

**Minutes**  
**Western Piedmont Council of Governments**  
**Bimonthly Policy Board Meeting**  
**Tuesday, November 27, 2012**  
**WPCOG offices, Hickory**

**Members Present:**

Chip Black, Chairman  
Bob Smyre, Vice-Chairman  
Darrell Robertson, Secretary  
Mary Bess Lawing, Treasurer  
Wayne Abele, Past Chairman  
Bruce Meisner, At-Large  
George Holleman, At-Large  
Ronnie Setzer  
Nicky Setzer  
Tim Lowrance, Alternate  
Johnny Berry  
Don Beal  
Barbara Pennell  
Christine Abernathy  
Trudy Simpson, Alternate  
Dr. Caryl Burns  
Karen Robinson  
Vernon Moyer  
Dr. Alfred Hamer  
Forrest Fleming, Alternate  
Rick Justice  
Gary McClure  
Wayne Annas, Alternate  
Amparo Alfaro  
Charlie Taylor

**Members Absent:**

Ben Griffin  
Kitty Barnes  
Sue Noblitt  
Bob Floyd  
Danny Ritchie  
Larry Chapman  
Merlin Perry  
Trena Kirby  
Robin Robinson  
Jerry Hodge  
Everett McNair  
Ann Smith

**Local Government:**

Valdese  
Maiden  
Alexander County  
Newton  
Burke County  
Hickory  
Taylorsville  
Cajah's Mountain  
Claremont  
Claremont  
Connelly Springs  
Conover  
Gamewell  
Glen Alpine  
Glen Alpine  
Granite Falls  
Hildebran  
Long View  
Morganton  
Morganton  
Rhodhiss  
Rutherford College  
Rutherford College  
Non-Elected  
Non-Elected

Caldwell County  
Catawba County  
Brookford  
Cedar Rock  
Drexel  
Hudson  
Lenoir  
Sawmills  
Catawba  
Non-Elected  
Non-Elected  
Non-Elected

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**Guests/Others Present:**

Mary Carter, Gamewell Town Administrator  
Connie South, Cahah's Mountain Town Manager  
Todd Clark, Newton City Manager  
Jeff Morse, Valdese Town Manager  
Betty McCall, Glen Alpine Planning Board

**Staff Present:**

H. DeWitt Blackwell, Jr., Executive Director  
James E. Chandler, Assistant Director  
John Tippet, Director of Planning, CDBG and GIS/Data Services  
Sheila Dotson, Workforce Development Director  
Sherry Long, Community Development Director  
Doug Laffon, Finance Director  
Dana Roberts, Administrative Services Manager

**Call to Order/Welcome**

The regular meeting of the WPCOG Policy Board was called to order at 6:45 pm by Chairman Chip Black. Mr. Black thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and the reception held earlier for Jim Chandler and John Tippet, who will retire January 1, 2013.

A moment of silence was observed in memory of Jerry Woods, a Cahah's Mountain Town Councilman and Policy Board member who passed away November 24.

**Minutes of Previous Meeting**

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

**Unfinished Business**

There was no unfinished business.

**New Business**

2012-13 Budget Revisions

Mr. Laffon said the proposed revision was the first since the budget was adopted in May. He reviewed the proposed amendments and justified each increase or decrease by line item. Mr. Laffon said the revision would increase the overall budget by \$231,342.

Following a brief discussion, the proposed amendments were unanimously approved on motion by Mr. Setzer and second by Mr. Beal.

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Capital Threshold

Mr. Laffon reported that WPCOG auditors have recommended an increase in the capital threshold amount from \$1,000 to \$2,500. He noted that equipment valued below that threshold amount would still be listed on the inventory but not considered capital assets. This increase was necessary to comply with various grant programs. There was some discussion and a motion was offered by Mr. Meisner to increase the capital threshold amount to \$2,500. Mr. Beal seconded the motion and it passed with a unanimous vote.

