

**MINUTES
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
UPPER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
430 HELIX ROAD
GREENWOOD, SOUTH CAROLINA
OCTOBER 27, 2025**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jackie Brown, Matthew Brownlee, John Calhoun, Jeff Carroll, Jim Coleman, Frank Daniel, Ken Durham, Qwen Etheredge, Charles Goodwin, Tiffani Ireland, Shirley Jenkins, Charles Jennings, Sen. Floyd Nicholson, David Sawyer, Ernie Segars, Brandon Smith, Roy Smith Jr., Don Smoak, Albert Talbert, Faye Thomas, and Anita Williams.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Otis Grier Jr., Charlie Henry, Justin Lane, Theo Lane, Sen. Shane Massey, Miliken Matthews, Wes McAllister, Marian Miller, Matthew Miller, Willie Norman, and Sen. Danny Verdin.

STAFF PRESENT: Patricia Hartung, Sam Leaman, Sandra Moore, Melissa Phillips, Rick Green, Peggy Merritt, Langley Richardson, and David Hays.

GUESTS PRESENT: Tyke Redfearn, SCDOT Program Manager; Clint Scoville, SCDOT Project Manager; Mike Hannah, District Two Construction Engineer, SCDOT; Nick Rebovich, District Two Traffic Engineer, SCDOT; Scott Neely, Dominion Energy; Myranda Butler, Saluda Town Council; Ryan Syrbe, Office of U.S. Senator Tim Scott

Call to Order	The meeting was held in person with the option to attend via Zoom. Frank Daniel gave the invocation and Chairman Charles Jennings called the meeting to order. Jennings introduced Laurens County Board member Jeff Carroll, who was attending his first meeting in person. The minutes from the August 25, 2025, meeting were approved unanimously upon motion by Shirley Jenkins, seconded by Jackie Brown.
Guest Presentation: S.C. Department of Transportation	SCDOT Program Manager Tyke Redfearn and SCDOT Project Manager Clint Scoville gave update on Upper Savannah Regional Mobility Program ongoing projects which are federally funded with SCDOT Rural Guidesshare dollars. Redfearn said the traffic study has been completed on the US 25 and Shortcut Road intersection project in Edgefield County near Fox Creek High School and that a public meeting will be held in early 2026. DOT is recommending a new signalized intersection with dedicated turning lanes. Right of way acquisition is scheduled for spring 2026 with construction beginning spring 2027. Scovill said the traffic study has been completed on the US 25 Bypass and Sweetwater Road intersection project in Greenwood County. A new signal and turning lanes have been recommended, he said. Right of way acquisition is scheduled for mid-2026 with construction in mid-2027. Scovill said the traffic study has also been completed on the SC 101 and SC 14 intersection project in Laurens County in the Town of Gray Court. DOT is recommending reconfiguration of the intersection and signal upgrades. Right of way acquisition is scheduled for fall 2026 with construction beginning in fall 2027.

	Redfearn also updated the Board on new intersection projects, including Augusta Road and Bauskett Street just south of the Town of Edgefield. It is a skewed intersection in a commercial area. He said a traffic study is underway to determine alternatives. Right of way acquisition is scheduled for early 2027 with construction beginning in early 2028. A traffic study is underway to determine alternatives for the Lee and Edisto streets intersection in the Town of Johnston. Located near the Triangle Restaurant, the skewed intersection has five points. Right of way acquisition is scheduled for mid-2027 with construction beginning mid-2028. A traffic study is also underway at the West Cambridge Avenue and Mathis Road intersection near Greenwood Country Club in the City of Greenwood. The intersection is adjacent to a multi-use path. Right of way acquisition is scheduled for mid-2027 with construction beginning in mid-2028. Redfearn said preliminary engineering is underway to replace the bridge on Charleston Road West over Long Cane Creek in McCormick County west of the Town of Troy. The bridge is currently closed. The bridge replacement will be funded by SCDOT's Bridge Program. Right of way acquisition is scheduled for mid-2026 with construction beginning in early 2027. Anita Williams said the intersection of Bell Street and Carolina Avenue and adjacent Main Street and railroad track crossing in the City of Clinton has safety issues with several accidents. She said there needs to be a traffic study, suggesting the need for a signal. Redfearn made several suggestions on how to initiate a project, including contacting SCDOT and Rick Green at USCOG.
Transportation: SCDOT Performance Measures 2022- 2026 Safety Performance Targets	Government Services Director Rick Green said the SCDOT Performance Safety Targets document requires annual approval by the Board. Federal legislation requires that each state come up with its own performance measures and safety standards that must be approved by COGs and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). Green pointed out that fatal vehicle accidents and serious injuries are down this year in the Region and state-wide. He noted that Laurens County has the most fatalities but also likely has the most traffic due to having two interstates. Jim Coleman made a motion to approve the SCDOT Performance Safety Targets document, seconded by Floyd Nicholson. The document was approved unanimously. Green updated the Board on the SCDOT Public Transit Application Rankings, which were announced at the August Board meeting. Transit providers annually apply for van replacement funds and Upper Savannah staff ranks their requests. Green said McCormick Senior Center was ranked first since it provides transit for the public and serves a secondary county (Greenwood) with McCormick Area Transit (MAT Trans). However, the SCDOT Commission requested that McCormick be removed from the number one ranking since McCormick has been awarded funds but has not been providing the required matching funds. Therefore, Piedmont Agency on Aging and Burton Center were moved to first and second, respectively, and will be awarded funding for vans. McCormick has been moved to a waiting list.
Comprehensive Economic	Green requested approval of the Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) annual update which is necessary to make the region eligible for Economic

