

**Minutes**  
**Western Piedmont Council of Governments**  
**Bimonthly Policy Board Meeting**  
**Tuesday, May 24, 2022**  
**Catawba County Emergency Services, Newton**

**Members Present:**

Jill Patton, Chair  
Joseph L. Gibbons, Vice-Chair  
Larry Chapman, Secretary  
Bob Floyd, Past Chair  
Larry Yoder, At-Large  
Wayne Abele, At-Large  
Kitty Barnes, At-Large  
Mike Labrose  
Ronnie Setzer  
Joie Fulbright  
Jim Green, Alternate  
Dennis Anthony  
Barbara Pennell  
Dr. Caryl Burns  
Danny Hipps  
Chris Jernigan  
Jerry Hodge  
Beverly Danner, Alternate  
Allen Spencer  
Wayne Annas  
Charlie Watts  
Amparo R. Alfaro  
Helen Chestnut  
Jeanna Price  
Tommy Luckadoo

**Members Absent:**

George Holleman, Treasurer  
Marla Thompson, At-Large  
Kelvin Gregory  
Johnnie Carswell, Alternate  
Robbie Wilkie, Alternate  
Donald Robinson  
Dale Sherrill  
Ramona Duncan  
Tracy Townsend, Alternate  
David Williams, Alternate  
Mike Smith, Alternate  
Sheila Perkins

**Local Government/Agency:**

Hickory  
Lenoir  
Hudson  
Town of Cedar Rock  
Alexander County  
Burke County  
Catawba County  
Caldwell County  
Cajah's Mountain  
Conover  
Conover  
Drexel  
Gamewell  
Granite Falls  
Maiden  
Morganton  
Newton  
Newton  
Rhodhiss  
Rutherford College  
Valdese  
Appointed  
Appointed  
Appointed  
Appointed

Taylorsville  
Long View  
Brookford  
Burke County  
Caldwell County  
Catawba  
Claremont  
Connelly Springs  
Granite Falls  
Hickory  
Hildebran  
Glen Alpine

Tuesday, May 24, 2022

Page | 2

Ben Honeycutt	Hildebran
Holly Crafton-Lay, Alternate	Maiden
Keith Warren	Sawmills
Erisha Lipford	Appointed
Malla Vue	Appointed
Randy Burns	Appointed

**Guests/Others Present:**

Randy Feirerabend	Cajah's Mountain
Donald Duncan	Caldwell County
Thomas Hill	Catawba County
Peggy Eades	Catawba County
Randy Isenhower	Catawba County
Mary Furtado	Catawba County
Seth Eckard	Valdese
Tracy Blackwood	Valdese

**WPCOG Staff Present:**

Anthony Starr, Executive Director  
Sherry Long, Assistant Executive Director  
Ashley Bolick, 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  
Donna Gilbert, Interim Director of Workforce Development  
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 Patton. Chair Patton thanked Catawba County for hosting. Randall Isenhower, Catawba County Commission Chair, welcomed the Policy Board to Newton.

**Introductions**

Chair Patton congratulated Dennis Anthony on his recent appointment as Mayor for the Town of Drexel. 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 March 22, 2022 meeting and Mr. Larry Yoder offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Unfinished Business/Reports**

There was no unfinished business.

#### **New Business**

##### WPCOG ADA Inventory and Transition Plan

Ms. Alison Adams, Director of Community and Regional Planning, presented the WPCOG recently completed Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. This plan is required of disabilities by correcting mobility barriers and allowing full access to all programs and services open to the public. This plan prioritizes mobility barriers for WPCOG as part of an effort to:

- Plan for the most important facility improvements in conjunction with the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design;
- Document approach and entry accessibility barriers (parking lot, sidewalk around building, exterior door pressures, and other exterior elements); and
- Document interior facility accessibility barriers (any area of the building open to the public).

