

Minutes
Western Piedmont Council of Governments
Bimonthly Policy Board Meeting
Tuesday, March 26, 2024
The HUB Station, Hudson

Members Present

Joseph L. Gibbons, Chair
George Holleman, Treasurer
Larry Chapman, Secretary
Marla Thompson, At-Large
Ronnie Setzer
Joie Fulbright
Brenda Powell, Alternate
Dennis Anthony
Dr. Caryl Burns
Charlotte Williams, Alternate
Mike Smith, Alternate
Ralph Prestwood, Alternate
Phyllis Pennington, Alternate
Chris Jernigan
Jerry Hodge
Allen Spencer
Bobby Mosteller
Kimberly S. Brown Alternate
Charlie Watts
Amparo R. Alfaro
Erisha Lipford
Helen Chestnut
Malla Vue
Tonia Stephenson

Local Government/Agency

Lenoir
Taylorsville
Hudson
Long View
Cajah's Mountain
Conover
Conover
Drexel
Granite Falls
Hickory
Hildebran
Lenoir
Long View
Morganton
Newton
Rhodhiss
Sawmills
Taylorsville
Valdese
Appointed
Appointed
Appointed
Appointed
Appointed

Members Absent

Randy Burns, Vice Chair
Jill Patton, Past Chair
Mike LaBrose, At-Large
Larry Yoder, At-Large
Cole Setzer, At-Large
Josh Lail, Alternate
Kelvin Gregory
Johnnie Carswell, Alternate
Lloyd Robbins, Alternate
Robbie Wilkie, Alternate
Donald Robinson
Carroll Yount, Alternate
Barbara Beatty, Alternate

Burke County
Hickory
Caldwell County
Alexander County
Catawba County
Alexander County
Brookford
Burke County
Cajah's Mountain
Caldwell County
Catawba
Catawba
Catawba County

Bob Floyd
Dale Sherrill
Ramona Duncan
Johnny Berry, Alternate
Barbara Pennell
Ron Lackey, Alternate
Sheila Perkins
Tracy Townsend, Alternate
Ben Honeycutt
Jim Engelman, Alternate
Holly Crafton-Lay
Ronnie Williams, Alternate
Ronnie Thompson, Alternate
Beverly Danner, Alternate
Kendra Edwards, Alternate
Wayne Annas
Yates Jensen, Alternate
Joe Wesson, Alternate
Rexanna Lowman, Alternate
Mark Transou
Tommy Luckadoo

Cedar Rock
Claremont
Connelly Springs
Connelly Springs
Gamewell
Gamewell
Glen Alpine
Granite Falls
Hildebran
Hudson
Maiden
Maiden
Morganton
Newton
Rhodhiss
Rutherford College
Rutherford College
Sawmills
Valdese
Appointed
Appointed

Guests/Others Present

Randy Feierabend
Donald Duncan
Tom Hart
Bill Carroll
Ann Smith
Jonathan Green
Shana Guy
Tammy Swanson
Janet Winkler
Jeff Link
Rick Shew
Scott Hildebran
Rick Justice
Keith Warren

Cajah's Mountain
Caldwell County
Conover
Drexel
Hudson
Hudson
Hudson
Hudson
Hudson
Hudson
Hudson
Lenoir
Rhodhiss
Sawmills

WPCOG Staff Present

Anthony Starr, Executive Director
Sherry Long Griffin, Assistant Executive Director
David Pugh, Director of Administrative Services and Human Resources
Ben Willis, Director of Community and Economic Development
Tina Miller, Director of Area Agency on Aging

Stephanie Hanvey, Director of Regional Housing Authority

Lucas Bentley, IT Manager

Tasmin Mack, HR Manager

Sarah Stamey, Aging Program Manager

Elizabeth Hilliard, Executive Administrative Assistant

Call to Order/Welcome

A regular meeting of the WPCOG Policy Board was called to order at 6:45 pm by Chair Gibbons. Chair Gibbons thanked the Town of Hudson for hosting. Mayor Janet Winkler welcomed the Policy Board to Hudson.

