

Minutes
Western Piedmont Council of Governments
Bimonthly Policy Board Meeting
Tuesday, September 24, 2024
R.O. Huffman Recreation Center, Drexel

Members Present

Joseph L. Gibbons, Chair
Randy Burns, Vice Chair
George Holleman, Treasurer
Larry Chapman, Secretary
Jill Patton, Past Chair
Larry Yoder, At-Large
Cole Setzer, At-Large
Marla Thompson, At-Large
Ronnie Setzer
Donald Robinson
Johnny Berry, Alternate
Joie Fulbright
Brenda Powell, Alternate
Dennis Anthony
Barbara Pennell
Dr. Caryl Burns
Tracy Townsend, Alternate
Charlotte Williams, Alternate
Phyllis Pennington, Alternate
Ronnie Williams, Alternate
Ronnie Thompson, Alternate
Beverly Danner, Alternate
Allen Spencer
Bobby Mosteller
Kimberly S. Brown Alternate
Charlie Watts
Amparo R. Alfaro
Malla Vue
Tommy Luckadoo
Tonia Stephenson

Members Absent

Mike LaBrose, At-Large
Josh Lail, Alternate
Kelvin Gregory
Johnnie Carswell, Alternate
Lloyd Robbins, Alternate
Robbie Wilkie, Alternate
Carroll Yount, Alternate

Local Government/Agency

Lenoir
Burke County
Taylorsville
Hudson
Hickory
Alexander County
Catawba County
Long View
Cajah's Mountain
Catawba
Connelly Springs
Conover
Conover
Drexel
Gamewell
Granite Falls
Granite Falls
Hickory
Long View
Maiden
Morganton
Newton
Rhodhiss
Sawmills
Taylorsville
Valdese
Appointed
Appointed
Appointed
Appointed

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

Barbara Beatty, Alternate	Catawba County
Bob Floyd	Cedar Rock
Dale Sherrill	Claremont
Ramona Duncan	Connelly Springs
Ron Lackey, Alternate	Gamewell
Sheila Perkins	Glen Alpine
Ben Honeycutt	Hildebran
Mike Smith, Alternate	Hildebran
Jim Engelman, Alternate	Hudson
Ralph Prestwood, Alternate	Lenoir
Holly Crafton-Lay	Maiden
Chris Jernigan	Morganton
Jerry Hodge	Newton
Kendra Edwards, Alternate	Rhodhiss
Wayne Annas	Rutherford College
Yates Jensen, Alternate	Rutherford College
Joe Wesson, Alternate	Sawmills
Rexanna Lowman, Alternate	Valdese
Erisha Lipford	Appointed
Helen Chestnut	Appointed
Mark Transou	Appointed

Guests/Others Present

Randy Feierabend	Cajah's Mountain
Bill Carroll	Drexel
Scott Coe	Drexel
Timothy Franklin	Drexel
Daniel Cobb	Granite Falls
Rick Justice	Rhodhiss
Keith Warren	Sawmills
Robin Ramsey	Senator Thom Tillis' Office
Patty Thompson	Arts Culture Catawba
Ingrid Keller	Arts Culture Catawba

WPCOG Staff Present

Anthony Starr, Executive Director
David Pugh, Director of Administrative Services and Human Resources
Andrea Roper, Director of Finance
Alison Adams, Director of Community and Regional Planning
Duncan Cavanaugh, Senior Planner – Project Management
Ben Willis, Director of Community and Economic Development
Elizabeth Moncrief, Program Manager of Regional Housing Authority
Lucas Bentley, IT Manager
Tasmin Mack, HR Manager

Elizabeth Hilliard, Executive Administrative Assistant

Call to Order/Welcome

A regular meeting of the WPCOG Policy Board was called to order at 6:43 pm by Chair Gibbons. Chair Gibbons thanked the Town of Drexel for hosting. The Town of Drexel Mayor, Dennis Anthony, welcomed the Policy Board to Drexel.

Introductions

Introductions were made by everyone in attendance.

Presentation – Arts Culture Catawba

Ms. Patty Thompson, Board President of Arts Culture Catawba, provided an introduction of the Arts Culture Catawba, formerly known as the United Arts Council of Catawba County, and thanked their government partners. This transformative rebranding reflects their dedication to arts and culture in Catawba County which will enable them to better connect with our diverse audience, inspire collaboration, and strengthen the cultural life of our community.

