

**MINUTES  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
UPPER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION  
430 HELIX ROAD  
GREENWOOD, SOUTH CAROLINA  
MONDAY, APRIL 25, 2022**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Buddy Agan, Diane Anderson, Jackie Brown, John Calhoun, Dean Campbell, Jim Coleman, Ken Durham, Otis Grier Jr., Shirley Jenkins, Charles Jennings, Miliken Matthews, Marian Miller, Matthew Miller, Sen. Floyd Nicholson, Willie Neal Norman, Rep. Anne Parks, David Sawyer, Ernie Segars, Albert Talbert and Faye Thomas.

MEMBERS ABSENT: John Carter, Edith Childs, Frank Daniel, Charlie Henry, Amelia Herlong, Theo Lane, Wes McAllister, Sen. Shane Massey, Brandon Smith, Roy Smith Jr., Don Smoak, Melissa Spencer, David Tribble and Sen. Danny Verdin.

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

GUESTS PRESENT: Kevin McLaughlin, SCDOT; Scott Neely, Dominion Energy; Dr. Hope Rivers, Piedmont Technical College President; Russell Martin, Piedmont Technical College Director of Marketing and Public Relations.

<p><b>Call to Order</b></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 February 28, 2022, minutes were approved unanimously.</p> <p>Norman recognized guests Kevin McLaughlin from SCDOT; Scott Neely from Dominion Energy; and Dr. Hope Rivers, Piedmont Technical College</p>
<p><b>Guest Presentation: Piedmont Technical College</b></p>	<p>Piedmont Technical College President Dr. Hope Rivers made presentation on the school's current activities in the Upper Savannah region.</p> <p>She opened the presentation with the mission statement that PTC "transforms lives and strengthens communities" by providing opportunities for intellectual and economic growth.</p> <p>She said PTC promotes finding careers as soon as possible, bachelor's degrees without debt, and flexible training and continuing education opportunities. She said the school is offering free tuition for qualifying students through the spring and summer semesters. She said enrollment has increased 8 percent since free tuition was offered.</p> <p>Rivers told the Board that PTC has the largest geographic area in the state among technical schools, including the Upper Savannah region plus Newberry County. Current enrollment of students receiving credits is 7,190.</p> <p>Rivers showed a list of programs offered and highlighted mechatronics, nursing</p>

	<p>and the state’s only cardiovascular technology program in the state. Rivers said the healthcare portion of the Greenwood campus will soon be undergoing a renovation and expansion. She concluded her presentation by showing a success story video of a cardiovascular tech student.</p>
<p><b>Transportation Update</b></p>	<p>Government Services Director Rick Green requested that the Board vote to move the region’s top three intersection projects from the USCOG Long-Range Plan into the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) so that SCDOT could proceed with the projects. The projects are Short Cut Road and Highway 25 in Edgefield County, Highways 101 and 14 in downtown Gray Court in Laurens County, and Sweetwater Road and Bypass 25 SE in Greenwood County. The Board voted unanimously to move the projects into the STIP.</p> <p>Green told the Board that intersection improvements at Highway 378 and Callison Highway in Edgefield County have been funded through the SCDOT Safety Program.</p> <p>Green said the Upper Savannah Regional Transportation Workshop held April 20 at Piedmont Technical College was a success, with eight SCDOT officials speaking about their programs with some giving updates on regional roads and bridges projects. Green distributed to Board members detailed project lists from each county as prepared by District 3 Engineer Kevin McLaughlin for last week’s workshop. McLaughlin said the lists can also be found at <a href="http://www.scdot.org">www.scdot.org</a>, and search for Project Viewer.</p>
<p><b>Economic Development Update</b></p>	<p>Economic Recovery Specialist Cason Wright informed the Board about the Economic Resiliency Plan for the Region. The document includes Economic Recovery and Resiliency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Board unanimously approved the document, which will also be integrated into the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The full 2022-2027 CEDS document will be available for approval at the August 2022 Board meeting.</p> <p>Green reviewed the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) portion of the CEDS for Board approval.</p> <p>Strengths as listed in the current CEDS include strong community leadership, effective economic development organizations, a well-trained workforce, strong existing businesses, attractive and livable communities, access and proximity to economic markets, local health care facilities, and overall mix of employers.</p> <p>Weaknesses include transportation network, renewable energy potential, local school systems, distance to larger metropolitan areas, workforce continuing education, and limited local resources for capital business loan funds.</p> <p>Opportunities include workforce development, entrepreneurial support, small business expansion, tourism; community leadership, specialized or niche manufacturing, and natural resources.</p> <p>Threats include infrastructure deficiencies; vacant Main Streets, town centers, or</p>

