

**MINUTES
 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
 UPPER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
 DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
 430 HELIX ROAD
 GREENWOOD, SOUTH CAROLINA
 MONDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2022**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Buddy Agan, Diane Anderson, Jackie Brown, John Calhoun, Dean Campbell, John Carter, Edith Childs, Jim Coleman, Frank Daniel, Ken Durham, Otis Grier Jr., Shirley Jenkins, Charles Jennings, Wes McAllister, Marian Miller, Sen. Floyd Nicholson, Willie Neal Norman, Ernie Segars, Brandon Smith, Melissa Spencer, Albert Talbert, David Tribble, and Faye Thomas.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Charlie Henry, Amelia Herlong, Theo Lane, Sen. Shane Massey, Miliken Matthews, Matthew Miller, Rep. Anne Parks, David Sawyer, Roy Smith Jr., Don Smoak, and Sen. Danny Verdin.

STAFF PRESENT: Patricia Hartung, Sam Leaman, Ann Skinner, Rick Green, Linda McAllister, David Hays, Brittany Hallman, Cason Wright, Erin Nodine.

GUESTS PRESENT: Kevin McLaughlin, SCDOT; Scott Neely, Dominion Energy.


Call to Order	<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 October 25, 2021, minutes were approved unanimously.</p> <p>Norman welcomed new Board members Frank Daniel of Saluda County and Dean Campbell of Edgefield County. He also recognized guests Kevin McLaughlin from SCDOT and Scott Neely from Dominion Energy.</p>
Transportation Update	<p>Government Services Director Rick Green announced that the SCDOT rural guideshare dollars have increased by \$918,455 for this year and that the full amount of \$7,181,611 is now available for highway projects, with no more debts needing to be paid.</p> <p>Green reported that 1,061 highway fatalities are projected for the State in 2022 and that 121 have already been recorded statewide. He said that according to the Performance Safety Targets adopted last year, SCDOT hopes to keep the fatality numbers as low as possible with several different strategies.</p> <p>Green said that at the April meeting he hoped the Board can vote to request SCDOT to proceed with the following intersection projects under the Long-Range Transportation Plan: Short Cut Road and Highway 25 in Edgefield County, Highways 101 and 14 in downtown Gray Court in Laurens County, and Sweetwater Road and Bypass25 SE in Greenwood County. SCDOT would start with project engineering, followed by right of way acquisition and then construction.</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. Board</p>

	<p>members and public administrators will be invited.</p> <p>Diane Anderson asked for more details about the Highways 101 and 14 intersection project in Laurens County. Green said it would involve adding turn lanes to improve traffic flow.</p>
<p>Aging Update</p>	<p>Aging Program Director Linda McAllister gave update to the Board that the Upper Savannah AAA has received its American Rescue Plan funding of \$1.9 million which must be used by Sept. 2024.</p> <p>She said the AAA will use the funding for new clients and new programs as requested by the S.C. Department on Aging. The funding will be used to increase home-delivered meals, transportation, and home care services. A new dental care program is launching March 1, 2022, which will fund one-time treatment for dentures, tooth extractions, gum disease, etc. Eligible seniors can choose their dentist and the AAA will work with that dentist to provide reimbursement.</p> <p>McAllister said that beginning on March 1, the AAA will be distributing needs assessments forms to determine the continued needs as well as unmet needs of seniors. She also encouraged Board members to fill out the two-page form.</p> <p>McAllister said a big need among the senior population is affordable housing. Some seniors are living in motels, some in campers, and waiting lists for affordable housing are long. She said the AAA also receives many calls about seniors needing mental health, help paying their utility bills, and requests for home repair such as roof replacements that exceed Upper Savannah Minor Home Repair program’s funding limitations. McAllister said state Aging director Connie Munn is trying to find more funding to help fill these needs.</p>
<p>Workforce Development: Helping Find Hidden Workers</p>	<p>Workforce Development Director Ann Skinner introduced new Deputy Workforce Development Director Erin Nodine, who is assisting FUJIFILM workers and is also involved in other projects.</p> <p>Skinner told the Board that workforce development staff is working with high school seniors. She said more than 2,000 seniors graduate from high schools in the region and that around one-third go on to four-year college, another third go directly into the workforce, and one-third go to college and also work around their school schedules. She showed the employment guide for graduating seniors which includes a list of employers who hire graduating seniors as well as quotes from workforce professionals directed toward students. Skinner said staff is working with schools to invite graduating seniors to the regional job fair to be held March 17 at Piedmont Technical College.</p> <p>Skinner said there is a need for employers to find “hidden workers.” They include new workforce entrants such as graduating high school seniors and college students, career changers such as those not satisfied with the hospitality industry, existing workers who seek better opportunities, and those not in the labor force which might include veterans, caregivers, individuals with poor work histories, those with disabilities and former offenders.</p>

