

Minutes
Western Piedmont Council of Governments
Bimonthly Policy Board Meeting
Tuesday, March 23, 2021
Video/Conference Call Meeting

Members Present:	Local Government/Agency:	In-person/Remote Participation
Bob Floyd, Jr., Chair	Cedar Rock	Remote
Jill Patton, Vice-Chair	Hickory	Remote
Johnny Berry, Secretary	Connelly Springs	Remote
George Holleman, Treasurer	Taylorsville	Remote
Barbara Pennell, Past Chair	Gamewell	Remote
Kitty Barnes, At-Large	Catawba County	Remote
Joseph L. Gibbons, At-Large	Lenoir	Remote
Wayne Abele, At-Large	Burke County	In Person at WPCOG
Larry Yoder	Alexander County	Remote
Johnnie Carswell, Alternate	Burke County	Remote
Mike Labrose	Caldwell County	Remote
Dale Sherrill	Claremont	Remote
Joie Fulbright	Conover	Remote
Kyle Hayman, Alternate	Conover	Remote
Dennis Anthony	Drexel	Remote
Larry Knight, Alternate	Granite Falls	Remote
Ben Honeycutt	Hildebran	Remote
Larry Chapman	Hudson	Remote
Marla Thompson	Long View	Remote
Chris Jernigan	Morganton	Remote
Jerry Hodge	Newton	Remote
Allen Spencer	Rhodiss	In Person at WPCOG
Tommy Luckadoo	Appointed	Remote
Helen Chestnut	Appointed	Remote
Erisha Lipford	Appointed	Remote
Jeanna Price	Appointed	Remote
Malla Vue	Appointed	Remote
Randy Burns	Appointed	Remote
Members Absent:		
James Weaver	Brookford	
Donald Robinson	Catawba	
Sheila Perkins	Glen Alpine	
Ronnie Setzer	Cajah’s Mountain	
Ronnie Williams	Maiden	
Gary McClure	Rutherford College	
Keith Warren	Sawmills	

Chip Black, At-Large
Amparo Alfaro

Valdese
Appointed

Guests/Others Present:

Scott Hildebran, Lenoir, Remote
Donald Duncan, Conover, Remote
Sherri Bradshaw, Drexel, Remote

WPCOG Staff Present:

Anthony Starr, Executive Director, In-person at WPCOG
Sherry Long, Assistant Executive Director, In-person at WPCOG
Ashley Bolick, Director of Administrative Services and Human Resources, In-person at WPCOG
Andrea Roper, Finance Director, In-person at WPCOG
Jason Toney, Communications Specialist, In-person at WPCOG
Stephanie Hanvey, Director of Regional Housing Authority, In-person at WPCOG
Wendy Johnson, Workforce Development Director
Alison Adams, Community & Regional Planning Director
Brianna McCrory, Administrative Assistant

Call to Order/Welcome and Roll Call

A regular meeting of the WPCOG Policy Board was called to order at 6:00 pm by Chair Bob Floyd. Chair Floyd thanked the board for joining the remote meeting. Chair Floyd asked the board clerk for a roll call. The roll call was completed and names recorded for the meeting minutes. Chair Floyd said that he would ask for a motion for all items requiring board approval at the end of the meeting.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting were considered. There were no corrections or questions.

Unfinished Business/Reports

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

EDA Cares Act Grant Story Book Mapping

Ms. Alison Adams, Community and Regional Planning Director, provided an updated to the board on the Storybook Mapping Project. The Storybook Mapping Project is one of three EDA Cares Act grant projects for the WPCOG. The purpose of the project is to highlight the opportunities and places within the region that promote quality of life to help engage and attract new and retain current workforce talent, industry and business in the region. The purpose also aligns with WPCOG CEDS goals.

Industries that are successful look to locate to areas where employees will want to live, work and play. It saves the companies money from the cyclical pattern of hiring, rehiring and training. They are able to attain quality personnel. The quality of life storybook tool will allow businesses/corporations (future and current) to have quick

access to information to attract future employees. This tool quickly and easily provides drone footage of locations of interest across the region in four major categories.