Introductions

Introductions were made by everyone in attendance.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting were considered. Mr. Joie Fulbright made a motion to approve the minutes from the January 23, 2024 meeting and Mr. Larry Chapman offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business/Reports

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

2024 - 2028 Regional Aging Services Plan Approval

Ms. Tina Miller, Director of Area Agency on Aging, stated federal and state laws require the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) Area Agency on Aging (AAA) to submit a regional area plan every four years. The plan provides important input from stakeholders and citizens. The plan establishes goals to be accomplished over the next four years to benefit older adults and their caregivers in our region. Many of these goals will have value to individuals across their lifespan. This plan serves as a guide and work plan for the WPCOG AAA to follow for the next four years.

A series of assurances are listed in the area plan to ensure that federal requirements outlined in the Older American's Act (OAA) and Title III regulations are being carried out at the state, regional, and local levels. These assurances, along with the Verification of Intent of the Area Plan, must be signed by the AAA and other listed bodies indicating their knowledge of and willingness to meet the intent of the OAA.

The area plan guides the work of the AAA over the next four years. It also provides the Area Agency's Regional Advisory Council, WPCOG executive director and board, and others with an easy means to understand and track the work of the AAA. The AAA annually submits an update on work completed and/or any amendments to the plan.

Staff recommended approval of the Area Agency on Aging Regional Aging Service Plan 2024 – 2028.

Mr. George Holleman made a motion that the policy board approve the Area Agency on Aging Regional Aging Service Plan 2024 – 2028 as presented and Mr. Jerry Hodge offered a second. Motion passed unanimously.

Housing and Employment Trends Update

Mr. Anthony Starr, Executive Director of WPCOG, stated staff prepared a PowerPoint presentation with information regarding employment and housing trends for the region. This information was provided to the policy board for informational purposes.

Key points include:

- The unemployment rate remains low for the region.
- The number of persons in the workforce grew modestly from 2021 to 2023.
- About 27% of all regional jobs are in manufacturing, which is much higher than the 9% national average.
- There are more job openings than unemployed people in the region.
- Local governments permitted 2,172 new housing units in 2023.
- The median home sales price decreased 3.5% from 2023 to 2024 (January) to \$255,000.
- The average list price of a home increased 14.5% to \$365,273.
- The inventory of homes for sale remains extremely low.

The PowerPoint slides along with the Housing Unit Targets document and Population Estimates document were included in the policy board agenda packet.

No policy board action is requested at this time. This item is for informational purposes only.

RHA Annual Administrative Plan(s)

Ms. Stephanie Hanvey, Director of Regional Housing Authority, stated the US Department of Housing and Urban Development requires all public housing agencies (PHAs) to prepare and adopt Annual and 5-Year agency plans. This year we are required to prepare and adopt an Annual Administrative Plan (July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025). HUD prescribes a standardized plan format for PHA plans, which provides information relating to the day-to-day operations of the program. As usual, HUD has made some plan suggestions on policies and procedures to make things less burdensome on our tenant population.

In addition to the regular plan changes, HUD has required another addition to the annual plan process this year. On July 29, 2016, the Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act of 2016 (HOTMA) was signed into law. HOTMA made numerous changes to statutes governing HUD programs, including sections of the United States Housing Act of 1937. Title I of HOTMA contains 14 different sections that impact the public housing and Section 8 programs. The Final Rule implementing broad changes to income and asset in Sections 102 and 104 of HOTMA, and for PHAs that administer the public housing program over-income provisions in Section 103, was officially published in the *Federal Register* on February 14, 2023. On September 29, 2023, HUD issued notice PIH 2023-27, which provided guidance to PHAs on the implementation of the program changes described in the Final Rule.

While PHAs are required to fully comply with HOTMA by January 1, 2025, WPCOG cannot fully comply with the requirements of HOTMA until the IMS/PIC system has transitioned to the new Housing Information Portal (HIP) system later this year, and our software vendor, SACS, has provided updated software.

