

**Board of Directors
Hybrid (In-Person and Zoom)
Monday, February 6, 2023
6:00 PM**

MINUTES

In Person

Kershaw County: Alfred Mae Drakeford, John Thomas, Sammie Tucker, Penry Gustafson, Brad Hanley

Clarendon County: Julia Nelson

Sumter County: Jim McCain, Eugene Baten, Roland Robinson, Bernadetta Robinson, Steve Corley, Herbert McClary, James Blassingame, Earl Wilson

Zoom

Clarendon County: Dwight Stewart, Kevin Johnson, Shirley Keels

Kershaw County: John Lee, Kenneth McCaskill, Jeffery Graham

Sumter County: Vivian McGhaney, David Weeks, Gifford Shaw

Members Absent/Excused

Lee County: Travis Windham, Will Wheeler, Grady Brown

Sumter County: David Merchant, Earl Wilson

- 1. Welcome and Call to order:** Chairman Julia Nelson called the meeting to order at 6:02PM. Chairman Nelson announces to the Board a new Board member Mr. Herbert McClary and welcomed him.
- 2. Invocation:** Mr. James Blassingame provided the invocation.
- 3. Pledge of Allegiance:** Mr. Jim McCain lead the pledge of allegiance and all attendees participated.
- 4. Quorum Determination:** The Board Clerk, Ms. Linda Jackson, informed Chairman Nelson we had reached a quorum with 23 of 28 board members present.
- 5. Agenda Adoption:** Chairman Nelson called for a motion to adopt the agenda. Mr. Sammie Tucker made the motion, and it was seconded by Mr. Jim McCain. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

6. **Approval of Previous Minutes:** Chairman Nelson called for a motion to approve the minutes from December 5, 2022. Mr. Tucker made the motion, and it was seconded by Mr. McCain. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

7. **Staff Reports:**

- a. **Finance:** Enclosure information only.

- b. **Health & Human Services:** Mrs. Janae Stowe, Health and Human Services Chief, briefed to the Board the Long-Term Care Statewide Project that Santee-Lynches with SC Thrive and nine (9) AAA's provides Long Term Care/Medicaid applications to provide services to help meet health and personal needs of individuals who are aged, blind, or disabled. She explained that applicants must need help with self-care due to illness or disability and need the level of care provided by a nursing home or certified at-home care provider. Mrs. Stowe express from July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022, Santee-Lynches completed 127 contacts, 108 submitted applications, and conducted 24 outreach events. As a result of the regional and statewide efforts, SC Thrive awarded Santee-Lynches AAA with Partner of the Year for 2022.

Mrs. Stowe briefed that on January 25, 2023, Santee-Lynches AAA in collaboration with SC Department on Aging held an In-Home and Community Based Services workshop to educate potential offerors of Clarendon County on the State guidelines to provide group dining, evidenced-based diseases, and health promotion, home delivered meals, and transportation. The workshop was attended by 20 participants representing 9 agencies within Clarendon County. She expressed that the goal of the workshop was not only to educate potential offerors on State guidelines but create partnerships across agencies who are truly passionate about serving Clarendon County aging community. The current target date for the Request for Proposal to be issued is February 20, 2023. Mrs. Stowe explained to the Board that she is working on the Regional Area Plan for 23-25. The 2022 needs assessment survey data is being utilized to implement goals and objectives which meet the current needs of our seniors within the four-county region.

- c. **Government Services:** Mr. Dennis Cyphers, Executive Director, briefed to the Board many projects that are ongoing within the Government Services department. The Pinewood Demolition project is finishing up and is in the process of taking care of the eleven (11) homes that need to be demolished. He informed the Board that funding was secured for Kershaw County to acquire a fire truck for about \$499,000 and staff is now working with Sumter to acquire a fire truck through CDBG funding. Most of the equipment within our counties are aging and some vehicles are about 30 plus years old. He asked the Board if they have that issue in their county to reach out to him or staff stating their county is in need of a fire truck. Mr. Cyphers explained that there are multiple ways of funding fire trucks, Manning just received one through USDA funding. He informed that Board that the Project and Planning is working with the town of Summerton and Pinewood on water issues. They are in the process of securing funding for a new water tower in the Summerton area. Mr. Cyphers explained that communities such as Summerton have limited CBDG funding. There is a 10% match

