

**SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
NOVEMBER 19, 2025  
COMMISSION OFFICE**

**Convened: 10:00 A.M.**

**Adjourned: 11:13 A.M.**

**Members In Attendance**

Mr. Rick Strait (via Zoom)  
Hon. Laura Burke  
Hon. Randy Bunch  
Mrs. Sharon Clapper (via Zoom)  
Hon. J.R. Winck (via Zoom)  
Hon. Scott Hunt  
Mr. Donald Rhodes III  
Hon. Pamela Tokar-Ickes  
Hon. David Kessler

Ms. Beth McGregor  
Hon. Hervey Hann  
Mr. Jay Cessna  
Hon. Deb Baughman  
Hon. Scott Walls  
Hon. Jeff Thomas  
Hon. Brian Fochtman  
Hon. Mike Stiles (via Zoom)  
Mr. Jim Foster

**Others In Attendance:**

Mr. Steve Howsare  
Mrs. Rebecca Canavan  
Mr. George Gvozdoch, Jr.  
Mrs. Renee Best  
Mrs. Jennifer Sklodowski  
Ms. Emily Hite

Mr. Lee Slusser  
Ms. Tina Taylor  
Mr. Zack Lee  
Mr. Matt Bauerlin  
Ms. Lynsie Vieira

**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, SEPTEMBER 17, 2025**

A motion was entered by Mr. Foster to approve the September 17, 2025, Board of Directors' meeting minutes, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kessler and was unanimously approved.

## **FY 2024-2025 SAP&DC SINGLE AUDIT**

Mrs. Rebecca Canavan, Director of Finance, introduced Ms. Lynsie Vieira of Maher Duessel, who then presented an overview of SAP&DC's Financial Statement/Audit for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

Ms. Vieira provided an overview of the audit procedures and financial statements included in the meeting packet. There were four reports issued: Financial Statements/Single Audit, Communication to Those Charged with Governance Letter, Form 990, and the Data Collection Form.

Ms. Vieira then reviewed the Communication to Those Charged with Governance Letter. Maher Duessel's responsibility under GAAS and Uniform Guidance is to express opinions about whether the financial statements prepared by management are fairly presented in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States. The report was backed with findings and deficiencies in which none were found. There were no new accounting policies adopted this year. There were no audit findings or issues found during the course of the audit, nor were there any changes or anything out of the ordinary found. The Financial Statements, Government Auditing Standards and Uniform Guidance received an unmodified opinion which is the highest opinion that Maher Duessel can offer.

Ms. Vieira provided a detailed summary of the Financial Statements, Restricted Fund Balance, and Notes Receivable by Program. Form 990 was then reviewed, and she noted that it is currently in draft form. It is best practice to have Form 990 reviewed by Board members for comments and changes prior to filing.

Mrs. Canavan thanked Ms. Vieira and her staff, SAP&DC staff, and the Board members for their help and support during the audit. She emailed the draft of Form 990 in addition to the financial statements to the Board and asked that they are returned by December 19, 2025 with any comments or changes.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Kessler to approve SAP&DC's Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Audit and submission of SAP&DC's Form 990 following review by the Board of Directors and contingent upon any comments/concerns being received by December 19, 2025, and those changes being made. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Walls and was unanimously approved.

## **FINANCE REPORT**

Mrs. Canavan presented the Accounts Payable list of invoices that were paid in September and October in addition to the General Fund Ending Balance.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Thomas to approve the Accounts Payable and Bank Account Summaries, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Tokar-Ickes and was unanimously approved.

### **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM UPDATE**

Mr. Zack Lee, Director of Business Development provided an update on business development programs.