WPCOG's ADA Transition Plan identifies high, medium, and low priority items. Priority items are based on issues that are non-compliant based on ADA standards. Transition plans generally advise municipalities to address high priority items first. Items that are not included within standards but could improve accessibility are included as recommendations. Recommendations are not required to be fixed, but are still ranked by high, moderate, or low severity.

You can view the full plan at:

[https://www.wpcog.org/files/ugd/960958\\_0dc1d44df7074eb5a0b3ee418f4880a0.pdf](https://www.wpcog.org/files/ugd/960958_0dc1d44df7074eb5a0b3ee418f4880a0.pdf)

Staff requested a motion from the Policy Board to adopt the final WPCOG ADA Transition Plan. The WPCOG completed a 30-day public comment period before adoption. No public comments were received.

Mr. Larry Chapman made a motion that the Policy Board adopt the WPCOG ADA Transition Plan and Ms. Kitty Barnes offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

##### Workforce Development Board Reappointments

Ms. Donna Gilbert, Interim Director of Workforce Development, presented a request to the Policy Board to reappoint six current Workforce Development Board members for another two year term expiring June 30, 2024. The following individuals' terms are expiring and are eligible for re-appointment.

- Marty Waters, Owner, Kestrel Realty – Caldwell County
- Bill Burton, President/Owner, Jack Sipe Construction – Catawba County
- Glenn Privette, Director of Human Resources, Leviton Manufacturing Inc – Burke County
- Wayne Abele, Owner, Abele's Family Restaurant – Burke County
- Jennifer Nicholes, HR Manager, Siegwark, EIC, LLC – Burke County

Tuesday, May 24, 2022

Page | 4

- Malla Vue, District Director for Catawba, Caldwell, Burke, Alexander and Iredell counties, Goodwill Industries Northwest North Carolina

Staff requested the Policy Board to re-appoint the six current Workforce Development Board members for another two year term.

Mr. Larry Yoder made a motion that the Policy Board re-appoint the six current Workforce Development Board members for another two year term expiring June 30, 2024 and Mr. Jerry Hodge offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

#### WIOA Plan Summary, Program Year 2022-2023

Ms. Donna Gilbert, Interim Director of Workforce Development, stated the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires each Workforce Development Board (WDB) to develop and submit, in partnership with the local chief elected official, a comprehensive four-year plan. Four-Year Plans were last submitted in June 2021.

Annually, each WDB is to provide updates to the Comprehensive Four-Year Plan (PY 2020-24). The WIOA Program Year (PY) 2022 Plan is to provide current information and be effective July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023 and will include all current local policies. The PY2022 Plan Summary must be made available for 30 days for public comment. The plan is located on the workforce website [www.westernpiedmontworks.org](http://www.westernpiedmontworks.org). The draft plan contains no substantive changes.

Staff requested that the Policy Board review and provide feedback of the WIOA Program Year 2022 Plan as needed. No formal action by the Board is needed at this time.

#### Utility Allowance Changes for the Section 8 Program

Ms. Stephanie Hanvey, Director of Regional Housing Authority, stated the Regional Housing Authority (RHA) established utility allowance schedule is used in determining family share and PHA subsidy. The RHA must maintain a utility allowance schedule for (1) all tenant-paid utilities, (2) the cost of tenant-supplied refrigerators and ranges, and (3) other tenant-paid housing services such as trash collection.

The utility allowance schedule must be based on the typical cost of utilities and services paid by energy-conservative households that occupy housing of similar size and type in the same locality. In developing the schedule, the RHA must use normal patterns of consumption for the community as a whole and current utility rates.

The utility allowance must include the utilities and services that are necessary in the locality to provide housing that complies with housing quality standards. Costs for telephone, cable/satellite television, and internet services are not included in the utility allowance schedule.

The RHA must review its schedule of utility allowances each year, and must revise the schedule if there has been a change of 10 percent or more in any utility rate since the last time the allowances for that utility was revised.

