

LOWCOUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

January 24, 2013

6:30 p.m.

MINUTES

PRESENT:

ABSENT:

BEAUFORT COUNTY:

Gerald Dawson
Brian Flewelling
Herbert Glaze
Marc A. Grant
Billy Keyserling
Bill McBride
Joseph McDomick
Jerry Stewart
Lisa Sulka
George Williams

Mary Beth Heyward

COLLETON COUNTY:

Esther Black
Joseph Flowers
Larry (Babe) Hutto
Thomas (Tommy) Mann
Evon Robinson
Gene Whetsell
Bill Young

HAMPTON COUNTY:

Frankie Bennett
Charles Boyles, Jr.
J. L. Goodwin
Lloyd Griffith
James (Pete) Hagood
Charles (Buddy) Phillips
Nat Shaffer

JASPER COUNTY:

Sherry Carroll
Henry Etheridge
Henry Lawton, Sr.
Joey Malphrus
Gwen Johnson Smith

GUESTS:

Craig Forrest, SCDOT Commissioner At Large; Bob Nanni, Hardeeville City Manager;
Lisa T. Wechsler, CPA, Crowley Wechsler & Associates

STAFF:

Chris Bickley, Michelle Knight, Ginnie Kozak, Sherry Smith, Carol Stonebraker, Marvile Thompson

Chairman Herbert Glaze called the January 24, 2013 Lowcountry Council of Governments regular board meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Gerald Dawson gave the invocation. Chairman Glaze welcomed new Board members Jasper County Council Chairman Henry Etheridge, Hilton Head Island Town Council Member Marc Grant and City of Beaufort Mayor Billy Keyserling. Brian Flewelling noted Chairman Glaze had been reappointed by Beaufort County Council as its At Large Representative on the LCOG Board. Introduction of guests and staff followed. Minutes of the October 25,

2012 meeting were unanimously approved on motion by Henry Lawton with a second from Tommy Mann. The Executive Director reported there were no proxies to submit. The meeting proceeded after determining a quorum was present.

Chairman Glaze presented the 2013 Board Meeting Schedule, which was unanimously approved on motion by Lloyd Griffith following a second from Joe Flowers.

The Chairman recognized Lisa Wechsler, CPA and a Partner with Crowley Wechsler & Associates, the COG's independent auditor, to present the Lowcountry Regional Development Corporation (LRDC) Audit Report for fiscal year ended September 30, 2012. LRDC is the COG's affiliate development corporation. Copies were mailed to board members prior to the meeting. Ms. Wechsler reviewed the financial data and project status. There were no new projects. The Colleton County Spec Building lease was paid off during the year, and there was no activity on the Jasper County Hardeeville Industrial Park lease. LRDC received payments on a retail store construction loan for a business in Sheldon, SC, Beaufort County. Discussion followed. Brian Flewelling asked about interest income on temporarily restricted net assets (Page 3.) Ms. Wechsler explained it was interest paid on notes receivable in 2012. Payments received in 2011 on the same note were applied to principal. Joe McDormick asked if anything was found during the audit that the Board needed to be aware of. Ms. Wechsler said there were no findings, little activity and very limited transactions. Henry Etheridge requested more information about the Palm Key proceeds (Page 7.) Ms. Wechsler responded that repayment of grant money to develop Palm Key was placed in restricted funds until used for a similar economic development project in Jasper County. Michelle Knight added that it is money generated from an old economic development block grant to install a sewer system at Palm Key. The repayment is being held for Jasper County's benefit. Effort continues to identify a qualifying project.

Chris Bickley spoke about the mission of LRDC to help local governments with economic development and gave examples of its projects over the years. The LCOG Executive Committee serves as the LRDC Board of Directors. Bill McBride made a motion to receive the report as information. The motion unanimously carried following a second from Frankie Bennett.

Having no Old Business on the Agenda, Chairman Glaze addressed New Business and recognized Transportation Committee Chairman George Williams to report on the meeting held earlier that afternoon. Mr. Williams requested that staff prepare a written report on approved transportation projects and their funding and timing so that details can be discussed at the February meeting. He reported on the new MPO being formed for parts of Beaufort County and Southern Jasper County. SCDOT estimates it will take 12-18 months to get the MPO running. Current LCOG administered transportation projects located within the MPO area will transfer, along with their funding allocations, to the MPO.

Mr. Williams reviewed an earlier Beaufort County request to relook at the Windmill Harbor, Hwy 278, project that was projected to be a new frontage road concept. Based on seismic rules and wetlands issues, SCDOT revised cost estimate upward from \$1.4M to approximately \$7M. Beaufort County is requesting an interim change on that project; SCDOT has not estimated cost, but expects it to be about \$600-700K. Any funds remaining from the \$1.4M would return to the funding pool for reallocation.

