

**MINUTES
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
UPPER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
430 HELIX ROAD
GREENWOOD, SOUTH CAROLINA
AUGUST 26, 2024**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Diane Anderson, John Calhoun, Jim Coleman, Frank Daniel, Ken Durham, Qwen Etheredge, Charles Goodwin, Otis Grier Jr., Charlie Henry, Tiffani Ireland, Shirley Jenkins, Charles Jennings, Wes McAllister, Marian Miller, Matthew Miller, Sen. Floyd Nicholson, Randy Randall, David Sawyer, Ernie Segars, Brandon Smith, Roy Smith Jr., Don Smoak, Albert Talbert, Faye Thomas and David Tribble

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jackie Brown, Theo Lane, Sen. Shane Massey, Miliken Matthews, Willie Norman and Sen. Danny Verdin.

STAFF PRESENT: Patricia Hartung, Sam Leaman, Rick Green, Melissa Phillips, Keith Smith, Peggy Merritt, Kal Kunkel, Christy Stroud, David Hays


GUESTS PRESENT: Clint Scoville, Assistant Program Manager, SCDOT; Jim Walden, Regional Planning Manager, SCDOT; Freedom Spradley, Design Manager, SCDOT; Yiyun Zou, Planning Office, SCDOT; Tyke Redfern, Program Manager, SCDOT; Kevin McLaughlin, District 2 Administrator, SCDOT; Myranda Butler, Saluda Town Council; Kristopher Covington, Watershed Coordinator with the S.C. Office of Resilience; Scott Neely, Dominion Energy

Call to Order	<p>The meeting was held in person with the option to attend via conference call. Chairman Charles Jennings called the meeting to order.</p> <p>The June 24, 2024, minutes were approved unanimously upon motion by Albert Talbert and properly seconded.</p>
Upper Savannah Aging Program Update	<p>Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Director Peggy Merritt gave program update, stressing the importance of getting the word out about what services are available to seniors.</p> <p>She said staff are using new software which will improve their ability to track service units while also improving case management.</p> <p>Merritt said it is the responsibility of the senior or a family member to initiate the contact in order to receive services such as home-delivered meals, congregate dining, transportation and home care. However, she said it's the AAA staff's responsibility to get the word out about what services are available to seniors, saying "you have to put your feet on the street" through outreach.</p> <p>She said there are several outreach events coming up, including Lander CommUniversity Sept. 11 when Lander students can learn what is offered in the community including possible volunteer Ombudsman internships with USCOG, a Savannah Lakes Village event Sept. 26, Provider Fair Day at Laurens Piedmont Technical College campus Sept. 27, and a Senior Expo at Piedmont Tech in</p>

	<p>Greenwood Oct. 1. She said the AAA’s family caregiver advocate is hosting Caregiver Day Sept. 23 at New Journey Church on Deadfall Road in Greenwood. This is an invitation only event just for caregivers served by the Upper Savannah program to provide education and support; 67 people have made reservations for the event.</p> <p>Merritt showed Board members a “Reaching the Region” Powerpoint display featuring pictures from recent outreach events including a Senior Prep event in Laurens, Senior Expo at Piedmont Tech, Senior Day in Columbia, Veteran’s Appreciation Day in Greenwood, a presentation at Bethany United Methodist Church in Saluda, a community resource event in McCormick, and events at the Edgefield County Senior Center and the Abbeville County Library.</p>
<p>Medicare Open Enrollment</p>	<p>Regional State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) Coordinator Christy Stroud gave update on the upcoming Medicare Open Enrollment period Oct. 15 to Dec. 7, 2024.</p> <p>She said it is difficult for seniors to understand Medicare Part A, Part B and Advantage plans, especially which plans most benefit them in relation to their prescriptions. She said seniors are susceptible to fraud calls trying to get them to sign up for plans that don’t fit their needs. She stressed never giving personal information over the phone.</p> <p>Stroud encouraged seniors to set up phone or in-person appointments with her during the open enrollment period when she can go over their prescriptions list and help them determine which plan best fits their need.</p> <p>Stroud said the State requires her to do at least 36 outreach events per year. She reaches seniors by speaking to church groups and soon-to-be retirees by coming to their places of employment. For instance, Stroud said she is speaking at two churches on a Saturday in September. Stroud said she is more than happy to speak to anybody, anywhere.</p>
<p>Transportation Update</p>	<p>Government Services Director Rick Green provided Transportation update. He said the Moving South Carolina Forward SCDOT surveys are still available and encouraged Board members to fill them out.</p> <p>Green said SCDOT has been seeking local feedback on near-term growth corridors in each county to assist in its prioritization efforts for the Regional Mobility Program. He said meetings have been held in Edgefield, Greenwood, McCormick and Saluda counties while Abbeville and Laurens will have meetings in September.</p> <p>Green said SCDOT will soon be moving forward with three intersection improvements in the region including Short Cut Road and U.S. 25 in Edgefield County, S.C. Highways 101 and 14 in Laurens County (Gray Court), and 25 Bypass and Sweetwater Road in Greenwood County. SCDOT Program Manager Tyke Redfern said traffic studies are taking place and that alternatives will be discussed.</p> <p>Green said he has made presentations on the Roadway Departure Safety Action Plan to Edgefield, McCormick and Saluda county councils and the Greenwood County Transportation Committee, and will present to Greenwood County Council next week. Funding is being sought for signage and further studies designed to prevent roadway departure accidents. Green requested that the Board adopt the Roadway Departure</p>