Tuesday, May 24, 2022

Page | 5

The RHA must maintain information supporting its annual review of utility allowance and any revisions made in its utility allowance schedule. In June of 2017, the RHA released Request for Proposals for the Utility Allowance Study. David Simms and Associates Consulting Engineers was awarded the bid for five years. The final year review has been completed and we need to change most of our utility rates. Staff would like to make this change in utility allowances effective July 1, 2022.

Staff requested that the Policy Board approve the Section 8 Utility Allowance changes.

Mr. Chris Jernigan made a motion that the Policy Board approve the Section 8 Utility Allowance Changes and Mr. Joe Gibbons offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

#### Increase in Applicable Payment Standards

Ms. Stephanie Hanvey, Director of Regional Housing Authority, stated During the pandemic in 2021, HUD published Fair Market Rents (FMRs) went down which created a burden on many families that were searching for housing. The FMRs determine the amount of rental housing assistance provided to clients. Many prospective tenants have been unable to find affordable housing and must submit numerous requests before being approved. Landlords continue to complain because there is a significant amount of paperwork involved with the normal request process and the denials cause them to submit paperwork several times.

Although there was an increase in the new FMRs for 2022, it has not been enough to keep up with rising rental costs and the affordable housing market. HUD understands that there is a need for payment standards to be increased temporarily in order to help bring our housing assistance payments back in line to meet the needs of the current housing market. HUD has encouraged all housing authorities to raise their payment standards to 120% of the FMRs. The RHA would like to increase all voucher sizes to 120% of the FMRs.

Starting 1/1/2023, the payment standards will be reduced to 110% of the FMRs which will be in compliance with the normal HUD regulation. The RHA anticipates HUD increasing the FMRs for 2023, which could result in no reduction in benefits for housing clients.

Our goal is to help as many families as possible in our communities while maximizing the funding that HUD allows us to spend. With the anticipated increase in the FMRs in 2023 and the ability to increase our local payment standards, it will greatly assist our families to find housing that is affordable to them. The board has been provided the increase in the payment standards for approval.

Staff requested that the Policy Board approve the increase in the applicable payment standards to become effective July 1, 2022.

Mr. Jerry Hodge made a motion that the Policy Board approve the change in the applicable payment standards and Mr. Danny Hipps offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

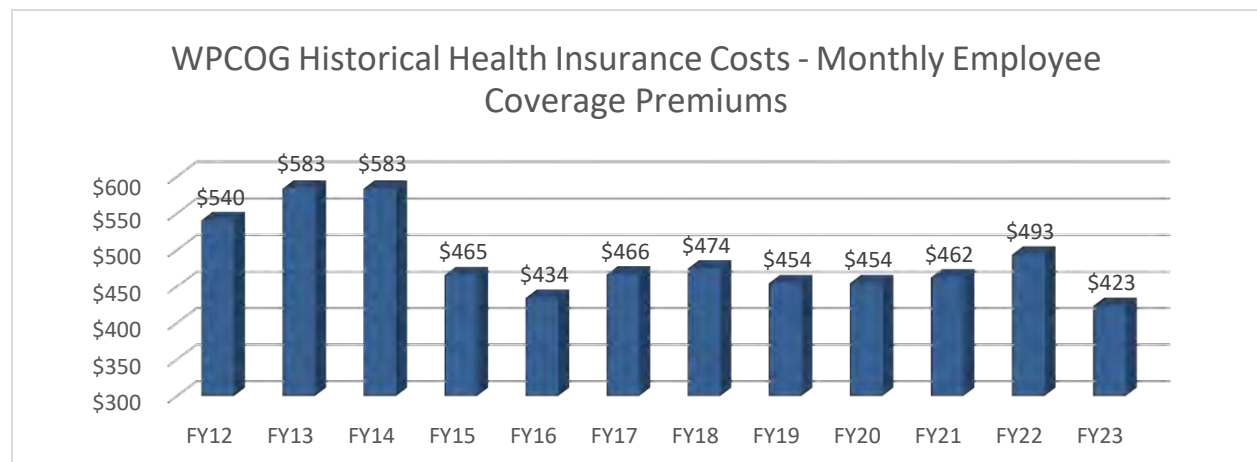
#### Section 8 Application Intake/Waiting List

