

**MINUTES  
 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
 UPPER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
 DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION  
 430 HELIX ROAD  
 GREENWOOD, SOUTH CAROLINA  
 APRIL 24, 2023**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Diane Anderson, Jackie Brown, John Calhoun, Frank Daniel, Ken Durham, Qwen Etheredge, Charles Goodwin, Otis Grier Jr., Charles Jennings, Theo Lane, Wes McAllister, Miliken Matthews, Marian Miller, Sen. Floyd Nicholson, Willie Norman, David Sawyer, Ernie Segars, Brandon Smith, Roy Smith Jr., Albert Talbert, and David Tribble.

MEMBERS ABSENT: John Carter, Jim Coleman, Charlie Henry, Tiffani Ireland, Sen. Shane Massey, Matthew Miller, Don Smoak, Faye Thomas, and Sen. Danny Verdin.

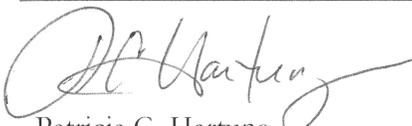
STAFF PRESENT: Patricia Hartung, Sam Leaman, Rick Green, Ann Skinner, Amber Bearden, David Hays

GUEST PRESENT: Sara Pincelli, Project Coordinator, Office of the Executive Director, SC Department of Administration; Tara Gonce, Piedmont Technical College (PTC) Dean of Health Care; Jessica Mundy, PTC Health Care Program Manager; Kile Antone, PTC Program Director/Instructor, Paramedic; Matt Wiggins, PTC Dean of Workforce Innovation.

<p><b>Call to Order</b></p>	<p>The 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 February 27, 2023, minutes were approved unanimously upon motion by Charles Jennings, seconded by Willie Norman.</p>
<p><b>Guest Presentation: ConnectSC/ Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Statewide Planning Efforts</b></p>	<p>Sara Pincelli, Project Coordinator, Office of the Executive Director, SC Department of Administration, gave update on statewide planning efforts to expand affordable, high-speed internet availability to all S.C. citizens.</p> <p>Pincelli said the current planning stage involves grass roots listening tours throughout the state, including a meeting at the Arts Center in Greenwood May 3 at 2 p.m. The state is also conducting GetConnectedSC online surveys to help determine home internet availability whether good, poor or non-existent.</p> <p>The next step is to get South Carolina qualified for the State Capacity Grant Program, which provides \$60 million to states from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) to develop digital equity programs, she said.</p> <p>Pincelli said she has found that many citizens have such slow internet that it's like having no internet at all. For example, Pincelli said she had to assist many people over the telephone with signing up for COVID shots because internet issues made it difficult for some to complete the required online registration.</p> <p>There was much discussion among Board members. Wes McAllister acknowledged there are pockets throughout the State where affordable, high-speed internet is hard to obtain. Diane Anderson said residents are tired of hearing that quality internet is</p>

