

SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING
July 15, 2026
Commission Office

Convened: 10:00 A.M.

Adjourned: 11:10 A.M.

Members In Attendance:

Hon. Randy Bunch
Hon. Scott Hunt
Hon. Patrick Reeder
Mrs. Sharon Clapper
Hon. J.R. Winck (via Zoom)
Hon. Hervey Hann
Hon. Deb Baughman

Hon. Mike Stiles (via Zoom)
Hon. Amy Webster
Ms. Erin Abel (via Zoom)
Mr. Donald Rhodes III (via Zoom)
Hon. Scott Walls
Hon. Jeff Thomas (via Zoom)
Hon. Keith Rager (via Zoom)

Others In Attendance:

Mr. Steven Howsare
Mrs. Rebecca Canavan
Mr. George Gvozdoch, Jr.
Ms. Emily Hite
Mrs. Jennifer Sklodowski

Mrs. Sherry Socie
Ms. Tina Taylor
Mr. Lee Slusser
Mrs. Renee Best
Mr. Matt Bjorkman (via Zoom)

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, MAY 27, 2026

A motion was entered by Mrs. Clapper to approve the May 27, 2026, Board of Directors meeting minutes, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bunch and was unanimously approved.

FINANCE REPORT

Mrs. Rebecca Canavan, Director of Finance, reported that fiscal staff are currently working on the year end close for SAP&DC FY 2025-2026. The audit is underway and remains on schedule for presentation at the November board meeting. The auditor search is ready to be released in August. Once proposals are received, Mrs. Canavan will forward them to the Finance Committee for review and scoring.

Mrs. Canavan presented the Accounts Payable list of invoices that were paid in May and June in addition to the General Fund Ending Balance. She noted that the bank account decreased by approximately \$600,000 due to bill payments; receivables are expected to come in to cover those costs. There was an increase in DVHT health insurance costs resulting from the addition of a new employee and a dependent.

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

Mrs. Canavan shared that Somerset County lost two fiscal employees and she will be assisting with the transition until the positions are filled.

SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD (SAWDB)

Mrs. Jennifer Sklodowski, Director of Workforce Development, reported that the Executive Board met on July 14th for their monthly meeting. She shared that the program met the 80% WIOA expenditure requirement for PY25. The budget has been approved, and provider allocations have been sent out for PY26. The providers have been informed of their funding reductions. Goodwill Industries, which serve Bedford, Blair, and Cambria Counties, received a significant reduction. Mrs. Sklodowski had previously asked providers to submit staff compliments to help determine how funds could be distributed equally while maintaining quality services. Based on that review, it was determined that Goodwill Industries had an overabundance of staff that exceeded available funding. As a result, nearly \$900,000 was removed from Goodwill's staffing budget to preserve workforce board staff positions, resulting in a 33% cut in Goodwill's staff.

During the One Stop Operator (OSO) meeting held on July 14th, it was reported that the PA CareerLink® satellite office located at YPCC in Ebensburg may be closing due to declining foot traffic. The OSO will be reaching out to the consortium partners to gather their input; feedback will be provided to Mrs. Sklodowski before a final decision is made.

Commissioner Hunt requested a meeting with Mrs. Sklodowski, Cambria County Commissioners, and PA CareerLink® staff to discuss the potential impact of the office closure and to review how other offices in the county are addressing similar needs.

Mrs. Sklodowski shared that she is currently looking for other funding opportunities. In previous years, the region received substantial WIOA funding, reducing the need to pursue other funding sources. She encouraged the workforce board members and the OSO to utilize community partners, county commissioners, and economic development organizations to identify opportunities to grow workforce services and secure supplemental funding as long as WIOA dollars are being cut.

