

SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING
September 16, 2026
Commission Office

Convened: 10:00 A.M.

Adjourned: 11:25 A.M.

Members In Attendance:

Hon. Randy Bunch
Hon. Scott Hunt
Ms. Sharon Clapper
Hon. J.R. Winck
Hon. Hervey Hann
Hon. Deb Baughman (via Zoom)
Hon. David Kessling
Hon. Pam Tokar-Ickes

Hon. Mike Stiles (via Zoom)
Mr. Rick Strait (via Zoom)
Mr. Donald Rhodes III (via Zoom)
Hon. Scott Walls (via Zoom)
Hon. Jeff Thomas
Mr. Jay Cessna
Hon. Brian Fochtman
Ms. Beth McGregor

Others In Attendance:

Mr. Steven Howsare
Ms. Rebecca Canavan
Mr. George Gvozdich, Jr.
Mr. James Gerraughty
Ms. Jennifer Sklodowski

Ms. Sherry Socie
Ms. Trudy Mitchell
Mr. Lee Slusser
Ms. 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, JULY 15, 2026

A motion was entered by Commissioner Fochtman to approve the July 15, 2026, Board of Directors meeting minutes, as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Clapper and was unanimously approved.

FINANCE REPORT

Ms. Rebecca Canavan, Director of Finance, presented the Accounts Payable list of invoices that were paid in July and August in addition to the Bank Account Summaries. She noted that the difference in health insurance costs from July to August was due to the retirement of two employees. There was an influx of funding to the General Account that is due to account receivable payments; the Money Market Account has been reimbursed and is now at an acceptable level.

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

Ms. Canavan shared that the audit is currently underway and there will be an on-site review next week with Maher Duessel staff. The RFQ was advertised and proposals are due by September 30th. So far there have been three requests received: Maher Duessel, Novatech, HBK CPAs. Once all proposals are received, Ms. Canavan will forward them to the Finance Committee for review and scoring.

APEX ACCELERATOR PRESENTATION

Mr. James Gerraughty, Government Procurement Program Manager, presented an overview of the APEX Accelerator Program and its activities over the past six months. The APEX Accelerator is part of a nationwide alliance consisting of 89 programs and 690 counselors. Mr. Gerraughty has served as treasurer for the NAPEX Accelerator Alliance and has been involved with the organization for 13 years. Key highlights from his presentation include:

- The program is funded by federal and state or other kinds of match sources. It is assigned to a specific geographic area and provides services across 18 counties.
- The program serves small and large businesses of all kinds with government contracts of all kinds. It also helps large businesses identify subcontractors that they can partner with at the state and federal level.
- Nationally, clients were awarded approximately \$65 billion in contracts in 2024. The program also conducted about 6,200 outreach events, including presentations and educational sessions for clients, agencies, and legislative stakeholders.
- Basic services provided by the program include vendor assessment, registration and certification assistance, identification of government markets and opportunities, market research, help with bid and proposal preparation, guidance on post award contract performance, a free Bid Match service, and education and training for businesses.
- Southern Alleghenies started its program in 1987, and North Central and Northern Tier started their programs in 1988-1989. In 1991 it became a 3-way partnership. JARI APEX Accelerator joined with Southern Alleghenies as a subcenter in July 2025.
- Mr. Gerraughty reviewed Return on Investment results for PY24, PY25, and PY 26 including contract actions and awards at the national level, across the Commonwealth, and within the Southern Alleghenies APEX region. Since 2014, businesses in the Southern Alleghenies region have secured \$627.74 million

in contracts with 5,700 awards. The entire program generated \$1.12 billion in contracts with 14,200 awards.

- PY25 results: 31 outreach events, 1,400 counseling sessions comprised of 2,200 hours, 237 hours of Professional Development, Tri-State Mega Matchmaker, Cybersecurity/CMMC training, IBAS/DPA Title III training.
- Key initiatives for the current program year include: PA Submarine Talent Pipeline Overview, Cybersecurity/CMMC change-ups, CMMC Level 1 certification training for counselors, 7th Tri-State Mega Matchmaker, National APEX Accelerator Day on October 8th, Lockheed Martin is looking for assistance from APEX Accelerators on their supplier base.
- The program supports businesses pursuing both defense and state contracting opportunities. Through its assistance, several clients have successfully obtained multiple state contracts. APEX Accelerators offer a wide range of services and resources to businesses.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM UPDATE

Ms. Sherry Socie, Director of Business Development, reported that the final State PREP and ENGAGE report is nearly complete and the FY 26-27 application will be submitted by the end of the week. Although a 10% funding decrease for ENGAGE was suggested, the LDD partners and coordinators chose to request level funding.

