

Minutes
Western Piedmont Council of Governments
Bi-Monthly Policy Board Meeting
Tuesday, November 22, 2016
City of Lenoir

Members Present:

George Holleman, Chairman
Larry Yoder, Vice-Chairman
Barbara Pennell, Secretary
Bob Floyd, Jr., Treasurer
Robert Smyre, Past Chair
Johnny Berry, At-Large
Chip Black, At-Large
Wayne Abele, At-Large
Johnnie Carswell, Alternate
Mike Labrose
Dale Sherrill
Joie Fulbright
Dr. Caryl Burns
Jill Patton
Barbara Lowman
Larry Chapman
Ben Willis
Forrest Fleming
Ronnie Thompson, Alternate
Jerry Hodge
Gary McClure
Wayne Annas, Alternate
Reed Lingerfelt, Alternate
Merlin Perry
Mary Bess Lawing
Nicky Setzer
Amparo Alfaro
Pat Hatley
Tommy Luckadoo

Members Absent:

Kitty Barnes, At-Large
Vacant
Cheryl Pritchard
Donald Robinson

Local Government/Agency:

Taylorsville
Alexander County
Gamewell
Cedar Rock
Maiden
Connelly Springs
Valdese
Burke County
Burke County
Caldwell County
Claremont
Conover
Granite Falls
Hickory
Hildebran
Hudson
Lenoir
Morganton
Morganton
Newton
Rutherford College
Rutherford College
Sawmills
Appointed
Appointed
Appointed
Appointed
Appointed
Appointed

Catawba County
Brookford
Cajah's Mountain
Catawba

Members Absent (Continued):

Benny Orders	Drexel
Jimmy Wakeford	Glen Alpine
Vernon Moyer	Long View
Rick Justice	Rhodhiss
Deborah Ashley-Smith	Appointed

Guests/Others Present:

Joe Gibbons, Lenoir
Becky Gibbons, Lenoir
Scott Hildebran, Lenoir
Seth Eckard, Valdese
Mary Carter, Gamewell
Radford Thomas, Lenoir
Helen Chestnut, Guest
Cindy Randolph, Lowdermilk Church & Co.
Rebecca Bently, Hudson
Todd Herms, Maiden
Kaylynn Horn, Lenoir
Glenda Williams, Lenoir
Jenny Wheelock, Lenoir
Vickie Miller, NCLM

WPCOG Staff Present:

Anthony Starr, Executive Director
Sherry Long, Assistant Executive Director/Community & Economic Development Director
Ashley Bolick, Director of Administrative Services and Human Resources
Andrea Biddix, Finance Director
John Marshall, Director of Planning, Transportation & Environmental Programs
Jason Toney, Communications Specialist

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 thanked the City of Lenoir for hosting the meeting and for allowing the board to visit Carolina Distillery. City of Lenoir Mayor, Joe Gibbons, welcomed the board and introduced those representing Lenoir.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

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

Unfinished Business/Reports

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

NC League of Municipalities Update and Legislative Preview.

Grassroots Coordinator, Vickie Miller with the NC League of Municipalities presented legislative update information, the League's 2030 vision plan, 2016 election results, and a preview of 2017 issues expected to arise during the long session.

Audit Presentation

Cindy Randolph, CPA Audit Manager with Lowdermilk Church & Co. began by thanking the board for allowing Lowdermilk Church & Co to again perform the annual audit for fiscal year ending June 30, 2016. Cindy explained that state law requires each year that WPCOG have an audit of finances. Additionally, she explained that this was a single audit with compliance testing on three major programs, Aging, WIOA and Regional Housing. Cindy said that this was a good, clean audit with no findings also that it was a good year for the general fund balance.

Mr. Johnny Berry made a motion that the board accept the audit report as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Larry Yoder. The motion passed unanimously.

ARC Emerging Opportunities Grant Award Recommendations

Ms. Sherry Long, Assistant Executive Director/Community & Economic Development Director presented ARC Emerging Opportunities Grant Award Recommendations. For the second year, the NC Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Program Office offered the Emerging Opportunities Grant Program (EO). The program allocated \$100,000 for the region to assist local governments and organizations in developing projects that will provide significant community and economic development opportunities. The WPCOG was responsible for soliciting projects, having a Review Committee make recommendations to the Policy Board and the Policy Board recommend projects to North Carolina for ARC for funding.

Burke Partnership for Economic Development and City of Lenoir submitted the only two applications. The Burke Partnership for Economic Development project is a workforce marketing campaign that utilizes traditional and non-traditional media and outreach to inform students, parents and the community about jobs available in Burke County now and in the future with the primary goal being to increase the number of students that pursue post-secondary education, thus increasing their capacity to be lifelong learners.