Ms. Stephanie Hanvey, Director of Regional Housing Authority, stated the Regional Housing Authority's Section 8 Housing Program will exhaust its regular Housing Choice Voucher Program waiting list as of June 30, 2022. Accepting new applications for the rental housing assistance program so that a new list can be started is necessary. Notice will be published in the local newspapers the week of May 29th. Notice will also be published on the WPCOG's website and on our social media the week of May 25, 2022. The Regional Housing Authority plans to accept new applications beginning Friday, July 1, 2022 and the application period will remain open as long as the waiting period would be between one and three years. This would be approximately 2,500-3,000 applications received.

Staff was informing the board of the intention to open the Section 8 Housing waiting list for new applications beginning Friday, July 1, 2022 and will remain open as long as the waiting period would be between one and three years. No Policy Board action is requested at this time.

NCLM Resolution and Interlocal Agreement to Join the Municipal Insurance Trust of North Carolina

Ms. Ashley Bolick, Director of Administrative Services and Human Resources, stated annually, WPCOG evaluates both the cost and benefit of staff fringe benefits with the goal of offering the best benefits for staff at the most competitive price. Historically, this practice has worked well for WPCOG. Shopping benefit providers this spring will result in a 10.6% cost savings. WPCOG will be moving the medical plan from the current provider, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina to the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM) Municipal Insurance Trust of North Carolina.



Staff requested the resolution and interlocal agreement (included in the agenda packet) must formally be adopted and approved by the board to enter into the Municipal Insurance Trust of North Carolina. Staff requests the Policy Board to adopt and approve the resolution and interlocal agreement as presented.

Mr. Larry Yoder made a motion that the Policy Board adopt and approve the resolution and interlocal agreement to enter membership in the Municipal Insurance Trust of North Carolina as presented and Mr. Larry Chapman offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

8<sup>th</sup> Amendment of FY 2021-2022 Budget

Ms. Andrea Roper, Director of Finance, presented the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the 2021-2022 Budget (included in the agenda packet) reflects a total budget of \$20,930,277 and an operating budget of \$7,429,757, which represents a decrease of the total budget from the March 22, 2022 budget amendment of \$7,965.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the 2021-2022 Budget includes:

- Community Development increased due to a new housing project.
- A decrease in Economic Development due to the increase of anticipated compensated absences and decrease of chargeable salaries.
- Regional Public Housing decreased \$84,138 due to personnel changes and an increase in anticipated compensated absences.
- Aging increased due to increased project work for the dementia care contract with Wake Forest University.
- Workforce Development decreased due to personnel changes and to better reflect anticipated compensated absence expense.
- Chargeable salaries decreased due to the increase in compensated absences (sick leave and vacation leave) and personnel changes.
- Increase in the incentive line item to account for the one-time bonus of \$1,000, approved by the Executive Committee at the April meeting.
- Unemployment costs decreased to better reflect actual expenses for the current fiscal year.
- Increase in contractual due to the new housing project in Community Development.
- Supplies increased due to needed supplies for aging, facilities and IT.
- Maintenance-equipment decreased to better reflect actual expenses.
- OPEB Trust Allocation increased \$15,309 to help offset the liability of post-employment benefits.
- Transfer to Capital Reserve decreased due to the decrease in chargeable salaries, reducing indirect revenues.
- Fund Balance Appropriated increased \$45,777 due to an increase in fringe and indirect expenses and a decrease in chargeable salaries.
- Fund Balance Appropriated – Previous Year Fringe Funds increased due to the decrease in chargeable salaries and increase in compensated absences.
- Workforce Development Special Revenue Fund increased due to additional funding received for programmatic funding.
- All other changes to the expenditure lines reflect normal program needs.

Staff requested the Policy Board to review and approve the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the 2021-2022 Budget.