- Regional Export Network Program - Over the program year there were 34 active clients, 136 projects, 300 export actions taken, 19 exporting companies that reported sales resulting from SAP&DC's assistance. There was \$50.5 million in export sales reported by clients in our region. Export sales companies reported \$79.5 million in economic impact that helped to support 175 jobs and generated \$2.1 million in state and local tax revenue.
- APEX Accelerator Program - Over the program year the program assisted businesses to secure over \$149.28 million in local, state, and federal government contracts with approximately 1,600 contract actions. There were over 3,100 counseling hours conducted with 232 companies program wide. They introduced 43 new businesses to government contracting and held or supported 45 outreach events that reached over 4,000 attendees. This program has been running for 37 years.

Mr. Lee shared that he received notice from DCED that SAP&DC's State Prep and Engage funding has been approved.

### **EARN PROGRAM UPDATE**

Ms. Emily Hite, EARN Program Director, provided an update on the EARN (Employment Advancement and Retention Network) Program. The EARN program serves individuals who have been receiving TANF cash assistance as well as SNAP food stamp assistance with the primary goal that they obtain full time employment and no longer need assistance from the programs.

Ms. Hite reported that there continues to be high enrollment levels across all six counties. Currently there are 198 participants being served. Referral activity has also increased significantly; during the first quarter of this program year they have received 174 referrals from the county assistance offices compared to 112 during the same period last program year. There have been federal changes to the SNAP work requirements that now mandate recipients must either be employed or participate in an employment and training program like EARN. It is anticipated that there will be a notable increase in SNAP referrals by the end of this year.

Ms. Hite shared that since the start of the program year there were five participants who earned credentials or a degree, 70 participants have gained employment, and they maintain a 90 percent hourly participation rate across all activities.

Ms. Hite provided a staffing update. The monitoring position was filled internally by Mrs. Cheryl Batemen, who was previously a Case Manager. The Case Manager position has been filled, and the new employee will start on December 8<sup>th</sup>.

The annual monitoring review process with the state has started and will take place tomorrow.

### **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

Mrs. Jennifer Sklodowski, Director of Workforce Development, provided an update on Workforce Development events. She shared that on October 31<sup>st</sup>, Mr. Jim Walker retired with 31 years of service with a breakfast sendoff that was held in his honor. His successor, Ms. Sydney Burkes is doing a great job.

Mrs. Sklodowski reported that the workforce development full board met on November 12<sup>th</sup> at the Hampton Inn and at that time the local plan was approved for state submission. The plan was submitted to the state on November 17<sup>th</sup>.

Mrs. Sklodowski shared that Youth OJTs have been suspended for the remainder of the fiscal year due to budget restraints. She advised staff that if they have a youth and depending on their age, they might qualify as an adult; there is ample money in adult dislocated worker that is set aside for OJTs.

Mrs. Sklodowski noted that she was asked to submit a timeline to the state as to when they will be submitting an RFP for the One Stops and Title I funding which is currently being worked on. Policies and procedures are being reviewed, and the RFP should go out in the spring for PY26. The last time SAP&DC issued an RFP for Title I was in 2014.

Mrs. Sklodowski shared that the workforce program is in a very stable position for WIOA and TANF funding.

## **PENN HIGHLANDS HEALTHCARE LSA GRANT RESOLUTION**

Mr. Lee Slusser, Director Planning & Community Development, reported that SAP&DC has been asked by Penn Highlands Healthcare to apply to the Granting Agency for a LSA grant under the DCED Local Share Account Statewide Program in the amount of \$178,000.00 to aid in the cost of installing and establishing a digital X-ray room at their Tyrone facility. Penn Highlands Healthcare will handle the management of the grant. If they are awarded the funds, a contract will be created stating the specific roles for SAP&DC and Penn Highlands Healthcare.

Commissioner Hunt stated that Cambria County has done this in the past with the Airport Authority and an MOU was created defining that they were just the applicant; the Airport Authority would handle everything else. If the LSA grant is awarded, there should also be language added to the contract that the equipment will be used for what it was applied for and will stay in the location/county it was applied for.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Walls to approve the Resolution, as presented, in support of SAP&DC serving as an applicant and submitting an application to the Granting Agency for a LSA grant under the DCED Local Share Account Statewide Program on behalf of Penn Highlands Healthcare. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bunch and was unanimously approved with Commissioner Fochtman abstaining.

