

Minutes
Western Piedmont Council of Governments
Bimonthly Policy Board Meeting
Tuesday, November 26, 2024
J.E. Broyhill Civic Center, Lenoir, NC

Members Present

Joseph L. Gibbons, Chair
George Holleman, Treasurer
Larry Chapman, Secretary
Jill Patton, Past Chair
Larry Yoder, At-Large
Cole Setzer, At-Large
Ronnie Setzer
Joie Fulbright
Brenda Powell, Alternate
Dennis Anthony
Barbara Pennell
Dr. Caryl Burns
Tracy Townsend, Alternate
Mike Smith, Alternate
Ralph Prestwood, Alternate
Holly Crafton-Lay
Chris Jernigan
Ronnie Thompson, Alternate
Bobby Mosteller
Kimberly S. Brown Alternate
Erisha Lipford
Helen Chestnut
Malla Vue
Mark Transou
Tommy Luckadoo
Tonia Stephenson

Members Absent

Randy Burns, Vice Chair
Mike LaBrose, At-Large
Marla Thompson, At-Large
Josh Lail, Alternate
Kelvin Gregory
Johnnie Carswell, Alternate
Lloyd Robbins, Alternate
Robbie Wilkie, Alternate
Donald Robinson
Carroll Yount, Alternate
Barbara Beatty, Alternate

Local Government/Agency

Lenoir
Taylorsville
Hudson
Hickory
Alexander County
Catawba County
Cajah's Mountain
Conover
Conover
Drexel
Gamewell
Granite Falls
Granite Falls
Hildebran
Lenoir
Maiden
Morganton
Morganton
Sawmills
Taylorsville
Appointed
Appointed
Appointed
Appointed
Appointed
Appointed

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

Bob Floyd
Dale Sherrill
Ramona Duncan
Johnny Berry, Alternate
Ron Lackey, Alternate
Sheila Perkins
Charlotte Williams, Alternate
Ben Honeycutt
Jim Engelman, Alternate
Phyllis Pennington, Alternate
Ronnie Williams, Alternate
Jerry Hodge
Beverly Danner, Alternate
Allen Spencer
Kendra Edwards, Alternate
Wayne Annas
Yates Jensen, Alternate
Joe Wesson, Alternate
Charlie Watts
Rexanna Lowman, Alternate
Amparo R. Alfaro

Cedar Rock
Claremont
Connelly Springs
Connelly Springs
Gamewell
Glen Alpine
Hickory
Hildebran
Hudson
Long View
Maiden
Newton
Newton
Rhodhiss
Rhodhiss
Rutherford College
Rutherford College
Sawmills
Valdese
Valdese
Appointed

Guests/Others Present

Randy Feierabend
Ashley Bolick
Daniel Cobb
Scott Hildebran
Ethan Ward
Rick Justice
Keith Warren
Alan Thompson

Cajah's Mountain
Caldwell EDC
Granite Falls
Lenoir
McMillan Pazdan Smith
Rhodhiss
Sawmills
Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams & Co, PA

WPCOG Staff Present

Anthony Starr, Executive Director
David Pugh, Director of Administrative Services and Human Resources
Andrea Roper, Director of Finance
Ben Willis, Director of Community and Economic Development
Alison Adams, Director of Community and Regional Planning
Stephanie Hanvey, Director of Regional Housing Authority
Ric Smith, Homelessness Response Manager
Lucas Bentley, IT Manager
Tasmin Mack, HR Manager
Elizabeth Hilliard, Executive Administrative Assistant
Chasity Houck, Homelessness Response Specialist

James Anders, Homelessness Response Specialist
Mary Kendrick, Homelessness Response Specialist
Rachel Dillingham, Homelessness Response Specialist
Chae Moore, Homelessness Response Specialist

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 City of Lenoir for hosting. Chair Gibbons, who is also the City of Lenoir Mayor, welcomed the Policy Board to Lenoir.

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 September 24, 2024 meeting and Mr. Larry Yoder offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business/Reports

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Awards

Mr. Anthony Starr, Executive Director, stated the National Association of Development Organizations' (NADO) is a Washington, DC-based association that promotes programs and policies that strengthen local governments, communities, and economies through regional cooperation, program delivery, and comprehensive strategies.

