

**SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING
March 20, 2019
Commission Office**

Convened: 10:00 A.M.

Adjourned: 11:30 A.M.

Members In Attendance:

Hon. Ted Beam
Mr. Jay Cessna
Mrs. Sharon Clapper
Hon. Paul Crooks
Hon. Barry Dallara
Hon. Bruce Erb
Hon. Josh Lang
Mr. Ricky Leese
Mr. Thomas Luciano

Hon. Rodney McCray
Hon. Mark. Sather
Hon. Jeff Thomas
Hon. Stuart Ulsh
Hon. Gerald Walker
Hon. Scott Walls
Mr. Arthur Wilkin, Jr.
Hon. Mark Wissinger

Others In Attendance:

Mr. Daniel Bowers
Mr. Brandon Carson
Mr. George Gvozdich
Mr. Steven Howsare

Mrs. Trudy Mitchell
Mrs. Debbi Prosser
Ms Deborah Shaffer
Mrs. Susan Whisler

CALL TO ORDER:

Commissioner Erb, President, called the meeting to order at 10:00 A.M.

Prior to the start of business, a moment of silence was observed in memory of Commissioner John Vatauvuk, a long-time active member of SAP&DC's Board of Directors, who passed away January 27, 2019.

Following the moment of silence, Commissioner Erb introduced and welcomed Mr. Thomas Luciano Vice President of Finance and Accounting for Sheetz Corporation, as the newest At-Large member to the SAP&DC Board of Directors. Mr. Luciano thanked members for their support of his nomination and provided members with a brief bio.

MINUTES, January 16, 2019:

A motion was entered by Commissioner Walker to approve the January 16, 2019 Board of Directors' meeting minutes, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Thomas and was unanimously approved.

FINANCE REPORT:

Mr. Daniel Bowers, SAP&DC Director of Finance, presented the Accounts Payable/General Fund Ending Balance, reviewed some of the larger expenses and reported no changes to the information submitted. He also provided a summary of available Commission funds and reported that SAP&DC remains in a good cash position.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Walls to approve the Accounts Payable/General Fund Ending Balance, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wilkin and was unanimously approved.

BUSINESS LENDING SERVICES:

Mrs. Trudy A. Mitchell, Director, Business Lending Services, presented and reviewed the action taken by the Loan Review Committee. The application for Luke Z. & Velma S. Zimmer was approved, as presented. The application is now presented to the Board of Directors for concurrence.

Several SAP&DC Board members mentioned the down turn in the dairy business and the fact that dairy farmers are finding it difficult to stay afloat. Mrs. Mitchell, while admitting this is true, stated that in this situation the applicants are simply "swapping" a lease payment for a mortgage payment and that there has never been a dairy/agriculture loan default.

A motion was entered by Mr. Leese to concur with the action taken by the Loan Review Committee, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wilkin and was unanimously approved.

AUTHORIZATION FOR CREDIT CARD FOR "STEP UP" GRANT PURCHASE:

Mr. Steven Howsare, Executive Director, presented a request for authorization of an additional SAP&DC credit card for Mrs. Deborah Prosser, Director, Business Development Services for expense related to SAP&DC's "Step-Up" grant. This credit card is needed so that purchases can be made for those entrepreneurs who are

ready to move forward with their products but lack the financial capacity to purchase needed supplies. The additional credit card would have a credit line of \$20,000 and will only be utilized for purchases related to the “Step Up” grant.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Beam to authorize the addition of a third SAP&DC credit card to be used only for purchases related to the “Step Up” grant, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wissinger and was unanimously approved.

Mr. Howsare stated that he and Mr. Dan Bowers had recently attended the annual Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA) conference. At the “conference kickoff” SAP&DC was lauded for their successful “Start Up” program.

SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD REPORT:

Mrs. Susan Whisler, SAWDB Director, presented an update of the activities/initiatives related to the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board and the region’s public workforce system. She reported that the Workforce Development Board has been awarded over \$600,000 in funding for various grants.