To comply with these implementation requirements, WPCOG will need to adopt two Administrative Policy Plans. The first Annual Plan Amendments (Attachment 1) does not include HOTMA changes and will be effective from July 1, 2024-December 31, 2024. The second Administrative Plan Amendments includes HOTMA changes and will be effective January 1, 2025-June 30, 2025.

RHA staff has also made some local plan changes to assist our tenant population more efficiently. The plan provides public information about the way that the RHA's housing programs are operated and afford opportunities for client and public review and input. The required public hearing was held at 9:00am on Monday, March 25, 2024. Upon board approval, the RHA Annual Administrative Plan is due in the Greensboro HUD office no later than April 15, 2024.

Staff requested that the board approve both of the RHA's Annual Administrative Plan Amendments for the fiscal year (July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025). As stated, the first plan amendments (attachment 1) will be effective July 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024. The second Annual Plan Amendments (Attachment 2) will be effective January 1, 2025 to June 30, 2025. All of these amendments will be sent to HUD by April 15, 2024.

Mr. Chris Jernigan made a motion that the policy board approve both RHA's Annual Administrative Plans for July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025 for their submission to HUD by April 15, 2024 and Mr. Charlie Watts offered a second. Motion was unanimously approved.

RHA Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Action Plan

Ms. Stephanie Hanvey, Director of Regional Housing Authority, stated the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires all public housing agencies (PHAs) that operate a Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program to prepare and adopt annual agency FSS Action Plans. Housing authorities are required to send any administrative plan amendments to HUD annually. The proposed FSS amendments were included in the agenda packet for board review. Staff would like to send these amendments to HUD with the Annual Administrative Plan amendments by April 15, 2024 with an effective date of July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025. The required public hearing for the RHA's Administrative Plan/FSS Action Plan was held at 9:00am on Monday, March 25, 2024. Upon board approval of the RHA's Annual Administrative Plan, the RHA will send both the updated Administrative Plans and the current FSS Action Plan to HUD's Greensboro office no later than April 15, 2024.

Staff requested that the policy board approve the RHA Family Self-Sufficiency Action Plan Amendments.

Mr. Jerry Hodge made a motion that the policy board approve the RHA Family Self-Sufficiency Action Plan Amendments to be sent to HUD by April 15, 2024 with an effective date of July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025 and Mr. Larry Chapman offered a second. Motion was unanimously approved.

Valdese Public Housing Authority (VPHA) Update

Ms. Stephanie Hanvey, Director of Regional Housing Authority, stated on January 23, 2024, the WPCOG Policy Board approved Resolution 2024-01 to transfer the Valdese Public Housing Authority (VPHA) to the WPCOG. The VPHA, in turn, approved their own resolution for the same action.

WPCOG staff continues to work with VPHA staff regarding the transfer. Below are current progress report points:

- The request for transfer was submitted to HUD March 1, 2024. Staff continues to work on gathering other required documents. Staff continue to work with the VPHA executive director to obtain an inventory of projects and units, financial statements, leases, and other information.
- Staff continues to consult with WPCOG attorney David Hood on an as needed basis to discuss legal issues with the transfer.
- Staff continues to meet with VPHA staff to discuss the transfer process details and WPCOG benefits.
- VPHA provided staff salaries and job descriptions. Staff is working on changes to the job descriptions. We continue to follow up with VPHA with additional questions including employee benefits and take-home vehicle policy.
- Executive Committee decision will need to be made regarding the acceptance of the VPHA employee sick/annual leave and total service time before finalizing the consolidation.
- VPHA and Western Piedmont RHA use the same SACS software program. Staff is working with SACS to set up any needed software modules for the transfer and training for all employees sometime in May, 2024.
- Staff continue to be in contact with their HUD Greensboro representative regarding the transfer process and other actions needed to facilitate and finalize the transfer.
- In April 2024, staff will begin going to VPHA on Thursdays of each week to begin cross training and learning their housing authority processes for the public housing program. Inspection staff will also be cross trained and it is projected that our inspectors will begin inspecting the VPHA units as we get closer to the transfer date.
- WPCOG senior staff including Anthony Starr, Sherry Long, Stephanie Hanvey, David Pugh, and Andrea Roper continue to meet every two weeks to discuss the transfer process, timelines and any required tasks.