At the November 24, 2020 Policy Board meeting, a demo of the GIS storybook mapping application was shared. The project at that time was in the infancy stages. There are four main areas of focus across Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba counties - recreational experiences, places of interest, agricultural opportunities and gathering spots. Over the course of the last three months there has been an intense focus on the recreational component of the project. Staff met with the Town/City/County Managers and recreational staff throughout the region to obtain feedback and ideas. Staff has taken over 120 hours of drone footage to attach to designated regional locations within the application. We will be reviewing the recreational experiences portion of the storybook map.

The next steps are as follows:

Places of interest (May 2021)

Agriculture (September 2021)

Gathering spots (January 2022)

We will continue to collaborate and engage partners throughout the region in the specific categories to obtain information, receive feedback and ideas, and help market the tool.

A video summary of the recreational opportunities within the region can be found by following the link <https://wpcog.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=1f20817d9aea44f2b069747d62fb61d8>.

Staff requests the Policy Board to provide feedback and guidance. No formal action by the Board is needed at this time.

Unifour HOME Consortium

Ms. Sherry Long, Assistant Executive Director provided an update to the board on the Unifour HOME Consortium. During the year 2021, the Unifour HOME Consortium is celebrating its twenty-fifth year serving the region.

In 1995, local governments in the region began discussing the formation of the Unifour Consortium. In July 1996 the Consortium, with the City of Lenoir as the lead entity, received its first allocation from the Department of Housing on Urban Development. Since then, \$24.7 million of HOME dollars have been brought to the region, leveraging an additional \$395 million. In the past 25 years, the Consortium has provided down-payment assistance to over 3,000 first-time homebuyers and assisted in the development of 1,225 affordable rental units, including 380 for senior housing throughout the region.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development requires the HOME program to leverage a 25 percent match in order to receive funding. In the beginning, the Unifour Consortium's program was designed so that the match was generated from different sources, saving the local governments in the region over \$6 million. Much of the success of the program is due to the City of Lenoir Finance Department. Over the years the City of Lenoir has written over 4,000 checks and completed 25 audits and annual reports for the Consortium. Lenoir Finance Department's ability to be flexible by providing checks to closing attorneys in a timely manner allowed the program to be reliable for homebuyers and lenders for the past 25 years.

As we look toward the next 25 years, the design of the down-payment assistance program is changing – going from \$5,000 per home to investing 20 percent of the purchase price up to \$30,000. Multi-family construction costs continue to rise and will make it challenging to provide affordable rental units. The Unifour Consortium will continue to support Habitat for Humanity chapters in all four counties.

myFutureNC Resolution of Support

Ms. Wendy Johnson, Workforce Development Director, presented a proposed resolution of support for myFutureNC. myFutureNC is a statewide nonprofit organization focused on educational attainment and is the result of cross-sector collaboration between North Carolina leaders in education, business, and government. myFutureNC's mission is to prepare North Carolina for the future by empowering individuals, strengthening communities, and ensuring economic viability in a global economy. myFutureNC is working across sectors and in communities throughout the state to:

- Close gaps in postsecondary attainment.
- Promote alignment between educational programming and business/industry needs.
- Ultimately improve the quality of educational opportunities for all North Carolinians.

On February 20, 2019, myFutureNC unveiled its goal and bold vision for the future of education in the state: “We will work to ensure that by 2030, 2 million North Carolinians have a high-quality credential or postsecondary degree.”

To help facilitate local conversations and decision-making aimed at increasing education levels, myFutureNC has provided data profiles for each of the 100 North Carolina Counties. You can find all county profiles by visiting the website <https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/county-data-and-resources/>. Over 150 organizations have endorsed the goal and work of myFutureNC and they are now hoping to have endorsements from COGs across NC. The WPCOG logo and endorsement will be displayed on the myFutureNC website, along with the list of other endorsers.

