

**MINUTES**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**  
**UPPER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**  
**DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**  
**430 HELIX ROAD**  
**GREENWOOD, SOUTH CAROLINA**  
**JUNE 22, 2026**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Matthew Brownlee, John Calhoun, Jeffrey Carroll, Jim Coleman, Frank Daniel, Ken Durham, Qwen Etheredge, Charles Goodwin, Tiffani Ireland, Shirley Jenkins, Charles Jennings, Theo Lane, Wes McAllister, Marian Miller, Willie Norman, Dayne Pruitt, Ernie Segars, Brandon Smith, Roy Smith Jr., Albert Talbert, Faye Thomas, and Anita Williams.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Johanna Bishop, Jackie Brown, Otis Grier Jr., Charlie Henry, Justin Lane, Sen. Shane Massey, Miliken Mathews, Matthew Miller, Sen. Floyd Nicholson, David Sawyer, Don Smoak, Sen. Danny Verdin.

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

GUESTS PRESENT: Connie Munn, Executive Director, S.C. Department on Aging; Lily Cogdill, Program Coordinator, S.C. Department on Aging; Susan Thomason, Outreach Director; Office of U.S. Rep. Sheri Biggs; Ryan Syrbe, Field Representative, Office of U.S. Senator Tim Scott; Scott Neely, Local Affairs Manager, Dominion Energy; Tyke Redfearn, SCDOT Program Manager; Clint Scoville, SCDOT Project Manager; and Amy Hearing, Assistant Program Manager, SCDOT; Libby Redd, S.C. Human Affairs Commission.

<b>Call to Order</b>	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. The minutes from the April 27, 2026, meeting were approved unanimously.
<b>Guest Presentation: SC Department on Aging – An Update from the Director</b>	<p>S.C. Department on Aging (DOA) Executive Director Connie Munn gave overview of the state’s Aging program. She expressed appreciation for Upper Savannah’s Area Agency on Aging (AAA) staff and recognized the strong work being done throughout the Upper Savannah Region.</p> <p>Munn discussed the growing importance of Aging services, noting that by 2035 older adults are expected to outnumber children in the United States for the first time in history. She emphasized that older adults have diverse needs across age groups from 60 to 100-plus and that many wish to remain active, continue working, and then age in place rather than enter institutional care.</p> <p>Munn explained the structure of South Carolina's aging network, describing how funding flows from the federal government through the Older Americans Act to the South Carolina Department on Aging and then to the state's 10 Area Agencies on Aging, many of which operate within Councils of Governments. She noted that approximately 95 percent of federal aging funds are distributed to local agencies, with the majority supporting direct services for older adults. Munn stated that the Department continues to advocate annually for additional state funding to leverage federal dollars and expand</p>

	<p>services such as home-delivered meals, transportation, in-home care, and other home and community-based services. She explained that supporting a senior at home is significantly less expensive than nursing home care and often leads to better quality-of-life outcomes.</p> <p>Munn also highlighted the Ombudsman Program and Friendly Visitor Program, which provide advocacy and social support for residents in long-term care facilities. She noted that the Department has requested additional funding to strengthen these efforts and ensure vulnerable older adults have someone looking out for their interests.</p> <p>Special recognition was given to the Upper Savannah AAA staff for its performance. Munn reported that the agency has consistently met its monthly goal of 160 client assessments, which are required before services can be provided. She said that Upper Savannah ranks fifth statewide in information and referral contacts, recording 2,603 contacts as of April 30, representing a 45 percent increase from the previous year. Munn commended the staff for helping connect residents with needed community resources and services.</p> <p>Munn emphasized the importance of transportation services, particularly for medical appointments such as dialysis treatments. She also highlighted the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), which assists Medicare beneficiaries in evaluating coverage options and making informed decisions during open enrollment.</p> <p>Munn gave updates on several statewide initiatives, including a falls-prevention program that uses occupational therapists to assess homes and recommend safety modifications, and the expansion of Community Care Specialists who provide dementia-related support and caregiver education across all regions of the state. She also shared information about Trualta, a free caregiver resource platform, and encouraged community members to utilize available online resources.</p> <p>Munn thanked Upper Savannah’s leadership and staff for their partnership and dedication to helping older adults remain healthy, independent, and engaged in their communities.</p>
<p><b>Staff Reports: Transportation</b></p>	<p>Government Services Director Rick Green gave an overview of the S.C. Department of Transportation Modernization Act, signed into law on May 18, 2026, and the significant changes it will bring to transportation programs and governance across the state.</p> <p>Green said the DOT Commission will be eliminated effective Jan. 1, 2027, and that the Secretary of Transportation will become a cabinet-level position appointed by the new governor. While many implementation details remain under development, Green explained that the legislation is expected to bring significant changes to transportation planning and administration throughout the state.</p> <p>Green also reviewed changes affecting County Transportation Committees (CTCs), including new requirements for committee membership, public transparency, meeting procedures, and the development of four-year transportation plans. Counties currently using county councils as their CTCs will need to establish separate committees to comply with the new law.</p>