Ms. Ingrid Keller, Arts Culture Catawba Executive Director, shared the mission of the Arts Culture Catawba which promotes, nurtures, and funds excellence in individuals and organizations who provide creative experiences that enrich the lives of residents and visitors. The vision for Catawba County is known as a preferred location to live and visit where arts and culture are fundamental to our vibrant quality of life and unique sense of place. Additional information can be found on the Arts Culture Catawba website: <https://www.artscatawba.org/>.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting were considered. A motion to approve the minutes from the July 23, 2024 meeting was made by Mr. Joie Fulbright and Mr. Charlie Watts offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business/Reports

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

The Center for Advanced Research and Data Analytics

Ms. Alison Adams, Director of Community and Regional Planning, stated in past years, our local governments and other entities in the educational and private sectors have come to rely on the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) Data Center to provide demographic and economic analyses that help them understand regional trends and make data-driven policy decisions. WPCOG has developed significant capabilities to obtain and analyze data from a wide range of resources – from the U.S Census to the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

As part of WPCOG's planning mission, including the development of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and our longstanding commitment to contingency planning, we have reorganized and expanded our data and research capabilities. The Data Center has been reorganized

into the Center for Advanced Research and Data Analytics and is comprised of four core services: Mobile Data Analytics, Data Analysis, Drone Aerial Services (including LiDAR and Thermal Imagery), and GIS/Mapping. The Center for Advanced Research and Data Analytics will be led by Duncan Cavanaugh. Mr. Cavanaugh has been with the WPCOG for seven years. He began working as a Data Technician, then migrated into the role of a Transportation Planner, upon expansion of skills he then was named a Senior Planner of Special Projects. He will be the primary point of contact for project development within the Center, while the following staff will help support service efforts:

- Taylor Dellinger – Data reporting and specialized projects
- Andrew Webb – GIS – managing, mapping, and migration
- Kelly Christenson – Mobile Data and web-based application
- Trey Schwitzer – Drones/Geothermal and Lidar applications

Below is a summary of the sections and services within each that are offered. Ms. Alison Adams welcomes challenges and outside the box ideas as we work together on your projects and initiatives.

Center for Advanced Research and Data Analytics Services			
Drone Aerial Services	GIS/Mapping	MOBILE DATA ANALYTICS	DATA ANALYSIS
Emergency Management Support/Grants	Work order systems - Geocoding and database design and maintenance	Transportation - Traffic flows, counts, volumes, and efficiencies	Census and Demographic analysis and socio-economic information
Photogrammetry – construction monitoring, digital twin modeling	Utility/Infrastructure data collection and system maintenance	Event Analysis- Attendance, attract sponsors/vendors, other locations visited in conjunction with the event, and Economic Impact	Economic Research - Economic Indicators Newsletter
Tree Canopy Analysis	Cemetery Mapping	Retail/Industrial Recruitment data	School Growth Models and Early Head Start Assessment
Terrain Analysis for Sites and Areas (LIDAR)	Ward Redistricting	Sales Tax Estimation	Workforce Analysis - Industry Growth Analysis
Thermal Energy Loss Analysis	Land Use, zoning, transportation and recreation mapping	Travel and Tourism - destinations and visitation	Quality of Life - chronic diseases data
The 3-D modeling of infrastructure	Environmental applications and analysis	Marketing and reports	Housing and Building Permit Data

Aerial Photography and Video for Land Use Meetings	Online application mapping - Transit stops, and quality of life	Analyze public investment (equity and ROI)	Supply Chain mapping
Aerial videography for marketing purposes	Story maps for plans and initiatives	Support local businesses - customer journey and dwell time	Transportation Analysis Zones, Passenger Sampling data collection

This was for informational purposes only. No board action was requested.

Regional Housing Authority Changes in Applicable Payment Standards

Ms. Elizabeth Moncrief, Regional Housing Authority Manager, stated the Public Housing Program through HUD determines the amount of assistance provided to clients through publishing a schedule of fair market rent (FMR) rates based on the housing type. Those rates directly affect the payment standards that housing authorities use for providing rental voucher assistance.

Recently, HUD announced the 2025 FMRs, which show an increase of 1 - 4% for our region. The new FMR levels will enable the voucher program to keep up with rent increases in the private market and will allow voucher holders to access and secure leases in more units so they can benefit from the housing affordability and stability that vouchers provide.

Our goal is to help as many families as possible in our communities while maximizing the funding that HUD allows us to spend. This will also increase the payment standard amounts to be paid on behalf of the tenants.

Staff requested that the Policy Board approve the changes in the applicable payment standards to become effective January 1, 2025.

A motion that the Policy Board approve the changes in the applicable payment standards was made by Ms. Jill Patton and Mr. Larry Chapman offered a second. Motion passed unanimously.

2024 Essential Single Family Rehabilitation Loan Pool (ESFRLP) Burke County Assistance Policy and Procurement and Disbursement Policy

Mr. Ben Willis, Director of Community and Economic Development, stated the Essential Single Family Rehabilitation Loan Pool (ESFRLP) is funded through the NC Housing Finance Agency (NCHFA) to provide essential home repairs for qualified low to moderate-income homeowners. The WPCOG has been awarded \$162,000 for three (3) homes in Burke County. Once the initial set aside has been spent, WPCOG can request more funding for additional homes for the loan pool. The assistance is in the form of a deferred loan up to \$40,000 per home. WPCOG will receive soft cost and administration funds for each unit in addition to the \$40,000 per unit for rehabilitation. The NCHFA requires certain procedures and policies for the grant and these policies require adoption by the Policy Board.