Staff requests the Policy Board to endorse myFutureNC and NC's educational attainment goal.

Ms. Jill Patton asked if the myFutureNC information was being shared with local school boards. Ms. Johnson answered yes and indicated that there is a larger conversation at the state, DPI, level with both the local school systems and community colleges.

Workforce Development Board Reappointments

Ms. Wendy Johnson, Workforce Development Director, presented proposed persons to the Policy Board to be reappointed to the Workforce Development Board for another two-year term. The following individuals' terms are expiring and are eligible for reappointment, July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2023.

- Josh McKinney, Vice President, Peoples Bank – All counties
- Phyllis Johnston, VP Human Resources, Catawba Valley Medical Center – Catawba County
- Jim Packer, Director Human Resources, Elite Comfort Systems – Catawba County
- Jason Lingle, Director Innovative Energy Solutions, Blue Ridge Energy – Caldwell County
- Dr. Jamie Conrad, Coordinator of Experiential Learning & Outreach, Lenoir Rhyne University – All counties

- Dr. Tim Sims, Director of Federal Programs, Hickory Public Schools
- Beth Mills, Unit Manager, Vocational Rehabilitation - Regional
- Alan Wood, President & CEO, Burke Development – Burke County
- Felicia Setzer, Regional Operations Director, Division of Workforce Solutions - Regional
- Casey Kinard, President, Burke Fraternal Order of Police – Burke County

Staff requested that the Policy Board re-appoint the ten current Workforce Development Board members for another two year term, July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2023.

Chair Floyd asked for questions. There were none.

Regional Housing Authority Annual Administrative Plan

Ms. Stephanie Hanvey, WPCOG Regional Housing Authority Director, presented proposed updates to the Regional Housing Authority Annual Administrative Plan. 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 the WPCOG Regional Housing Authority is required to prepare and adopt an Annual Administrative Plan (July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022). HUD prescribes a standardized plan format for PHA plans, which provides very brief information relating to the day-to-day operations of the program. These plans provide public information about the way that the PHA's housing programs are operated and afford opportunities for client and public review and input. The public hearing was held at 11:00 am on Monday, March 22, 2021. Upon board approval, the Annual Administrative Plan is due in the Greensboro HUD office no later than April 15, 2021.

Staff requested that the board review the proposed updates and approve the annual plan as presented.

Regional Housing Authority Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Action Plan

Ms. Stephanie Hanvey, WPCOG Regional Housing Authority Director, presented proposed updates to the Regional Housing Authority Family Self-Sufficiency Action Plan. In 2019, the Regional Housing Authority staff updated the complete Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Action Plan. The plan was effective April 1, 2019. Housing authorities are required to send any administrative plan amendments to HUD annually. The proposed amendments are included in the agenda packet for board approval. Staff would like to submit these amendments to HUD with the Annual Administrative Plan amendments. Staff would like these amendments to become effective April 1, 2021.

Chair Floyd ask for questions. There were none.

6th Amendment of the FY 2020-2021 Budget

Ms. Andrea Roper, Finance Director, presented the 6th Amendment of the 2020-2021 Budget reflecting a total budget of \$21,534,980 and an operating budget of \$7,655,091 which represents a decrease of \$19,993 from the February 23, 2021 budget amendment.

The 6th amendment of the 2020-2021 Budget includes:

- Economic Development increased \$8,821 due to an increase in ARC anticipated expenses.
- Regional Public Housing increased \$18,439 due to an added housing position.
- Aging decreased \$21,943 to adjust for the reallocation of CARES Act funding. These funds will be spent directly from the aging pass through funds.
- Compensated Absences increased \$14,904 to better reflect anticipated expenses.