Approval of Revised 2012-13 Section 8 Utility Allowances

Mrs. Pitts presented revised utility allowances for apartment, single-family and mobile home unit types. The Department of Housing and Urban Development requires public housing agencies to review these schedules annually after a determination has been made that any or all of the utility providers within the region have had a ten percent increase in the utility rate schedule within a 12 month period. She said the proposed allowances, which will be effective December 1, reflect a 2 percent decrease. This decrease will allow the Section 8 program to help more families in need.

Mr. Robertson asked what effect utility rate hikes would have if the allowances were decreased. Mrs. Pitts said PHA's are only required to adjust rates once per year and only if the increase is more than 10 percent. The rates could be adjusted the following year.

A motion was made by Mr. Beal and seconded by Mr. Setzer to approve the reviewed Section 8 utility allowances. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

Nominating Committee Report/Election of Officers

Mr. Robertson, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, stated that he and other members of the committee unanimously agreed to recommend the following slate of officers for 2013. He made this recommendation in the form of a motion.

Chairman:	Chip Black
Vice-Chairman:	Bob Smyre
Secretary:	Darrell Robertson
Treasurer:	Mary Bess Lawing
Past Chairman:	Wayne Abele
At-Large Members:	George Holleman
	Bruce Meisner
	Kitty Barnes
	Barbara Pennell

There were no additional nominations from the floor and Ms. Robinson seconded the motion. It passed with a unanimous vote.

Mountain Resources Commission (MRC) Appointment

Chairman Black announced Merlin Perry's resignation from the MRC and said that staff had asked local government managers for recommendations for his replacement. None were received.

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Mr. Black said John Tippet has an interest in the committee's work and volunteered to serve on the MRC if there was no other interest.

There were no nominations from the floor and Mayor Smyre made a motion to appoint John Tippet to the Mountain Resources Commission. Mrs. Pennell seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Department Updates

Mr. Chandler reported on behalf of Public Services, noting that November is National Family Caregiver Month. The WPCOG partnered with other agencies to arrange special events to raise awareness. Staff is also working to establish a support program for grandparents who provide care for their grandchildren. The Long-Term Care Ombudsman is working to raise awareness about dementia, working primarily with long term care and law enforcement agencies. Scam Jam, an event designed to raise awareness about scams that defraud the elderly, was held in October and attended by more than 120 persons. Staff has been working with senior centers to get recertified and monitoring programs for the elderly to measure their impact. Another focus of the aging staff has been to assist in a statewide initiative to provide a single point of contact which will enable the elderly to access services through one agency. Mr. Chandler reported that staff is averaging 10 reverse mortgage sessions per month.

Workforce Development Board Appointment

Sheila Dotson asked the Board to approve the appointment of Glenn Privette, Leviton's Senior Manager of Human Resources, to the Workforce Development Board. She said he understands and appreciates the challenges facing the workforce today and will be an asset to the board. Mr. Meisner made a motion to approve Mr. Privette's appointment to the WDB; the motion was seconded by Ms. Lawing and approved unanimously. His term will expire June 30, 2014.

Mrs. Dotson spoke of the merger of ESC into the NC Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Solutions. She said there has been little activity due to the recent elections but the State has released an RFP for technology to connect the two systems. Seven vendors responded and a decision is expected in January. The system will be in place by July. Mrs. Dotson showed a short video of a recent Workforce Development Partnership Conference focusing on a local case manager who received the Wayne Daves Award. She said this is an excellent example of the kind of staff we have in the region providing services.

Mrs. Pitts said the WPCOG had received a grant to continue funding for the Family Self-Sufficiency Program Coordinator. Currently there are 35 participants in the program and of those, seven have increased their income through counseling and are escrowing. Mrs. Pitts said the Section 8 program serves 1042 clients with a total of 1,075 vouchers.

