

**Minutes**  
**Western Piedmont Council of Governments**  
**Bimonthly Policy Board Meeting**  
**Tuesday, November 23, 2021**  
**Brushy Mountain Golf Course, Taylorsville, NC**

**Members Present:**

Bob Floyd, Jr., Chair  
Jill Patton, Vice-Chair  
Johnny Berry, Secretary  
George Holleman, Treasurer  
Barbara Pennell, Past Chair  
Wayne Abele, At-Large  
Joseph L. Gibbons, At-Large  
Kitty Barnes, At-Large  
Chip Black, At-Large  
Johnnie Carswell, Alternate  
Ronnie Setzer  
Joie Fulbright  
Kyle Hayman, Alternate  
Dr. Caryl Burns  
Larry Chapman  
Jim Engelman, Alternate  
Marla Thompson  
Chris Jernigan  
Allen Spencer  
Kendra Edwards, Alternate  
Amparo Alfaro  
Helen Chestnut  
Randy Burns  
Tommy Luckadoo  
Jeanna Price

**Members Absent:**

Larry Yoder  
James Weaver  
Mike Labrose  
Donald Robinson  
Dale Sherrill  
Dennis Anthony  
Sheila Perkins  
Jerry Hodge  
Vacant

**Local Government/Agency:**

Cedar Rock  
Hickory  
Connelly Springs  
Taylorsville  
Gamewell  
Burke County  
Lenoir  
Catawba County  
Valdese  
Burke County  
Cajah's Mountain  
Conover  
Conover  
Granite Falls  
Hudson  
Hudson  
Long View  
Morganton  
Rhodhiss  
Rhodhiss  
Appointed  
Appointed  
Appointed  
Appointed  
Appointed

Alexander County  
Brookford  
Caldwell County  
Catawba  
Claremont  
Drexel  
Glen Alpine  
Newton  
Rutherford College

Keith Warren  
Erisha Lipford  
Malla Vue

Sawmills  
Appointed  
Appointed

**Guests/Others Present:**

Mary Carter, Gamewell  
Scott Hildebran, Lenoir  
Gary McClure  
Seth Eckard, Valdese  
Richard Andrews, Cahah's Mountain  
Jimmy Clark, Conover  
Tamara Brooks, Connelly Springs  
Jonathan Greer, Hudson  
Rick French, Alexander County  
Claire Chase, Martin Starnes & Associates

**WPCOG Staff Present:**

Anthony Starr, Executive Director  
Sherry Long, Assistant Executive Director/Director of Community & Economic Development  
Ashley Bolick, Director of Administrative Services and Human Resources  
Andrea Roper, Finance Director  
Wendy Johnson, Director of Workforce Development  
Alison Adams, Director of Community & Regional Planning  
Jason Toney, Communications Specialist  
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 Bob Floyd. Chair Floyd thanked the Town of Taylorsville and Alexander County for hosting. Town of Taylorsville Mayor, George Holleman, welcomed the Policy Board to Taylorsville and Alexander County.

**Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Minutes of the previous meeting were considered. Mr. Larry Chapman made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 28, 2021 meeting and Mr. Joie Fulbright offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

**Unfinished Business/Reports**

There was no unfinished business.

**New Business**

#### FY 2020 – 2021 Audit Presentation

Ms. Andrea Roper, WPCOG Finance Director, introduced Ms. Mary Claire Chase, auditor from Martin Starnes & Associates, CPAs, P.A. Ms. Chase presented 2021 audited financial statements to the board for their review. Ms. Chase reported a clean unmodified opinion and thanked the WPCOG staff for their cooperation during the audit.

Ms. Chase offered other general highlights on the general fund, special revenue funds (WIOA, Aging, and Section 8), capital project funds, OPEB pension trust, and custodial funds (Future Forward, Sister Cities, SE4A, and NC4A). She reported no findings and no general performance indicators of concern for FY 2021.

Ms. Roper provided additional insight in a fiscal year 2020-2021 report to the board. She reviewed general fund revenues, general fund expenditures, fund balance as well as major fund expenditures. In summary in FY 2020-2021 there was an increase in the fund balance, total revenues increase from the prior fiscal year, and expenditures were underspent.

Ms. Kitty Barnes made a motion that the Board accept the audit report as presented. Mr. Randy Burns offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

#### One Comprehensive NCWorks Career Center

Ms. Wendy Johnson, Workforce Development Board Director, presented the concept of establishing a single (one) comprehensive NCWorks career center for the region.

The recommendation is based on current and future funding and customer engagement opportunities. Factors that support a regional career center include:

- In-person engagement (foot traffic) at the current career centers is slowly decreasing;
- Increased engagement with customers via virtual platforms allows for greater participation and outreach to job seekers;
- Increased flexibility/mobility to deploy staff to various locations across the region is possible with a regional career center;
- Communication & management with a regional career center increases efficiency with staffing/mobility/virtual services; and
- Improve use of both WIOA and Wagner-Peyser funding to cover one lease.

