

**MINUTES
 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
 UPPER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
 DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
 430 HELIX ROAD
 GREENWOOD, SOUTH CAROLINA
 MONDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2021**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Buddy Agan, Diane Anderson, Jackie Brown, Edith Childs, Jim Coleman, Scott Cooper, Ken Durham, Otis Grier Jr., Shirley Jenkins, Charles Jennings, Miliken Matthews, Marian Miller, Matthew Miller, Sen. Floyd Nicholson, Willie Neal Norman, David Sawyer, Ernie Segars, Don Smoak, Melissa Spencer, Albert Talbert, David Tribble, and Faye Thomas.

MEMBERS ABSENT: John Calhoun, John Carter, Charlie Henry, Amelia Herlong, Theo Lane, Sen. Shane Massey, Wes McAllister, Rep. Anne Parks, Brandon Smith, Roy Smith Jr., Jerry Strawbridge, and Sen. Danny Verdin.

STAFF PRESENT: Patricia Hartung, Sam Leaman, Ann Skinner, Rick Green, Linda McAllister, Keith Smith, David Hays.

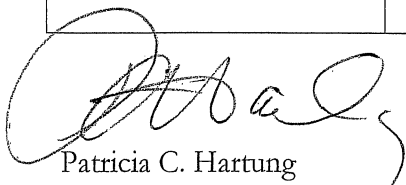
GUESTS PRESENT: Susan Jackson, Regional Director of 3rd District Congressman Jeff Duncan’s office.

<p>Call to Order</p>	<p>Meeting was held in person with the option to attend via conference call. Chairman Willie Neal Norman gave invocation and called the meeting to order.</p> <p>The August 23, 2021, minutes were approved unanimously.</p> <p>Norman recognized guest Susan Jackson, Regional Director of 3rd District Congressman Jeff Duncan’s office.</p> <p>Norman said that Board member Jerry Strawbridge is ill. Board member David Sawyer said Strawbridge needs prayers and hoped he would be back with the Board soon. Patricia C. Hartung passed a get-well card around for Board members to sign. Norman also said former Board member Robert Douglas Butler of Saluda County recently passed away and suggested reaching out to his family to offer condolences.</p> <p>Norman congratulated Board member Jackie Brown on being Councilperson-elect in District 5 on McCormick County Council.</p>
<p>SCDOT Performance Safety Targets and Census Review</p>	<p>Government Services Director Rick Green announced that the SCDOT Performance Safety Targets document requires annual approval by the Board. Green said traffic fatalities have not decreased and that the leading cause of fatal accidents in the Upper Savannah Region is one person in a vehicle leaving the road and striking an object at night.</p> <p>Green said SCDOT is tentatively scheduled to have a meeting April 20, 2022, at Upper Savannah or Greenwood Genetic Center to discuss its programs. Hartung and Green said SCDOT wants a large audience and encouraged Board members to attend the meeting.</p>

	<p>As the discussion returned to highway safety, Edgefield County Board member Albert Talbert mentioned the intersection dangers of Highways 378 and 67 (Callison Highway). Ernie Segars of Laurens County discussed the poor line sight on bridges off Interstates 385 and 26. Green said he would pass the concerns on to Kevin McLaughlin, SCDOT District 3 Engineer.</p> <p>Green said the Long-Range Transportation Plan will attempt to address intersections and that the State might receive more rural guideshare dollars. If that happens, the intersections program can be accelerated. The top three intersections currently in the Plan are Shortcut Road and Highway 25 in Edgefield County, Kateway and U.S. 221 in Greenwood County, and Highways 14 and 101 in Gray Court.</p>
	<p>After discussion was completed, Charles Jennings made a motion to approve the SCDOT Performance Safety Targets document seconded by Miliken Matthews. The Plan was approved unanimously.</p> <p>Green updated the Board on public transit services which are growing in the Region. Effective July 1, 2021, McCormick Area Transit (MAT) began providing medical, pharmacy and other essential rides within 2.5 miles of the Greenwood County Courthouse. The services have since been expanded to anyone within four miles of the Courthouse. Greenwood County had 90 riders in July, 134 in August, and 183 in September. MAT acquired a \$100,000 federal grant to expand transit services into Abbeville County. These services have begun with one day in Donalds-Due West area, another in Calhoun Falls, and one in Abbeville as well as a circle around the County. The services are short-term due to being grant funded. Abbeville County will have to provide match funding for the services to continue in the future. Community Development Block Grant COVID funding of \$50,000 has been approved to contract temporary health care public transit services in Saluda County until that money runs out. The services will soon be bid out to nearby transit providers, Green said.</p> <p>Green updated the Board on Census 2020 results. Saluda County Board member Miliken Matthews asked Green about the accuracy of the Census during the pandemic. Green said he did not believe there was as much Census outreach in 2020 as opposed to past Census years. Matthews said he feels many in the Town of Saluda were not counted due to not answering the door, not responding to online surveys or being confused by the deadline that changed due to the pandemic. Green said the Census performs an annual American Community Survey, making phone calls to estimate populations year to year. Green said it is believed that the federal prison has been left out of the Town of Edgefield Census. The Town is considering an appeal. Green said the State of South Carolina had an approximate 10 percent growth in population from the previous Census in 2010, with most of the growth coming from the Coastal regions, York and Lancaster counties, and the Greenville-Spartanburg area.</p>
<p>Workforce Development – CAREER Dislocated Worker Grant</p>	<p>Workforce Development Administrator Ann Skinner said employers are in desperate need of skilled workers. She said the Upper Savannah COG workforce development staff and Upper Savannah Workforce Development Board help employers recruit workers and analyze training needs. She referred to</p>