	<p>Safety Action Plan. The Plan was approved unanimously upon motion by Floyd Nicholson that was properly seconded.</p>
<p>CDBG Program Update</p>	<p>Community Development Director Keith Smith updated the Board on current Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) projects and applications to be submitted in September.</p> <p>Smith said there are 13 active CDBG projects in the Upper Savannah region totaling more than \$13 million and staff will apply for two more grants in the September funding round, including a fire truck for Town of Edgefield and library renovations for Saluda County.</p> <p>The Laurens County Clinton-Joanna Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade Phase II was recently awarded and will include installation of a second 750,000-gallon sludge holding tank.</p> <p>Smith updated the Board on current projects, including Greenwood City Waller Streetscape, Greenwood County DSS Building Improvements, City of Abbeville Structure Demolitions, City of Abbeville Chestnut Street Park, City of Clinton Fire Truck Purchase, Town of Saluda North Main/West Church Streetscape, Greenwood County Mathews Mill Sewer Upgrade Phases I and II, Town of McCormick North Main/Augusta Streetscape, City of Greenwood Booker T. Washington Sewer Upgrade, Laurens County Clinton-Joanna Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade Phase I, Town of Ridge Spring Sewer Rehab, and Regional Planning Grant.</p> <p>He said the Waller Streetscape bid is awaiting S.C. Department of Commerce approval, DSS project is in the engineering phase, the Abbeville Structure Demolitions were completed in July, Chestnut Street Park bids for playground equipment and other improvements will go out in September 2024, Clinton fire truck was delivered in May 2024, Saluda streetscape construction began in May, Mathews Mill Phase I has been completed, Mathews Mill Phase II construction began in May, McCormick streetscape will be completed this year, Booker T. Washington sewer began in July; Clinton-Joanna WWTP upgrade will be completed this fall, and Ridge Spring sewer awaiting right of way acquisitions and will go out to bid soon.</p>
<p>COG Operating Policies Review</p>	<p>Leaman discussed updating the Annual Board Resolution of Select Operating Policies, recommending increases in per diem for overnight travel and meal reimbursements while changing the purchase amount required to seek competitive bids.</p> <p>The budget and the Annual Board Resolution on Select Operating Policies were passed at the June Board meeting. During the Executive Committee meeting in June, it was mentioned that USCOG probably needs to raise the meal reimbursement rates. The resolution was passed as it was and promised to bring back for a recommendation on increasing those rates.</p> <p>Leaman said the \$11.25 per quarter or \$45 per day rate for overnight travel has been in place for at least 14 years. He recommended an increase to \$15 per quarter or \$60 per day as of Sept. 1, 2024. If a meal is provided as part of the conference registration, one quarter is deducted from the per diem.</p>

	<p>Meal reimbursement comes into play when staff are working out of the office during meal time but not part of an overnight trip. Meal reimbursement recommendations effective Sept. 1, 2024, are to increase from \$6 to \$10 for breakfast, \$9 to \$15 for lunch, and \$15 to \$25 for dinner.</p> <p>Upper Savannah only recently raised the threshold for procurement without competitive bids from \$2,500 to \$5,000. But State procurement rules do not require competitive solicitation for procurements of \$10,000 or less. USCOG's recommendation is to increase the threshold to \$10,000 as of Sept. 1, 2024.</p> <p>The recommendations were passed unanimously upon motion by Jim Coleman and properly seconded.</p>
<p>Executive Director's Report</p>	<p>Prior to the Executive Director's report, Chairman Charles Jennings recognized Board member Faye Thomas for having a park named after her in the City of Abbeville.</p> <p>Executive Director Patricia C. Hartung said USCOG won a National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) award for successfully acquiring grant to fund Revolutionary War interpretative signs to be placed on SC Highway 10 near Town of Troy.</p> <p>Rick Green said the COG applied jointly on behalf of the McCormick and Greenwood County SC 250 committees to fund signs as well as local artist rendition of the Battle of Long Canes to be placed on sign at Wisteria Park in Troy. The signs will include QR Codes providing information about site and accompanying trails. The funding was provided by the State SC 250 Committee. The exact location of battle is still being studied, but it crossed between what is now Greenwood and McCormick counties near Troy. Ernie Segars said 14 Revolutionary War sites have been identified in Laurens County. Each county has an SC 250 committee that is eligible to apply for similar grants.</p> <p>Hartung said the SC COGs annual training conference will be held at Kingston Plantation in North Myrtle Beach Nov. 24-26. BCDCOG is in charge of the conference with transportation as the selected feature topic. Hartung said Board members will receive registration information soon and asked them to respond promptly.</p> <p>Hartung said the COG has decided to use ZOOM instead of conference calls for future meetings.</p> <p>Hartung distributed the staff activities report.</p> <p>Tyke Redfern and SCDOT District 2 Administrator Kevin McLaughlin answered questions about traffic roundabouts. Redfern said SCDOT is working to improve its website to provide progress reports on road improvement projects. Green said pavement improvement projects by county are listed on the USCOG website.</p>
<p>Adjourn</p>	<p>Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.</p>



Patricia C. Hartung
Executive Director