

Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission
Minutes of the Meeting
October 25, 2021 – 4:00 p.m.
Cisco Webex Meeting

The one hundred and fiftieth meeting of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission was called to order by Chairman Fitzgerald.

Members: Brian Allen, Tony Amadio, Jennifer Beer, Mike Belding, Kevin Boozel, Morgan Boyd, Douglas Chew, Ali Doyle, Scott Dunn, Pat Fabian, Rich Fitzgerald, Kim Geyer, Sheila Gombita, Mark Gordon, Joe Grata, Kelly Gray, Bob Griffin, Dick Hadley, Lynn Heckman, Sherene Hess, Diana Irey Vaughan, Fred Junko, Katharine Kelleman, Sean Kertes, William Kovach, Dave Lohr, Jack Manning, Jeff Marshall, Kevin McCullough, Leslie Osche, Johnna Pro, Mavis Rainey, Aurora Sharrard, Nick Sherman, Larry Shifflet, Cheryl Moon-Sirianni, Byron Stauffer, Gina Cerilli Thrasher, Vince Vicites, Christopher Wheat

Others: Dusty Kirk, Dave Matusoff, Jeneen McNally, Ann Orgoreuc, Kelly Rolls, Chris Sandvig, Angela Saunder, Shannon White.

Staff: Kristin Baum, Jared Bedekovich, Kirk Brethauer, Domenic D'Andrea, Margaret Fonner, Colleen Friend, Chuck Imbrogno, Jenn Lasser, Steve Meredith, Shannon O'Connell, Kay Tomko, Dave Totten, Vince Valdes, Sara Walfoort, Andy Waple

1. Chairman Fitzgerald called to order the October 25 2021 meeting of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission
 - a. Quorum – There being a quorum present the meeting proceeded
 - b. Any Conflict of Interest Declaration on Action Items – None
2. Action on Minutes of the September 27th Meeting.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the September 27, 2021 meeting by Diana Irey Vaughan which was seconded by Tony Amadio. The affirmative vote was unanimous.
3. Public Comment – None
4. Financial Report – Margaret Fonner
 - a. Margaret reports that in August we had about 1.6 million dollars in revenue and 11.69% of our budget so far for the year. Since Vince Massaro's retirement Margaret has been reviewing the current systems of the financial department at SPC looking for areas that can be made more efficient, cut costs and review internal procedures such as purchase order request forms.
 - b. Margaret is excited to take SPC's financial department into an electronic system to streamline purchases and reimbursements for staff.
 - c. There were no questions for Margaret on the financial report.
5. Committee Reports – Regional Policy Advisory – Leslie Osche
 - a. There was discussion about the Build Back Better grant in earlier sessions as well as the objective for EDA fit with the SmartMoves for a Changing Region strategic plan.
 - b. There's also a huge push as to how we modernize buying tickets for transit such as Connect Cards, but also how we connect regionally is one of our main goals.
 - c. There were no questions for Commissioner Osche.

- Schedule of Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Public Meetings – Andy Waple
 - a. There are three public meetings scheduled for November to discuss the 2023/2026 TIP updates. The meeting dates are: 1. Allegheny, Beaver, Lawrence, and the City of Pittsburgh – Thursday, November 4th, 6:00 p.m., 2. Fayette, Greene, Washington, and Westmoreland – Tuesday, November 16th, 6:00 p.m. and 3. Armstrong, Butler, and Indiana Counties – Wednesday, November 17th, 6:00 p.m. Representatives from SPC, PennDOT, counties and transit operators will be in attendance to answer questions.
 - b. There were no questions for Andy on the scheduling of the public meetings.