<p>Recruitment and Retention for Local Government</p>	<p>the Ready to Roll project grant that was awarded in 2018 that helped train truck drivers. The next funded project awarded in January 2021 by a Rural Healthcare grant is training 100 emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics across the Region. County EMS services will be able to train students during the last half of their schooling.</p> <p>Upper Savannah has since been awarded on-the-job training funding to train the job seeker by sending them to school or paying an employer to train them. The employer is reimbursed half of training expenses over the person's first 12 weeks on the job. McCormick County was the first county to sign up for on-the-job training, focusing on EMTs.</p> <p>Skinner announced that the Upper Savannah Workforce Area along with the Spartanburg, Lowcountry, Lower Savannah and Pee Dee Workforce Areas have recently received a joint \$2.8 million career dislocated worker federal grant. This was one of only nine such grants awarded nationwide. The grant will provide funding for a total of 260 dislocated workers across the five areas and is especially beneficial to small businesses. Upper Savannah will be meeting with employers, setting up agreements, and identifying people who want to work.</p> <p>Skinner said the worldwide pandemic led to a record number of people being out of work. She said messages are being sent via e-mail and text to dislocated workers who have made unemployment insurance claims in the past year. She said the focus is finding individuals who have long COVID syndrome who can no longer perform physically demanding jobs. Also being sought are anyone who is not in the workforce who wants to go back to work with an employer who can receive training funding.</p> <p>Skinner told Board members that local governments are also eligible for workforce investment opportunities.</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 were 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; City of Greenwood Demolition (dilapidated housing), \$177,571; and Greenwood County Regional Planning, \$50,000. He said Greenwood County College Heights Sewer Upgrade and Laurens County Lydia Mill Sewer Upgrade – Phase II have been completed and closed out by the S.C. Department of Commerce.</p> <p>The three projects that were submitted 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 Downtown Streetscape, \$713,984.</p>

	<p>CDBG-CV projects recently awarded include \$632,000 in public services (Home Delivered Meals for Seniors region-wide, \$390,000; Laurens School District 55 - Air Purifiers for Schools, \$192,000; Saluda County - Public Transportation Contract, \$50,000); and \$86,900 for public facilities (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). These projects are in the procurement stage.</p>
<p>Annual County Investment Report</p>	<p>Assistant Director Sam Leaman discussed Upper Savannah's Annual County Investment Reports. Board members received a Fiscal Year 2021 report from the county that they represent. The report includes how USCOG is funded through county dues, federal and state dollars, and direct services funding. A return on investment page focuses on each county's investment, aging and workforce development direct services, rural guideshare allocation (for highway improvement projects), and direct grants for a funds total that determines return on investment. The report also includes county and region highlights. In Fiscal Year 2021, member counties invested \$153,027, which leveraged \$9.4 million in funding, programs and services in the Upper Savannah Region for a return-on-investment ratio of 64:1 for the region.</p>
<p>Director's Report</p>	<p>Hartung said the in-person 2021 SCCOGs annual training conference scheduled for November Nov. 22-23 has been canceled. But the COGs are working on a virtual conference to also be held Nov. 22-23. The draft agenda includes economist Dr. Laura Ullrich with the Federal Reserve Office in Charlotte who will explain what is occurring in the federal economy, a program on electric vehicles which are gaining interest; and National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Executive Director Joe McKinney who will provide a legislative update. Upper Savannah will be in charge of the SCCOGs conference in 2023 when Board member Scott Cooper will serve as SCCOGs President. Information will soon be provided on how to join the virtual conference.</p> <p>Hartung said the 10 COGs recently had an interesting meeting with Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA) Executive Director Bonnie Ammons on the disparity of water systems across South Carolina. Some smaller systems are struggling, Hartung said. Ammons is proposing a platform where water service providers can come together at COG offices in their respective regions and share ideas and experiences.</p> <p>Board member Floyd Nicholson said Senator Hugh Leatherman who has been a major supporter of COGs has been ill and needs to be remembered. Diane Anderson added that fellow Board member John Carter has been in the hospital but is now home.</p>
<p>Adjourn</p>	<p>Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.</p>



Patricia C. Hartung
Executive Director