so a \$750,000 water tower can be purchased for \$75,000 and not have help from the County is always a plus. Mr. Cyphers explained that the COG is always seeking additional revenue to bring into the area. He informed that the COG has the best planners in the State, and they are getting calls all the time which allows the COG to generate technical assistance agreements with other COGs and other entities around the State to produce additional revenue not only for their salaries but for other staff salaries as well. Mr. Cyphers informed the Board that the COG's planning department has created maps for not only the Santee-Lynches region but also have had other regions reach out for them to produce maps. One of the biggest projects that is currently going on in the Sumter County and Sumter City area is providing environmental reviews for 360 houses and the ultimate plan is bloated structure and demolition. He explained that all of the packages and believes the project will begin around the August time frame. Mrs. Drakeford asked was there still CDBG funds available for fire trucks. He explained that there two (2) rounds of CDBG funding, the Community Enrichment round and the Services round annually. Surveys can get started now in the region that she is inquiring about, and they could apply for that application in the fall round. Mr. Cyphers informed that they are generally awarded at the end of December and announcements can be made in January. Sumter has already begun the and working towards getting their application ready for the fall round. Mr. John Thomas wanted more understanding on the water issue in Summerton. Mr. Cyphers explained that there are multiple issues including issues with ruptures of pipes. He suggested to them to go ahead and repair it completely in a tiered phase. The first one is using CDBG funds costing \$75,000 to build a new water tower since they fit the LMI data need instead of spending \$160,000 to \$200,000 on rehabbing and renovating 100 year old water tower. He explained that Summerton also has issues with their wastewater facilities, but one thing can be done at a time. Phase two (2) is to begin looking at a demo project because they have a lot of blighted structures in the area. Mr. McCain asked was the Shannontown demolition coming to a close March 2023. Mr. Cyphers responded that they are still on schedule with that project. Staff applied for an extension for that project because there was a hold up with some asbestos abatements and some air quality monitoring.

- d. **Workforce Development:** Ms. Areatha Clark, Workforce Development Chief, briefed to the Board information provided on the Labor Force, Unemployment data, Employment outcomes and other information for the region. Updated unemployment numbers for the month of December was received on February 6th. The unemployment rate for each county in the region increased from November to December: Clarendon – 3.7% to 4.5%; Kershaw – 2.8% to 3%; Lee – 4.4% to 4.7% and Sumter – 3.5% to 4%. Ms. Clark noted that with increased unemployment rates staff have seen an increase in the traffic/number of individuals coming into the SC Works Centers. Staff also believes that due to many of the programs providing extra benefits expiring this month and over the next few months, traffic will continue to increase even more with individuals seeking employment. Ms. Clark shared an example of such through their experience with hosting a 2-day job fair for Ollie's Bargain Outlet January 31-February 1, 2023. Over 600 applications were received

online and approximately 250 individuals completed applications on site at the Sumter SC Works Center.

Lastly, Ms. Clark referenced the News Release included in the board packet regarding the SC Chamber and SC Department of Employment and Workforce (SCDEW)'s collaboration to launch a Palmetto Business Barometer Survey. This survey is a voluntary monthly survey to better understand the conditions South Carolina employers are facing and inform the public about the State's economy and workforce. The survey measures business conditions and attitudes over time with an emphasis on workforce behaviors. The first round of the Palmetto Business Barometer survey went live on Monday, January 9, 2023. The survey opened again on today, February 6th, and will continue to open on the first full week of each month throughout 2023 for each new survey round. South Carolina businesses of all sizes and industries are encouraged to participate in the survey. Ms. Clark encouraged the board members to complete the survey.

8. Committee Reports:

a. Building Task Force: Mrs. Drakeford briefed to the Board that the Building Task Force met on January 11, 2023, to discuss multiple options on moving forward on a new facility and reductions on lease cost. A partnership with the City of Sumter and Sumter County have discussed to offer additional State level funding. She explained that Mr. McCain briefed to the Committee that discussions are still underway with Sumter Administrators and members of the Legislators. Mrs. Drakeford explained that there is preliminary plan to partner with the RDC for the COG cannot borrow money. This will allow the COG to create a land-lease deal in order to avoid restrictions. She informed the Board that Committee will return for further discussion as soon as a solid fund arrangement have been found. She informed the Board that staff will continue to work with the architect.