The association's Aliceann Wohbruck Impact Awards program recognizes regional development organizations and partnering organizations for improving the economic and community competitiveness of our nation's regions and local communities. Award-winning projects were recognized during NADO's 2024 Annual Training Conference in New Orleans, LA on October 21st through the 24th. Western Piedmont Council of Governments received the Aliceann Woodbrook Impact Award for the Western Piedmont Housing Community Health and Disaster Mitigation Explorer (CHADME), Catawba County Schools-Early Head Start (CCS-EHS) Community Assessment, and the Western Piedmont Homelessness Outreach Program at the conference.

Community Health and Disaster Mitigation Explorer (CHADME)

The Community Health and Disaster Mitigation Explorer (CHADME) tool was designed for disaster mitigation, preparedness, and resiliency planning purposes for the Western Piedmont region of North Carolina. This metrics-based tool allows you to examine potential mitigation practices through a hierarchy of variables, including socioeconomics, high-risk health populations, location of populations with limited or no access to transportation, proximity to natural features, and other social determinants of health.

This resource leverages local data and knowledge with ESRI GIS products to boost regional risk assessments through identification of critical assets and problem areas, to realize and support potential grant opportunities while improving recovery efforts through collection and maintenance of digital twins in support of public assistance requests. The detailed, date stamped documentation of preliminary damage assessments and post recovery repairs are critical in the validation of work conducted post disaster.

Catawba County Schools-Early Head Start (CCS-EHS)

WPCOG collects data and provides a thorough assessment of the current state of the physical, social, and economic welfare of families with very young children in Catawba County to CCS-EHS staff and the administration of Catawba County Schools. The federally funded program encourages healthy prenatal outcomes for economically disadvantaged expectant mothers. The report is intended as a tool to assist leaders of CCS-EHS in understanding and targeting their client population effectively. The assessment also seeks to determine geographic areas of Catawba County, North Carolina for CCS-EHS to concentrate outreach and services provided by the CCS-EHS program.

Western Piedmont Homelessness Outreach Program

The Western Piedmont Council of Governments' Homelessness Outreach Program was selected as an award recipient for their efforts in addressing homelessness in the rural region of western North Carolina. The program consists of six team members with expertise in substance use disorders, mental health, domestic violence, workforce development, public health, and housing. This team works directly with the homeless population to navigate them to the proper resources in the region.

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

FY 2023-2024 Audit Presentation

Mr. Alan Thompson, Auditor with Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams & Co., P.A., presented a report to the board regarding the financial audit of the Western Piedmont Council of Governments for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024. He shared highlights along with their observations and report. It was noted this was a clean audit. The audit is required by state law and various regulations of funding entities. The audit report was included in the policy board agenda packet.

Staff requested that the policy board review the audit information and accept the audit report as presented.

Ms. Jill Patton made a motion that the policy board accept the audit report as presented and Mr. Chris Jernigan offered a second. Motion passed unanimously.

Resolution #2024-05: Approving Finance Terms for the WPCOG Building Expansion Project

Ms. Andrea Roper, Director of Finance, stated the Request for Proposal (RFP) for installment financing for the WPCOG Building Expansion Project are summarized in the following table. The proposals from the banks that responded to the RFP are also included.

Resolution 2024-05 has been prepared to reflect the installment financing loan not to exceed \$2,750,000, not to exceed 3.85%, and not to exceed a fifteen (15) year loan term. Each of these

elements provides room for some flexibility, without obligation, as staff continue with both contract specifications and submittal to the North Carolina Local Government Commission (NC LGC) for final financing approval for the project.

Western Piedmont Council of Governments Building Expansion Financing RFP Summary

Banks Circulated	Proposed *Rates for:			Early Pay Fees	Other Notable Items	
	10 Year	15 Years	20 Years		Rate Expiration	Collateral
Peoples Bank	3.75%	3.85%	3.95%	None	01.10.2025	2nd Deed of Trust on expansion & existing properties
Truist	5.12%	5.15%	5.19%	Yes	01.10.2025	2nd Deed of Trust on expansion & existing properties
First Citizens	Responded, but DECLINED to submit			Prepayment penalty - 1st yr 5%; 2nd yr 4%; 3rd yr 3%; 4th yr 2%; 5th yr 1%		
Other Banks	No Response					

*Note: All rates are fixed rates.

Staff requested the following actions:

1. Approve Resolution 2024-05, awarding the financing contract to Peoples Bank for a 15-year period at 3.85% not to exceed an amount of \$2,750,000.
2. Authorize the Executive Director, Finance Director, and WPCOG Attorney to execute loan documentation and complete the financing once approval is received from the NC LGC.

