



MINUTES

APPALACHIAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2022 – 10:30 A.M.
COUNCIL BOARD ROOM WITH ZOOM OPTION
GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA

Members Present:

Sen. Thomas Alexander, Bob Briggs, Rocky Burgess, Rep. Mike Burns, David Cauthen, Dennis Claramunt, Rep. Neal Collins, Joe Dill, Ed Elliott, John Elliott, Ennis Fant, Ensley Feemster, Lillian Brock Flemming, George Fletcher, Mike Forrester, Sandra Gantt, Don Godbey, Ray Graham, Jane Hall, Henry Jolly, Butch Kirven, Jack Mabry, Willis Meadows, Dana Moore, Charles Pinson, E. Riley, Jeff Roberts, Mildred Tillerson, Cindy Wilson

Guests Present:

Susan Cyr, Joel Dill, William Grimsley, Jim Walden

Staff Present:

Chip Bentley, Lance Estep, Brooke Ferguson, Steve Pelissier, Tim Womack, Don Zimmer

Call to Order

Chairman Forrester called the meeting to order. Mr. Riley offered the invocation. Mr. Pelissier introduced guests, Secretary William Grimsley from the SC Department of Veterans' Affairs and Jim Walden from SCDOT. He also introduced two new board members, Charles Pinson serving as a minority member from Anderson County and Mayor Bob Briggs of Landrum, SC. Chairman Forrester asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the January 28, 2022, board meeting. Mr. Riley made a motion to adopt the minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Godbey. The motion was approved unanimously. The financial statement was accepted as information.

SC Department of Veterans' Affairs

Chairman Forrester introduced Secretary William Grimsley of the SC Department of Veterans' Affairs. He spoke of the challenges that Veterans face and of the need to have a sound Veteran

population. Secretary Grimsley explained that the SCDVA mission is to create and sustain an environment for Veterans to thrive and contribute to society. He reviewed the key points of the services provided: assisting Veterans in obtaining benefits, integrating the efforts of other service providers, advocating for Veterans in SC, and informing and educating the public.

Overview of ACOG's Transportation Planning Program and Introduction to the Long Range Transportation Plan Update

Chairman Forrester called on Jane Hall, Committee Chair, and Lance Estep, Planning Director, to report on the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Mr. Estep gave an overview of the LRTP and reported on recent committee activity. He explained that planning decisions are made by looking at factors like population and employment growth in the region. The list of projects go through a ranking system. He reviewed some of the upcoming changes from SCDOT and discussed next steps in the process. Mr. Estep answered questions from the board about specific transportation projects.

Report from the Finance Committee

Chairman Forrester asked Ensley Feemster, Committee Chair, to present information from the recent Finance Committee meeting. Mr. Feemster reported that the committee met in order to consider several budget amendments proposed by staff: limb clearing in the back lot (\$7,500); programming study, preliminary specifications for building expansion (\$1,000); Aging Services Minor Home Repair Program (\$60,000); furniture-chairs (\$7,500); security cameras (\$4,300); and a plotter (\$1,700). Mr. Pelissier clarified issues resulting in the need for the items. The full Finance Committee report is included in the board packet. Since the agency has sufficient funds and the performance in FY 2022 is strong, the Finance Committee recommended that the board approve the amendments to the budget for the items/services listed. Chairman Forrester called for a vote. The motion was approved unanimously.

Action Item

South Carolina Legislative Update

Chairman Forrester called on Brooke Ferguson, Economic Development Director, to update the board on legislative matters of interest to local governments. She reviewed the American Rescue Plan, including various grants. The Savannah River Site settlement funds are being allocated to the state by the General Assembly and a portion will help with transportation. Changes with election practices are being discussed. A bill was introduced in the SC General Assembly that will amend the federal vaccine mandate. Compassionate Care Act legalizes cannabis for medical use under limited uses and conditions. Cities and counties can have control of where dispensaries are located or opt out. Budget debates begin soon.

Executive Director's Report

Chairman Forrester asked Mr. Pelissier to give the Executive Director's report. Mr. Pelissier reported that he has scheduled to meet with all of the County Councils in the six-county region to review ACOG's Annual Report. He informed the board that copies of the Annual Report are available. Mr. Pelissier reminded the elected officials that the ethics filing is due the end of March.

Member Reports

Chairman Forrester requested that Mr. Pelissier share information about a recent situation at a long term care facility in Spartanburg. He stated that ACOG's ombudsmen worked diligently to help relocate thirty-seven (37) seniors from an unsafe facility that was closed by DHEC. He praised ACOG's staff for their immediate response to the urgent need. Mr. Womack answered questions from the board about the condition of the facility and the patients. He stated that the facility had been reported to DHEC in the past.

Mr. Claramunt reported issues with citizens having difficulty contacting Social Security. Members gave suggestions.

Mr. Dill asked the board for committee member recommendations for the Regional Aging Advisory Committee (RAAC). There are vacancies that need to be filled at this time.

The next board meeting will be held on March 25, 2022, at 10:30 AM in the ACOG Board Room. Members may also attend through Zoom.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:50 AM.

Mike Forrester, Chairman

The South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments has complied with the Freedom of Information Act in scheduling and conducting this meeting.