Mrs. Sklodowski reported that Southern Alleghenies has partnered with Westmoreland-Fayette for a \$1.5 million ARC grant. If awarded, \$350,000 will be allocated to the Southern Alleghenies workforce region with a dollar-for-dollar match. The initiative is the Regional Healthcare Employment Ecosystem Collaborative and includes funding opportunities for additional OJT training, ITA training for education, as well as incumbent worker training. When WIOA is reauthorized, the anticipated 50% training mandate will make incumbent worker funding very important. Southern Alleghenies currently funds approximately 18% on training. If the 50% requirement must be met, Mrs. Sklodowski will have to pull for incumbent worker training from businesses to meet those guidelines. The grant proposal includes \$100,000 for incumbent worker training in the healthcare industry that would provide an additional funding source to support healthcare related training initiatives.

Mrs. Sklodowski shared that TANF Youth funding has been under scrutiny for several years. In the past, Career Planners were able to use these funds to offer robust summer youth programs. Unfortunately, the state will no longer allow the current eligibility guidelines. Going forward, youth eligibility will be determined based on household income rather than the youth's individual income. As a result, youth will no longer be automatically eligible and must meet parental income requirements. This change will affect the summer program, and Mrs. Sklodowski is exploring several grant opportunities to supplement the funding.

Mrs. Clapper noted that the workforce board can no longer rely on a single funding source. She stated that educational grants will be pursued to help provide youth with employment opportunities and to assist with supportive service costs. She further noted that the workforce board must restructure its approach and continue seeking outside funding opportunities.

Mrs. Sklodowski shared that Southern Alleghenies has partnered with Westmoreland-Fayette on a \$1.2 million WORC grant application. She received a strong letter of support from JWF Industries who will be assisting throughout the grant process.

Mrs. Sklodowski noted that PA CareerLink® staff attended a training session in June led by motivational workforce speaker Coach Daryl Andrews. The training was well received, and Coach Andrews did an excellent job.

Mr. Steven Howsare, Executive Director, shared that Ms. Emily Hite, Director of EARN, is interested in offering the same training for EARN staff and partner staff. She is working on a proposal that should be ready for the September board meeting.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM UPDATE

Mrs. Sherry Socie, Director of Business Development, reported that on June 26th she submitted the ARC PREP grant for \$411,425 for area business development funding that includes business lending services, government procurement, international trade, and marketing. She noted that this was approximately a \$50,000 decrease from prior years.

Mrs. Socie also reported that quarterly reports are due at the end of July. Mr. Zack Lee, former Director of Business Development, has been assisting with these reports while continuing to help with the job transition.

Mrs. Socie shared that she will be attending a DCED ARC PREP Kick off meeting in Harrisburg next week. She is hopeful that budget updates will be provided at this meeting.

Mrs. Socie also reported that the ARC PREP final reporting is due on August 3rd.

SAP&DC MINI-GRANT PROGRAM

Mr. Matt Bjorkman, Transportation Program Manager, reported that a one-year extension has been requested for Round 10 funds that were awarded in January 2024. The extension is being requested for two reasons:

- The TOPP Trail Project received a Technical Assistance Grant from SAP&DC and would like to utilize the funds at a later date due to several project timelines.
- A supplemental round of funding was awarded resulting in some projects receiving funding later than the majority of award recipients. This extension will provide additional time for those projects to be completed.

Mr. Bjorkman noted that DCNR has requested a letter outlining the status of the Mini-Grant projects that received funding. If approved, the extension will go through December 2027.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Baughman to approve the request for a one-year extension of the contract between SAP&DC and PaDCNR, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Clapper and was unanimously approved.

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (P&CD) PROGRAM UPDATE

Mr. Lee Slusser, Director of Planning and Community Development, presented an update on current regional activities and initiatives. Some projects that were reviewed include:

- The Rural Health Transformation (RHT) Program continues to move forward. The PA Department of Health will provide SAP&DC with \$100,000 for the first year and \$25,000 annually thereafter to

support a Department of Health employee responsible for setting up the Rural Care Collaborative (RCC). This Regional Policy Specialist employee will be housed at SAP&DC and is expected to begin soon. The proposal for the state includes recommended categories for people to serve on the RCC. Each RCC will consist of a prescribed roster and will be responsible for reviewing and making decisions on grant applications, as well as identifying priorities for their region. Representation from each county and all segments of the healthcare industry will be needed.