	<p>coming when nothing has improved. Miliken Matthews said approximately 60 percent of citizens in Saluda cannot get internet. Otis Grier Jr. said the internet is sometimes available but not always affordable for low-income families.</p> <p>Pincelli showed a video filmed in Fairfield County where residents say poor internet service hurts them in education, business, telehealth, and collaborating with the world around them, leaving them at a disadvantage with so many services exclusively online.</p>
<b>SC Best Program</b>	<p>Government Services Director Rick Green discussed the SCDHEC \$1 million Brownfields Environmental Site Testing (BEST) Program that was introduced earlier this year. Catawba COG is administering the program, allocating funding to each COG region in the State based on population. The Upper Savannah region will receive approximately \$73,446. The funding allows for environmental testing of brownfields sites that could be used for future development. The brownfields site with contamination or perceived contamination can be owned by a city, town or county, or by a private owner who agrees to an assessment. Green said the first phase of environmental testing costs around \$3,500.</p> <p>Upper Savannah staff reviews all potential BEST program projects and then the projects must be approved by the Board.</p> <p>Three BEST projects have been submitted and Green described each to the Board. They include the old McCormick County Administration Building where there are plans to develop apartments and office space. Based on the age of the building, there could be lead-based paint or asbestos, Green said. The other two are old mill sites in the City of Clinton – Lydia Mills and Clinton Mills. Housing developments are being considered at both sites. The brownfields phase 1 test was completed at the Lydia site but expired and must be redone.</p> <p>The projects were approved upon motion by David Tribble, seconded by Willie Norman.</p>
<b>Upper Savannah Long Range Transportation Plan</b>	<p>Green informed the Board that SCDOT has asked COGs and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to adapt the Strategic Ten-Year Asset Management Plan (STAMP) system performance report as an amendment to the existing Long-Range Plan. This document will serve to combine traffic safety performance measures and goals into one document. The STAMP amendment was passed upon motion by Diane Anderson, seconded by Marian Miller.</p>
<b>Final Audit Review</b>	<p>Assistant Director Sam Leaman said Upper Savannah’s audit for FY 2022 has been completed and is available on Upper Savannah’s website. A preliminary version of the audit was presented at the last board meeting. There were no changes made between the preliminary and final versions.</p>
<b>U.S. Department of Labor – “Level Up Grant”</b>	<p>Workforce development staff highlighted the National Rural Health Training Grant “Level UP” program, which has resulted in 91 enrollees into EMT and paramedic training at Piedmont Technical College to date. The \$500,000 grant was applied for by Workforce staff and awarded in 2021 to help alleviate EMT and paramedic shortages throughout the Upper Savannah region.</p>

	<p>Workforce Development Director Ann Skinner introduced Tara Gonce, Piedmont Technical College (PTC) Dean of Health Care; Jessica Mundy, PTC Health Care Program Manager; Kile Antone, PTC Program Director/Instructor, Paramedic; and Matt Wiggins, PTC Dean of Workforce Innovation, who are all partners in the “Level UP” project.</p> <p>Upper Savannah Health Training Project Manager Amber Bearden gave Powerpoint presentation on the “Level UP” project. She said the project targets the unemployed, underemployed and incumbent workers. This spring, 13 paramedic students have been enrolled, the largest class to date. The project provides funding for tuition, books/fees and travel reimbursement. One student is commuting from Orangeburg, she said.</p> <p>Recent enhancements to the “Level UP” program include group career counseling sessions to educate on job opportunities and further training options, a tutor who is currently working as a flight medic, and an ambulance simulator which PTC uses to give students access to a real-life experience.</p> <p>Bearden highlighted student success story Ashley Williams, a single mom who was working part-time as a medical scribe. Williams earned her EMT credential in May 2022 and landed a full-time position with McCormick County EMS. She is back in training to earn her Advanced EMT credential while planning to enroll into Paramedic training in January 2024.</p> <p>The ambulance simulator arrived in February 2022 and has allowed for training to be provided to students at all PTC campus locations throughout the seven-county region. Students can participate in simulated scenarios that are like what they could experience on the back of an ambulance, Bearden said.</p> <p>Of the 91 total enrollees, 48 are currently working in Emergency Services positions throughout the Upper Savannah region. There are 32 open cases/active participants in the program, 24 are in training, and 22 currently working as EMTs or Advanced EMTs, and 1 Paramedic (working) but still in training to earn Associates Degree, Bearden said.</p> <p>Skinner said a student can become an EMT right out of high school and then “level up” to become a paramedic. Mundy encouraged dual enrollment where high school students can take classes at PTC before finishing high school.</p> <p>Several Board members visited the ambulance simulator that was set up in the USCOG parking lot after the meeting.</p>
<p><b>Director’s Report</b></p>	<p>Director Patricia C. Hartung distributed the staff activities report to Board members.</p>
<p><b>Adjourn</b></p>	<p>Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.</p>



Patricia C. Hartung  
Executive Director