Development Strategy (CEDS) Annual Update	Development Administration (EDA) funding. Upper Savannah COG is working with Laurens County Water & Sewer Authority (water system improvements) and Piedmont Technical College (new Health Sciences building) on active EDA grants, has submitted a grant application on behalf of Edgefield County Water & Sewer Authority, and expects to apply for another Laurens County Water and Sewer project. Albert Talbert made a motion to approve the CEDS, seconded by Nicholson. The CEDS was approved unanimously. Green announced that the consultants from Montana State University's Western Transportation Institute, who are creating a public transit feasibility study for Abbeville, Laurens and Saluda counties, have asked for more time beyond the original October 2025 deadline. Green said he expects the consultants to report to the Board about the study in February 2026. Abbeville, Laurens and Saluda counties do not have access to public transit.
Aging Program Update	Director of Aging Programs Peggy Merritt updated the Board on current Aging activities. Merritt said that when she spoke to the Board in April, there was uncertainty about federal funding. She said federal funding arrived near the end of the fiscal year. Merritt thanked the congressional delegation for making sure the Upper Savannah Area Agency on Aging (AAA) received funding and also thanked the state legislative delegation for providing additional state funding. Merritt provided a spiral bound document which includes information about each service that the AAA provides, a description of each service, and contact information for each program. She said the document is handed out at all Aging outreach events. Merritt discussed the Area Plan Update which she will be sending to the S.C. Department on Aging this week. The Area Plan was written in 2022 and recently updated for FY2024 and FY2025 as required by SCDOA. She said there are problems with the way the original Plan was written both regional and state-wide, with goals to increase the number of clients or the amount spent on clients by five percent each year. She said these goals are based strictly on available funding. Merritt said she hoped the Plan in the future can focus on how spending money on services needed to age in place saves money compared with facility care. Merritt said the needs assessment survey is used to help write the Area Plan but was based on the responses of only 370 seniors for all six Upper Savannah Region counties. The goal for the upcoming needs assessment survey is to cast a broader net in the communities, not only surveying current clients but all seniors to decide on areas of focus. Tomorrow, the AAA is meeting with the SC Office of Rural Health as well as partners and providers to discuss ways to improve the needs assessment survey. Merritt said seniors must contact the AAA to request services. Upper Savannah's Reach the Region initiative has increased visibility in the community and helped the AAA exceed many target goals in the Area Plan. Information and Referral Assistance (Community Resource Specialist) increased from 12 outreach events in FY 2022 to 51 in '25. There were only 50 State Health Insurance Program (SHIP) group outreach contacts in '23 when Upper Savannah hired new SHIP specialist Christie Stroud. Those numbers increased to 2,026 contacts in '25. Family Caregiver Program outreach events increased from 11 in '22, dropped down to three in '23 and when Upper Savannah hired new

Family Caregiver Advocate Ariell Bowick, it increased outreach to 43 events in '25.

The Community Resource Specialist's goal was to increase contacts by five percent per year. While FY '23 and '24 saw great increases, there was a decrease in contacts in FY '25 even though target goals were exceeded. Merritt said the decrease was likely due to seniors finding out that they would be put on waiting lists due to funding limitations back in the spring. In addition to regular outreach goals, the Aging team began visiting senior centers each month (each county receives two visits per year). The team gives presentations, does on-site assessments, and provides an activity.

This next portion of met goals are based on spending, she said. While these goals were met, the AAA had American Rescue Plan funding which provided additional money. The AAA increased Seniors Raising Children funding by five percent, assisting with the purchase of clothing and school supplies, after school care, tutoring, etc. The Family Caregiver Advocate recently partnered with a counseling service so that the AAA can provide individual and family counseling to the seniors and the children in these families.

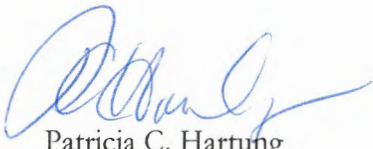
The AAA has increased Home Care services spending by five percent annually. This service is important as it allows seniors to age in place receiving light housekeeping services and personal care to assist with bathing. Minor Home Repair spending has also increased by five percent annually. The program provides home modifications including ramps, grab bars, steps, railings, etc., to increase seniors ability to age in place.