Mr. Williams reported on the Hwy 68 project. The first environmental assessment on the project was about six years ago. The assessment had to be redone based on new regulations requiring additional right-of-way, which added \$100K to the cost. Before the project can go forward, the COG needs to increase the allocated funding from \$9M to \$9.1M. Mr. Williams recommended that an additional \$100K be allocated to the project with those funds anticipated to come from reduction in the Windmill Harbor project. Lloyd Griffith moved to approve the recommendation, and following a second by Bill Young, the motion unanimously carried.

The Chairman addressed Reports and recognized Sherry Smith for the Mid-year Finance Report. Copies were in meeting packets. Sherry reported that program match and over-match requirements are on target. Operations are under budget due to a planned large equipment purchase that has not been completed. Building Project expenditures should wrap up soon. Accounts Receivable reflect a Nov-Dec slowdown in reimbursements from the State.

Michelle Knight was recognized for the Community and Economic Development Report. Copies were in meeting packets. Michelle said the City of Beaufort and Town of Bluffton recently closed first phase of Village Renaissance programs, and their new applications qualify for automatic renewal. The City of Walterboro has a similar open project, and if all requirements are met, should qualify for automatic renewal as well. The Jasper County DHEC project on the report was funded and should be moved to the CDBG Investment Projects section. A letter regarding the Jasper County/Ridgeland EDA project was received the previous day stating the "application has been invited", which means there are a few more things to do, but approval is expected. Michelle reviewed application deadlines: Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA) applications are due February 1, Jasper, Colleton and Hampton County are eligible applicants. We know of 5 applications from the region that are likely to be submitted; all are water-sewer infrastructure that address environmental health concerns. A second round of applications for RIA are due April 1; and CDBG infrastructure (water, sewer or drainage) application requests are due March 15.

Chris Bickley was recognized for the Director's Report. Copies were in meeting packets and Chris reviewed selected items. He drew attention to handouts in the meeting packet including Unemployment Rates, Labor Force & Employment, and 208 Certifications that are good indicators of regional economic activity. Chris reviewed Board membership: Mayor Billy Keyserling has filled the City of Beaufort seat; Chairman Herbert Glaze's status changed from Elected to At Large, leaving a Beaufort County Council vacancy; Gerald Dawson and Henry Etheridge filled two vacancies on the Transportation Committee; Jasper County members will appoint an Executive Committee member. Chris requested that everyone review their information on the Board Roster and report changes, including occupations, as that information is needed for certain EDA grants. A new member orientation will be scheduled prior to the next meeting.

The Aging Program homecare services contractor that withdrew last fall has been replaced by four providers giving clients more choice to meet their needs. The transition is going well.

Chris briefed the Board about a serious contractual matter with a Jasper County aging services provider where one of its employees had, without management's knowledge or that of the COG, intentionally submitted erroneous reimbursement requests for transportation units. Their paid staff drivers were counted as clients when requesting reimbursement, which resulted in overpayment. Appropriate investigations have taken place with a preliminary finding that no criminal intent took place, and the employee did not personally benefit. State is not aware of a similar problem having occurred before, and the COG quickly revised its monitoring procedures to assure it will not happen again. The provider must repay the money, and all parties are working on resolution. Considerable discussion followed. No Board action was required, but consensus was that repayment and the administrative matter be straightened without sacrificing a provider that is doing a lot of good for many seniors.

Chris Bickley continued and said that Lt. Governor Glenn McConnell, who heads the State Aging Program, strongly supports and understands the goal of keeping seniors at home instead of in nursing homes and has secured additional funding to help meet those state-wide needs.

A tentative request from the Town of Lodge to use the COG's payroll services was presented during the Director's Report. There were no objections to starting the service in January with formal approval before the Board for consideration in February. The Board also discussed a new effort in Congress to eliminate the Economic Development Administration. Chris Bickley spoke about how important the program has been to the region and urged everyone to contact their Congressman to support continuing the program.

Following the Director's Report, Brian Flewelling asked about status of the TDR program in Northern Beaufort County. Ginnie Kozak took the question and reported that, shortly before Christmas, Maj. Gen "Dutch" Holland, head of the newly revitalized SC Military Bases Task Force, attended the Military Enhancement Committee meeting where she and Alice Howard were asked to make a presentation about the TDR program. The general asked lots of questions, explaining that the state might want to recommend TDR programs at other military facilities in South Carolina. Later he said he would recommend to SC Comptroller General Richard Eckstrom that the COG retain the funds for when the program goes forward. He is interested in having the approach applied to other facilities in the state. An official letter from Mr. Eckstrom has not been received.

During Council Time, Lisa Sulka reported on two items: Town of Bluffton development grants obtained through LCOG are going well and helping the community. The Southern Beaufort County Implementation Committee is requesting that its members send an alternate to Committee meetings if they cannot attend.

With no additional business to address, and on motion duly made, seconded and approved, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 7:26 p.m. Copies of the agenda were distributed prior to the meeting. A notice of the meeting was posted on the LCOG bulletin board at least twenty-four hours prior to the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

L. Chriswell Bickley, Jr.
Executive Director

Attachments