

**MINUTES
 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
 UPPER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
 DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
 430 HELIX ROAD
 GREENWOOD, SOUTH CAROLINA
 MONDAY, AUGUST 22, 2022**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Buddy Agan, Diane Anderson, Jackie Brown, John Calhoun, Dean Campbell, Edith Childs, Jim Coleman, Frank Daniel, Otis Grier Jr., Charlie Henry, Shirley Jenkins, Charles Jennings, Theo Lane, Wes McAllister, Miliken Matthews, Marian Miller, Matthew Miller, Willie Norman, Rep. Anne Parks, David Sawyer, Ernie Segars, Brandon Smith, Roy Smith Jr., Albert Talbert, Faye Thomas and David Tribble.

MEMBERS ABSENT: John Carter, Ken Durham, Amelia Herlong, Sen. Shane Massey, Sen. Floyd Nicholson, Don Smoak, Melissa Spencer, and Sen. Danny Verdin.

STAFF PRESENT: Patricia Hartung, Sam Leaman, Ann Skinner, Rick Green, Melissa Phillips, Keith Smith, David Hays, Cason Wright

GUESTS PRESENT: Jim Stritzinger, Director, SC Broadband Office; Cedric Keitt, Director, Broadband, Communications & Safety, SC Broadband Office; Jeff Wilson, CEO, Western Carolina Rural Telephone Cooperative.

<p>Call to Order</p>	<p>Meeting was held in person with the option to attend via conference call. Willie Norman gave the invocation and Chairman Albert Talbert called the meeting to order.</p> <p>The June 27, 2022, minutes were approved unanimously.</p> <p>Talbert recognized guests Jim Stritzinger, Director, SC Broadband Office; and Jeff Wilson, CEO, Western Carolina Rural Telephone Cooperative.</p>
<p>Guest Presentation: SC Office of Regulatory Staff</p>	<p>Director of the SC Broadband Office Jim Stritzinger gave the Board an update on broadband activities in South Carolina.</p> <p>Stritzinger referred to broadband internet as the “next, next greatest thing.” He said a gentleman stood up in a rural church in 1940 and said, “the greatest thing on Earth is to have the love of God in your heart, but the next greatest thing is to have electricity in your house.” Stritzinger said replace the word electricity with internet and history is repeating itself. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the Rural Electrification Act in 1936, creating rural electric cooperatives. In 1949, the Act was updated to allow loans to telephone companies such as the Western Carolina Rural Telephone Cooperative to serve unconnected rural areas.</p> <p>In 2022, Stritzinger said Governor Henry McMaster signed House Bill 4408 which allocated \$400 million to the SC Broadband Office. Stritzinger showed maps displaying how internet is distributed in South Carolina, pointing out that Abbeville County is covered with fiber technology. He said several areas still</p>

	<p>have DSL while others have no internet service providers such as Edgefield County, saying it's an infrastructure problem, not an affordability issue. The SC Broadband Office is only able to make investments in areas that are unserved, he said.</p> <p>He told Board members that local officials can look at the county maps available on the SC Digital Drive website and determine internet distribution. As of March 31, 2022, there are 181,000 homes in South Carolina that do not have at least 25/3 internet speed. Plans are to connect 24,000 of those homes by the end of this year, Stritzinger said.</p> <p>Stritzinger described three specific grant programs from the Broadband Office in 2022. The first was the Last Mile Grant Program pilot project which expects to fill some of the gaps where internet is lacking, the current Priority Area Grant (June 30 through Aug. 31) which focuses on areas where there are a lot of K through 12 students and low to moderate income residents ("difficult development" areas), and the upcoming Accelerated Project Grant which expects to assist some of the internet providers who are building aggressively. The Priority Area Grant applications are due Aug. 31, 2022. Stritzinger said letters of support from counties, municipalities, and councils of government weigh heavily in the scoring system for these competitive grants. Only internet service providers can apply for the grants.</p> <p>The Capital Project Fund will be made available in early 2023, focusing not only on where K through 12 students live and difficult development areas but also Main Street communities.</p> <p>Stritzinger also suggested anyone who is working on water and sewer projects to consider the national best practice called "Dig Once." The concept is if there is an open trench for water and sewer, broadband conduit could be placed in the same right of way.</p> <p>He said the Bi-Partisan Infrastructure Law is providing \$48 billion in broadband funding starting in 2024. Most of the money (\$42.5 billion) is going through the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program. The SC Broadband Office has just applied for the BEAD Planning Grant, which requires a one-year planning process to qualify for the funding. He said between an estimated \$700 million and \$1.2 billion more broadband funding could become available on top of the current \$400 million. Stritzinger said "we are on a pathway to connect every house in the state of South Carolina." He is requesting assistance from the COGs in the planning process, starting around October 2022. It involves, for example, collecting 30,000 paper surveys from South Carolina residents on how they use the internet.</p> <p>At least 10 board members made comments as discussion continued.</p>
<p>Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update (CEDS, US</p>	<p>Government Services Director Rick Green requested action on the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) document that is required for entities to be eligible for Economic Development Administration (EDA) funds. The CEDS must be updated every five years. He said recent</p>

