

**MINUTES
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
UPPER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
430 HELIX ROAD
GREENWOOD, SOUTH CAROLINA
MEETING AT CURRY AUDITORIUM,
GREENWOOD GENETIC CENTER
OCTOBER 28, 2024**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Diane Anderson, Jackie Brown, John Calhoun, Jim Coleman, Frank Daniel, Qwen Etheredge, Charles Goodwin, Tiffani Ireland, Charles Jennings, Miliken Matthews, Marian Miller, Matthew Miller, Sen. Floyd Nicholson, Willie Norman, Randy Randall, David Sawyer, Ernie Segars, Brandon Smith, Albert Talbert, Faye Thomas and David Tribble

MEMBERS ABSENT: Ken Durham, Otis Grier Jr., Charlie Henry, Shirley Jenkins, Theo Lane, Sen. Shane Massey, Wes McAllister, Roy Smith Jr., Don Smoak, and Sen. Danny Verdin.

STAFF PRESENT: Patricia Hartung, Sam Leaman, Rick Green, Melissa Phillips, David Hays

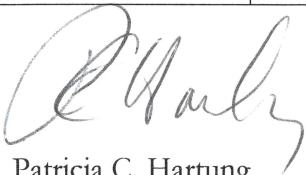
GUESTS PRESENT: Tyke Redfern, Program Manager, SCDOT; Clint Scoville, Assistant Program Manager, SCDOT; Berry Mattox, Regional Production Engineer for the Upstate; SCDOT; Kevin McLaughlin, District 2 Administrator, SCDOT; Myranda Butler, Saluda Town Council; Grant Mays, Senator Danny Verdin’s office; Dr. Frank Herlong, Saluda native and University of Texas Southwestern Medical School instructor invited by David Sawyer.

Call to Order	<p>The meeting was held in person at the Greenwood Genetic Center’s Curry Auditorium with the option to attend via Zoom. Willie Norman gave the invocation and Chairman Charles Jennings called the meeting to order.</p> <p>Hartung recognized guests Tyke Redfearn, Clint Scoville, Berry Mattox and Kevin McLaughlin from SCDOT, Myranda Butler from Saluda Town Council, and Grant Mays from Senator Danny Verdin’s office. David Sawyer introduced his invited guest Dr. Frank Herlong from Saluda who is a professor at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Parkland Hospital in Dallas.</p>
Guest Presentation: SC Department of Transportation	<p>Program Manager Tyke Redfearn and Project Manager Clint Scoville from SCDOT updated board members on several Upper Savannah Regional Mobility Program projects. Redfearn and Scoville talked about highway projects in the upcoming, engineering and construction phases.</p> <p>Redfearn described the three upcoming intersection safety improvement projects in the Region in the rural guideshare program which were prioritized by the USCOG Board. They include Augusta Road and Bauskett Street in Edgefield, Lee and Edisto Streets in Johnston, and West Cambridge and Mathis Streets near Greenwood Country Club in Greenwood. The Augusta/Bauskett intersection located in a retail heavy portion of Edgefield is angled, the Lee/Edisto intersection has multiple incoming points, and the Mathis/Cambridge Street intersection is crossed by a multi-use recreational pathway and is in need of turn lanes and signal upgrades. All three are scheduled to be in the</p>

	<p>preliminary engineering phase in FY '26, right of way purchase phase in FY '27, and construction phase in FY '28. Traffic studies are ongoing or completed for each project. Redfearn said the engineering for any or all three projects could be moved up into the latter part of FY '25.</p> <p>There are three intersection safety improvement projects in the Region in the design phase. They are Highway 25 and Shortcut Road/Trailside Drive in Edgefield County, Highways 101 and 14 in Town of Gray Court, and 25 Bypass and Sweetwater Road in Greenwood County.</p> <p>Redfearn said the Shortcut Road intersection located near Fox Creek High School and a new Dollar General includes a wide open median for turns and is in need of dedicated turn lanes and traffic signals. Scoville said a traffic study has been completed to help determine how to improve the Gray Court intersection. Scoville also said widening the Sweetwater intersection could be an option. All three projects have completed traffic studies and are currently in the preliminary design phase, which will be followed by right of way purchase phase in FY '26 and construction in FY '27.</p> <p>Current projects include bridges at Airport Road over Rocky Creek near Greenwood County Airport and Lanham Road over Horn Creek in Edgefield County, Redfearn said. Airport Road project is due for completion in the fall of 2025 and Lanham Road in mid-2026.</p> <p>Floyd Nicholson asked District 2 Administrator Kevin McLaughlin about debris removal after Hurricane Helene. McLaughlin said there have been 48 debris removal contract agreements reached with counties and municipalities in District 2 which also includes the Upper Savannah Region plus Anderson and Newberry counties. McLaughlin said he is starting to see progress and hopes debris removal will be completed around Christmas 2024.</p> <p>Brandon Smith asked for more specifics about the Cambridge/Mathis intersection project to which Redfearn replied that the traffic study is in the early stages. Jim Coleman said the Gray Court intersection needs more immediate attention.</p>
<p>Transportation Update</p>	<p>Government Services Director Rick Green presented to the board the SCDOT Performance Measures 2021-2025 Statewide Highway Safety Targets.</p> <p>Green said that the SCDOT Performance Safety Targets document requires annual approval by the board. Federal legislation requires that each state come up with its own performance measures and safety standards that must be approved by COGs and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). Floyd Nicholson made a motion to approve the SCDOT Performance Safety Targets document, seconded by Willie Norman. The document was approved unanimously.</p>
<p>Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Annual Update</p>	<p>Green requested approval of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) annual update which is necessary to make the region eligible for Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding. For instance, Piedmont Technical College was recently awarded an \$11.27 million EDA grant for a new health science building. Albert Talbert made a motion to approve the CEDS, seconded by Marian Miller. The CEDS was approved unanimously.</p>

