

**MINUTES
 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
 UPPER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
 DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
 430 HELIX ROAD
 GREENWOOD, SOUTH CAROLINA
 OCTOBER 23, 2023**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jackie Brown, John Calhoun, Jim Coleman, Frank Daniel, Ken Durham, Charles Goodwin, Otis Grier Jr., Charlie Henry, Tiffani Ireland, Charles Jennings, Miliken Matthews, Marian Miller, Sen. Floyd Nicholson, Willie Norman, Randy Randall, David Sawyer, Ernie Segars, Roy Smith Jr., Don Smoak, Albert Talbert, Faye Thomas and David Tribble.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Diane Anderson, Qwen Etheredge, Theo Lane, Sen. Shane Massey, Wes McAllister, Matthew Miller, Brandon Smith, and Sen. Danny Verdin.

STAFF PRESENT: Patricia Hartung, Sam Leaman, Sandra Moore, Rick Green, Melissa Phillips, Ann Skinner, Keith Smith, Peggy Merritt, David Hays

GUEST PRESENT: Pamela Christopher, Vice Chairman of the SCDOT Commission and Commissioner of the 3rd Congressional District; Scott Neely, Dominion Energy; Kevin McLaughlin, SCDOT District 2 Administrator; Myranda Butler, Saluda Town Council.

<p>Call to Order</p>	<p>The meeting was held in person with the option to attend via conference call. Floyd Nicholson gave the invocation and Chairman Albert Talbert called the meeting to order.</p> <p>The August 28, 2023, minutes were approved unanimously with an amendment indicating Randy Randall was present at that meeting.</p> <p>Patricia Hartung introduced guests Pamela Christopher with SCDOT, Scott Neely with Dominion Energy and Kevin McLaughlin from SCDOT.</p>
<p>Community Development Update: Overview of Recent Applications Submitted and Current Projects Underway</p>	<p>Community Development Director Keith Smith updated the Board on recently submitted Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) applications and current CDBG projects.</p> <p>Smith said there are 13 active CDBG projects in the region totaling more than \$12 million and staff has applied for four new projects in September with award announcements anticipated around early December.</p> <p>The four new applications include improvements to the Greenwood County DSS building, which needs new roof, HVAC, improved restrooms, asbestos abatement, ADA accessibility, lobby/waiting room improvements, flooring, lighting, repainting, and parking lot and safety improvements for a total project cost of \$1,462,787. The City of Greenwood is requesting funding for Waller Streetscape, including sidewalks, brick roadway, curbing, ADA accessibility, parking stall indicators, landscaping and outdoor seating for a total project cost of \$1,232,368. McCormick County is requesting funds to pave the parking lot that serves the</p>

	<p>McCormick County DSS, DHHS and First Steps. The lot is deteriorating, pavement is cracked, and the striping is virtually non-existent in many places. Estimated project cost is \$312,785. The Town of Ninety Six is requesting CDBG funds to demolish the Ninety Six Mill Village Community Center. The structure has outlived its useful life and is now condemned due to mold, asbestos, and unstable interior conditions. The Town wants to demolish structure and turn into greenspace. Estimated project cost is \$344,600.</p> <p>Smith updated the Board on current projects, including City of Abbeville Structure Demolitions, City of Abbeville Chestnut Street Park, City of Clinton Fire Truck Purchase, Town of Saluda North Main/West Church Streetscape, Greenwood County Mathews Mill Sewer Upgrade Phases I and II, Greenwood County Baptist Avenue Sewer Upgrade, Town of McCormick North Main/Augusta Streetscape, City of Greenwood Booker T. Washington Sewer Upgrade, Laurens County Highway 56/76 Sewer Upgrade, Laurens County Clinton-Joanna Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade, and Town of Ridge Spring Sewer Rehab.</p> <p>He said the Abbeville Structure Demolitions asbestos testing is out to bid, Chestnut Street Park bids will go out in January or February 2024, Clinton fire truck will arrive in June 2024, Saluda streetscape is going out to bid this month, Mathews Mill I is under construction, Mathews Mill II bid is out for approval, Baptist Sewer is complete and awaiting closeout, McCormick streetscape is under construction, Booker T. Washington sewer is in start-up phase, Laurens 56/76 is complete and awaits monitoring by the State on Nov. 8, Clinton-Joanna WWTP contract signed Oct. 17, construction beginning in December, and Ridge Spring sewer working on bid package.</p>
<p>Aging Program Update: Trualta Caregivers Program and Aging System Software Update</p>	<p>Aging Director Peggy Merritt gave report on Trualta Caregivers Program and an Aging system software update.</p> <p>Merritt said the Upper Savannah Area Agency on Aging is partnering with Trualta to assist caregivers. She passed out flyers about the program and compared it to an online classroom for caregivers. The program was created by clinical experts, offering short video lessons to caregivers. Merritt pulled up the Trualta website and gave a demonstration. She said Trualta offers support groups and community chat rooms to help caregivers who face similar challenges and issues. The flyer includes Upper Savannah Family Caregiver Advocate Aeriell Bowick’s contact information.</p> <p>Merritt told Board members about the GetSetUp program, which offers more than 4,000 free online classes for people 60 and over. Classes include travel, art, business, technology, social media, aging in place among many others. She said all the classes in every category are taught by people 55 and over. She passed out flyers that have a link to the classes. Internet and a computer are necessary to participate in GetSetUp classes.</p> <p>Merritt told the Board that the Aging department is changing its software system from Advanced Information Management (AIM) to Aging Service Information System (ASIS). Assessors who go into homes and senior centers to evaluate seniors for services can now enter information live on tablets on the ASIS system rather than fill out paper surveys that are later typed into the AIM.</p>

SC Brownfields Environmental Site Testing (SC BEST) Program Update

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 is receiving 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.