## **BUSINESS LENDING REPORT**

Ms. Tina Taylor, Business Lending Program Manager, presented and reviewed the actions taken by the Loan Review Committee. Ms. Taylor reported that there were three projects approved since the last Board of Directors meeting.

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

Mr. Steve Howsare, Executive Director, shared that he and Ms. Taylor met with some of the legislators to discuss raising the lending cap from \$400,000 to \$1 million as the projects continue to get larger. There has not been any progress made due to the budget, but they will continue to work on this.

Ms. Taylor reported that there are currently ten large poultry barn projects and some cost up to \$15 million. The current \$400,000 PIDA cap is insufficient for large projects, and it really needs to be increased.

Ms. Taylor provided an update on the USDA loan application for \$1 million that was submitted in June 2026. She received a Federal Award Letter but has not received the official \$1 million USDA Loan Notification yet; she is hopeful to receive it soon.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Howsare reported that Mr. George Gvozdoch, SAP&DC Solicitor, has agreed to continue to represent the Commission as both its general counsel and loan program legal counsel for Calendar Year 2026 with no requested increase or adjustment in the \$15,000 rate for each function.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Tokar-Ickes to approve retaining Mr. George Gvozdoch as SAP&DC's general legal counsel and loan program legal counsel at the rate of \$15,000 for each function, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kessler and was unanimously approved.

Mr. Howsare discussed the issue that occurred in Somerset County where the KOZ Extension Application deadline was missed. There was a failure to obtain the required resolutions from the taxing bodies which resulted in the loss of KOZ eligibility for 16 parcels. There was a communication breakdown, and it was acknowledged that earlier intervention could have prevented this issue.

Mr. Slusser provided background on Keystone Opportunity Zones and their benefits which include state and local tax abatement. KOZ designations are valid for 7 to 10 years. The role of SAP&DC as the KOZ Administrator was reviewed in addition to IDC's role and the approval process.

Mr. Slusser reviewed the Somerset County KOZ Extension Application process and timelines as to when work was completed and exchanges with the IDC. He shared a proposed improvement process to the KOZ extension application process to prevent this from happening again. The commissioners will be copied on all critical correspondence regarding a KOZ Extension Application. SAP&DC will also be more aggressive in their follow-through with the involved IDC and in working with the commissioners.

Mr. Slusser reviewed the upcoming schedule of KOZ Extension Applications through 2035 for all six counties. Commissioner Thomas noted that commissioners should be made aware of the extensions at least a year in advance to ensure everything gets completed and submitted on time.

Commissioner Tokar-Ickes stated that they have reached out to Senator Stefano to see if there is some kind of legislative solution to resolve this. Moving forward she stressed that SAP&DC staff need to call the commissioners if they run into any problems with getting the required documents or communication issues with the IDC.

Commissioner Hunt provided Board members with a copy of SAP&DC's staff Holiday schedule for 2026 and the SAP&DC Board of Directors meeting schedule for 2026.

Mr. Howsare noted that the next Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for January 21, 2025, and will serve as the Annual Reorganization meeting. This meeting will be held at the Blair County Convention Center beginning at 10:00 AM.

Mr. Howsare shared that he received an appointment from Governor Shapiro to be on the Governor's Advisory Council of Rural Affairs.

Mr. Howsare shared information on the Rural Health Transformation Program. He attended an Advisory Council Meeting in Harrisburg a few weeks ago and it was reported that there will be up to \$200 million a year for 5 years available to the state. Most likely the amount will be between \$150 million to \$170 million. Details are to be finalized, and an advisory board is to be established. Mr. Howsare will be asking for suggestions for people to appoint to this advisory board. He will be attending a seminar in Indiana County tomorrow and will hopefully get additional information to share with the Board.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:13 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. J.R. Winck

Secretary