<p>Annual County Investment Reports</p>	<p>Assistant Director Sam Leaman discussed Upper Savannah’s Annual County Investment Reports. Board members received a Fiscal Year 2024 report from the county that they represent. The report includes how USCOG is funded through county dues, federal and state dollars, and direct services funding. A return-on-investment page focuses on each county’s investment, aging and workforce development direct services, and direct grants for a funds total that determines return on investment. These funds were leveraged to generate projects and services that benefited local governments and constituents, including water and sewer projects, downtown redevelopments, services for senior citizens, services for job seekers and employers, and transportation planning. The report also includes county and region highlights.</p> <p>In Fiscal Year 2024, member counties invested \$151,524, which leveraged \$7,289,146 in funding, programs and services in the Upper Savannah Region for a return-on-investment ratio of 48:1 collectively by the six counties. Greenwood County had the highest return-on-investment ratio at 78:1 based on almost \$4 million in funding. Leaman suggested sharing the reports with their councils.</p>
<p>Executive Director’s Report</p>	<p>Executive Director Patricia C. Hartung informed the board about a non-agenda item which does not require immediate action. She said Central Midlands Council of Governments (CMCOG) has formulated a resolution supporting the installation of security cameras in nursing homes across the State. The purpose of the cameras is to protect both nursing home residents and staff, especially in cases that might involve Ombudsman investigations. CMCOG is encouraging the State Legislature to pass legislation requiring cameras. After some discussion concerning whether nursing home facilities wants to have cameras and also the cost, the board decided to table the resolution until its next meeting.</p> <p>Hartung began a discussion about Upper Savannah’s possible future role in Hurricane Helene disaster recovery efforts. Jim Coleman said he was at a national meeting last week where he learned there would be a lot of federal funds coming to this area for disaster recovery. Coleman said since every county and municipality in the Upper Savannah Region was impacted by the storm, USCOG could play a major role in recovery efforts. Coleman said the National Association of Development Organizations, EDA, workforce development, aging, USDA, the Forestry Service, Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA), and Small Business Development Administration will all be involved in assisting recovery efforts. He said smaller towns and counties might not have enough staff to pursue all possible assistance and believes USCOG can be a lead organization in helping these communities acquire assistance. He was told at the meeting that recovery efforts will not be a sprint, but a marathon, and that some of the federal money might not become available for another two to three months.</p> <p>Hartung said EDA representative Robin Cooley organized a ZOOM meeting where all 10 COGs were invited to talk about storm damage incurred in their regions and possible needs. Hartung said she believes EDA might fund disaster recovery specialists dedicated to helping local governments access funding. Hartung said she expects more details to come out soon.</p>

	<p>After Hartung invited board members to talk about their community's recovery efforts, Tiffani Ireland said Edgefield County employees worked through the entire recovery process despite no phones or internet and were classified as emergency essential workers. She said the county's employees fed first responders and responding agencies who came from all over the country, set up distribution sites for food for local residents, answered phone calls, etc., despite facing their own storm damage challenges at home. Marian Miller said the City of Laurens, Laurens County, citizens and first responders from six states bonded together to help clean up storm damage. She said one community had a cookout every day to feed residents and Laurens churches fed first responders. She complimented utility providers for their efforts. Coleman said despite the struggles in the Upstate, North Carolina is much worse off and needs our help and prayers. Charles Jennings talked about McCormick County's recovery efforts with teamwork including FEMA and SCDOT. He suggested planning workshops in case there is another storm of this magnitude. Ridge Spring Mayor Qwen Etheredge said her community came together to feed citizens. The mayor said she hoped the spirit of working together would continue throughout the recovery process.</p> <p>Hartung discussed the possibility of funding becoming available through the State Legislature for a local government services manager at COGs. Senator Thomas Alexander had met with local governments in August and learned of the need for somebody who can help smaller community with certain public administration services. She said the Appalachian Council of Governments has a government services program funded by the Appalachian Regional Commission. Hartung said Upper Savannah is a member of the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission which is in its infancy stages in terms of funding. Alexander has asked the COGs to explore the feasibility of a government management program in their regions. The COGs have support from the S.C. Municipal Association and the Association of Counties, she said. Hartung said she hoped the program proposal would gain support in the Senate.</p> <p>Hartung asked board members to review the activities report that was provided for them. She also said Sandra Moore would be providing board members confirmation numbers by the end of next week for those who are attending the SC COGs Annual Conference at Kingston Plantation in North Myrtle Beach Nov. 24-26, 2024.</p>
Adjourn	Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.



Patricia C. Hartung
Executive Director