The City of Lenoir project will advance the branding and marketing of Downtown Lenoir to both residents of the region and visitors by installing vertical light pole banners in the historic downtown area that display the recently developed logo and brand for the Downtown.

A project review committee was established last year including the County Managers, EDC Directors from Alexander, Burke and Caldwell counties. Two additional persons from each of the three counties were included as well as three members of Policy Board.

The Committee members reviewed the projects and recommended the policy board submit both projects to the Appalachian Regional Commission for funding.

Mr. Chip Black made a motion that the board accept the Review Committee's recommendation and submit the City of Lenoir's Light Pole Banners Project, and Burke Partnership for Economic Development's Making the Future – Burke County's Workforce Marketing Campaign to the Governor's Office to request funding from Appalachian Regional Commission. The motion was seconded by Mr. Joie Fulbright. The motion passed unanimously.

CEDS Committee Appointments

Mr. Anthony Starr, WPCOG Executive Director, presented information about the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The WPCOG was designated as the economic development district for the region in 2004 by the U.S. Economic Development Administration. The WPCOG is required to develop and maintain a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) every 5 years. The last CEDS was adopted in 2012 and work has begun for the 2017 CEDS. Part of that process involves the appointment and engagement of a CEDS Committee that broadly represents the region.

WPCOG Staff carefully compiled a list of 15 proposed CEDS Committee members for consideration by the Policy Board. Key diversity characteristics considered for the proposed CEDS Committee members include: proportional geographic representation, occupation, age cohort, race, ethnicity, and gender. Just over half of the committee is female, one-third represents a racial or ethnic minority and there is representation from each of the 4 counties. In addition, WPCOG staff received direction from the WPCOG Executive Committee to include significant portion of younger people since the loss of the 25-44 age group is a key economic challenge for our region. As a result, over two-thirds of the committee is under age 50 and half of the committee is under 40 years of age.

The CEDS Committee is expected to meet about 5 times and complete its work by September of 2017.

Proposed Members of the 2017 CEDS Committee

<u>Name</u>	<u>Business/Organization/Affiliation</u>
Sara Black	Burke County Realtor/Non-profit work with Youth
Rocky Brooks	Caldwell County Healthcare Executive
Elle Fulenwider	Business Marketing Director in Burke County
Gary Herman	Alexander EDC/Small Business Coordinator
Dr. Trish Johnson	Caldwell Schools Asst. Superintendent
Lindsay Keisler	Catawba County Chamber SVP & Young Professional Assoc.
Zack King	Catawba County Public Health Analyst
Jeremy Ku	Transportation Industry Professional in Catawba County
Tommy Luckadoo	Real Estate Executive/School Board & WPCOG Policy Board
Lisa Miller	Western Piedmont Community College
Stacee Rash	Certified Public Accountant in Catawba County
Nancy Taylor	Burke County Community Foundation
Crystal "Crissy" Thomas	Bank Executive in Lenoir and City Council Member
Christopher Todd	Sawmills Town Administrator
Malla Vue	Goodwill Industries and Workforce Board Member

Mr. Joie Fulbright made a motion that the board appoint the proposed list of individuals to the CEDS Committee and appoint Tommy Luckadoo as the committee chair and Nancy Taylor as the vice chair. The motion was seconded by Mr. Larry Yoder. The motion passed unanimously.

Vacant & Substandard Housing Task Force

Mr. Anthony Starr introduced the idea of a regional vacant and substandard housing task force. Vacant and substandard housing is a significant challenge for many of area local governments. The Census statistics for the region show an alarming increase in vacant housing. The Census statistics also show that more than 27% of area homes (about 60,800 homes) were built before 1970. While historically significant homes add to the character of our communities, many of the other older homes will be the primary source of code enforcement issues and neighborhood blight.

Responding to conversations with local government staff, the WPCOG began exploring the creation of a new task force. The purpose of this task force would be to share information, coordinate efforts, and increase effectiveness to address vacant & substandard housing in the region. The task force could develop some best practices and most effective methods, potential legislation to improve effectiveness, seek multi-jurisdictional grants, etc.

Local governments are dealing with tax foreclosures, abandoned homes, neighborhood de-stabilization, cumbersome legal procedures, and public health and safety issues due to this increase in vacant homes. From 1990 to 2015 the number of vacant homes increased 245% from about 9,031 (7.4% of total housing units) to 22,188 (13.7% of total housing units) for the Western Piedmont Region. Currently there are about 22,200 vacant homes in the region. About 2,200 are for sale, 3,300 are for rent, another 4,900 are seasonal homes, and over 11,800 homes are truly vacant. The Western Piedmont Region also has an aging housing stock.

