

**MINUTES
 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
 UPPER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
 DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
 430 HELIX ROAD
 GREENWOOD, SOUTH CAROLINA
 MONDAY, August 23, 2021**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Buddy Agan, Jackie Brown, John Calhoun, Jim Coleman, Scott Cooper, Ken Durham, Otis Grier Jr., Shirley Jenkins, Charles Jennings, Miliken Matthews, Marian Miller, Floyd Nicholson, Willie Neal Norman, Rep. Anne Parks, David Sawyer, Ernie Segars, Brandon Smith, Don Smoak, Jerry Strawbridge, Albert Talbert, Faye Thomas, David Tribble

MEMBERS ABSENT: Diane Anderson, John Carter, Edith Childs, Charlie Henry, Amelia Herlong, Theo Lane, Sen. Shane Massey, Wes McAllister, Matthew Miller, Roy Smith Jr., Melissa Spencer, and Sen. Danny Verdin.

STAFF PRESENT: Patricia Hartung, Sam Leaman, Ann Skinner, Rick Green, Melissa Phillips, Keith Smith, Sandra Moore, David Hays, Linda McAllister

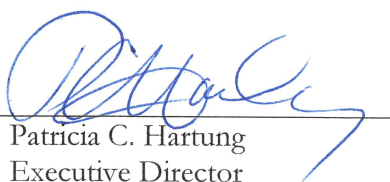
GUESTS PRESENT: William "Tyke" Redfearn, SCDOT

Call to Order	<p>Meeting was held in person with the option to attend via conference call. David Sawyer gave the invocation. Chairman Willie Neal Norman called the meeting to order.</p> <p>The June 28, 2021, minutes were approved unanimously.</p> <p>Norman recognized David Tribble, a former Board member and Chairman who has returned to the Board representing Laurens County.</p>
Transportation	<p>Government Services Director Rick Green updated the Board on public transit, the Whelon Road situation in Laurens County, a plan for a regional transportation meeting, and Census 2020 early returns.</p> <p>Green said public transit for medical, pharmacy and essential shopping began July 1, 2021, in Greenwood County for residents who live within a 2½-mile radius of the Courthouse. The County is partnering with McCormick Area Transit. Green said he hoped to have ridership numbers soon. He said the COG will continue to work with Abbeville, Laurens and Saluda counties in hopes of getting transit services started there. McCormick and Edgefield counties already have public transit.</p> <p>Green updated the Board on a transportation safety concern in Laurens County. A portion of Whelon Road, a state-maintained road located just northwest of the City of Laurens, runs between two ponds but has no guardrails due to lack of space between shoulders of the road and the water. The property owner has requested assistance from the COG with improving the safety of this portion of the road. The property owner might have to drain the ponds. Green said the property owner and his attorney will be meeting an SCDOT attorney to</p>

	<p>determine who is responsible for that portion of the road. Green said there are no easy solutions.</p> <p>Green said there are plans to invite public administrators and Board members to an in-person meeting to discuss SCDOT projects. The meeting is tentatively scheduled for the first week of October 2021, he told the Board (the meeting has now been scheduled for Oct. 7). He said an infrastructure bill is currently in the U.S. House of Representatives and could contribute to state transportation projects by next spring.</p> <p>Green said Census 2020 population data is beginning to be released, starting with counties and also cities with more than 5,000 people. He said all Upper Savannah counties lost population since 2010 with the exception of Laurens County, which increased approximately 1.7 percent. He said the City of Abbeville has dropped under 5,000. Smaller city and town data will be coming out soon, he said.</p>
<p>Workforce Development Update</p>	<p>Workforce Development Director Ann Skinner gave update on USCOG’s response to the Fuji plant closing announcement. Fuji is closing its manufacturing plant, resulting in 400 job losses by 2022. Skinner said Upper Savannah staff will be at Fuji on Tuesdays to assist affected workers with resumes, training information, etc. She said Fuji employees can receive assistance while on the clock.</p> <p>Skinner said Upper Savannah will assist with two job fairs at Piedmont Technical College, one specifically for Fuji employees on Oct. 18 and another for the general public Oct. 22.</p> <p>Skinner said staff has been working with recent high school graduates, developing booklets for the Class of 2021 on who is hiring and tailoring job fairs for their benefit.</p> <p>There was much discussion about unemployment benefits ending (June 30) and why more of the beneficiaries aren’t actively looking for work. Skinner said manufacturing facilities are paying overtime and not able to meet some demands due to not enough staff and that the health care industry is overwhelmed and in need of more workers. She told the Board that Upper Savannah and its workforce development partners are putting a lot of effort into reaching those who are not working.</p>
<p>Community Development Block Grant Program</p>	<p>Community Development Director Keith Smith gave detailed report on Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) current projects, applications that will be sent to the State in September 2021, and CDBG-CV (coronavirus) projects that were recently awarded.</p> <p>The eight current projects include Greenwood County Mathews Mill Village Sewer Upgrade, \$1,000,000 in CDBG funding; Town of McCormick, N. Main/Augusta Streetscape, \$750,000; City of Clinton, Clinton Mill Sewer Upgrade, \$1,460,000; Greenwood County, Baptist Sewer Upgrade, \$750,000; Laurens County, Highway 56/76 Sewer Upgrades, \$715,000; Town of Johnston Fire Truck Purchase, \$454,545;</p>