<p>Economic Development Administration)</p>	<p>EDA-funded projects include water and sewer service to Teijin, Inc., construction of the Piedmont Technical College Upstate Center for Manufacturing Excellence, and two water and sewer upgrades in Laurens County. The document was approved unanimously upon motion by Jim Coleman, seconded by Charles Jennings.</p>
<p>CDBG Awards</p>	<p>Community Development Director Keith Smith updated the Board on Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) awards from the spring infrastructure round including Town of Ridge Spring Sewer Rehab, Clinton-Joanna Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade, and Mathews Mill Phase II Sewer Upgrade.</p> <p>Ridge Spring is receiving CDBG funds to help rehabilitate three major sections of the Town’s main sewer trunkline. The project includes approximately 2,541 feet of 8” gravity sewer, 2,151 feet of 10” gravity sewer, 200 feet of 16” steel encased pipe, 3,361 feet of CIPP and installation of approximately 42 manholes. Total project costs are estimated to be \$2,086,000 and will benefit the entire Town of Ridge Spring.</p> <p>Laurens County was awarded CDBG funds to help upgrade Clinton-Joanna Wastewater Treatment Plant. 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. Total project cost is estimated to be approximately \$3 million and will benefit the City of Clinton, Joanna and other neighborhoods which use the service. The project will benefit 8,078 people, Smith said.</p> <p>Greenwood County will receive CDBG funds to help provide continued sewer improvements to the Mathews Mill area in Greenwood County. Improvements include installation of approximately 825 feet of 12-inch and 5,200 feet of 8-inch gravity sewer line, 23 manholes and reconnection of 109 structures. Construction to include Georgia Street, Bolt Avenue, Bond Avenue, Stevens Avenue, and Cross Street. Total project costs are estimated to be around \$3.1 million and will benefit more than 300 people.</p>
<p>Workforce Development</p>	<p>Workforce Development Director Ann Skinner told the Board about an upcoming Middle School Career Day set for Sept. 15, 2022, at Piedmont Technical College.</p> <p>She said a workforce development staff intern produced a video of a recent project with the Boys and Girls Club where a tractor-trailer brought \$2 million worth of simulators so the participants could experience what it would be like to be a linesman, truck driver or welder. Skinner said workforce developers will replicate that day on Sept. 15, when 1,000 middle school students can tour the PTC campus including the Odell Center (Center for Advanced Manufacturing) and view industry demonstrations that will expose them to career opportunities.</p> <p>Skinner said USCOG has assisted with some recent job fairs, including one at Piedmont Tech on July 25 and another in Saluda last week attended by 50</p>

	<p>people, including four who received job interviews that day. The next job fair is Oct. 6 at Piedmont Tech.</p> <p>Workforce development staff have begun sending out customer service surveys, mailing out letters to all clients. Skinner read one letter that was received earlier in the day referring to a GLEAMNS case manager that read, “Pat Crawford is phenomenal. I had a job within hours of contacting her. She also helped me get in touch with the Pathway House that helps the homeless.” Skinner said that made her day.</p>
<p>Aging Update</p>	<p>Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Director Linda McAllister gave report on current activities in the Aging program, focusing on accomplishments from the past year.</p> <p>She said AAA staff assesses all potential senior clients, completing approximately 2,000 assessments in FY 22. McAllister said staff responded to around 1,500 information, referral and assistance (IR&A) calls during the year.</p> <p>After the COVID pandemic limited congregate meals to around 5,000 the previous year, more than 25,000 meals were served in FY 22 as clients were more able to return to senior centers across the Upper Savannah region. Home-delivered meal totals increased approximately 4 percent in the last year with 165,000 meals served, she said.</p> <p>A total of 7,445 home care and personal care hours were funded for clients in FY 22, while 135 hours of legal assistance were provided. The minor home repair program spent \$45,000 on safety improvements for seniors including ramps and grab bars.</p> <p>Medical and essential transportation totals also increased in FY 22 as more seniors were able to leave their homes after the height of the pandemic, climbing from 123,000 miles in FY 21 to approximately 195,000 miles.</p> <p>A total of 348 classes were conducted in the 3-D evidence-based exercise program for seniors. Caregivers received 241 hours of respite care in FY 22 while \$45,000 in incontinent supplies were provided in the respite program.</p> <p>The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren program provided approximately \$25,000 for school supplies, school clothing and after-school program funding for those families, McAllister reported.</p> <p>She said the AAA provides Medicare counseling to seniors, offering unbiased information and helping seniors pick plans which best fit their needs. Medicare’s annual enrollment period begins Oct. 14, 2022, and the AAA will be offering counseling during that period.</p> <p>McAllister said AAA staff makes presentations to local churches, senior centers, etc., about services provided at the Area Agency on Aging. She said the AAA began a dental program this year, providing a one-time preventative dental service to uninsured or underinsured seniors to dentists of their choice.</p>

Director's Report	<p>Director Patricia C. Hartung reminded those Board members who wish to attend the SCCOGs Annual Conference Nov. 20-22 to return their registration forms by Sept. 15 to secure hotel reservations. She said Lower Savannah COG is in charge of this year's conference while Upper Savannah will assist in 2022 and be in charge of the conference in 2023.</p> <p>Hartung distributed staff activity reports and invited Board members to contact any staff member if they have questions.</p>
Adjourn	Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.



Patricia C. Hartung
Executive Director