The AAA almost doubled its quarterly "Friendly visits" to nursing homes and assisted living facilities in the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, way above the five percent target goal increase. Upper Savannah also began a Volunteer Ombudsman Program, moving from zero volunteers in 2022 to 10 in FY '25. These goals are directly attributable to the DDSN Ombudsman/Volunteer Coordinator position Ashley Capps who arrived in 2023. Merritt said that nationwide, 60 percent of seniors in facilities receive no visitors each year. Volunteers make friendly visits, enabling the Regional Ombudsman to focus on complaints and investigations. The Volunteer Ombudsmen go through extensive training, background checks and conflict of interest review. The DDSN (disabilities and special needs) Ombudsman makes friendly visits to DDSN facilities, and investigates abuse and neglect in these facilities which is a difficult job since some of these clients are non-verbal, have intellectual disabilities, etc.

The AAA fell short in target goals to increase assessments, Family Caregiver Support clients, and transportation clients by five percent each year. Assessment goals fell short due to staff turnover in the assessment program. It is a tough job and not for everyone, Merritt said. The Upper Savannah region is rural, so assessors spend a lot of time on the road, face bedbugs and other pests, and it is emotionally draining seeing some of the conditions in which seniors live. Also, a new assessment tool was introduced by the State last year, so there was a steep learning curve and more documentation requirements, increasing the assessor's workload. Funding uncertainty resulted in the inability to fill one open assessor position. The loss of ARP funding and federal uncertainty resulted in a decrease in Family Caregiver services in FY '25. A lack of drivers and the capacity of providers led to an initial drop in transportation for clients. Also, federal funding uncertainty didn't allow for removing transportation clients from the wait list in FY '25, she said.

	Tiffani Ireland asked about Edgefield County representation on the Aging Advisory Committee. Merritt said Edgefield County has two vacancies on the Committee, while Abbeville and McCormick counties each have one vacancy, and there is a vacancy for a Regional member.
EDA Conflict of Interest Regulations for RLF Recipients	Leaman presented the EDA Conflict of Interest Regulations with Special Rules for RLF Recipients. Conflict of interest avoidance is a point of emphasis for EDA in all its programs. Part of the updated RLF Plan requires the Board to review these regulations annually. Reading from the regulations, he said, “in all dealings with the board, loan review committee and staff must avoid dealings that could create a conflict of interest. Those include an interested party (an employee or member of the board of directors or other governing board of the Recipient) receiving direct or indirect financial or personal benefits from the award of Investment Assistance or an RLF grant.” Leaman provided the Board with the specific excerpt from the Conflict of Interest section of the RLF Plan. Leaman said the Annual County Investment Reports will be mailed out.
Board Member Updates	The floor was opened to Board members to report on items of interest from their communities. Jeff Carroll said Laurens County has hired a new County Administrator Jerre Threatt who will begin his duties Nov. 3. He said the County is nearing completion of its historic Courthouse restoration. The County has also completed its new Agriculture and Business Center. Ireland offered an invitation to Sara’s Farm Adventure in Trenton, which features pumpkins, wagon rides, etc., and will have a Christmas light show Santa’s Southern Lights (Nov. 20 through Jan. 3). She said there were 6,000 visitors to Sara’s Farm Adventure on Saturday. Myranda Butler of Saluda Town Council offered an invitation to a free grant writing workshop at Progressive Church at 347 Bouknight Ferry Road in Saluda Nov. 8 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. She said the workshop is for anyone who can benefit from learning about grants. Butler is hosting the workshop. The speaker will be Mary Louise Resch, who works for the S.C. Office of Resilience and has more than 20 years of grant writing experience. Charles Goodwin said Abbeville County is in the process of renovating its Courthouse. Anita Williams offered an invitation to the Clinton Community Garden Tuesday evening from 5-7 p.m. for food, live music and prizes, and to the Trunk or Treat in downtown Clinton on Halloween evening. Jim Coleman said Laurens County is proud of the Presbyterian College football team whose record is 7-1. Floyd Nicholson announced that the United Way of the Lakelands serves Greenwood, Abbeville, McCormick and Saluda counties. Nicholson said he is the campaign chair for this year’s fund drive and would like to come before Abbeville, McCormick and Saluda county councils to explain services provided by the United Way and generate some

	funding from those counties.
Executive Director's Report	Executive Director Patricia C. Hartung asked Board members to check with USCOG Office Manager Sandra Moore if they haven't received hotel confirmation information for the S.C. Councils of Government Annual Training Conference Nov. 23-25 at Kingston Plantation in Myrtle Beach. The conference theme is Leading with Intention, Defining our Role and Impact. She also asked board members who can remain after the board meeting concludes to stay for about fifteen more minutes for an important presentation by Civitas, a firm hired by the SC Dept. of Commerce to update their 5-year plan. The plan requires input from local communities.
Adjourn	Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.



Patricia C. Hartung
Executive Director