Upper Savannah staff reviews all potential BEST program projects and then the projects must be approved by the Board. USCOG has submitted the most projects in the state. They include four in Edgefield County, two in Laurens County, and one each in Abbeville and McCormick counties.

Green said the Town of Ninety Six is pursuing a BEST project for the old, now condemned Ninety Six Mill Village Community Center which included a theatre, mill store and basement. The Town is also pursuing a CDBG site demolition and clearing grant which was submitted in September. But brownfields testing has been requested in order to qualify for demolition. The BEST project application was approved upon motion by Jim Coleman, seconded by Floyd Nicholson. The approval gives the Upper Savannah Region nine BEST projects.

Transportation Safety Performance Targets (2020-2024) and Transportation Improvement Plan Update

Green updated the Board on the Upper Savannah Regional Roadway Departure Safety Implementation Plan, the Safety Performance Targets (2020-2024), and Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP).

The Roadway Departure Safety Implementation Plan is in the development stage and hopes to address issues of roadway departures that cause death and serious injuries on the Upper Savannah Region’s rural roads. The Plan will include recommendations to add rumble strips, signage, lighting and other safety features on certain roads. The Plan is expected to be completed this fall.

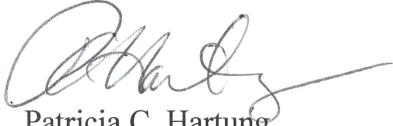
Green said that the SCDOT Performance Safety Targets document requires annual approval by the Board. Federal legislation requires that each state come up with its own performance measures and safety standards that must be approved by COGs and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). Floyd Nicholson made a motion to approve the SCDOT Performance Safety Targets document, seconded by Willie Norman. The document was approved unanimously.

Green said the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) is currently being updated and will include a 10-year window instead of the current seven years. He said the current version is online on the Upper Savannah COG website under Transportation. The new Plan will be presented at the February 2024 Board meeting, he said. The TIP includes which highway improvement projects are currently being funded and which will be funded in the future.

The TIP has moved toward intersection projects, Green said. Current intersections in the TIP include Highways 101 and 14 in Gray Court, Sweetwater Road and U.S. 25 Bypass in Greenwood County, and Shortcut Road and U.S. 25 in Edgefield County. No construction has begun yet on those projects. The next projects to be included in

	<p>the TIP are the Augusta Road intersection near Pendarvis Chevrolet in the Town of Edgefield, the three-way intersection near the Triangle Restaurant in the Town of Johnston, and the intersection of Cambridge and Mathis streets in the City of Greenwood.</p>
<p>Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Update</p>	<p>Green requested approval of the Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) annual update which is necessary to make the region eligible for Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding. Patricia Hartung said Green has been appointed by Governor McMaster to serve on the S.C. Drought Response Committee for this region. Jim Coleman made a motion to approve the CEDS, seconded by Marian Miller. The CEDS was approved unanimously.</p>
<p>Annual County Investment Reports</p>	<p>Assistant Director Sam Leaman discussed Upper Savannah’s Annual County Investment Reports. Board members received a Fiscal Year 2023 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, and direct grants for a funds total that determines return on investment. The report also includes county and region highlights. In Fiscal Year 2023, member counties invested \$150,661, which leveraged \$9,394,036 in funding, programs and services in the Upper Savannah Region for a return-on-investment ratio of 62:1. Saluda County had the highest return-on-investment ratio at 150-1 based on almost \$2 million in funding. Leaman suggested sharing the reports with their councils.</p> <p>Leaman also handed out the October 2023 Board report which gives detailed highlights of current projects throughout the Region.</p> <p>Floyd Nicholson asked about the \$500 bonus for GED completers listed in the county investment reports. Workforce Development Director Ann Skinner confirmed that the State is offering \$500 bonuses for students who complete their GED and also for people who go into short-term training at a technical college.</p>
<p>Director’s Report</p>	<p>Hartung expressed appreciation to the Upper Savannah staff for taking time out of their busy work schedules to report highlights to be included in the county investment and regular bi-monthly board reports.</p> <p>Hartung recognized Finance Director Melissa Phillips for her 35 years of service to the COG. She said Phillips goes above and beyond the list of responsibilities in her job description, particularly with her preparation for annual financial audits.</p> <p>Hartung updated the Board on the SCCOGS Annual Training Conference to be held Nov. 19-20 at Kingston Plantation in Myrtle Beach. Upper Savannah is responsible for planning the conference every 10 years, including 2023. Sandra Moore has been instrumental in planning the logistics, Hartung said. Hartung said the theme of this year’s conference is Reimagining Communities, and will feature a panel of speakers including mayors, city and county managers, economic developers, etc. who have been involved in projects leading to enhanced economic development, beautification, improved quality of life, and increased tourism. USCOG Board member Willie Norman will preside over the conference. The keynote speaker is</p>

	scheduled to be Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy Christopher Coes with the U.S. Department of Transportation.
Adjourn	Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.



Patricia C. Hartung
Executive Director