The Assistance Policy explains what the program requirements are and how the program will operate during the cycle of funding. The Procurement and Disbursement Policy provides procurement and disbursement guidelines. Both policies were included in the agenda packet.

Staff requested that the policy board review and approve the 2024 Essential Single Family Rehabilitation Loan Pool (ESFRLP) Burke County Assistance Policy and Procurement and Disbursement Policy.

A motion that the policy board approve the 2024 Essential Single Family Rehabilitation Loan Pool (ESFRLP) Burke County Assistance Policy and Procurement and Disbursement Policy was made by Mr. Donald Robinson and Ms. Jill Patton offered a second. Motion passed unanimously.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Accomplishment Update

Ms. Alison Adams, Director of Community and Regional Planning, stated the WPCOG was designated as the Economic Development District (EDD) for our region in 2004 by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). The WPCOG is required to develop and maintain a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) every five years. The last CEDS was adopted in September 2022.

The 2022 CEDS represents a document to lead the region and WPCOG in several key directions, including:

- Robust and aggressive economic development
- Construction of desirable and affordable housing
- Successful marketing of regional assets
- Development of an inclusive community
- Retention and recruitment of a talented workforce
- Development of an efficient and well-maintained infrastructure system

These objectives are aimed at ensuring an equitable and resilient future for the entire region. EDA requires the WPCOG to submit an annual progress report. As a requirement an update is to be given to the Policy Board outlining achievements. The CEDS Accomplishments Update was included in the agenda packet.

This item was for informational purposes only. No board action was requested.

WPCOG Building Expansion Update

Mr. Anthony Starr, Executive Director of WPCOG, stated at the June 2024 meeting, the Executive Committee approved excluding the Regional NCWorks Career Center from the planned building expansion. This results in less grading, less building construction, and eliminates the basement. The remaining costs fit the WPCOG budget.

WPCOG staff continue to work with McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture on the decrease and redesign of the new building expansion. Minor changes to the remaining addition are required and some site plan adjustments (parking) are also required. Elimination of the NC Works Careers Center section

minimally affects the administration, finance, workforce development section, which was already designed. The building expansion renderings were included in the agenda packet.

Current cost estimates for the building are as follows:

Prebid & Design (Surveyor, Architect, etc.):	\$ 500,000
Furniture, etc.	\$ 200,000
<u>Construction (includes 20% contingency):</u>	<u>\$5,650,000</u>
Total Project Cost (approx.):	\$6,350,000

The WPCOG received \$3 million from the General Assembly for the project and will have about \$600,000 to \$1,000,000 in our capital reserve account to fund the project. Depending on bid results, the necessary debt would range from \$1.2 million to \$2.75 million.

Updated Project Square Footage

New building square footage (base): 9,549
Alternates
Covered outdoor area: 742
Conference room area: 1,170
Total project square footage (base + alternates): 11,461

Updated Project Timeline

1st week of October: Construction bid release date
November 12th: Bid Opening
November 26th: Policy Board Meeting
Approval of lowest responsible bidder for building expansion construction
Approval of loan financing institution

This item is for informational purposes only. No board action was requested.

Resolution #2024-04: Authorizing Filing of Application to the NC Local Government Commission (LGC) for Building Expansion

Mr. David Pugh, Director of Administration/Human Resources stated as required by the NC Local Government Commission (LGC), the WPCOG Policy Board must approve a resolution directing staff to file an application for approval of a financing agreement for the new building expansion project.

The amount for the installment financing is up to \$2,750,000. It should be noted that WPCOG does not have to borrow the full amount. The amount listed is to ensure coverage in case bids come back higher than expected.

Staff requested that the policy board approve Resolution 2024-04.

A motion that the policy board approve Resolution 2024-04, authorizing staff to file an application with the NC Local Government Commission for approval of a financing agreement for the construction of the

new building expansion was made by Mr. Donald Robins and Ms. Jill Patton offered a second. Motion passed unanimously.

3rd Amendment of the FY 2024-2025 Budget

Ms. Andrea Roper, Director of Finance, stated the 3rd Amendment of the FY2024-25 budget reflects a total budget of \$32,624,279 and an operating budget of \$10,737,135 which represents an increase of the total budget from the August 27, 2024 budget adoption of \$378,252. The 3rd Amendment of the FY 2024-2025 Budget was included in the agenda packet.

