

**SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING
May 28, 2025
Commission Office**

Convened: 10:00 A.M.

Adjourned: 10:58 A.M.

Members In Attendance:

Mr. Jim Foster (via Zoom)
Hon. Randy Bunch
Hon. Laura Burke (via Zoom)
Hon. Patrick Reeder
Mrs. Sharon Clapper
Hon. JR Winck
Hon. Scott Hunt

Ms. Beth McGregor
Hon. Mike Stiles
Mr. Jay Cessna
Mr. Rick Strait (via Zoom)
Hon. Pamela Tokar-Ickes
Hon. Scott Walls
Mr. Donald Rhodes III

Others In Attendance:

Mr. Steven Howsare
Mrs. Rebecca Canavan
Mr. George Gvozdoch, Jr.
Ms. Regina Klevan

Ms. Emily Hite
Ms. Tina Taylor
Mr. Lee Slusser
Mrs. Renee Best

CALL TO ORDER:

Commissioner Hunt, President, called the meeting to order at 10:00 A.M.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Commissioner Hunt asked if there were any public comments. Hearing none, the meeting continued without comment.

MINUTES, MARCH 19, 2025 and APRIL 21, 2025:

A motion was entered by Mrs. Clapper to approve the March 19, 2025, Board of Directors meeting minutes and the April 21, 2025 Personnel Committee meeting minutes, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Reeder and was unanimously approved.

SAP&DC FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 OPERATIONAL BUDGET

Mrs. Rebecca Canavan, Director of Finance, referred to the 2025-2026 Operational Budget Comparison Report that was included in the meeting packet. The report contained a comparison between the FY25 and FY26

budgets. FY25 was budgeted for \$12.7 million dollars, and FY26 is budgeted for \$10.9 million dollars which is a change of approximately \$1.8 million dollars or a 14% decrease. There was a change in direct and indirect salary and benefits of roughly \$25,000. The anomaly is that a 3% pay increase for staff has been built into the budget. There were also a few staff changes; last year there was a full-time staff member budgeted, and this year it is a part-time position which affected benefits as well. A staff member is retiring at the end of June, and their replacement salary is also built into the budget. There is a new position built in for the EARN program that was approved at the Personnel Committee meeting that was held in April.

Mrs. Canavan reviewed each of the programs' projected expenses/revenues for FY25 and FY26. Regarding the Workforce Program, there is a \$4.2 million decrease in funding due to cuts in their program. The EARN Program was level funding from FY25 to FY26. The Business Development expenses changed by approximately \$173,000. The SCAA program added JARI to the program as a subrecipient, and the Marketplace has been extended for one more year. Regarding the Planning expenses, the Smart Grant was only budgeted for one year since it is in its second and final year.

Mrs. Canavan reported that the FY26 budget is balanced, and SAP&DC is not requesting money from any of the counties.

Commissioner Hunt stated that a recommendation was made by the Finance Committee that met prior to approve SAP&DC's Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Operational Budget, as presented.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Winck to approve SAP&DC's Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Operational Budget, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Tokar-Ickes and was unanimously approved.

FINANCE REPORT:

Mrs. Canavan presented the Accounts Payable list of invoices that were paid in March and April in addition to the General Fund Ending Balance. She noted that there was nothing unusual that was paid; the Bank Account Summaries include the normal operations of the Commission.

A motion was entered by Mrs. Clapper to approve the Accounts Payable and Bank Account Summaries, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Winck and was unanimously approved.

SAP&DC ACCOUNTING POLICY UPDATES:

Mrs. Canavan reported that recommendations were made to SAP&DC due to a fraud incident that occurred a few months ago. As a result, SAP&DC staff attended Cyber Security training in April. Suggestions were also made to update SAP&DC's Accounting Policy regarding their ACH policy in addition to making changes to their current insurance policy to include fraud coverage.

Mrs. Canavan reviewed the changes made to the Authority for EFT Transfers policy. SAP&DC staff will now contact the vendor or subrecipient by phone to verify authenticity before processing the payment. This step is in addition to the current verification steps already in place.