b. FY 23-24 Membership Request: Mrs. Drakeford briefed to the Board that the Audit Finance Committee met February 1, 2023, to discussed and approve the Annual membership fees. The Committee was briefed by staffed and a recommendation of no change to current fees was approved by the Committee. On behalf of the Audit Finance Committee, Mrs. Drakeford made a motion to approve the 2023-24 membership fees as presented with no change from the previous year and it was seconded by Mr. McCain. Mr. Tucker wanted clarification was the reason for not raising the fees is because what staff is doing. Mrs. Drakeford confirmed that staff was doing things outside of the COG to bring in fees to help. Mr. Cyphers informed the Board that staff creates technical assistance agreements that earn the COG additional revenue from other COGs including Waccamaw COG, Pageland COG and the Pee Dee COG. Along with that and a few other things, has allowed the COG to maintain the financial structure. He informed that Board that Ms. Clark and Mrs. Katorkas have done a tremendous job of keeping the finances healthy. Through the technical assistance agreements and going in front of the House asking for more appropriations always helps and has allowed the COG to maintain the same member dues for our next fiscal year. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

9. Old Business:

- a. **Employee Policy Manual:** Mr. Cyphers informed the Board that there were a few highlighted changes throughout the policy manual. Mr. Gifford Shaw asked if the five (5) mental health days was new or clarification. Mr. Cyphers responded that it was a new piece added to the policy and the five (5) days was seen at the SHRM National level and have worked that into the policy for the Board to review. Mr. Cyphers clarified there is a six (6) months probationary period and once the probationary period is officially over with a written consent, the five (5) mental health days will be applied. The mental health days will work as a use it or lose it situation along with the annual leave and sick leave that are listed in the manual. Mrs. Penry Gustafson suggest that the word moderate on page 40 of the manual be strike out or defined because it's not really defined. After several conversation around what was pointed out, Chairman Nelson asked that staff get with the attorney on the concerns. Mr. Tucker recommended that the attorney participate via Zoom during the April meeting, to clarify wording for the concerns. Mrs. Drakeford made a motion to approve to employee policy manual, after discussion with some certain concerns, the Board asked the Executive Director to talk it over with the attorney and any amendments needed to be made will come forward in the April meeting and it was seconded by Mr. Tucker. Out of 23 members present, 22 were in favor and 1 (Gifford Shaw) opposed and the motion passed.

10. New Business:

- a. **Special Presentation:** Mr. Cyphers presented a plaque for outstanding leadership as a two term SCCOG President to Chairman Nelson on behalf of the South Carolina Council of Governments.

- 11. Executive Director's Report:** Mr. Cyphers informed the Board that the COG is off to a fantastic year. There were some obstacles that have been overcome with the Clarendon County Council on Aging. He has been meeting in Columbia often inquiring about additional funding for aging. Mr. Cyphers have been working with Ms. Clark with the Workforce bill to reach out to higher powers and help write a piece of legislature to make changes in clarifying the language that is used in the bill while getting additional funding to push towards the area. He informed the Board that there was an update in late December on the COATS MPO that is now contracting, so the COG has a larger study boundary. Mr. Cyphers informed that Board that there will be a project and planning meeting at the end of the first quarter to being the long range transportation plan. Santee-Lynches are under a new type of program that is no longer referred to as the guideshare funding, it is now referred to as the regional mobility program. He explained there are different criteria that will have to be followed when looking, creating, and ranking projects. Mr. Cyphers explained the reasons for the no annual membership changes are because of the technical assistance agreement done outside of the region. Staff has spent a lot of time getting appropriations from the State. Those funds are doesn't always go into salaries but is used for match to pull in federal money in the area. He explained that the COG is in really good shape not only from being financially healthy but having partners willing to work with the COG.

12. Chairman Remarks: Chairman Nelson expressed that staff did their due diligence in sending information on the policy manual to the Board. She explained that the discussion from the Executive Committee and Board on the policy manual was great, but she encouraged the Board to pay more attention as staff put in the work with the attorney on the information that they receive. Chairman Nelson thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Mr. Eugene Baten and Sen. Kevin Johnson receive approval for Chairman Nelson to express their concerns around Workforce Development in closing comments.

Mr. Tucker thanked Mr. Cyphers and staff for attending the Kershaw County Council meeting last month. He also expressed his concerns and requested that when the financial chief is out, someone would still need to present the financial report.

13. Adjourn: Chairman Nelson entertained a motion to adjourn. Mr. Tucker made the motion, and it was seconded by Mrs. Drakeford. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Submitted by:

Linda Jackson

Linda Jackson
Board Clerk

Approve by:

Dennis Cyphers

Dennis Cyphers
Executive Director

I certify that the public and media notifications of the above-mentioned meeting were given prior to the meeting as follows:

Public Notified: Yes
Manner Notified: Agenda was posted on Bulletin Board at 2525 Corporate Way, February 3, 2023

Media Notified: Yes
Manner Notified: Agenda emailed to local newspapers:
The Chronicle and The Item

Date Notified: January 31, 2023, and February 1, 2023