black, Chairman
Darrell Robertson, Secretary
Mary Bess Lawing, Treasurer
Wayne Abele, Past Chairman
Kitty Barnes, At-Large
Ben Griffin, At-Large
Bruce Meisner, At-Large
Jerry Woods
Nicky Setzer
Tim Lowrance, Alternate
Kyle Hayman
Barbara Pennell
Dr. Caryl Burns
Karen Robinson
Larry Chapman
Merlin Perry
Vernon Moyer
Dr. Alfred Hamer
Forrest Fleming, Alternate
Rick Justice
Trena M Kirby
Bob Gibbs, Alternate
Amparo Alfaro
Jerry Hodge

Local Government/Agency:

Valdese
Alexander County
Newton
Burke County
Catawba County
Caldwell County
Hickory
Cajah's Mountain
Claremont
Claremont
Conover
Gamewell
Granite Falls
Hildebran
Hudson
Lenoir
Long View
Morganton
Morganton
Rhodhiss
Sawmills
Sawmills
Non-Elected
Non-Elected

Members Absent:

Bob Smyre, Vice-Chairman
George Holleman, At-Large
Johnny Berry
Danny Ritchie
Christine Abernathy
Gary McClure
Bob Floyd, Jr.
Sue Noblitt
Robin Robinson
Charlie Taylor
Everett McNair
Ann Smith

Maiden
Taylorsville
Connelly Springs
Drexel
Glen Alpine
Rutherford College
Cedar Rock
Brookford
Catawba
Non-Elected
Non-Elected
Non-Elected

Guests/Others Present:

Bryan Steen, Burke County Manager
Seth Eckard, Sawmills Town Manager
Barbara Harmon, Rhodhiss Town Manager

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Guests/Others Present (continued):

Mary Carter, Gamewell Town Manager
Donald Duncan, Conover City Manager
Randy Isenhower, Catawba County Commissioner
Mary Furtado, Catawba County Assistant Manager

Staff Present:

H. DeWitt Blackwell, Jr., Executive Director
James Chandler, Assistant Executive Director
Doug Laffon, Finance Director
John Marshall, Senior Planner
Sheila Weeks, Area Agency on Aging Director
Dana Roberts, Administrative Services Manager

Call to Order/Welcome

The regular meeting of the WPCOG Policy Board was called to order by Chairman Chip Black at 6:45 pm. Catawba County Chair Kitty Barnes welcomed the board to Catawba County and introduced Commissioner Randy Isenhower, Assistant Manager Mary Furtado and Executive Assistant Avajeon Wickes. She noted that earlier in the day Dee Freeman, Secretary of the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources, presented Catawba County with an award for being #1 in the State for recycling. Mrs. Barnes said Catawba County was the first NC county to offer curbside recycling, something that would not have been possible without the county's partnerships with cities, towns and businesses.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

There were no additions or corrections to the minutes of the March meeting and they were unanimously approved on motion by Mr. Setzer and second by Ms. Lawing.

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

Public Hearing – 2012-13 Budget.

Chairman Black stated that a public hearing was duly advertised inviting persons to attend the meeting to comment on the proposed FY 2012-13 budget. He opened the public hearing at 6:47 pm and there being no one present to comment on the budget closed the public hearing at 6:48 pm.

Review and Approval of 2012-13 Budget and Budget Ordinance

Chairman Black recognized Finance Director Doug Laffon who presented a balanced budget of \$15,967,670 for FY 2012-13. Mr. Laffon reviewed revenue and expense line items and highlighted changes made since the preliminary budget was presented in March 2012. He said the net change from the first reading was an increase of \$139,502. Responding to a question posed by Mr. Duncan, Mr. Laffon stated that the WPCOG fund balance for the general fund was approximately \$1,000,000.

Following brief discussion, Mr. Meisner made a motion to approve the final reading of the FY 2012-13 budget and budget ordinance. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Barnes and approved unanimously.

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Consideration of FY 2011-12 Budget Amendments

Mr. Laffon reviewed proposed amendments to the FY 20-11-12 budget most recently amended at the November 22, 2011 meeting. The proposed amendments decrease the budget by \$280,261. There was some discussion and a question by Chairman Black about unemployment costs. Mr. Black asked if the unemployment claims were filed by employees hired for a specific job related to a grant or project for a finite term. Mr. Laffon gave an example of the Hickory Stormwater project. Staff was employed specifically for that project and was only employed during the contracted time frame. The charges incurred during the 2011-2012 fiscal year included staff hired for the Stormwater project and another staff person who had left after about 5 1/2 years. Mr. Chandler added that in the past three years the WPCOG has secured the services of employment agencies to hire temporary staff for a specific task or program, to minimize unemployment insurance claims.

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Dr. Hamer made a motion to approve the proposed budget amendments. Ms. Lawing seconded the motion and it passed with a unanimous vote.