Mr. George Holleman made a motion that the policy board approves:

1. Resolution 2024-05, awarding the financing contract to Peoples Bank for a 15-year period at 3.85% not to exceed an amount of \$2,750,000 and,
2. Authorize the Executive Director, Finance Director, and WPCOG Attorney to execute loan documentation and complete the financing once approval is received from the NC LGC and Ms. Jill Patton offered a second. Motion passed unanimously.

Resolution #2024-06: Accepting Bids and Awarding the Lowest Responsible Bidder

Mr. Anthony Starr, Executive Director, stated on Tuesday, November 19th, formal bids were opened for the WPCOG Building Expansion Project. Per the attached bid tab and the table below, four contractors bid on the project.

Neill Construction has been identified by WPCOG staff and McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture as the lowest responsive, responsible bidder on the project with a bid total of \$4,716,500. This amount includes all three bid alternates.

WPCOG Building Expansion Bid Totals

Bidder	Package Requirements	Base Bid	ADD 1 (Conference Room)	ADD 2 (Generator)	ADD 3 (Outdoor Space)	Bid Total
Neill Construction	Complete	\$4,287,000	\$295,000	\$79,500	\$55,000	\$4,716,500
Moss-Marlow	Complete	\$4,444,444	\$318,000	\$92,340	\$58,000	\$4,912,784
Wilkie Construction	Complete	\$4,500,000	\$299,600	\$93,700	\$49,300	\$4,942,600
Hickory Construction	Complete	\$4,997,000	\$375,000	\$61,000	\$69,500	\$5,502,500

The final contract is contingent on the North Carolina Local Government Commission (NC LGC) approval at their meeting on January 7, 2025.

Staff requested that the policy board approve Resolution #2024-06 identifying and awarding the lowest responsible bidder as Neill Construction at a bid total of \$4,716,500 and directing the executive director, attorney, and finance director to move forward with the notice of award and final contract negotiation and execution.

Ms. Jill Patton made a motion that the policy board approve Resolution #2024-06 identifying and awarding the lowest responsible bidder as Neill Construction at a bid total of \$4,716,500 and directing the executive director, attorney, and finance director to move forward with the notice of award and final contract negotiation and execution and Mr. Cole Setzer offered a second. Motion passed unanimously.

Amendment of the Building Expansion Capital Project Budget Ordinance

Ms. Andrea Roper, Director of Finance, stated the amended WPCOG Building Expansion Capital Project Budget Ordinance was attached in the policy board agenda packet. The revenue and expenditure amounts reflect the updated building contractor costs and subsequent loan amount. Per NCGS, the amended ordinance is presented as balanced.

Staff requested that the policy board approve the amended Building Expansion Capital Project Budget Ordinance.

Mr. Larry Yoder made a motion that the policy board approve the amended Building Expansion Capital Project Budget Ordinance and Ms. Jill Patton offered a second. Motion passed unanimously.

Resolution #204-07: Regarding the Consolidation/Transfer of the Hickory Public Housing Authority to the WPCOG

Ms. Stephanie Hanvey, Director of Regional Housing Authority, stated over the last several months that the City of Hickory began reaching out to the WPCOG regarding a potential abolishment of the Hickory Housing Authority and subsequent absorption of the Hickory Housing Authority by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments. The transfer would result in 556 Section 8 vouchers coming to the WPCOG Regional Housing Authority (RHA). The City Council held a public hearing on Tuesday, October 15, 2024, where the public was given the chance to be heard regarding the potential abolishment of the Hickory Housing Authority. It is anticipated that the City Council may act to abolish the Hickory Housing Authority effective July 1, 2025 and appoint Anthony Starr as the Interim Executive Director until the transfer to the WPCOG is complete July 1, 2025. This could occur as early as December.

HUD requires that the request to transfer the Hickory Housing Authority's 556 Section 8 vouchers be submitted at least 90 days prior to the effective date of the transfer. Federal regulations and state law already allow the consolidation/transfer of housing authorities but require the policy board to consider the request. The WPCOG RHA is bringing to the board the resolution for approval of the acceptance of the Hickory Housing Authority to be consolidated with the WPCOG RHA. The effective date for the consolidation/transfer would be July 1, 2025.

The consolidation of housing authorities in the region has been an ongoing goal to provide better service to housing clients, increase efficiency, and improve accountability. Current Hickory Housing Authority staff will be considered for potential employment through an interview process. The WPCOG expects to hire four to five additional staff with this transfer. The Hickory Housing Authority currently administers 556 Section 8 landlord vouchers. Hickory Housing Authority currently manages 311 housing units that are owned by a non-profit known as Nu-Dimensions. The WPCOG Regional Housing Authority will not continue the property management of Nu Dimension with this transfer.