Ms. Socie reviewed the PREP Program results and goals for FY 25-26. The division performed very well and met most of its goals, with Workshop Attendees, Loans Closed, and New Clients significantly exceeding projections. For FY 26-27, it will be level funding back to 2022 which required some adjustments.

Ms. Socie provided an update on ENGAGE Program results for FY 25-26. HCBI previously handled ENGAGE calls and referrals in Fulton County as well as Huntingdon County, but with staffing reduced to one person FIDA will join the ENGAGE Program in FY 26-27. The FY 25-26 survey goal was 185, and 183 surveys were completed across the counties.

EARN SUCCESS COACHING ACADEMY TRAINING PROPOSAL

Ms. Jennifer Sklodowski, Director of Workforce Development, presented a training proposal for Case Manager staff across the six-county region. The cost of the training is \$50,000 and would be funded through past performance funding that is very limited on how it can be used. She noted that the investment would provide valuable professional development for EARN staff and help them strengthen their job performance.

Ms. Sklodowski reported that the state now requires professional development for both EARN staff and subcontractors.

Ms. Sklodowski explained that the training will be provided by Darrell Andrews (Coach D), who previously served in a similar role and has firsthand knowledge of the daily responsibilities and challenges faced by case managers. The proposal outlines a six-month organizational excellence initiative. A structured capacity building partnership is designed to strengthen the skills, resilience, and effectiveness of the EARN team. The total investment of \$50,000 covers two live Workforce Excellence Summits, six monthly training sessions, six monthly group coaching sessions, individual coaching for all EARN staff, assessments, curriculum customization, training materials, a final Summary Report with no additional consulting, preparation, or travel fees. The subcontracts can also participate in this training at no additional cost.

Mr. Steven Howsare, Executive Director, explained that several years ago the state revised how SAP&DC was funded in the EARN Program; requiring some of the funding to be performance based and limiting how those funds may be used. He noted that there is ample funding available to cover the cost of the training program.

Ms. Clapper asked if there is an aspect of the training that could be brought to the Workforce Development Board. Ms. Sklodowski noted that Ms. Emily Hite, Director of EARN, is willing to do that as well.

Commissioner Tokar-Ickes asked whether SAP&DC experiences a high turnover rate among Case Manager staff. Ms. Sklodowski responded that turnover has improved recently and is hopeful that the training will help with retention. If staff receives the right guidance and resources, this will help them perform their roles with greater confidence and effectiveness.

A motion was entered by Ms. Clapper to approve the six month EARN Success Coaching Academy for EARN staff and subcontractors at a cost of \$50,000, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kessling 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 activities and initiatives. Some projects that were reviewed include:

- The Rural Health Transformation (RHT) Program continues to move forward. The PA Department of Health has hired someone to be housed at SAP&DC. They have also provided a list of recommended individuals for appointment to the Rural Care Collaborative (RCC).

Mr. Howsare shared that Ms. Kelly Randolph has been hired as the Regional Care Specialist. He noted that she brings many years of healthcare experience to the position. He also reported that SAP&DC is

still waiting for the state contract. Regarding the RCC, Mr. Howsare expressed a preference for establishing a smaller core group, with larger area-specific subcommittees depending on state guidelines.

Commission Tokar-Ickes asked if a representative can be added to the list to represent UPMC. With the footprint that UPMC has in the region, there should be representation on the RCC. Mr. Howsare is hopeful that additional names may be added that will be beneficial but will know more once Ms. Randolph begins her role.

Mr. Slusser stated that the level of flexibility with the proposed list remains unclear, as details of the contract are still being finalized. DHS is still defining SAP&DC's role in funding decisions. SAP&DC continues to work very closely with other PREP regions across the state.