	<p>shopping areas; declining industries, limited willingness of entrepreneurs to start or expand businesses, lack of living wage jobs available, lack of developable land and/or suitable buildings, lack of affordable housing, lack of access to capital, and lack of community amenities.</p> <p>There was much discussion about the list. Diane Anderson questioned the lack of living wage jobs available. Workforce Development Director Ann Skinner explained that although wages are rising, they are not keeping up with the rest of the State or current inflation rates. She said workforce development partners are trying to steer workers into manufacturing and skilled healthcare jobs. Ernie Segars questioned school systems being a weakness, said Main Streets are being improved in Laurens County as well as tourism. Green added that there have been improvements on Main Streets in Abbeville and McCormick. Nicholson questioned continuing education being considered a weakness while Skinner responded that many are not taking advantage of these opportunities. Miliken Matthews, Otis Grier and Charles Jennings said rural areas are at a disadvantage in taking advantage of opportunities.</p> <p>After the discussion, Green said local school systems, Main Streets, continuing education, tourism growth and broadband access would be moved to the Opportunities section. The CEDS update was approved unanimously by the Board with the stated changes.</p> <p>Green invited Board members to attend a Green Infrastructure Plan virtual meeting May 11, from 2 to 3:30 p.m. The South Carolina Forestry Commission, USCOG and the Green Infrastructure Center are taking part in developing a regional green infrastructure plan for the USCOG region to be integrated with other COG regional plans. The regional plans will be combined into a statewide green infrastructure plan with maps showing concentrations of forests and available croplands.</p>
<p><b>CDBG Program</b></p>	<p>Wright informed the Board that Community Development staff has submitted three CDBG spring infrastructure grants – Town of Ridge Spring Sewer Rehab, Clinton-Joanna Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade and Mathews Mill Phase II Sewer Upgrade.</p> <p>CDBG funds were requested to rehabilitate three major sections of the Town of Ridge Spring’s main sewer trunkline, Wright said. A study completed in 2005 indicated excessive inflow and infiltration within the Town’s system. Recent inspections indicate the conditions have significantly worsened. The proposed project costs are estimated to be \$2,086,090. Project is considered a town-wide benefit. Ridge Spring has an estimated population of 920 of which 68 percent are low-to-moderate (LMI).</p> <p>CDBG funds were requested to upgrade Clinton-Joanna Wastewater Treatment Plant located in Kinards. Proposed improvements include removing existing drying beds and upgrading the WWTP process by installing two large sludge holding tanks, aeration, mixers, pumps, controls, and other necessary fittings for liquid land application of the digested sludge. Project cost is estimated to be \$3,026,000. Proposed project will benefit the City of Clinton, Joanna and neighboring</p>

	<p>communities which utilize the sewer service. The project will benefit an estimated 8,078 people of which 65 percent are estimated to be LMI.</p> <p>CDBG funds were requested to provide continued sewer improvements to the Mathews Mill area. Construction is proposed on Georgia Street, Bolt Avenue, Bond Avenue, Stevens Avenue, and Cross Street. Total project costs are estimated to be \$3,103,399. This project will benefit approximately 303 people, of which 92% are considered LMI.</p>
<p><b>Final Audit Review</b></p>	<p>Assistant Director Sam Leaman presented Upper Savannah’s final audit report for FY 2021. The draft audit was presented in February. During FY 2021, revenues exceeded expenditures by \$265,786. At year end, the fund balance was \$1,748,895. The report concluded that there were no deficiencies in internal control over financial reporting or compliance. There were no findings or questioned costs. He said the Audit can be found on Upper Savannah’s web site under documents. Leaman thanked USCOG Finance Director Melissa Phillips for her work with the audit as well as other financial staff and division directors.</p>
<p><b>Nominating Committee Appointment</b></p>	<p>Norman announced the re-appointment of the Nominating Committee, which will reconvene in June to appoint a new Board chairman and vice chairman. The Committee includes Chairman Floyd Nicholson, Diane Anderson and Wes McAllister.</p>
<p><b>Director’s Report</b></p>	<p>Hartung thanked the Board members who attended the Upper Savannah Regional Transportation Workshop held April 20. She said Upper Savannah hopes to have transportation workshops on a regular basis.</p> <p>Hartung updated the Board on the state COGs pursuit of an increase in councils of government funding in the State budget. The COGs are requesting that funding be restored to 2008 levels. The request is for \$1.1 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. The House recommended the increase to \$1 million this year plus an additional \$1 million to be divided equally among the COGs (\$100,000 apiece). The Senate, however, is recommending the appropriations at \$556,000 but keeping the additional \$1 million in non-recurring funding.</p> <p>Hartung invited Board members to the Senior Health Fair Expo to be held at the Greenwood YMCA from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., May 10. There will be no solicitation allowed. Aging Director Linda McAllister said Community Long-Term Care will be among the agencies attending, there will be other health care agencies, nursing homes, the Abbeville Hospital will conduct COVID vaccinations and screenings, and there will be demonstrations of evidence-based programs for seniors.</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>Norman requested a moment of silence to honor the death of Cayce Police</p>

	Officer Drew Barr, a native of the Ridge Spring area who was killed in the line of duty last weekend, and also for several clergy in Laurens County.
<b>Adjourn</b>	Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.



Patricia C. Hartung  
Executive Director