Construction of a regional comprehensive career center could occur at the main WPCOG campus. Funding would come from leasing the space to the NC Department of Commerce and could lower costs for the WPCOG and State of North Carolina.

Staff requested the Board to authorize proceeding with further research to establish one regional comprehensive career center. Future action by the Policy Board would be required before significant costs are incurred or construction began.

Mr. George Holleman made a motion that the Policy Board authorize proceeding with further research to establish one regional comprehensive career center. Mr. Chip Black offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

#### CEDS Committee Appointments

Mr. Anthony Starr, WPCOG Executive Director, presented to the board information about the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) as well as a list of suggested committee members. 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 CEDS every five years. The last CEDS was adopted in 2017 and work must soon begin for the 2022 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 13 proposed CEDS Committee members for consideration by the Policy Board. Key diversity characteristics considered for the proposed committee members include: geographic representation, occupation/employment background, age cohort, race, ethnicity, and gender. About 38% of the committee is female, about 38% represent a racial or ethnic minority, and there is representation from each of the four counties. Nearly half of the committee consists of persons under 50 years of age.

#### Proposed Members of the 2022 CEDS Committee

Name	Business/Organization/Affiliation
Randy Burns (Chair)*	Administration, WPCC & CVCC
Mandy Hildebran (Vice Chair)	CEO, Hickory Metro Convention Center & Visitors Bureau
Amparo Alfaro*	Certified Public Accountant/Small Business Owner
Sarah Chester	Executive Director, Industrial Commons
Helen Chestnut*	Retired Administrative Officer for Dept. of Agriculture
Honey Estrada	Public Health Strategist, Catawba County Public Health
Alan Glines	Burke County Planning Director
Josh McKinney	VP for Peoples Bank & Workforce Dev. Board Chair
Bryan Moore	CEO, Caldwell Chamber of Commerce
Ike Perkins+	Minister, Lenoir
Dale Sherrill*+	Retired President of Vextra Tech, a CommScope Division
Ben Willis+	Caldwell Education Foundation Director
Malla Vue*	District Director of Goodwill Industries/Workforce Board

\* Also serves as a WPCOG Policy Board Delegate

+ Also serves as a local government elected official

The CEDS Committee is expected to meet about six times and complete its work by September of 2022.

Mr. Chip Black made a motion that the Board appoint the presented list of individuals to the CEDS committee and appoint Randy Burns as the chair and Mandy Hildebran as vice chair. Mr. Johnny Berry offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the FY2021-22 Budget

Ms. Andrea Roper, Finance Director, presented the 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the 2021-2022 Budget reflecting a total budget of \$20,535,082 and an operating budget of \$7,414,567 which represents an increase of \$525,526 from the September 28, 2021 budget.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the 2021-2022 Budget includes:

- Transportation has a decrease in funding to reflect actual anticipated expenses.
- Community and Regional Planning increased \$40,953 to reflect several new planning projects.
- Aging has a \$30,000 increase due to ARPA funding.
- Workforce Development increased \$1,033 due to additional funding for infrastructure costs.
- A decrease of \$30,874 in fund balance appropriated due to the addition of new projects and contractual work.
- Workforce Development Special Revenue funds increased \$284,314 to reflect actual funding for the fiscal year.
- Aging Special Revenue funds increased \$200,000 due to ARPA funding.
- Chargeable salaries decreased and compensated absences increased \$16,266, respectively, to better reflect anticipated staff usage.
- Contractual increased due to the ARPA funding for Aging and increased costs for Community & Regional Planning.
- An increase in telephone to reflect anticipated costs for the security system and landline.
- Supplies decreased \$5,637 due to reallocation of funds to maintenance-building grounds for additional landscaping.
- Contingency increased \$20,771 due to the addition of several new projects.
- OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) Trust Allocation decreased \$24,957 due to an increase in compensated absences and other fringe benefit costs. This amount will vary depending on the availability of funds throughout the fiscal year.
- A decrease of \$13,935 to the transfer to capital reserve fund expense line is mainly due to the reduction in chargeable salaries. This amount will vary depending on the availability of funds throughout the fiscal year.

Ms. Kitty Barnes made a motion that the Board approve the 4<sup>th</sup> amendment of the 2021-2022 budget as proposed. Mr. Joe Gibbons offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

#### Nominating Committee Report & Board Leadership Election

Ms. Kitty Barnes, Catawba County commissioner and nominating committee chair, presented information to the board on behalf of the nominating committee. 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 Floyd appointed Wayne Abele (Burke County), Larry Chapman (Hudson), Kitty Barnes (Catawba County) and George Holleman (Taylorsville) to serve as members of the 2020 Nominating Committee.