	<p>Green said that the legislation establishes a statewide pothole management program that will include additional staffing and a public reporting app intended to improve response times for fixing potholes.</p> <p>Green provided several regional transportation updates, including the retirement of District Engineering Administrator Kevin McLaughlin and the appointment of Dusty Turner as his replacement. He also shared information regarding recent census population estimates, transportation grant awards received by local providers Burton Center, Piedmont Agency on Aging and McCormick Area Transit (MAT), and the SCDOT Pavement Improvement Program, which identifies road resurfacing projects scheduled to begin in 2027.</p> <p>Green reported on recent transportation-related legislation affecting bicyclists, noting that South Carolina has adopted the “Palmetto Stop,” allowing bicyclists to treat stop signs as yield signs and proceed through traffic signals when safe to do so. South Carolina is the first state on the East Coast to adopt this law.</p> <p>He also discussed the required update to the region's Long-Range Transportation Plan and highlighted several proposed projects that may be advanced as funding opportunities become available. Specific discussion included improvements at Murrah Road and Springhaven Drive in Edgefield County and also in Fountain Inn in Laurens County.</p> <p>Green informed the Board that SCDOT has proposed delaying right-of-way acquisition and construction timelines for the Highway 101 and Highway 14 intersection project in Gray Court to FY 27 and FY 28 respectively. The project, originally selected around 2020-21, remains in the planning stages, and additional information will be provided as it becomes available. Green said that many details surrounding DOT modernization legislation are still emerging and that staff will continue monitoring developments and sharing updates with the Board as additional guidance becomes available.</p>
<p><b>FY 2027 Budget</b></p>	<p>Assistant Director Sam Leaman presented Upper Savannah’s FY 2027 budget and gave update on the Annual Resolution on Select Operating Policies.</p> <p>Leaman said the combined operating and pass-through budget is up 5.3 percent, primarily due to funding increases across most programs. The operating budget has increased 3.5 percent.</p> <p>Legislators have proposed an increase of \$31,517 in State Aid recurring funding. Statewide that increase was \$443,747 with all 10 COGs receiving an increase based on the formula. However, the state budget has not been passed yet. County participation dues are up 2.1% due to population growth across the region. Another increase is the addition of the three-year EDA planning grant of which \$70,000 will be available in this fiscal year.</p> <p>The Revolving Loan Fund program shows a \$30,000 decrease in revenue as several loans have been paid off early in the last two years and some are in default, therefore the revenue decreases. Upper Savannah has a new SC Energy Office grant that will provide funding for the purchase of an electric vehicle and installation of new charging stations. Workforce funding has increased after many years of reductions. The Aging program</p>