Mr. Tippet spoke on behalf of the Planning, CDBG and GIS/Data Services division. He said staff have been active in local schools participating in career days and other events that involve GIS and planning. Staff assisted the City of Claremont with a zoning permit for Bed Bath and Beyond's

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data center. This project had to go through a conditional use process due to the watershed protection ordinance. Mr. Tippet said staff is canvassing neighborhoods, preparing to launch the Unifour Septic System Repair Program. A Source Water Protection Plan was finalized with staff planner Johnny Wear as the lead author.

Ms. Long gave an update on housing counseling activity. She said five staff counselors work full time to help families with foreclosure issues and this year have assisted 723 families. More than \$6 million has been invested in the community to help with foreclosures. She said people are still in need and additional funds have been received from the NC Housing Finance Agency. Ms. Long asked local governments to communicate with their citizens about these services and encourage them to get help early in the process. She said staff would be happy to provide information or make presentations to interested groups. Chairman Black applauded the work of Ms. Long and the housing counselors.

Mr. Blackwell announced the employment of Anthony Starr as Assistant Executive Director. His first day will be December 17. Mr. Starr is a former WPCOG employee who left to become Manager of the Town of Catawba and later Planning Director in Henderson County.

Mr. Blackwell said the State is involving regional councils in a pilot program whereby the State will pass DHUD's annual CDBG funding allocation to the regions. He said it is an excellent opportunity to show the state regions are able to expend these type funds better and faster. Mr. Blackwell said initially only the three regions that have the most successful CDBG programs will be involved and the other regions may be drawn in later. He said there is a meeting on December 5-6 to further discuss this initiative.

Mr. Blackwell said that in addition to being a Policy Board representative, Jerry Woods had represented the region on the Joint Regional Forum (JRF). The JRF was created by the NCLM and the NCACC to function as their liaison with regional councils. When the JRF met nearly a year ago, members expressed concern that the NCLM and NCACC weren't considering issues brought before them. Representatives from the League and the Association were invited to attend one of their meetings and JRF members weren't pleased with their response. A decision was made to create a new organization named "The Forum" under the auspices of the NC Regional Council Directors Association. The Forum would be an advocacy group formed to discuss regional issues. Each region would have one representative.

Mr. Blackwell asked local governments to submit nominations of non-elected officials to fill two slots on the Policy Board.

He also noted that Mr. Abele and Mr. Black accepted two NADO awards at the annual meeting in October. The first project targeted adult learners who either dropped out of high school or were displaced from the workforce without transferrable skills. The other project was a Student Growth Estimation Model used to predict enrollment trends and determine need for new school facilities.

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Mr. Blackwell gave an update on the HVAC in the new office building. He said a third party consultant indicated the HVAC was installed as specified and is generally operating as it should be. He wouldn't however guarantee operation of the system would address the humidity problem. He further suggested that installation of an APR valve on each unit at a cost of \$18,000. Mr. Blackwell said the engineer of record will be asked to reimburse the WPCOG for these costs.

**Other Business**

Bimonthly Financial Report

Chairman Black directed Policy Board members to see Doug Laffon to answer any questions they had about the financial report.

Next Meeting

The next regular Policy Board meeting will be held Tuesday, March 26, at a location to be announced. The WPCOG Annual Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 22, at the Crowne Plaza in Hickory beginning at 6:30 pm.

Announcement Regarding Hold Harmless Cities

Mr. Morse reminded board members that the annual transitional hold harmless payment, which was made to cities that suffered a revenue loss when the GA eliminated certain reimbursements in 2003, expires after the 2012 payment. He encouraged cities to adopt a resolution to NCLM asking them to include this item on their final legislative agenda. He said if it is not on the agenda the legislature will not support it.

**Adjournment**

Mr. Robertson asked the Policy Board to join him in thanking the Chairman and Officers for their work this year.

Chairman Black encouraged board members to take the opportunity at their next council or commissioners meeting to share the importance of the WPCOG to their communities.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Dana Roberts, Clerk to the Board