Ms. Barnes presented the recommendations from the Nominating Committee listed below:

Position	Recommendation	Term Ends
Chair	Jill Patton	Dec. 2022
Vice Chair	Joe Gibbons	Dec. 2022
Secretary	Larry Chapman	Dec. 2022
Treasurer	George Holleman	Dec. 2022
Immediate Past Chair	Bob Floyd	Dec. 2022
Executive Committee At-Large	Wayne Abele	Dec. 2022
Executive Committee At-Large	Kitty Barnes	Dec. 2022
Executive Committee At-Large	Marla Thompson	Dec. 2022
Executive Committee At-Large	Larry Yoder	Dec. 2022
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Malla Vue	Dec. 2023
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Jeanna Price	Dec. 2023
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Randy Burns	Dec. 2023
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Amparo Alfaro	Dec. 2022
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Erisha Lipford	Dec. 2022
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Tommy Luckadoo	Dec. 2022
Policy Board Appointed Delegate	Helen Chestnut	Dec. 2022
Forum Representative	Wayne Abele	Dec. 2022
Alternate Forum Representative	Kitty Barnes	Dec. 2022

Ms. Kitty Barnes made a motion that the Board approve the nominations as presented. Mr. Joe Gibbons offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Outgoing Board Member Recognition

Chair Floyd recognized outgoing board members and thanked them for their service to the WPCOG board. Outgoing board members included:

- Ronnie Williams, Maiden – WPCOG Policy Board delegate from 2019-2021
- Johnny Berry, Connelly Springs – WPCOG Policy Board delegate from 2010 – 2021
- Gary McClure, Rutherford College – WPCOG Policy Board delegate from 2004 – 2021
- John “Chip” Black, Jr, Valdese – WPCOG Policy Board delegate from 2009 – 2021 and board chair from 2012 – 2013

Vice Chair Jill Patton recognized Chair Floyd for his service as chair from 2020-2021.

Executive Director’s and Staff Report

Mr. Anthony Starr reviewed the Executive Director’s Report outlining both current and upcoming projects by department.

- Community and Regional Planning Director Alison Adams and Aging Specialist Sarah Stamey were named Top 10 Professionals Under 40 for the region. We are fortunate to have so many hard-working and talented staff.
- WPCOG is monitoring and examining the state budget. The latest draft includes provisions to fund COGs in NC to assist local governments with technical assistance for disaster funding (\$6 million) and American Rescue Plan funding (\$10 million). In addition, the budget includes \$465,000 for trail planning and development in **Burke County, Rhodhiss, and Hildebran** to

connect a trail from **Hickory** to **Morganton**. The budget also includes \$4.5 million allocated to the WPCOG for capital improvements. It is assumed this is the provision for broadband and/or rail improvements along the **Caldwell County** rail line.

- Staff are exploring the feasibility of expanding the WPCOG office to accommodate the growth of the organization. We have only a few vacant offices for new positions. A conceptual plan will be presented at a later date for board consideration.
- Staff appreciates the board's participation and guidance for the development of a strategic plan. SERDI is finalizing the assessment report and staff are working on the next step, a short document that will serve as the strategic plan.
- WPCOG is assisting the **City of Conover** with their manager search. Applications are due by November 26<sup>th</sup>.
- WPCOG is also assisting the **Town of Long View** with the search for a new town clerk/PIO. Interviews should be scheduled within the next few weeks.
- WPCOG completed the **Caldwell County** search for a new County Manager. Thank you to the county for the partnership and congratulations to Donald Duncan for his appointment.
- Applications are being accepted for an Information Technology Manager at the WPCOG. Long-time WPCOG employee P. Scott Miller announced his retirement effective 1/1/2022. A retirement reception in his honor is planned for Wednesday, December 8<sup>th</sup> from 4-6 pm at the office of WPCOG. Please join us.
- Community and Economic Development staff are currently administering eighty (80) grants for local governments.
- Three Building Reuse grants were funded by the NC Commerce in October totaling \$959,000. **Claremont** received \$375,000 for WestRock Converting. The company will invest \$16M and create 50 new full-time jobs. Claremont also received \$500,000 to assist Poppelmann Plastics who will invest \$8M and create 80 new full-time jobs. **Long View** received an \$84,000 grant to assist ClearElectric Motor Services. The business is investing \$96,450 and creating 12 new full-time jobs.

WPCOG Community & Regional Planning Director, Alison Adams, provided an update to the board on the Foothills Experience, an EDA project. Target completion date of June 2022.

#### Adjournment

Chair Floyd reminded the board of the next meeting scheduled for January 25, 2021 and adjourned the meeting at 7:44 pm.