She reported that the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board (SAWDB) received \$221,841 for the State Local Internship Program (SLIP). This funding will support internships for 50 college students. She reminded members of the \$40,000 Teacher in the Workplace Grant awarded to Tyrone Area School last year and announced that the PA Department of Labor and Industry released a notice for a second round of funding. Three applications totaling \$150,000 were submitted from the Southern Alleghenies, these include Altoona Area School District, Somerset County school districts and Tyrone Area School District. Mrs. Whisler will keep members informed once the funding announcement is made. She further reported that the SAWDB was recently notified that it has received full funding for its Business Education Partnership Grant (\$108,813) and Economic Transition National Dislocated Worker Grant (\$262,844).

Mrs. Whisler also announced that the Blair County CareerLink is moving from its current location to inside the Altoona Public Library. This created a “win-win” situation by being more centrally located allowing clients easier access and providing some financial support for the Altoona Public Library.

DCNR C22 RESOLUTION – GREENWAYS MINI-GRANTS PROGRAM, ROUND 6:

Mr. Brandon Carson, Director, PC&D Division, reported that SAP&DC is requesting DCNR funding for a sixth round of the Greenways Mini-Grants Program that was original launched in 2012-2013. As in the past, the program will advance the priorities identified in the Southern Alleghenies Regional Greenways and Open Space Network Plan as well as the Southern Alleghenies Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. SAP&DC plans to request \$200,000 from DCNR for this round and hopes to award funding to a minimum of four projects in the region. This program has become extremely popular and SAP&DC receives more applications each year.

The DCNR application package requires a Resolution as part of the submission which is presented for approval.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Crooks to approve a resolution authorizing submission of an application to DCNR for Round Six of the Greenways Mini-Grants program, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ulsh and was unanimously approved.

BREEZEWOOD FREIGHT SAFETY STUDY AND HUNTINGDON REAL AUTHORITY ECONOMIC SURVEY:

Mr. Carson reported that ensuring the safety, efficiency and usability of the freight system is a priority of the Southern Alleghenies Rural Planning Organization (RPO) and its 2041 Long Rang Transportation Plan. Bedford and Fulton County residents, emergency responders, business owners and elected officials have indicated that illegal truck turnarounds have become detrimental to the safety of the travelling public on US Route 30 between Breezewood and State Route 915 in Fulton County.

A local taskforce of representatives from PennDOT, the RPO, elected officials and emergency responders suggested a study is warranted to determine the root causes of the illegal turnarounds. The Southern Alleghenies RPO is requesting to utilize Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) funds to conduct the transportation study. The estimated cost for the study will be approximately \$50,000 and is within PennDOT's guidelines regarding expending UPWP funds and SAP&DC has the funding available.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Dallara to authorize the use of Unified Planning Work Program funds to conduct the transportation Breezewood Freight Safety Study, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCray and was unanimously approved.

Along with ensuring the safety, efficiency and usability of the of the freight system the Plan seeks to promote the economic vitality of the Southern Alleghenies Region by developing a reliable and resilient multimodal transportation network. To that end, the Huntingdon County Rail Authority is in the planning phase of reconstructing a rail spur to provide access to several commercial properties along Fairgrounds Road in Smithfield Township. To assist in this effort, the Southern Alleghenies RPO is requesting authorization to use UPWP funds to conduct a transportation study to determine the economic feasibility of the Huntingdon County Rail Authority's intent to purchase a currently closed spur of track in Huntingdon Borough and Smithfield Township.

The Southern Alleghenies RPO requested that the Rail Authority provide three quotes for the study. After soliciting several sources for the quote, the Rail Authority received only one respondent. The cost of \$8,790 falls under Pennsylvania's Simplified Acquisition Threshold of \$10,000 and the Rail Authority will provide justification to use this consultant. This survey/study and investigation is within PennDOT's guidelines regarding expending UPWP funds for transportation planning activities and SAP&DC has the funding available.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Dallara to authorize the use of Unified Planning Work Program funds to conduct the survey/study investigation to determine the economic feasibility of the Huntingdon County Rail Authority's intent to purchase a currently closed spur of track in Huntingdon Borough and Smithfield Township. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Thomas and was unanimously approved.