- Contractual increased \$39,668 to cover provider reimbursements for the Aging CARES Act funding.
- Supplies decreased \$66,054 due to the reallocation of Aging CARES Act funding to contractual and aging pass through funds.
- Capital Outlay-Equipment decreased \$10,328 due to the transfer of funds to the Capital Reserve Fund.
- Contingency decreased \$26,385 due to funds being reallocated to other expense lines and to better align with actual costs in the current fiscal year.
- OPEB Trust Allocation decreased \$22,661 due to the increase in compensated absences, retirement and group insurance.
- Transfer to Capital Reserve Fund increased \$70,328 to reflect the \$60,000 transfer approved on February 23rd and the additional \$10,328 from capital outlay.
- Special Revenue Fund – WIOA increased \$9,171 to reflect actual program income.
- Capital Reserve Fund increased \$10,328 to reflect a transfer from the General Fund, capital outlay.
- All other changes to the expenditure lines reflect normal program needs.

Staff requested that the Policy Board review and approve the sixth amendment of the 2020-2021 budget.

There were no questions.

1st Reading of the FY 2021-2022 Budget

Ms. Andrea Roper, Finance Director, presented the 1st Reading of the FY2021-2022 Budget reflecting a total budget of \$19,263,795 and an operating budget of \$6,684,443 which represents a decrease of \$19,993 from the February 23, 2021 budget amendment of approximately 10.5% or \$2,251,192.

Some key parts of the budget are uncertain at this time and that is normal for the first reading. The 1st Reading of the FY2021-22 Budget includes:

- 61 full and part-time staff positions.
- WPCOG dues rate increased by \$.01 per capita plus dues increases for the MPO as approved by the Board in January.
- Financial Administration Services for one local government and one local non-profit.
- Town planning services for 7 local governments.
- Long Range Planning services for 6 local governments.
- Code Enforcement services for 8 local governments.
- Administration of several new community & economic development projects (building reuse, infrastructure, economic development, etc.).
- A group insurance increase (\$45,303) reflecting a projected health insurance increase of 8%. We usually do not receive quotes until early May for FY22 and this number will be adjusted at that time.
- The decrease of \$454,245 in contractual is attributed to the current fiscal year housing rehab and urgent repair projects that were completed. The Burke Transit project contractual expenses are expected to be considerably lower in FY22.
- Supplies decreased \$481,346 mainly due to the reduction in COVID funding for PPE & supplies.
- Advertising/Subscription costs decreased \$25,041 to cover anticipated costs in other expense lines.
- Capital Outlay decreased \$67,634. Excluding transfers to the Capital Reserve Fund, no major equipment purchases are planned at this time.

- Contingency decreased \$154,173 due to those funds being utilized in the FY 21-22 budget.
- OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) Trust Allocation decreased \$64,328 due to the expected increase in retirement and group insurance. This allocation may increase with the availability of funds.
- Aging Special Revenue Funds decreased by \$1,291,366 to reflect the reduction in CARES Act funding. All funds are expected to be used in FY21.
- The proposed budget includes approximately \$89,039 in anticipated contracts for FY22. This amount is \$175,484 lower than the FY21 anticipated contracts amount at this time last year. The unfunded areas at this point are within the Community & Economic Development Department.
- The fund balance allocated is higher due to a change in accounting requirements regarding the use of project funds carried from one fiscal year to the next.

Chair Floyd asked for a single motion for the items requiring board action, the approval of the minutes, approval of the myFutureNC Resolution of Support, Workforce Development Board reappointments, approval of the RHA Annual Administrative Plan, approval of the RHA Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Action Plan, approval of the 6th amendment of the FY 2020-2021 budget, and approval of the 1st Reading of the FY 2021-2022 budget.

Ms. Jill Patton made a motion that the board approve and adopt the minutes from the January 26, 2021 meeting, approve the myFutureNC Resolution of Support, Workforce Development Board reappointments, RHA Annual Administrative Plan, RHA Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Action Plan, 6th amendment of the FY 2020-2021 budget, and 1st Reading of the FY 2021-2022 budget as presented. Mr. Larry Yoder offered a second. A roll call vote was ordered by Chair Floyd.