Consideration of Aging Advisory Committee Recommendations

Chairman Black recognized Sheila Week who shared recommendations made by the Aging Advisory Committee at their April 30 meeting. She noted that this is the 20th anniversary of the Home and Community Care Block Grant, which provides funds to help the elderly 60+ stay in their own homes. She noted that the block grant has grown but is not keeping pace with the number of elderly in the region. The Governor has put an increase for the block grant in her proposed budget.

Ms. Weeks reviewed the county equity allocations for SFY 2012-13 for the Home and Community Care Block Grant. These allocations were calculated using a funding formula which considers the number of elderly living in each county, how many are minorities, and how many are living in poverty. Ms. Weeks said that Legal Services was funded at the FY 2011-12 level and required a 10% local match. Funds are used by Legal Aid in Morganton to assist the elderly with wills, living wills, powers of attorney and health care powers of attorney. Title III-D Health Promotion/Disease Prevention Funds required a 10% match also. This program helps elderly folks who are struggling with chronic diseases. The service providers include the Alexander and Catawba Cooperative Extension Services, and the Burke and Caldwell Senior Centers.

Ms. Weeks said the Family Caregiver Program provides \$15,000 to each county for respite services for family caregivers.

Following brief discussion, Mr. Woods made a motion to approve the recommendations presented. Mr. Setzer seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Ms. Weeks then presented the 2012-2016 Area Plan on Aging approved by the Aging Advisory Committee on April 30. The plan focuses on six performance areas including Management and Staffing, Planning, Funds Administration and Quality Assurance, Information Brokerage, Program Resources and System Development, and Advocacy. It also builds on initiatives outlined in the State's 2011-2015 Aging Services Plan. Ms. Weeks said there is an opportunity to submit annual amendments to the Plan.

Ms. Lawing made a motion to approve the 2012-2016 Area Plan on Aging as presented. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Barnes and approved unanimously.

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Approval to Enter into Agreement with Lake Hickory Association

Mr. Blackwell said the WPCOG has been asked to carry on efforts initiated by the Lake Hickory Association (LHA). The LHA is a non-profit organization formed in 1985, and one of its projects has been to facilitate the NC Big Sweep annual waterway clean up event on Lake Hickory. The organization has only two members, one of which is gravely ill, and the non-profit is expected to be dissolved soon. The non-profit has \$8,000 that can only be transferred to another non-profit, and the LHA has asked the WPCOG to accept these funds to use for NC Big Sweep and other environmental stewardship efforts on Lake Hickory.

Mr. Blackwell said there were many unanswered questions about liability, etc. if the WPCOG were to take over these efforts. He said it was his understanding that the only WPCOG staff role would be to facilitate the efforts.

Mr. Robertson noted that similar organizations in the area and on other lakes should be consulted. Mr. Duncan suggested speaking with the Catawba Riverkeeper. Mr. Hodge asked about the \$8,000 and Mr. Blackwell said it is important that the funds be used as they have been in the past (for the Big Sweep) and it was suggested that the WPCOG Water Resources Committee oversee expenditure of the funds. There were some questions about continuity of the efforts once the \$8,000 was expended.

Chairman Black said there are many uncertainties and the Board should consider the impact the project would have on the WPCOG. He questioned if this was a responsibility the Board wanted to impose on the staff? Mr. Perry said he didn't think this was something the WPCOG should accept. Mr. Chandler clarified that the LHA is not asking the WPCOG to take ownership of the 501c3 but just be the recipient of their assets and continue their efforts. The LHA 501c3 would dissolve. Mrs. Barnes asked Mr. Blackwell's opinion and he replied that he is looking at the request conservatively and tends to view it as a risk.

Mr. Robertson said he would be disappointed to see the LHA's mission discontinued but he was not convinced it was a responsibility staff should accept. He made a motion that the WPCOG further investigate the liability and other details of the activities performed by the LHA and coordinate the continuation of this effort by consulting with other non-profit organizations such as the Catawba Riverkeeper or Keep Catawba County Beautiful to determine their interest. Mr. Robertson continued his motion by saying that the WPCOG should meet with these groups and if none accepts responsibility, staff would develop a recommendation with answers to the questions posed and present it to the Policy Board for reconsideration.

Mr. Robertson said he would be disappointed to see the LHA's mission discontinued but he was not convinced it was a responsibility the staff should accept. He made a motion that the WPCOG further investigate the liability and other details of the activities performed by the LHA and coordinate the continuation of this effort by consulting with other non-profit organizations such as the Catawba Riverkeeper or Keep Catawba Beautiful that might be more suitable. Mr. Robertson continued his motion by saying that the WPCOG should meet with various groups and if none accepts responsibility, staff will develop a recommendation with answers to some of the questions posed and present it to the Policy Board for reconsideration.

The motion was seconded by Ms. Lawing and passed unanimously.

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Mr. Chandler added that the WPCOG can help identify an organization to continue LHA's efforts and refer them but it will still be their choice. The WPCOG can play a role but it would not be the WPCOG's decision to choose a successor.