- Mr. Zack Lee, Community & Economic Development Program Manager, is working on the Bedford County Business Park EDA application that connects sewer to the newer parts of the Bedford County Business Park.
- Current ARC applications have been submitted and are awaiting an update:
 - New Enterprise Rural Electric Cooperative (\$678,745)
 - Broad Top Area Medical Center (\$997,053 funded of a \$1,994.106 project). This project involves acquiring dental practices from dentists who are retiring across several counties.
 - East Providence Rising (\$139,327) - application submitted August 4th
 - Bedford County Business Park II, Lot II Multi-Tenant Building Project (\$1,299,691)
 - Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum (\$250,000)
 - Fulton County Medical Center (\$250,000)
 - The Horseshoe Curve Trail Network - Mr. Lee submitted the form to begin working on the application for the project. This project is to build a mountain bike trail network above and behind the Horseshoe Curve.
- POWER Projects awarded include the ABI Workforce Development Initiative and the Johnstown Redevelopment Authority Veterinary Campus; P&CD is assisting both projects as they move forward. Applications from Penn Highlands Community College, the Bottleworks, Penn State, and the Richland School District are still pending.
- P&CD continues to work on updating Alleghenies Ahead, the Bike/Ped Plan, and the Coordinated Transit Plan, while also developing new KOZs and extending existing ones.

UPWP RESOLUTION

Mr. Slusser reviewed the UPWP Resolution that authorizes Mr. Howsare to execute the Grant Agreement for the FY 2027-2029 Rural Transportation Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) between SAP&DC and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Bunch to approve the UPWP Resolution, as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Clapper and was unanimously approved.

BISHOP GUILFOYLE LSA GRANT RESOLUTION

Mr. Slusser reported that the Local Share Account (LSA) Statewide Program is money that is available from casinos and is spent on community projects through which communities apply. He shared that SAP&DC has been asked by Bishop Guilfoyle School to apply for a \$239,935 grant to assist with the replacement of its gymnasium bleachers. The school is currently preparing the application.

A motion was entered by Commissioner Kessler to approve the LSA Grant Resolution for Bishop Guilfoyle, as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. McGregor and was unanimously approved.

Commissioner Hunt stated that an agreement should be created with Bishop Guilfoyle School requiring compliance with SAP&DC rules and requirements. He noted that the school must sign the agreement and assume responsibility for any funds if they fail to meet those requirements outlined in the agreement.

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 Thomas to approve the Projects Under Executive Order 12372, as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kessler and was unanimously approved.

BUSINESS LENDING SERVICES REPORT

Ms. Trudy Mitchell, Business Lending Program Manager, reviewed the actions taken by the Loan Review Committee. Ms. Mitchell reported that there were four projects approved since the last Board of Directors meeting.

Ms. Mitchell then presented 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 Commissioner Kessler and was unanimously approved.

PIDA SBF LENDING LIMIT INCREASE

Ms. Mitchell reported that PIDA began allowing agricultural projects to be submitted only within the past few years. Recent legislation was passed as part of an initiative by the AG Connect group and various Legislators to increase the SBF Lending limit for PIDA loans from \$400,000 to \$2 million. While the legislative change allowed the amount to increase to \$2 million, the PIDA Board discussed the fiscal code language increasing the allowable PIDA-SBF lending limit as well as the current liquidity position. Based on the discussion, the PIDA Board approved an increase in the PIDA-SBF lending limit from \$400,000 to \$1 million for eligible real estate loans.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Howsare reminded members that the next SAP&DC Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 18, 2026, beginning at 10:00 A.M with the Finance Committee Meeting beginning at 9:15 A.M. and will include the audit presentation.

Ms. Clapper shared that last week she accompanied 25 sailors from the USS Somerset to school districts and other sites in Somerset County where they met with students and spoke at assemblies about various careers in technical education. She noted that the experience was very positive for both the students and the sailors who came from around the world; more than 4,500 students participated.

Ms. Clapper also shared that she is coordinating a Somerset County Stakeholders Workforce Meeting on September 22nd to discuss the different career activities that are being proposed to the school districts.

Commissioner Fochtman expressed concern about the cost of the PA DEP Bureau of Watershed Restoration and Nonpoint Source Management Executive Order Project which supports initiatives to address nutrient and sediment related activities in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. He noted that this project appears to conflict with the PA Turnpike Interchange Project that involves blasting a section of the Allegheny Mountain which will create multiple environmental problems.

Commissioner Tokar-Ickes shared that a proposed resolution will be presented for consideration at a future Board of Directors meeting. She noted that coalition-building is underway and expressed concern that the PA Turnpike Interchange Project is not well planned, while the PA Turnpike Commission continues to move forward with the project. She added that it would be helpful for surrounding counties to better understand the safety issues and environmental impacts this project will have on migratory patterns.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:25.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. J.R. Winck

Secretary