No policy board action is requested at this time. This item is for informational purposes only.

3rd Amendment of the FY 2023–2024 Budget

Mr. Anthony Starr, Executive Director of WPCOG, reviewed the 3rd Amendment of the FY 2023–2024 Budget for Ms. Andrea Roper as she was unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Starr stated the attached 3rd Amendment of the FY2023-2024 budget reflects a total budget of \$26,413,284 and an operating budget of \$10,169,365 which represents an increase of the total budget from the November 28, 2023, budget adoption of \$28,797.

The 3rd Amendment of the 2023-2024 Budget includes:

- A decrease in Community Development of \$29,197 to accurately reflect anticipated expenses for

the remainder of the fiscal year.

- Community and Regional Planning increased \$18,981 to reflect the addition of new planning projects.
- Economic Development decreased due to updated project work for the fiscal year.
- Regional Public Housing increased to adjust for additional service fee funds earned.
- Chargeable salaries, retirement & group insurance decreased due to personnel changes.
- Contractual increased due to consultant service fees for MPO CRRSSA funding and contractual work for the homeless outreach webpage.
- Travel increased to support programmatic needs across several departments.
- An increase in supplies due to additional ARPA direct service funding in Aging, needed items for homeless outreach, and general office and IT supplies.
- Capital Outlay increased due to the purchase of a backup server for IT and the anticipated purchase of a vehicle for the Planning department.
- Contingency decreased due to those funds being utilized in the IT and Planning departments.
- Service fees increased to reflect additional funding provided for emergency housing vouchers and the family self-sufficiency program.
- Compensated Absence Liability increased due to the reduction in contingency funds in the fringe budget.
- Transfer to Capital Reserve Fund increased due to the utilization of contingency funds in the indirect budget.
- Regional Housing Authority Special Revenue Funds increased to reflect additional funding for service fees.
- Capital Reserve Fund increased due to the increase in transfers from the general fund.
- All other changes reflect normal programmatic needs.

Staff requested that the policy board to review and approve the Third Amendment of the 2023-2024 Budget.

Mr. Jerry Hodge made a motion that the policy board approve the Third Amendment of the 2023-2024 Budget as proposed and Mr. Joie Fulbright offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

1st Reading of the FY 2024-2025 Budget

Mr. Anthony Starr, Executive Director of WPCOG, stated the attached 1st Reading of the FY2024-25 budget reflects a total budget of \$27,673,320 and an operating budget of \$9,921,458 which represents an increase of the total budget from the November 28, 2023 budget amendment of approximately 4.7% or \$1,288,833.

Some key parts of the budget are uncertain at this time and that is normal for the first reading. The 1st Reading of the FY2024-25 Budget includes:

- 72 full and part-time staff positions.
- WPCOG dues rate reflect no increase and remain at 98.1 cents per capita along with no increase

for the required match for MPO as approved by the Board in January.