Formal Approval of FY 2011-12 Audit Contract

Mr. Laffon stated that the Local Government Commission is requiring that the Board take official action and record the date when the audit contract is approved. He noted that Lowdermilk Church has been conducting the WPCOG audit since 2005 and has done an excellent job. The amount of the contract they proposed for FY 2011-12 is reasonable, with an increase of only \$150 over last year's contract. He asked the Board to consider entering into a contract with Lowdermilk Church for the FY 2011-12 audit. Mr. Setzer made a motion to approve a contract with Lowdermilk Church for the FY 2011-12. The motion was seconded by Mr. Woods and approved unanimously.

Department Updates

John Marshall presented the Planning, CD and GIS/Data Services report. He noted that a management review was just completed for the Lenoir HOME program administered by Rick Oxford. Auditors were impressed with the program and there were no findings. GIS staff entered into two contracts to help Greenway Transit meet federal requirements. WPCOG will assist with data sampling methodology and data sampling. A septic tank program grant was signed which includes \$310,000 for residential loans for septic repairs in priority watersheds. Local governments are applying for free technical assistance for water projects through the Army Corps of Engineers with support from the NC Department of Water Resources. This could include feasibility studies, bank stabilization, engineering, stream restoration, and planning projects. WPCOG hosted the first public meeting for Statewide Mercury Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) on May 14. The Mortgage Payment Program assisted 316 families since the program started and the demand for assistance continues. Homeowners have received \$5.5 million due to staff efforts. The average wait to see a counselor is three weeks. Seventy three additional homeowners are working with counselors to modify their loans. Planning and Transportation staff conducted a free gas cap check on Catawba County Earth Day. Staff is helping Claremont with a marketing pamphlet. The 6th annual air quality conference will be held on June 15 at LRU. Interested persons may sign up through a staff member. Staff is also working on the bus shelter project for Greenway transit, and 16 of 25 shelters are either installed or have been permitted for installation. Mr. Marshall said that John Tippett reported at the last meeting that the Charlotte Area Urban Area grew slightly into Catawba County at Lake Norman on NC 150. Discussions with Charlotte MPO staff indicate they have no interest in planning for such a small area. WPCOG has proposed that the Greater Hickory MPO Planning Boundary be extended to include Sherrills Ford and Bandys. Mr. Marshall said that paving of I-40 in Catawba County is nearly complete and the Iredell section will begin soon. After that section is complete, pavement markings for

both sections will begin, with the work being done at night. Work continues on the NC 16 bridge replacement over I-40 in Conover, with completion expected in fall 2013. Crews are clearing land for the Grace Chapel RD/US 321 Connector in Caldwell County. Construction on Exit 105 in Morganton continues.

Mr. Chandler asked Sheila Weeks to deliver the Public Services report and speak about two new initiatives and other Aging program activities. She said she had met with the HCCBG Planning Committees in the four counties to make recommendations regarding services, allocation amounts, and providers. These recommendations have been sent to the county commissioners for final approval. Ms.

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Weeks added that a sealed bid process was conducted in Burke County for HCCBG service providers that are “for profit”. Results from that process have been forwarded to Burke county Commissioners. Ms. Weeks reported that Unifour Senior Games were held May 7 with a record number of participants, the oldest of which was 93 years old. Ms. Weeks is working with the Carolinas Center of Medical Excellence and a local care transitions team to help identify the root cause of the number of readmissions to hospitals in our service area. NC Operation Fan Heat Relief was the beneficiary of \$40,000 from Duke Energy of which \$2,800 will be distributed in our region. Ms. Weeks added that Duke Energy provided an additional \$50,000 last year but no word has been received on whether this additional money will be available in 2012.

Ms. Weeks said the AAA has received \$27,575 to help establish a Community Resource Connection (CRC) and a Local Contact Agency (LCA) in our region. The CRC is a network of organizations which allows people to get information and access to services by dialing one phone number. Ms. Weeks will recruit members for the collaborative and a community engagement event will be held in late summer. The Jordan School of Social Work in Chapel Hill will assist with development of the CRC. Ms. Weeks noted that funds from the grant will also be used to establish a LCA (local contact agency) for residents of long-term care facilities. An Options Counselor/Social Worker from the LCA will respond to requests from residents desiring to return home and will provide information and counseling regarding existing community supports/resources.

Mr. Blackwell spoke on behalf of Administration. He noted that the CEDS process is on track with key staff leading the effort and good participation on behalf of regional leaders. Mr. Blackwell said the WPCOG expects to close on the new building by the end of June. He also reported on a meeting hosted at the WPCOG with the Corp of Engineers. The purpose was to discuss funding opportunities for local governments. He said there was a lot of feedback and some local government projects might qualify for COE assistance.

Other Business

Bimonthly Financial Report

Chairman Black referred to the bimonthly financial report and asked Policy Board members to direct any questions to Doug Laffon

Next Meeting

The Town of Hildebran will host the next meeting on July 24.

Adjournment

There was no further business and the meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dana Roberts, Clerk to the Board