Mrs. Canavan shared that insurance and bonding coverage for SAP&DC was also reviewed to determine if the necessary coverage was in place. As a result of the review, ERISA Bonding and Cyber Deception policies have been added.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Stiles to approve the updates to SAP&DC's Accounting Policy, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Foster and was unanimously approved.

EARN PROGRAM:

Ms. Regina Klevan, EARN Program Director, provided an update on the EARN Program and shared information on the 2025/2026 budget. She shared that she will be retiring on June 30, 2025, and introduced Ms. Emily Hite, EARN Case Manager, as her replacement.

Ms. Klevan referred to the 2025/2026 Budget summary and noted that the EARN program has level funding for the new program year. She reviewed the totals of the TANF Cash portion and the SNAP portion of the report. Ms. Klevan then reviewed the breakdown of program expenses in detail. EARN staff consists of six Case Managers and an Assistant in addition to the newly proposed position. SAP&DC directly employs the staff and subcontracts services such as instruction, job placement, and job development. There is money allocated for Paid Work Experience, Credentials, and Incentives. The Contractor amounts listed on the summary are preliminary; on June 12th the actual amounts will be approved at the LMC Meeting.

Ms. Klevan reported that limited childcare continues to be a challenge. Staff continues to juggle remote activity versus on site activity with all of the clients. Job placement is always a challenge as many jobs do not offer enough hours to allow a person to get off of public assistance.

Ms. Klevan referred to the SAP&DC Salary Grade handout that she passed out to the Board members. She asked for the Board to consider moving the salary grade for Case Managers from a Professional Team Pay Grade P-2 to a P-1 level. She noted that the Case Managers work extremely hard in dealing with clients, and their job is very difficult and stressful. EARN has lost good staff due to the salary and the fact that it is a difficult job. She shared that there is money in the budget to accommodate this request.

EARN PROGRAM NEW POSITION:

Ms. Klevan referred to the EARN Program Monitor job summary that was included in the meeting pack and provided background on the proposed position. This job will be responsible for the provision of program monitoring services for all Welfare Programs administered by the Commission. Ms. Klevan explained that she has not had sufficient time to perform consistent monitoring of the subcontractors and Case Managers. She would like to see quarterly monitoring reports done on all subcontractors in addition to advising corrective action plans with the necessary follow-up. This person will be going out in the field more frequently and visiting each county every month in addition to visiting the subcontractors. Ms. Klevan noted that there is enough funding available for this position for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Steven Howsare, Executive Director, stated that the Personnel Committee voted for the approval and recommendation for the Board to approve the EARN Program Monitor position. The position is included in the 2025-2026 budget, and it is a necessary position that will help to mitigate any potential issues.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Tokar-Ickes to approve the addition of the EARN Program Monitor position to SAP&DC's staff complement, as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. McGregor and was unanimously approved.

Commissioner Hunt thanked Ms. Klevan for her years of service; it is greatly appreciated. Ms. Klevan stated that it has been a privilege working the job and serving the participants.

USDA INTERMEDIARY RELENDING PROGRAM (IRP) LOAN APPLICATION SUMMARY:

Ms. Tina Taylor, Director of Business Lending Services, provided an update on the IRP Loan Program and loan application status. SAP&DC will be applying for a \$1 million dollar IRP loan with a 1% interest rate for 30 years. The first three years are interest only, and then 27 years of principal and interest payments moving forward. SAP&DC has had four IRP loans in the past; three of them are paid off and the last one will be paid in full on April 31, 2030. There is a large backlog in the loan program, and they are out of in-house funding. They are looking to get additional money to recapitalize and fund more programs.

Ms. Taylor shared that SAP&DC carries a loan portfolio of 157 active loans with an outstanding principal of approximately \$22 million dollars. SAP&DC's delinquency rate is only .79%.

The IRP application will be submitted for the June 25th round and if approved, the funding will be received some time in the fourth quarter. If there is no money to approve it during this round, then it will be moved to the next round.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Walls to approve the Resolution, as presented, in support of SAP&DC's Business Lending Program submitting a loan application for the USDA Intermediary Relending Program. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bunch and was unanimously approved.