- Financial administration services for two local governments and one local non-profit.
- Town planning services for 9 local governments.
- ADA planning services for 3 local governments.
- Code enforcement services for 13 local governments.
- Administration of several new community & economic development projects (building reuse, infrastructure, home outreach, economic development, etc.). A reduction in ARPA funding is reflected within the Economic Development Department.
- GASB 87 – Indirect Leases reflects the future value of lease payments funded with indirect funds.
- The budget includes an average merit increase of 3.75% effective in January 2025.
- A group insurance increase (\$40,357) reflecting a projected health insurance rate increase of 9.5%.
- The decrease in contractual is attributed to the Aging ARPA funding for direct services projected to end in FY24.
- Supplies decreased due to the reduction in Aging ARPA grant funding.
- Capital Outlay decreased \$41,738. Excluding transfers to the Capital Reserve Fund, no major equipment purchases are planned at this time.
- Decrease in contingency due to FY24 funds anticipated to be utilized in FY25.
- Compensated Absence Liability remained the same as FY24. Funding the compensated absences liability improves the net position of the WPCOG.
- The Aging Special Revenue Fund decreased due to the reduction in ARPA funding.
- An increase in the Section 8 Special Revenue Fund due to additional administrative expenses. This increase does not reflect funds associated with the absorption of the Valdese Housing Authority.
- Workforce Development Special Revenue Fund increased to reflect expected additional administrative expenses.
- Decrease in the Burke River Trail Project Special Revenue Fund due to the completion of work in FY24.
- The proposed budget includes approximately \$316,504 in anticipated contracts for FY25. This amount is \$2,288 higher than the FY24 anticipated contracts amount at this time last year. The unfunded area at this point are within the Planning and Environmental Departments. A number of new projects are anticipated but not yet finalized.
- The fund balance allocated decreased due to an increase in assessment dues.
- The Capital Reserve Fund increased due to an increase in transfers from the General Fund.
- The Capital Project Fund increased due to additional funding and anticipated expenditures for the building expansion. Staff anticipates an amendment to the capital project ordinance to reflect total project costs once the bidding process is complete.

Staff requested that the policy board review and approve the First Reading of the FY2024-2025 Budget. Mr. Larry Chapman made a motion that the policy board approve the First Reading of the FY2024-2025 Budget and Ms. Charlotte Williams offered a second. Motion was unanimously approved.

Other Business

Executive Director's and Staff Reports

Mr. Anthony Starr, Executive Director of the WPCOG, highlighted the following items on his Executive Director's Report which was included in the agenda packet.

Administration

- The WPCOG is working with the City of Claremont regarding its police chief position search. The Granite Falls Town Manager search is complete and the new town manager is Daniel Cobb.
- The building expansion project is currently in the design phase with the architect. We expect to bid the project in the summer.
- Important Calendar Reminder: The WPCOG 2024 Annual Meeting will be held the evening of Thursday, April 11th at the Hickory Metro Convention Center. The Annual Meeting begins with a 6:00pm social and 6:45pm dinner seating.
- Communications will be starting a complete redesign of the WPCOG website with anticipated launch by late 2nd quarter.
- Sherry Long Griffin's retirement celebration is scheduled for May 23, 2024. Invitations will be forthcoming.

Community and Economic Development (CED)

- Community and Economic Development staff are currently administering 87 grants for local governments in our region.

Homelessness Response Team (HRT) January – February activities:

- Conducted 3,172 outreach contacts.
- Placed 2 clients in housing.

Community and Regional Planning

- Staff continue to work on the Catawba County Comp Plan and Taylorsville Comp Plan.
- We are also working to complete the Valdese Strategic Action Plan – slated for completion the mid of April.

Regional Housing Authority (RHA)

- The RHA has a total of 246 available Mainstream Vouchers and currently 248 are leased. Leasing numbers are monitored closely. The RHA still has a substantial waiting list for the Mainstream Voucher Program as vouchers become available. The Mainstream Voucher Program requires that at least one person in the household be disabled and be between the ages of 18-61.
- The RHA has approximately 447 families on its regular housing choice voucher waiting list.

Workforce Development

- Workforce Development released a public notice for a letter of intent to bid on the One-Stop Operator as part of the local service delivery of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) system in the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board (WPWDB) region including Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba Counties. The One-Stop Operator will also be

required to ensure delivery of services to other related programs received by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG).

Mr. Ben Willis, Director of Community and Economic Development, stated the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Grant pre application is due before April 15, 2024.

Next Meeting

The next Policy Board meeting is scheduled for May 28, 2024 and will be hosted by the City of Newton.

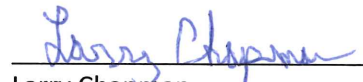
Adjournment

Chair Gibbons adjourned the meeting at 7:39 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Joseph L. Gibbons
Chair



Larry Chapman
Secretary