	<p>funding is up and more stable than it was a year ago even though the COG shows a decrease in revenue of 3.2 percent. At the end of the year this number may be higher than what has been budgeted.</p> <p>Significant expense items include salary and fringe, which is 62 percent of the operating budget. USCOG is allocating more funds to audit fees because with the change in Finance Director, Upper Savannah may have the auditor perform some duties that were previously completed in-house. Services rendered have increased \$17,000 due to contracts needed to assist in the accounting transition and legal fees in the loan program.</p> <p>Maintenance and service agreements will increase 32 percent because of a plan to purchase an AI assisted, cloud-based solution for accounting workflow and electronic document storage. Furniture, fixtures and equipment will increase due to the purchase of an electric vehicle using the SC Energy Grant and installation of at least two chargers.</p> <p>Workforce direct services have decreased because the workforce division has re-configured how services are delivered, which eliminated the need for fixed-based rental space and accompanying costs including utilities, telephone, internet, and janitorial. Aging direct services are budgeted lower not because the AAA intends to serve less but because this is the funding available in the allotted time frame. As new funds come in mid-year, USCOG will earmark those for services and this number will likely be higher by the end of the year.</p> <p>Pass-through revenue and expenses are up 7.6 percent this year. Eckerd Connects is the provider for workforce services and Edgefield Senior Citizens Council, McCormick County Council on Aging and Piedmont Area Agency on Aging have the primary contracts for Aging services.</p> <p>The budget was recommended by the Executive Committee and was approved unanimously by the Board.</p> <p>Leaman presented the FY 2027 Annual Resolution on Select Operating Policies. The resolution proposed a reimbursement rate for the use of personal vehicles at 72 cents per mile, 36 cents if a council car is available but employee chooses not to use it. No more changes were proposed from last year's resolution.</p> <p>After having been approved by the Executive Committee, the resolution was approved by the Board unanimously.</p>
<p><b>Nominating Committee Report</b></p>	<p>Jim Coleman presented the Nominating Committee's recommendation for COG officers for the July 1, 2026, to June 30, 2028 term. The Committee includes Chairman Floyd Nicholson who was not present at the meeting, Wes McAllister and Albert Talbert. The Committee recommended Frank Daniel of Saluda County as chairman, City of Greenwood Mayor Brandon Smith as vice chairman, and Patricia Hartung as Secretary-Treasurer. The Board unanimously passed the recommendations.</p>
<p><b>Changing of the Gavel</b></p>	<p>Charles Jennings "passed the gavel" to new chairman Frank Daniel. Jennings thanked the Board for allowing him to serve as chairman and Board members expressed their appreciation for his service. Daniel presented Jennings a plaque to honor him for his service as chairman.</p>

<p><b>Board Member Updates</b></p>	<p>The floor was opened to Board members to report on items of interest from their communities.</p> <p>Tiffani Ireland said that Edgefield County Recreation Department's summer camps are growing and full of participants. She said Edgefield is one of six counties in the state attempting to pass a zoning ordinance concerning data centers. A second reading and public hearing are upcoming. The purpose of the ordinance is to neither invite nor turn down potential data centers but to dictate where they can locate and what duties they can perform, she said.</p> <p>Ernie Segars said Laurens County is celebrating Carolina Day on Sunday, June 28. The community-wide event commemorates the County's role in the American Revolution, featuring a patriotic church service and the unveiling of a new Laurens County Museum exhibit.</p> <p>Dayne Pruitt said the Town of Ninety Six will have its annual Festival of Stars this Friday and Saturday, featuring food, music and other festivities as well as fireworks.</p> <p>Brandon Smith said the Festival of Flowers continues in the City of Greenwood for the rest of June, including its unique topiaries. The Festival of Discovery barbecue and blues festival begins the weekend after July 4<sup>th</sup>, with Smith's band being among the live music performers.</p> <p>Frank Daniel said Saluda County held a grand opening ceremony for its new EMS building last month.</p> <p>Charles Jennings said Faye Thomas is on the ballot for Mayor of the City of Abbeville, with the election on July 14. He said a lightning strike recently caused fire damage to McCormick High School (the gym) and expressed gratitude that the incident occurred at night when no children or staff were at the school. Also, McCormick County has added a new ambulance to its emergency services fleet, he said.</p>
<p><b>Executive Director's Report</b></p>	<p>Executive Director Patricia C. Hartung said the annual SC COG Training Conference will be Nov. 22-24 at Kingston Plantation in Myrtle Beach. Waccamaw Council of Governments is responsible for the event. No theme has been identified yet. But Waccamaw COG has produced a video which Hartung showed to Board members. The video hints at topics for the conference, including artificial intelligence, resolving conflicts and building coalitions with other governing bodies, agencies and private sector.</p>
<p><b>Adjourn</b></p>	<p>Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.</p>

Patricia C. Hartung  
Executive Director