Mr. Howsare reported that the state was awarded \$193 million from the RHT Program at the end of last year. These funds will be distributed to grant applicants by PREP region. The original goal was to have the Regional Policy Specialist in place by July, but SAP&DC is still waiting for the contract. SAP&DC was recently provided a list of potential candidates for input. The Department of Health will also pay SAP&DC rent for office space over the next five years.

He stated that the program aims to improve access to care and outcomes, use technology to drive innovation, expand partnerships for change, create a robust workforce to address regional needs, use data driven solutions, and implement financial sustainability strategies. For this year, the state received the grant request directly and will be announcing funding amounts shortly. Once established, the RCC will review projects within the region and make funding recommendations to the state.

Mr. Howsare noted that he prefers to keep the RCC smaller to support efficient decision making. The state is suggesting having subcommittees for each group which could be comprised of a larger group to participate and provide input to the process. He also noted a strong interest in the initiative, with many people reaching out to him about participating in the program.

- The CEDS will be updated this year, and Mr. Slusser will reach out to the CEDS committee for their ideas. One of the key goals of the CEDS is to support investment in outdoor recreation. An appendix will be created and maintained with a list of outdoor recreation projects throughout the region. Maintaining an up-to-date appendix can strengthen grant applications, as many DCNR and ARC grants award additional points for having a regional updated appendix document.
- The state has unveiled a new submission procedure for the Appalachian Regional Commission through its online web portal which is supposed to be more simplified. They are moving towards a rolling application basis, which moves away from prioritizing projects based on regional importance and toward a first come first serve approach.
- P&CD staff are helping to assemble the ARC application for the Horseshoe Trail Network Project and are working with the Blair County Trail, Park, and Recreation Authority.
- The ARC grant has been submitted for East Providence Rising and looks promising for approval.

- POWER grant applications through ARC are currently being developed with Penn Highlands, Bottleworks, Penn State, and the Richland School District.
- An ARISE grant was submitted to fund a study to potentially set up a revolving loan fund in the amount of \$190,000 for reuse of multiuse downtown buildings in 16 counties.
- P&CD staff are currently closing out the SMART Grant that funded the Emergency Delivery Services project in Johnstown. The project was not awarded federal funding in the second round, but efforts continue to secure alternative funding and expand the project.

Mr. Bjorkman shared that to continue this project, PennDOT funding is being pursued. He noted that PennDOT has been working with several SAP&DC partners to develop a grant regarding services involving drones.

- County Comprehensive Plan for Alleghenies Ahead - Mr. Slusser thanked the Board for promptly returning the required resolutions. The application is due September 1st, and all materials are ready for submission. Mr. Slusser also requested letters of support from the legislators and noted that the project is likely to get funded. If awarded, next year will involve the process of setting up county steering committees, securing meeting spaces, and engaging the community in the planning process to ensure community participation.

Commissioner Baughman asked how long additional resources would be needed. Mr. Slusser reviewed the project timeline and noted that some work will continue into 2028. A comprehensive plan typically takes two years to complete. Commissioner Baughman also made note that there will be Commissioner and Board changes in January 2028 so there could be new people working on this initiative.

Commissioner Hann asked Mr. Slusser to expand on the Fulton County Medical Center project. Mr. Slusser stated that they have applied for a \$250,000 ARC grant to be matched with their own money to help recruit nurses and other staff.

- Mr. Slusser reported that he met with Bishop Guilfoyle School, and they would like SAP&DC to serve as the grant applicant for a LSA grant that would be used to fund the replacement of the school's gym bleachers. He emphasized that any agreement between SAP&DC and Bishop Guilfoyle School must clearly define the roles and requirements to ensure compliance with applicable grant guidelines.

Mr. Slusser shared that Ms. Janice Streightiff, Planning and Community Development Program Assistant will be retiring on July 17th after 26 years of service.

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 Webster to approve the Projects Under Executive Order 12372, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Clapper and was unanimously approved.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Commissioner Hunt reminded members that the next SAP&DC Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 16, 2026, beginning at 10:00 A.M.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:10.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. J.R. Winck

Secretary