

**MINUTES
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
UPPER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
430 HELIX ROAD
GREENWOOD, SOUTH CAROLINA
APRIL 22, 2024**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jackie Brown, John Calhoun, Jim Coleman, Frank Daniel, Charles Goodwin, Otis Grier Jr., Charlie Henry, Tiffani Ireland, Shirley Jenkins, Charles Jennings, Theo Lane, Miliken Matthews, Marian Miller, Sen. Floyd Nicholson, Willie Norman, Randy Randall, David Sawyer, Roy Smith Jr., Albert Talbert and Faye Thomas.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Diane Anderson, Ken Durham, Qwen Etheredge, Wes McAllister, Sen. Shane Massey, Matthew Miller, Ernie Segars, Brandon Smith, Don Smoak, David Tribble and Sen. Danny Verdin.

STAFF PRESENT: Patricia Hartung, Sam Leaman, Melissa Phillips, Peggy Merritt, Cason Wright, Kal Kunkel, David Hays

GUEST PRESENT: Tracey Bedenbaugh, Piedmont Agency on Aging Chief Executive Officer; Scott Neely, Dominion Energy; James Walden, Regional Planning Manager, SCDOT.

Call to Order	<p>The meeting was held in person with the option to attend via conference call. Willie Norman gave the invocation and Vice Chairman Charles Jennings called the meeting to order.</p> <p>The February 26, 2024, minutes were approved unanimously with an amendment that Don Smoak was present at the meeting.</p>
Guest Presentation: Piedmont Agency on Aging	<p>Piedmont Agency on Aging (PAOA) Chief Executive Officer Tracey Bedenbaugh gave report on current activities in the Region.</p> <p>She said PAOA has facilities in Abbeville, Greenwood, Laurens and Saluda counties as well as in the Town of Ninety Six. The services they offer include home-delivered meals, congregate meals; medical, essential and congregate dining transportation; telephone reassurance, and foster grandparent program. Telephone reassurance enables PAOA staff to check the well-being of isolated seniors. Foster grandparent volunteers aged 55 and older are provided an AmeriCorps stipend to help children in public schools.</p> <p>Bedenbaugh told the story of 100-year-old client Mamie Gilchrist whose highlight of each day since 2015 is receiving a meal delivered by PAOA Elma Dillard. Otis Grier Jr. said his 93-year-old mother received meals from Floyd Nicholson, who has volunteered for eight years.</p> <p>Bedenbaugh said that during FY 2023, PAOA volunteers and staff delivered 198,000 meals, served 28,500 congregate meals, and traveled 224,000 point-to-point miles. The Agency impacted more than 1,000 lives in FY '23. She said "helping one person might not change the whole world, but it could change the world for one person."</p>

	<p>Bedenbaugh said PAOA needs a new nutrition center (kitchen) and is in the planning stages of building one behind the Agency’s Greenwood facility on South Emerald Road. She said the nutrition center located on Reynolds Park Drive in Greenwood was built in 1992 when 250 meals were prepared daily. Today, after the Agency began serving Abbeville, Laurens and Saluda counties years ago, approximately 900 meals are prepared daily. The Agency has added freezer space and storage facilities to try to keep up with the growth while also having to replace its air conditioning unit. She said the new nutrition center will be twice the size of the original. The building is expected to go out to bid in May 2024. She said the Agency is trying to raise funds to help pay for the building.</p> <p>Saluda Mayor Miliken Matthews said Saluda County needs more drivers to transport seniors. There was a discussion about a shortage of drivers, who are volunteers.</p>
<p>Upper Savannah Aging Program Update</p>	<p>Aging Program Director Peggy Merritt told Board members about Request for Proposals (RFPs) for Older Americans Act meals and for in-home and community-based services including transportation which were due March 20, 2024. She said USCOG Government Services Director Rick Green helped her put together a Review and Evaluation Committee. The Committee approved proposals from Piedmont Agency on Aging, Edgefield Senior Citizens Council and McCormick County Senior Center for meals and other services and Senior Catering to prepare meals for Edgefield and McCormick counties.</p> <p>Merritt said the Older Americans Act has been updated with new federal regulations as of March 15, 2024, and that entities have until Oct. 1, 2025, to comply with the changes. She said Upper Savannah and the State must update their Area Plans to make sure they comply with any new regulations.</p> <p>Merritt showed Board members dementia sensory blankets, fidget keychains and pop-it devices designed to help seniors keep their hands busy as a calming, soothing and stimulating tool. The blankets open as pouches and contain zippers, buttons, Velcro, beads etc. They will be distributed to caregivers of seniors with severe cases of dementia in the Region. She also said children in the Seniors Raising Children program will receive summer baskets containing items catered to each child’s interests with an emphasis on activities.</p> <p>She said Upper Savannah Area Agency on Aging (AAA) staff will participate in Children’s Day at the Greenwood YMCA April 27, Senior Day at the State Fairgrounds in Columbia May 1, Senior P.R.E.P. (Planning Resources for Emergency Preparedness) Day at Walgreens in Laurens May 3, GLEAMNS Community Action Day at Piedmont Technical College May 17, and Veteran’s Appreciation Day in Greenwood July 17 as outreach activities to get the word out about AAA services.</p>
<p>CDBG CARES Act and SC RIA Infrastructure Investment Program (SCIIP) in USCOG Region</p>	<p>Government Services Program Manager Cason Wright gave update on CDBG CARES Act Coronavirus (CV) projects and SC RIA (Rural Infrastructure Authority) Infrastructure Investment Program (SCIIP) activities.</p> <p>Wright said CDBG-CV funded activities are wrapping up with facilities projects being closed out. They include HVAC and ultraviolet air filtration for Abbeville Civic Center and ultraviolet air filtration at Abbeville Opera House totaling \$72,574, and air purifiers</p>