Staff requested that the policy board approve the transfer of the Hickory Housing Authority to the Western Piedmont Council of Governments Regional Housing Authority.

Mr. Mall Vue made a motion that the policy board approve the transfer and adopt the resolution for the consolidation of the Hickory Housing Authority to the Western Piedmont Council of Governments with an effective date of July 1, 2025 and Mr. Larry Chapman offered a second. Motion passed unanimously.

5th Amendment of the FY 2024-2025 Budget

Ms. Andrea Roper, Director of Finance, stated the 5th Amendment of the FY2024-25 budget reflects a total budget of \$37,492,491 and an operating budget of \$10,765,441 which represents an increase of the total budget from the October 29, 2024 budget adoption of \$3,868,212. The 5th Amendment of the FY2024-25 budget was included in the policy board agenda packet.

The 5th Amendment of the 2024-2025 Budget includes:

- An increase in Community Development due to an increase in housing program income and additional CDBG project work to be completed by the end of the fiscal year.
- Community & Regional Planning increased due to new planning projects.

- Staff salaries, retirement and group insurance decreased due to multiple personnel changes.
- Contractual decreased to reallocate budget to the advertising/subscription line item for software costs associated with the planning department.
- Supplies increased to cover computer and other necessary supplies in the planning department.
- Capital Outlay increased to reflect the anticipated purchase of two servers for the IT department.
- Compensated Absence Liability decreased due to the decrease in fringe funds generated by chargeable salaries.
- Capital Reserve Fund increased due to an increase in allocated fund balance.
- Capital Project Fund increased to reflect the total expected WPCOG building expansion costs.
- All other changes reflect normal programmatic needs.

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

Mr. Joie Fulbright made a motion that the policy board approve the Fifth Amendment of the 2024-2025 Budget as proposed and Ms. Jill Patton offered a second. Motion passed unanimously.

Nominating Committee Report and Officer Elections and Appointment

Ms. Jill Patton, Nominating Committee Chair, stated each year, the Board Chair appoints a nominating committee for the purpose of recommending persons for the Officers, Executive Committee and Appointed Delegates of the Policy Board. Chair Gibbons appointed Jill Patton (Hickory), Chris Jernigan (Morganton), Larry Yoder (Alexander County), and Mike LaBrose (Caldwell County) to serve as members of the 2024 Nominating Committee.

Committee Chair Patton presented the recommendations from the Nominating Committee listed below:

Position	Recommendation	Term Ends
Chair	Joe Gibbons	Dec. 2025
Vice Chair	Randy Burns	Dec. 2025
Secretary	Larry Chapman	Dec. 2025
Treasurer	George Holleman	Dec. 2025
Immediate Past Chair	Jill Patton	Dec. 2025
Executive Committee At-Large	Mike LaBrose	Dec. 2025
Executive Committee At-Large	Cole Setzer	Dec. 2025
Executive Committee At-Large	Marla Thompson	Dec. 2025
Executive Committee At-Large	Larry Yoder	Dec. 2025
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Tonia Stephenson	Dec. 2025

Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Mark Transou	Dec. 2025
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Malla Vue	Dec. 2025
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Amparo Alfaro	Dec. 2026
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Erisha Lipford	Dec. 2026
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Tommy Luckadoo	Dec. 2026
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Helen Chestnut	Dec. 2026
Forum Representative	Marla Thompson	Dec. 2025
Alternate Forum Representative	Larry Yoder	Dec. 2025

The nominating committee requested that the policy board elect the Officers, Executive Committee members, and Appointed Delegates for 2025.

Ms. Jill Patton made a motion that the policy board approve the nominations as presented by the Nominating Committee and Ms. Tonia Stephenson offered a second. Motion passed unanimously.

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.

Our team has been working hard to assist with the FEMA Administration on reimbursements. Tidal Basin was selected as the consultant for FEMA Public Assistance Support. They are already working with our local governments on documentation for reimbursements. Ms. Alison Adams, Director of Community and Regional Planning, and Mr. Curt Willis, Manager of Code Enforcement, are leading this.