	<p>City of Greenwood Demolition (dilapidated housing), \$177,571; and Greenwood County Regional Planning, \$50,000. He said Greenwood County College Heights Sewer Upgrade, \$260,000; and Laurens County Lydia Mill Sewer Upgrade – Phase II, \$750,000 have been completed.</p> <p>The three projects to be included in the fall CDBG application round are City of Clinton Fire Truck, \$500,000; City of Abbeville Demolition (dilapidated structures), \$321,210; and Town of Saluda Streetscape, \$713,984.</p> <p>CDBG-CV projects recently awarded include Upper Savannah Region - Home Delivered Meals for Seniors, \$390,000; Laurens School District 55 - Air Purifiers for Schools, \$192,000; Saluda County - Public Transportation Contract, \$50,000; Abbeville Civic Center, City of Abbeville - HVAC Upgrade and Installation of UVC Lights, \$65,400; and Abbeville Opera House, City of Abbeville - Installation of UVC Lights in Existing HVAC System, \$21,500.</p>
<p>Aging Program</p>	<p>Aging Program Director Linda McAllister gave COVID vaccine and American Rescue Plan funding updates.</p> <p>COVID vaccine federal funding passed down from the S.C. Department on Aging is being used to provide factual information and encourage seniors to get vaccinated, McAllister said. The focus is to inform Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, isolated and home-bound seniors about the benefits of getting the vaccine. She said transportation can be made available for those who need vaccines.</p> <p>She said the Upper Savannah region will receive \$1.6 million in COVID funding for Aging programs. But the criteria for the funding have yet to be defined. McAllister said there is a high need for home care, minor home repair (ramps, grab bars, handrails) and transportation in the region. She also expressed hope that funding could be available for eye care, hearing aids and dental care for seniors in need as well as HVAC repairs.</p> <p>Miliken Matthews shared with the Board that he helped with a vaccination drive targeting Hispanics in the Town of Saluda. He said 75 people received the COVID vaccination.</p>
<p>Economic Development</p>	<p>Assistant Director Sam Leaman gave update on EDA American Rescue Plan Funding and CARES ACT Revolving Loan Fund.</p> <p>Leaman said the \$3 billion in EDA American Rescue Plan nationwide funding is being divided into six programs, five of which are new to EDA. As a result, less funding is going to be available for traditional infrastructure improvements than originally hoped. The staff is researching ways to utilize these new programs.</p> <p>Leaman reported that 13 CARES Act RLF loans have been closed, totaling \$508,960. This represents 67 percent of the available funding. The remaining \$251,040 must be lent out by July 23, 2022.</p>

<p>Director's Report</p>	<p>Executive Director Patricia Hartung said she was pleased to have the first in-person Board meeting since the beginning of the pandemic. She said meeting in person sparks more discussion among Board members. Hartung said joining the meeting via telephone would continue to be available.</p> <p>Hartung said the COGs have met with the South Carolina Senate subcommittee on American Rescue Plan Act funding. The legislative subcommittees are deliberating about how the money should be spent. The COGs were asked to make a presentation to the Senate subcommittee about their capabilities in assisting with the process. The subcommittee is chaired by Senator Thomas Alexander who serves on the Appalachian COG Board and understands the capabilities of the SC COG network. Hartung said she does not know if the COGs will play a role in the ARPA funding distribution process.</p> <p>Hartung discussed Board member orientation which includes a list of roles and responsibilities. Hartung said a “what is a COG?” paragraph is included in the handout since there are a number of new Board members who may not understand what a COG is. She said one of the member responsibilities is to share information with their governing bodies about COG activities and encouraged them to contact Upper Savannah division directors and other staff members about activities that are important to their communities.</p> <p>The annual SC COGs training conference which was canceled in 2020 due to the pandemic will be held Nov. 21-23, 2021. Santee-Lynches is the lead COG for the conference and has created the theme: South Carolina United, Re-imagined, Re-designed and Re-launched. The theme’s concept recognizes that everyone has had to make changes in their personal, business and community lives due to the pandemic and how we learn and benefit from these changes.</p> <p>Jim Coleman recognized the passing of former Board member, Laurens City Administrator, Greenwood City Manager, and current Greenwood County Council Chairman Steve Brown, who began his career at USCOG. Hartung said Brown was responsible for starting Upper Savannah’s roving public administrator program which provided professional administrative services to towns that could not afford a full-time administrator. Other COGs throughout the state would copy the program. Hartung said Brown was a good friend and always supported the COG organization. One of his last missions was his support for the recently launched public transit in Greenwood County, she said.</p>
<p>Adjourn</p>	<p>Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.</p>



Patricia C. Hartung
Executive Director