The 3rd Amendment of the 2024-2025 Budget includes:

- An increase in General Government to reflect additional human resource contracts.
- A decrease in Community Development due to project work increasing in Economic Development.
- Community & Regional Planning decreased to reflect actual contract amounts for FY25.
- Economic Development increased to reflect new grants.
- An increase in Aging due to additional chore services grants.
- Staff salaries, retirement and group insurance decreased due to personnel changes.
- Contractual increased to cover costs associated with the additional chore services grants within the Aging department.
- The rent/lease expense line increased due to rent payments associated with the homelessness program.
- Capital Outlay increased to reflect the additional costs needed to purchase a vehicle for the planning department.
- Contingency decreased due to funds being utilized in the current fiscal year.
- Transfer to Capital Reserve Fund decreased due to the decrease in indirect funds generated by chargeable salaries.
- Regional Public Housing mainstream voucher service fees decreased to cover administrative costs associated with administering the vouchers.
- The Valdese Public Housing Special Revenue Fund increased to reflect additional administrative costs and operating costs.
- Capital Reserve Fund increased to reflect the appropriation of FY24 fund balance.
- All other changes reflect normal programmatic needs.

Staff requested the policy board review and approve the Third Amendment of the 2024-2025 Budget.

A motion that the policy board approve the Third Amendment of the 2024-2025 Budget as proposed was made by Mr. Randy Burns and Mr. Larry Chapman offered a second. Motion passed unanimously.

Nominating Committee Appointments

Mr. Joseph Gibbons, Chair of the Policy Board, stated each year at the September Policy Board meeting, four Policy Board members are asked to serve on a nominating committee. Under the WPCOG Charter, the Policy Board Chair appoints the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee is responsible for presenting a slate of officers, Executive Committee members and appointed (non-elected) board

members for the following year during the November meeting. The Nominating Committee includes a representative from all four counties. Traditionally, two county officials and two municipal officials compose the four-member committee.

The following board members have been appointed and have agreed to serve on this year's nominating committee:

- Jill Patton – City of Hickory Councilmember
- Mike LaBrose – Caldwell County Commissioner
- Larry Yoder – Alexander County Commissioner
- Chris Jernigan – City of Morganton Councilmember

WPCOG Past Board Chair Jill Patton will serve as the Nominating Committee Chair. Staff will assist with scheduling a committee meeting shortly after the November election.

This item is for informational purposes only. No board action was requested.

Other Business

Executive Director's and Staff Reports

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

Administration

- The WPCOG is working with the Town of Maiden regarding its manager search, which is in its final stages. The Town of Taylorsville Manager search is complete.
- The next Mayor-Chair-Managers meeting is Thursday, October 17th at Brushy Mountain Golf Club in Alexander County.
- Work continues regarding the Charlotte Interbasin Transfer (IBT). An attorney and lobbyist have been selected. A steering committee, which includes 5 county managers, has been formed.
- Large amount of funds in outstanding invoices with the Department of Transportation (DOT). Accounts Receivable will be the highest this year due to DOT.
- The City of Mooresville has filed for their Interbasin Transfer (IBT). Their city is divided among three different water basins. This is a different situation than Charlotte.

Area Agency on Aging

- The AAA held its Scam Jam event at the Hickory Metro Convention Center with several speakers, including Elaine Marshall, NC Secretary of State. It was well attended with over 300 people.

Community and Economic Development (CED)

- The Homelessness Response Team (HRT) continues to work with the homeless and conduct outreach throughout the region. The website offering homelessness data and resources by county is now live – www.homelessresponse.org.

Community and Regional Planning

- Planning began work with the Caldwell EDC to create a county housing study for Caldwell County and Lenoir.

Finance

- Finance Staff are working with the Village of Cedar Rock to provide financial services starting in October of 2024.

Regional Housing Authority (RHA)

- The RHA opened its waiting list July 1, 2024 and after only 26 days, the waiting list was closed on July 26, 2024 after receiving 2,914 applications for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. Staff continue to send about 75 offer letters monthly for individuals as they reach the top of the waiting list.

Workforce Development

- Workforce Development has a lot of projects taking place.

Ms. Marla Thompson, Mayor of the Town of Long View, shared James Brinkley's 12-year old son was diagnosed with a brain tumor and has undergone appendix surgery. The Town of Long View is doing a gun raffle and she has several tickets available. She asked everyone to keep James Brinkley's family in their prayers.

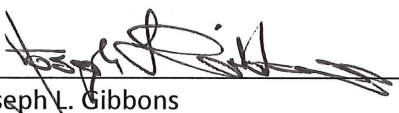
Next Meeting

The next Policy Board meeting is scheduled for November 26, 2024 and will be hosted by the City of Lenoir.


Adjournment

Chair Gibbons adjourned the meeting at 7:56 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Joseph L. Gibbons
Chair



Larry Chapman
Secretary