REGIONAL BROADBAND STUDY-APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION (ARC) POWER REQUEST:

Mr. Carson informed members that broadband was identified as a priority in the recently completed regional comprehensive plan. To begin addressing the issue, a task force was formed to focus on the challenges that the region faces regarding inadequate broadband service. Committee members were identified last summer, and the task force began meeting in August 2018. It has become evident that a regional needs assessment/feasibility

study is required prior to advancing implementation projects for consideration by our funding partners at the state and federal levels.

ARC is currently accepting proposals for consideration under the POWER Program a congressionally funded initiative that will target \$45M in federal funding to assist communities that have been negatively impacted by the downturn in the coal industry. Of the \$45M, \$15M will be used to fund broadband related studies and implementation projects.

SAP&DC is positioned to pursue a technical assistance grant through the POWER Program and is ready to move forward with the development of a proposal to request \$50,000 from ARC, but the funding will need to be matched with \$50,000 in local funds from participating counties. SAP&DC was approached by Westmoreland and Fayette Counties to gauge interest in partnering with our six counties to investigate the broadband needs in their respective area. With the potential of eight counties participating in the study, the match required from each entity would be \$6,250. These funds could be budgeted for use in early 2020. The deadline for submitting POWER proposals is April 10th.

A brief discussion was held regarding the issues and challenges of bringing broadband to our rural areas. Also mentioned was the possibility of a vertical asset study that could be funded through the Economic Development Administration (EDA).

A motion was entered by Commissioner Thomas to authorize moving forward with submission of a proposal to ARC under the POWER Program for funding of a broadband related study, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lang and was unanimously approved.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROJECTS:

Mr. Brandon Carson explained that SAP&DC is designated by the Federal Office of Management and Budget (under E.O. 12372) to review requests for Federal financial assistance within its six-county service area for concurrence with relevant regional planning documents. Two projects requesting federal financial assistance were presented as consistent with the Commission's overall Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

A motion was entered by Mrs. Clapper to approve the Projects Under Executive Order 12372, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Crooks and was unanimously approved

REGIONAL BIRTH CENTER:

Mr. Donald Schwartz, Director, Bedford County Planning Commission along with Ms Eva Clark, RN, MA in Nursing Administration and Ms Sherri Peeler, Certified Labor and Postpartum Doula/Certified Child Birth Educator, presented detailed information and began a discussion on the possibility of the formation of a birth center to serve the region due to the closing of UPMC's Bedford Memorial Hospital's maternity unit.

Lengthy discussion was held regarding the creation and use of birthing centers. Mr. Schwartz explained that at this time, decisions on location and other factors are in the distant future. The emphasis now is on forming a committee to consider all aspects for development of a birth center including, further data analyses, the possibility of a birth center being utilized as a potential nurse training facility and support for a feasibility study. He then asked that, if members knew of anyone who would be interested in serving on such a committee, to contact Mr. Brandon Carson of SAP&DC who will forward that information to the proper individuals.

OTHER BUSINESS & INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

Mrs. Sharon Clapper expressed her thanks and gratitude to Mrs. Whisler and her staff for the outstanding work they do for the citizens of the Southern Alleghenies region in securing financial assistance to ensure that students and dislocated workers receive training that will help to secure family sustaining employment in the region.

Mr. Steven Howsare, Executive Director, reminded members that the next SAP&DC Board of Directors meeting will be held Wednesday, May15, 2019. Prior to the Board of Directors meeting, a Finance Committee will be held beginning at 9:00 AM to review and discuss the SAP&DC 2019-2020 Operating Budget.

Mr. Howsare also told members that SAP&DC's office building lease will expire September 30, 2020. He, Mr. Wilkin and Mr. Bowers are working on negotiations with the current building's owner while looking for possible other office space. Mr. Howsare will keep members informed, as the process moves forward.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Josh Lang

Secretary