Mr. Danny Hipps made a motion that the Policy Board approve the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the 2021-2022 Budget as approved and Ms. Kitty Barnes offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Tuesday, May 24, 2022

Page | 8

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading and Adoption of the FY2-22-23 Budget

Mr. Anthony Starr, Executive Director, presented The attached 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading of the FY2022-23 budget reflects a total budget of \$22,456,535 and an operating budget of \$8,260,300 which represents an increase of the total budget from the March 22, 2022 budget amendment of approximately 6.2% or \$1,313,121.

The proposed budget provides resources to continue implementation of the 2022 WPCOG Strategic Plan. Regarding the strategic plan, the FY23 Budget includes:

- Funds to develop a regional housing toolkit to provide recommendations for local governments to facilitate strong housing growth.
- Affordable housing services through the HOME Consortium including first-time homebuyer assistance and loan funding for affordable apartment projects.
- Housing rehabilitation to benefit low to moderate income households.
- Code enforcement to protect property values and maintain healthy neighborhoods.
- Funding for staff to form a regional utilities task force or committee to increase cooperation and collaboration among local water and sewer utility providers.
- Funding for WPCOG to seek grants to expand water and sewer infrastructure.
- Implements career steps in the WPCOG pay plan to retain high performing staff.
- Funds to complete the State of the Workforce Report and Industry Growth Analysis to assist efforts to improve and increase the trained and available workforce in the region.
- Funds for new or expanded services to local governments (planning, GIS, grant administration, etc.).
- Funds for work to continue on the project to improve weather radar service for the region.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading of the FY23 Budget also includes:

- 67 full and part-time staff positions. This total includes three new positions; GIS technician, planner position and an administrative assistant position.
- WPCOG dues rate increased by \$.024 per capita plus dues increases for the MPO as approved by the Board in January.
- Financial Administration Services for two local governments and one local non-profit.
- Town planning services for 10 local governments.
- Long Range Planning services for 8 local governments.
- Code Enforcement services for 12 local governments.
- Administration of several new community and economic development projects (building reuse, infrastructure, economic development, etc.).
- The budget includes a plan approved by the Executive Committee to respond to increasing staff turnover and higher inflation. The plan includes a 3% cost of living adjustment (with a minimum \$1,500 increase) for all staff in July and an average merit increase of 3.75% effective in January 2023.
- A group insurance decrease (\$49,033) reflecting a projected health insurance savings of 9%.



- The increase of \$82,000 in contractual is mainly attributed to the housing rehabilitation project in partnership with Triangle J Council of Governments and the Department of Environmental Quality.
- Capital Outlay increased \$11,594. Regional housing anticipates purchasing a vehicle for the second full-time housing inspector.
- Contingency increased \$133,806 due to the new projects in which funds will be utilized in FY23.
- OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) Trust Allocation decreased \$61,310 due to an increase in expected compensated absences expense and the establishment of the compensated absence liability expense. This allocation may increase with the availability of funds. This allows the WPCOG to fund the liability and set aside funds for years with unexpected increases in compensated absences (e.g. staff illnesses, etc.).
- Aging Special Revenue Fund increases due to actual allocation amounts.
- Increase in the Burke River Trail Project Special Revenue Fund due to the ongoing grant administered by the state.
- Anticipate establishing a special revenue fund for the FY23 portion of \$4.5 million appropriation from the state for capital improvements.
- The proposed budget includes approximately \$49,233 in anticipated contracts for FY23. This amount is \$2,819 higher than the FY22 anticipated contracts amount at this time last year. The unfunded areas at this point are within the Community and Economic Development Department.
- The fund balance allocated increased \$3,817 due to higher ARC and EDA match amounts.
- Capital Reserve Fund increased \$242,409 due to an increase in allocated fund balance and an increase in the transfer amount from the general fund. The near term use of these funds will likely include replacement of the HVAC system for the WPCOG office.

Staff requested the Policy Board to hold the required public hearing, receive any public comments, and adopt the budget ordinance (included in the agenda packet).