	<p>She also said staff is working to assist young people who are aging out of the foster care system who need to develop a transitional plan to find work, place to live etc.</p> <p>Wes McAllister said retirees are a good source to tap into as far as filling some jobs.</p>
<p>CARES ACT – CDBG-CV, Project Bid Process</p>	<p>Economic Recovery Specialist Cason Wright updated Board members on the CARES ACT CDBG-CV (coronavirus) projects. She said the Upper Savannah Region received \$95,500 for Public Facilities projects and \$695,000 for Public Services projects.</p> <p>Public Facilities projects include HVAC upgrade and installation of UVC lights at the Abbeville Civic Center, and installation of UVC lights in existing HVAC system at Abbeville Opera House. Bid opening was held on February 10, 2022, and Upper Savannah is awaiting approval from Guidehouse on the Professional Services Contract, she said.</p> <p>Public Services projects include home-delivered meals for seniors, air purifiers for Laurens School District 55, and a public medical and essential transportation contract for Saluda County.</p>
<p>Community Development Block Grant Program – Fall 2021 Awards</p>	<p>Community Development Project Manager Brittany Hallman reported on CDBG projects awarded in November 2021.</p> <p>The three projects that were submitted in the fall CDBG application round that were awarded in November are City of Abbeville Demolition (condemned structures), \$221,000; City of Clinton Fire Truck, \$500,000; and Town of Saluda Downtown Streetscape, \$721,000.</p> <p>She said the demolition project will remove condemned houses on Brooks Street, Brown Street, Cambridge Street, Gip Edwards Road, Poplar Street, Raymond Road, Secession Avenue and Wilson Street in the City of Abbeville. The project is currently in the start-up phase.</p> <p>The City of Clinton’s new fire truck will replace a 2008 model, she said. The project is in the start-up phase.</p> <p>The Saluda streetscape involves beautification of the corner of Main and Church streets in hopes of increasing economic opportunities. Project is in start-up phase.</p> <p>Executive Director Patricia C. Hartung said the CDBG housing rehab program from years ago benefitted many municipalities but that the Department of Commerce does not wish to resume that program. There was much discussion that followed.</p>
<p>Preliminary Audit Review</p>	<p>Assistant Director Sam Leaman presented Upper Savannah’s preliminary financial results for FY 2021 in advance of the final audit report. During FY 2021, revenues exceeded expenditures by \$265,786. At fiscal year end, the fund balance was \$1,748,895. The final audit is expected to be available for the April Board meeting.</p>

<p>Upper Savannah and CARES Act Revolving Loan Funds</p>	<p>Leaman gave the Board an USCOG RLF Defederalization update and presented the annual CARES ACT RLF Annual Certification.</p> <p>The Board authorized a request to defederalize the EDA Revolving Loan Fund last February, meaning the RLF would continue to operate but would not be required to report to the EDA. Leaman said Upper Savannah recently received a letter indicating that EDA’s federal interest in the RLF has been released.</p> <p>Leaman reported that 16 CARES RLF loans have been closed, totaling \$586,710 to help the region recover from the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. He said two more loans have been approved, leaving approximately \$71,100 left to loan by July 23, 2022. The EDA requires the CARES RLF to leverage no less than \$2 in private investment for every \$1 in RLF funding, and Upper Savannah’s CARES RLF is leveraging \$1.55. The cost per job ratio requirement is no more than one job for every \$20,000 loaned, and Upper Savannah’s CARES Act RLF loans are creating/retaining one job for every \$7,669 loaned, Leaman said. The Board approved the resolution unanimously upon motion by Jim Coleman, seconded by Otis Grier Jr.</p>
<p>Nominating Committee Report</p>	<p>Floyd Nicholson gave report on the reconvening of the Nominating Committee to replace Scott Cooper as Vice Chairman for the remainder of the term which ends June 30, 2022.</p> <p>Nicholson said the Committee wants to keep the Vice Chairman in Edgefield County and nominated Edgefield County Council Vice Chairman Albert Talbert to fill the remainder of Cooper’s term. The Committee consists of Anderson, McAllister and Nicholson. The nomination of Albert Talbert for Board Vice Chairman was passed unanimously upon motion by Charles Jennings, seconded by Jim Coleman.</p>
<p>Director’s Report</p>	<p>Hartung said the state’s COGs are continuing to pursue an increase in councils of government funding in the State budget and are more optimistic this year due to support in the House. The COGs are requesting that funding be restored to pre-great recession levels. A recommendation to restore the funding was made to the House Ways and Means Committee after a presentation to the Constitutional Subcommittee. The request is for \$1 million, an increase from the \$556,000 that has been appropriated in budgets since 2008. Fifty percent of the appropriations are divided equally among the State’s 10 COGs and the other 50 percent split by region population. An additional request of \$1million (to be divided among the 10 COGs) was made to help support increased program activities.</p> <p>Hartung requested that Board members read over the activity reports that were provided for them and contact any staff member if they have questions.</p> <p>Hartung recognized Norman and his role in an MSNBC Into America podcast on the Promised Land community, for which he and his wife Elestine were interviewed. The podcast called “Reconstruction and the search for the Promised Land” can be heard on MSNBC.</p>

	<p>In other business, Coleman thanked the Board for condolences offered due to the loss of his mother.</p> <p>McAllister mentioned the McCormick Area Transit's partnership in providing medical and essential public transportation in the City of Greenwood to which Brandon Smith replied that the City is promoting the service because "if we don't use it, we will lose it."</p> <p>McAllister also discussed the push for broadband internet service to all areas of the region, particularly to the unserved and underserved. He said now is the time to partner up and get involved in broadband development.</p>
Adjourn	Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.



Patricia C. Hartung
Executive Director