BUSINESS LENDING SERVICES REPORT:

Ms. Taylor presented and reviewed the actions taken by the Loan Review Committee. Ms. Taylor reported that there were four projects approved since the last Board of Directors meeting.

Ms. Taylor then presented and reviewed the list of applications and projects in detail: All applications were approved unanimously by the Loan Review Committee, as presented, and are now presented to the Board of Directors for concurrence.

A motion was entered by Mr. Rhodes to concur with the actions taken by the Loan Review Committee, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Stiles and was unanimously approved.

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) RESOLUTION:

Mr. Lee Slusser, Director of Planning and Community Development, reported that the CEDS Resolution is one of the larger planning and analysis documents that SAP&DC is directly responsible for. The CEDS is an economic development strategy for the six-county area that is required to receive EDA funding, and SAP&DC is required to update this plan every five years. *Advancing the Alleghenies, the Southern Alleghenies Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), 2025-2029* was prepared by staff and the CEDS Committee and was adopted by a vote of the Board of Directors on December 4, 2024. The plan must be certified back to the EDA and the Board annually to satisfy the steps taken to implement and update the plan.

A motion was entered by Mr. Cessna to approve the CEDS Resolution, as presented, in support of SAP&DC's activities to date in updating and implementing the CEDS plan. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Clapper and was unanimously approved.

SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES GREENWAYS AND OPEN SPACE NETWORK ACTION PLAN:

Mr. Slusser provided an update on SAP&DC's progress towards submitting an application to the Greenways, Trails, and Recreation Program (GTRP) of the Commonwealth Financing Authority (CFA) and DCED to fund a new regional greenways and open space network plan. A copy of the agreement and resolution was included in the meeting packet.

Mr. Slusser shared that the existing Greenways and Open Space Network Plan is from 2007; DCNR has threatened to start deducting points for projects coming into the region due to the plan being so old and outdated. He has received all the required information and signatures from the counties to complete the Grant Cooperation Agreement and Resolution. The application will be submitted to DCED and GTRP today. SAP&DC staff will now begin to work on the comprehensive plan part of the project that will come later this year.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Winck to approve the submission of the Southern Alleghenies Greenways and Open Space Network Action Plan, as presented, in addition to granting SAP&DC's Executive Director authorization to sign the Grant Cooperation Agreement and Resolution on behalf of SAP&DC. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Stiles and was unanimously approved.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROJECTS:

Mr. Slusser explained that SAP&DC is designated by the Federal Office of Management and Budget (under E.O. 12372) to review requests for Federal financial assistance within its six-county service area for concurrence with relevant regional planning documents. The projects requesting federal financial assistance were presented, reviewed, and noted as consistent with the Commission's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Tokar-Ickes to approve the Projects Under Executive Order 12372, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rhodes and was unanimously approved.

A motion was entered by Mrs. Clapper to go into Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Winck and was unanimously approved.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Stiles to come out of Executive Session. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rhodes and was unanimously approved.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Mr. Slusser referred to the SAP&DC Data Dashboard Project handout and shared that SAP&DC has been invited to join other Pennsylvanian EDDs/LDDs in a joint effort to set up an online data dashboard website for each region. The dashboard will provide detailed, self-updating socioeconomic data for the region and each of our counties as part of the SAP&DC website. This could be of great use to our region's economic development partners, municipalities, counties, and grant writers, and it will increase SAP&DC's online presence and usefulness.

Mr. Slusser stated that if this project is approved by the Board, the SAP&DC data dashboard would be funded through an EDA grant for between three and five years, after which annual maintenance costs are estimated to be between \$2,000 and \$4,000. While the dashboard is being paid for by EDA, staff will monitor its use and recommend whether or not it should be continued after the EDA grant expires.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Tokar-Ickes to approve SAP&DC formally joining an online data dashboard project, as presented, in addition to granting SAP&DC's Executive Director authorization to sign the associated contract. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Winck and was unanimously approved.

- Commissioner Hunt reminded members that the next SAP&DC Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 16, 2025, beginning at 10:00 A.M.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:58.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. JR Winck

Secretary