Mr. Bob Floyd made a motion that the Policy Board open the public hearing and Mr. Larry Yoder offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

No public input was made.

Ms. Kitty Barnes made a motion to that the Policy Board close the public hearing. Mr. Larry Yoder offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Joe Gibbons made a motion that the Policy Board adopt the budget ordinance and FY 2022-23 Budget as presented and Mr. Larry Chapman offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Other Business**

#### Executive Director's and Staff Reports

Mr. Anthony Starr, WPCOG Executive Director, reviewed the Executive Director's Report providing details about current operations of the WPCOG and issues that may be of interest to board members.

### **Administration**

- WPCOG is assisting the Town of Long View with their search for a new deputy police chief and the Town of Gamewell with their search for a part-time town clerk/administrator.
- In response to inflation and rising staff turnover rates, the Executive Committee approved a plan to provide a \$1,000 retention bonus to staff in May as well as approved increasing the number of annual leave days for staff by 3 days annually.
- Interviews scheduled for the Workforce Development Director.

### **Community and Economic Development (CED)**

- Staff assisted and/or submitted nine (9) Appalachian Regional Commission grant pre-applications for the spring grant cycle. There were 30 total submissions in the entire NC ARC region meaning nearly a third of the applications came from WPCOG. Additionally, staff worked closely with the region to help write and submit 10 NC Rural Transformation Grant applications. Projects ranged from downtown revitalization, property acquisition, and industrial site development.
- Community and Economic Development staff are currently administering eighty-one (81) grants for local governments.

### **Community and Regional Planning**

- The **Hudson** Comprehensive Plan Committee meeting received a presentation on current land use and public meeting SWOT results.
- The **Hildebran** Comprehensive Plan Committee meeting received a presentation on transportation.

### **Finance**

- Finance continues to administer financial services for Town of Catawba, Caldwell Chamber and the Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority.
- Staff implemented the new payroll module for all staff. This process eliminates the use of paper for timesheets and travel cost reimbursements.
- Finance staff are assisting the Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority and Town of Catawba to obtain a new auditor after their current auditor suddenly discontinued service for their local government clients.

### **Regional Housing Authority (RHA)**

- The RHA is currently leased at 1,054 out of a potential of 1,074 (98%) for the regular housing choice vouchers. The RHA had a total of 16 new admissions for all housing programs in the month of April. Ongoing leasing efforts continue for all vouchers.

### **Workforce Development**

- A draft of the State of the Workforce report is complete. The final report will be presented at the June or August Workforce Development Board meeting.
- Staff have assisted 261 employers with services and assisted with 11 recruitment events either at a Career Center or Employer Site.

Tuesday, May 24, 2022

Page | 11

Ms. Alison Adams, Director of Community and Regional Planning, provided an update on Taylor Dellinger, Senior Data Analyst/GIS Manager. Taylor has finished his final chemo treatment and has more upcoming appointments.

Ms. Sherry Long, Assistant Executive Director, stated an announcement was made on May 24, 2022 that the Town of Hildebran was awarded a planning and training grant. We are still waiting to hear on others. Sherry mentioned other municipality applications may need to be tweaked and re-submitted.

Ms. Ashley Bolick, Director of Administrative Services and Human Resources, mentioned the upcoming Mayors/Chairs/Managers Meeting will be held on June 30, 2022 at Mimosa Golf Course. She also mentioned if the Policy Board Delegates would like to be featured in the pre-meeting PowerPoint to please see her after the meeting to pick up a profile sheet.

Ms. Alison Adams, Director of Community and Region Planning, mentioned the North Carolina Foothills Experience web application and logo will be available at the end of June. The web application will focus on recreation, cultural arts, alcohol, and outdoor supplies with hopes of retaining people in our region.

#### Next Meeting

The next Policy Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 26, 2022. Host and location to be announced.

#### Adjournment

Chair Patton adjourned the meeting at 7:21pm.