Larry Yoder	Yes	Bob Floyd	Yes	Jill Patton	Yes
George Holleman	Yes	Barbara Pennell	Yes	Marla Thompson	Yes
Wayne Abele	Yes	Larry Knight, Alt.	Yes	Ronnie Williams	Not Present
Johnny Berry	Yes	Larry Chapman	Yes	Jerry Hodge	Yes
Dennis Anthony	Yes	Joseph L. Gibbons	Yes	Erisha Lipford	Yes
Sheila Perkins	Not Present	Allen Spencer	Yes	Helen Chestnut	Yes
Ben Honeycutt	Yes	Keith Warren	Not Present	Amparo Alfaro	Not Present
Chris Jernigan	Yes	Kitty Barnes	Yes	Tommy Luckadoo	Yes
Gary McClure	Not Present	James Weaver	Not Present	Randy Burns	Yes
John "Chip" Black, Jr.	Not Present	Donald Robinson	Not Present	Jeanna Price	Yes
Mike Labrose	Yes	Dale Sherrill	Yes	Malla Vue	Yes
Ronnie Setzer	Not Present	Joie Fulbright	Yes		

The motion passed.

Staff Updates

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

- 76% of staff have taken their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. While 100% is the preferred participation rate, our rate is much higher than the average. Most of the staff will receive their second vaccine around March 24th. A special thanks to the Catawba County Government & Health Department for coordinating vaccines for WPCOG staff.

- We are considering plans to open the office on April 12th to walk-in foot traffic. This is a tentative plan and has not been announced to the public yet. Public Housing Authority clients will continue to be seen on an appointment only basis.
- Mark your calendars for Thursday, April 22nd for the Virtual WPCOG Annual Meeting at 2pm. WPCOG Annual Meeting "Save-the-Dates" have been mailed to area elected officials, local government staff and partners. More details to come.
- WPCOG continues to assist the Town of Catawba in their search for a new town manager. Interviews will be scheduled for mid-April.
- We previously communicated to you that our HVAC system was experiencing pre-mature failures and replacement costs may exceed \$200,000. In response, the Executive Committee approved the creation of a Capital Reserve Fund. This will allow us to fund the HVAC replacement over three fiscal years, beginning with the current fiscal year.
- The AAA has used all CARES Act funding for Alexander and Catawba Counties and funds for Caldwell and Burke Counties are nearly exhausted. We have stopped any new applications for these funds.
- Community and Economic Development staff are currently administering seventy-seven (77) grants for local governments.
- The NC Department of Commerce funded Two (2) Building Reuse grant applications in February. Burke County received \$500,000 for Ekornes Furniture. The project will create 80 jobs and leverage \$572,600 in private investment. The City of Morganton received \$100,000 for Toner Machining. The project will create 16 jobs and leverage \$593,000 in private investment.
- 160D Land Use Ordinance Updates – Planning Board presentations and drafts have been completed for Catawba, Sawmills, Hildebran, Drexel, Gamewell, Rutherford College, and Cahah's Mountain. Council for Hildebran to review this month.
- 160D draft completed and will be presented this month to Alexander County.
- 160D will be presented this month to Cedar Rock and Claremont. Drafts underway.
- Valdese and Conover Stormwater Management Plans public comment period ended March 1st. Awaiting comments from DEQ.
- Sawmills, Gamewell, Lenoir, Granite Falls, Cahah's Mountain and Hudson stormwater management plans are in public comment period.
- City of Conover ADA Inventory and Transition plan is in public comment period and was slated for adoption March 1, 2021, but meeting was postponed.
- Town of Granite Falls was presented a working draft of their ADA Inventory and Transition plan. The draft is slated to go to the March 29th or April 4th meeting which will begin the public comment period.
- The RHA has approximately 400 families on the waiting list.
- Since the beginning our new program year (July 1, 2020 to January 1, 2021) we have provide 128 scholarships.

Adjournment

Chair Floyd reminded the board of the next meeting board meeting scheduled for May 25, 2021. He adjourned the meeting at 6:46 pm.