	<p>in Laurens School District 55 totaling \$161,219.16. The projects are providing clean air in these locations, particularly during the height of COVID pandemic.</p> <p>Wright said staff is continuing grant administration for the SCIIP program, which includes 20 projects totaling \$79,891,066 across all six counties in the Region. The COG is administering nine of these projects totaling \$26,598,719. The nine projects include City of Abbeville Upper Long Cane Waterline Connection (\$3.45 million) with construction estimated to be completed in May 2025, Town of Due West Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade (\$1.95 million) estimated to go out to bid in June 2024, Town of Edgefield Gymnasium Stormwater Improvements (\$790,000) estimated to go out to bid in May 2024, City of Clinton Miller’s Fork Basin Sewer Rehabilitation (\$4.25 million) estimated to go out to bid in October 2024, Laurens CPW Water System Improvements (\$10 million) estimated to go out to bid in fall 2024, McCormick CPW Mechanical Barscreen & Raw Water Pump Improvements (\$4.128 million) estimated to go out to bid in September 2024, Ninety Six CPW Viability Study (\$930,500) draft report expected in fall 2024, Town of Ware Shoals Water and Sewer Viability Planning (\$600,000) draft report expected in fall 2024, and Town of Ridge Spring Water System & Storm Drainage Evaluation (\$500,000) draft report expected in September 2024.</p>
<p>Workforce Development Program Update</p>	<p>Workforce Development Director Kal Kunkel gave overview of recent activities, informing the Board that U.S. DOL has completed monitoring of the H-1B Rural Healthcare Grant with which USCOG partnered with Pee Dee COG. The Upper Savannah portion of the grant involved training paramedics and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) through Piedmont Technical College (PTC), helping to alleviate shortages in the Region. He said the Department of Labor’s dislocated worker federal grant for which Upper Savannah was lead applicant with other workforce areas in the State will close out Aug. 19, 2024. Kunkel also said workforce staff, partners and service providers are being trained on revised workforce development policies and procedures in hopes of enhancing services and employment opportunities.</p> <p>Kunkel reported that 80 employers and 383 job seekers attended the Upper Savannah Regional Job Fair March 21 at PTC. He said the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce is tracking how many job seekers were hired as a result of the job fair and hoped to report those numbers soon.</p> <p>Kunkel told Board members that new workforce legislation bill H.R. 6655 introduced in December 2023 has passed the House and is currently in the Senate. The result of the legislation will be replacing the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) with A Stronger Workforce for America Act. Kunkel said WIOA needs updating, for instance emphasizing more community events to educate job seekers and businesses on services available.</p>
<p>Nominating Committee Appointment</p>	<p>Chairman Albert Talbert announced the re-appointment of the Nominating Committee for 2025-27, which will reconvene in June to appoint a new Board chairman and vice chairman. The Committee includes Chairman Floyd Nicholson, Wes McAllister and Jim Coleman.</p>
<p>Executive Director’s Report</p>	<p>Executive Director Patricia C. Hartung expressed belief that the State’s COGs would receive \$1 million in non-recurring funds in this year’s budget. The item has passed in the House and Senate Finance Subcommittee and was due for a vote in full Senate April 23. If it passes, Upper Savannah would receive an additional, one-time amount of \$100,000 in</p>

	<p>fiscal year 2024-25 to be used for approved, nonrecurring expenditures.</p> <p>Hartung said reorganization of the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control could result in the S.C. Department on Aging being moved to a new office called the Executive Office of Health and Policy. Bill S.915 has passed the Senate and is being deliberated in the House. The result of the bill could move the Department on Aging effective July 1, 2024. Hartung said she does not believe it will affect how the Upper Savannah Area Agency on Aging does business with the State. She said Upper Savannah and the other six COGs which have Aging departments hope to meet with the Department on Aging director in the fall.</p> <p>Hartung distributed the staff activities report.</p>
Adjourn	Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

Patricia C. Hartung
Executive Director