- 6. Discussion of EDA American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Projects of Regional Significance – Vincent Valdes and Jenn Lasser
 - a. Vincent recapped presentations made in previous meetings regarding EDA grants, and the Build Back Better grant. BBB was submitted on October 15th.
 - b. Jenn Lasser outlined the key components of the EDA American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). EDA allocated \$3 billion dollars in funds to assist communities in economic recovery amidst the coronavirus pandemic.
 - c. The focus is Economic Revitalization – via jobs, workforce, regional resiliency.
 - d. There are six innovative challenges/grant opportunities
 - i. Build Back Better Challenge – **SUBMITTED**
 - ii. Economic Adjustment Assistance
 - iii. Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation
 - iv. Good Jobs Challenge
 - v. Indigenous Communities
 - vi. Statewide Planning & Networks
 - e. In the second round 50 projects will be submitted, approximately 20-25 will be selected nationwide. \$25-100 million will be allocated toward those projects.
 - f. One of the projects submitted was centered around a robotics workforce with the intent of having 2,200 jobs retained, grown, or staying in our communities.
 - g. The Economic Development department has been working tirelessly to make sure that the people in our communities are aware of these opportunities.
 - h. In working with Johnna Pro, SPC hosted EDA ARPA Overview Webinar on September 8th with 186 attendees. After the meeting a survey was sent out and responses were collected for about 30 days. After that time period, responses that were collected and fit the Build Back Better program were forwarded over to HR&A for further discussion.
 - i. Most common responses to areas of need were:
 - i. Blight/Beautification/Mainstreet
 - ii. Travel/Tourism/Recreation (bike trails, etc.)
 - iii. Water, Sewer and Aging Infrastructure
 - iv. Planning Dollars
 - v. Entrepreneurship/Workforce
 - j. While some of these projects may not exactly fit the specifications for this bill, it has given us an interesting look at where additional focus could be needed later, and when additional funds become available for these types of projects, we'll be ready for it.

- 7. Briefing on the Evolution Strategy – Guidehouse
 - a. Vincent introduced Kelly Rolls from Guidehouse who will be updating us on the progress that Guidehouse has been making on our Evolution Strategy and inviting members of the meeting to participate in some interactive exercises.
 - b. Shannon Weaver introduces a QR code so people can participate in the exercises and send in any questions, comments, or concerns they might want addressed by Guidehouse.
 - c. The first prompt asks participants which statement resonates with you the most for the region?

- i. Establish SWPA as a Leading Region
 - ii. Achieve Specific Strategic Goals
 - iii. Improve Practices
 - d. Most votes that came in were for the first two options.
 - e. Guidehouse spoke with staff, external stakeholders and reviewed internal documents.
 - f. Guidehouse conducted a staff impact analysis and about 85% submitted their thoughts and feelings on the organization and the Evolution Strategy. They then laid out a timeline from the beginning of Guidehouse's time at SPC starting in April 2021 moving into September 2021 and beyond.
 - g. There is a group of six to eight staff that have been notified in the last week that they are going to serve as Change Champions. We will be mobilizing committees around the strategic plan and future state initiatives.
 - h. Guidehouse also spoke with other MPOs so that we could baseline ourselves against national best practices.
 - i. Vincent summarized what SPC is hoping to gain from this work with Guidehouse. We work on behalf of the community and these core values speak to equity, innovation, and resiliency as a region.
 - j. Kelly Rolls puts up another survey for members to participate in. It's a word graph where people can see which words have been used the most when talking about the Evolution Strategy. She asked for questions, there are none.
 - k. For many years SPC worked as a "reactive" agency and now that is no longer a position we want to find ourselves in, at this time we must expand our core capabilities.
- 8. Message from the Executive Director – Vincent Valdes
 - a. The next meeting is scheduled for **December 13, 2021 at 4:00pm.**
 - b. There was a discussion about how SPC has planned and used funding in the past and how we will grow from here. SPC has come a long way in just a short time and our commissioners are excited to see more of that growth in the future under the guidance of Guidehouse and SPC.

9. Other SPC Business – Rich Fitzgerald

Chairman Fitzgerald asks if there is any other business that needs to be addressed before we adjourn, hearing none. He thanked everyone for their attendance and is happy to see more faces in person as we continue to face challenges with the covid-19 pandemic.

10. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Pat Fabian
Secretary-Treasurer