As seen in other regions in the United States, increased housing vacancy rates can trigger a number of negative issues including: declining property values, neighborhood deterioration, increased crime rates, negative impacts to a community's image, public health and safety issues, decreased population, and reluctance by businesses to invest in the community.

Area planners, code enforcement managers/supervisors, local government managers & assistant managers, tax administrators, county/municipal attorneys & legal staff, and other key staff would be invited to join the task force.

Dr. Carol Burns made a motion that the board approve the creation of the Vacant & Substandard Housing Task Force. Ms. Jill Patton offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

FY 16-17 Budget Amendments

Anthony Starr, Executive Director, presented information on proposed 3rd budget amendments for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. The budget reflects a total of budget of \$15,624,782 and an operating budget of \$5,474,883 which represents an increase of the total budget from the September 27, 2016 budget amendment of \$62,436.

The 3rd Amendment of the 2016-2017 Budget includes:

- An increase of \$9,964 in Community Development due to the addition of HUD Counseling funds to reflect the entire contract amount for this fiscal year. Other established project amounts were reserved for use in the next fiscal year.
- An increase of \$15,000 in Economic Development due to the addition of the new City of Hickory 1764 Park project (new business park).
- IT/GIS increased by \$37,472 to reflect the new infrastructure mapping projects for Taylorsville and Rutherford College.
- Printing increased by \$4,026 due to the decrease in salary for the Project CARE position.
- Contingency increased \$35,420 in Community Development, Economic Development, GIS/IT and Indirect due to increased funding and the decrease of charged indirect salary.
- Reserve for future expenditures increased \$22,301 in GIS/IT due to additional revenue.
- A decrease in chargeable salaries, compensated absences and retirement due to the delayed start of the new Project Care Provider position and Financial Manager position.
- Supplies increased \$16,521 due to the additional revenue in IT/GIS and decrease of Capital Outlay – Equipment in Aging.

Mr. Bob Smyre made a motion that the board approve the final the 3rd amendment of the 2016-2017 Budget as proposed. Mr. Larry Yoder offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Nominating Committee Report and Board Leadership Election

Mr. Wayne Abele presented the Nominating Committee report for the committee chair, Kitty Barnes, who could not attend the meeting. Kitty Barnes, Larry Chapman, Chairman Holleman and Wayne Abele all served on the Nominating Committee after being appointed by Chairman Holleman at the September Policy Board Meeting. The purpose of this committee was to recommend officers and appointed delegates for 2017. The committee included representatives from each county, two representing cities and two representing counties. Wayne Abele represented Burke County, Kitty Barnes represented Catawba County, Larry Chapman from Hudson, and Chairman Holleman from Taylorsville. The committee unanimously agreed to recommend to the board the following officers and appointments beginning January 1, 2017. They include:

Position	Recommendation	Term Ends
Chair	George Holleman	Dec. 2017
Vice Chair	Barbara Pennell	Dec. 2017
Secretary	Bob Floyd	Dec. 2017
Treasurer	Jill Patton	Dec. 2017
Immediate Past Chair	Bob Smyre	Dec. 2017
Executive Committee At-Large	Wayne Abele	Dec. 2017
Executive Committee At-Large	Kitty Barnes	Dec. 2017
Executive Committee At-Large	Johnny Berry	Dec. 2017
Executive Committee At-Large	Chip Black	Dec. 2017
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Amparo Alfaro	Dec. 2018
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Larry Yoder	Dec. 2018
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Tommy Luckadoo	Dec. 2018
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Helen Chestnut	Dec. 2018
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Pat Hatley	Dec. 2017

Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Mary Bess Lawing	Dec. 2017
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Nicky Setzer	Dec. 2017
Forum Representative	Kitty Barnes	Dec. 2017
Alternate Forum Representative	Wayne Abele	Dec. 2017

Mr. Wayne Abele made a motion that the board approve the nominations as presented by the Nominating Committee. Mr. Larry Yoder offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Recognition of Outgoing Board Members

Chairman Holleman thanked two outgoing board members for their service, Mr. Merlin Perry and Ms. Deborah Ashley-Smith. Merlin served as a delegate from 2008 – 2016. Deborah served from 2014 – 2016.

Staff Updates

Mr. Anthony Starr announced that WPCOG staff had been working on the installation of a new document management system.

Ms. Sherry Long announced that the Regional Housing Department would be opening the Section 8 Housing waiting list during the part of 2017.

Other Business

Mr. Holleman reminded the board that the next scheduled meeting would be on Tuesday, January 24 and would be hosted by the Burke County.

Adjournment

Mr. Larry Chapman made a motion that the meeting adjourn at 8:15 pm and the motion was seconded by Mr. Chip Black. The motion passed unanimously.