Mr. Ben Willis, Director of Community and Economic Development, has been working on recovery grant projects and will have a meeting in a week or two for local governments to talk about one aspect that would be advantageous for our region which is the inter-connection of our utilities in more locations so when we have a disaster and a system goes down, we have a way to supply that community with water service without disruption. This will make us more resilient. There will be other resilient type projects that are infrastructure and economic related that may not have anything to do with repair or rebuilding but will improve the economy in the region.

Administration

- The town manager search for the Town of Maiden is complete with the promotion of Tracy Ledford.
- WPCOG worked with other COGs and partners to develop a multi-state proposal to provide disaster funding through the Appalachian Regional Commission. Early feedback has been positive to support the \$2 billion in funding. An email has been received stating this will be drafted into the text to go into federal legislation.
- Work continues regarding the Charlotte Interbasin Transfer (IBT). An attorney and lobbyist

have been selected. Charlotte Water has invited the WPCOG to participate in a technical advisory group consisting of 30 members to provide feedback about alternatives analysis and mitigation strategies. Our IBT attorney thinks it is a good idea to participate. Charlotte has hired new lobbyists to lobby local officials on the Charlotte Interbasin Transfer issue. Local governments were asked to be prepared in the event they are contacted by lobbyists.

Area Agency on Aging

- AAA Director attended Southeastern Association of Area Agencies on Aging (SE4A) board meeting and conference in Gulf Shores, AL. She was elected as Treasurer for 9-state association.

Community & Economic Development (CED)

- CED staff is actively collaborating with other COGs located in Western NC to identify future funding opportunities from state and federal resources for Hurricane Helene recovery and resiliency efforts.
- Staff successfully prepared and submitted an asset inventory assessment for the Town of Glen Alpine's water system. If awarded, the \$150,000 grant will enable a comprehensive evaluation and documentation of the town's water infrastructure.
- CED staff successfully secured a \$510,280 ARC grant to support the City of Conover's waterline expansion project, which will enhance connectivity between Microsoft and Hunsucker Industrial Park.
- Staff assisted the City of Conover in successfully securing a \$254,997 grant from the Rural Downtown Economic Development fund for their downtown pedestrian project.

Community & Regional Planning

- Staff is continually working on the Caldwell County EDC Housing Study.

Finance

- Financial Services began for the Village of Cedar Rock October 1st.

Regional Housing Authority (RHA)

- The RHA continues to serve our community and currently has approximately 2,600 families on our waiting list. Staff continue to send 75 offer letters monthly for individuals as they reach the top of the waiting list. There were a total of 1,393 families served with the housing choice voucher program assistance in September 2024.
- As of July 1, 2024, the WPCOG's Regional Housing Authority began managing the Valdese Public Housing Authority. In October, the RHA started a beautification project at the Valdese Public Housing office location. New landscaping was done with the addition of flowers around the office and the signage. Parking lines were repainted, and windows were also cleaned. Some new signage is also being ordered. The transition continues to go smoothly. Residents and employees seem to like the new updates. Staff continue to train in new aspects of owning and managing public housing units. The RHA Program Manager continues to spend two-half days a week at Valdese Public Housing overseeing all activities of Valdese Public Housing. Staff


continue to have new and innovative ideas about doing some value-added activities for the Valdese Public Housing tenants and their children.

Workforce Development


- On October 10, 2024, The U.S. Department of Labor awarded \$10 million in initial emergency grant funding to North Carolina to support disaster-relief jobs and training services in 25 counties to help respond to Hurricane Helene.
 - The WPCOG Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board has been awarded \$250,000 of the Emergency National Dislocated Worker Grant. The Workforce Board plans to request more funding in the future.
- Upskill Western Piedmont, an initiative of the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board (WPWDB), offers competitive training grants to businesses in addressing employees' skill gaps, improving employee retention, helping stabilize the business, and increasing the competitiveness of the employee and business. Through this effort, businesses can improve productivity, increase competitiveness, retain key talent and expertise and reduce employee turnover.
 - Grants of up to \$10,000 may be awarded to eligible businesses in the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board service region for training of their current workforce in areas including, but not limited to technical Training, certifications, leadership Development, soft skills, professional development, etc.
 - In 2024, a total of four Upskill Grants have been awarded. A total of 48 incumbent workers were trained and total reimbursable funds were \$21,655.00.

Ms. Alison Adams, Director of Community and Regional Planning, stated the Digital Navigator Program is looking to partner with recreation centers, libraries, senior centers, and municipalities. The program's rolling classroom will be taken to partner locations to provide digital literacy for seniors.

Respectfully submitted,



Joseph L. Gibbons
Chair



Larry Chapman
Secretary

