

LOWCOUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

April 23, 2015

6:30 p.m.

MINUTES

PRESENT:

ABSENT:

**BEAUFORT COUNTY:**

Philip (Phil) Cromer  
Gerald Dawson  
Brian Flewelling  
Mary Beth Heyward  
Alice Howard  
Bill McBride  
Joseph McDomick  
Jerry Stewart

Marc A. Grant  
Lisa Sulka (Proxy to Chair)

**COLLETON COUNTY:**

Esther S. Black  
Bobby Bonds  
Jane Darby  
Evon Robinson  
Gene Whetsell

Joseph Flowers (Proxy to G. Whetsell)  
Thomas (Tommy) Mann

**HAMPTON COUNTY:**

Frankie Bennett  
James (Pete) Hagood  
Charles (Buddy) Phillips  
Nat Shaffer

Travis L. (Pete) Mixson

**JASPER COUNTY:**

Henry Etheridge  
Carolyn Kassel  
Henry Lawton, Sr.  
Joey Malphrus  
Gwen Johnson Smith

**GUESTS:** Herbert Glaze, former COG Board Member; Celia Price, guest of Esther Black; Joy Riley, P.E., SCDOT Lowcountry Project Manager; Connie Schroyer

**STAFF:** Hank Amundson, Sabrena Graham, Ginnie Kozak, Barbara Johnson, Sherry Smith, Carol Stonebraker

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Chairman Nat Shaffer called the April 23, 2015 Lowcountry Council of Governments regular board meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Pete Hagood gave the invocation. Introduction of guests and staff followed. Minutes of the March 26, 2015 meeting were unanimously approved on motion by Pete Hagood with a second from Mary Beth Heyward. Proxies presented by the Executive Director included Joe Flowers to Gene Whetsell and Lisa Sulka to the Chair. Both were general proxies. The meeting proceeded after determining a quorum was present. (During the fellowship period, the Board honored Henry Lawton on his 95<sup>th</sup> birthday. Mr. Lawton is a founding COG board member.)

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At 6:38 p.m., Chairman Shaffer, on motion by Joe McDomick, seconded by Beth Heyward and unanimously approved, opened a Public Hearing on the Regional HOME Consortium 2015-2016 Annual Action Plan. He recognized Affordable Housing Manager Barbara Johnson to conduct the hearing. The

hearing had been properly advertised in regional newspapers, and Board members received advance copies. Barbara reviewed the 2015-2016 funding allocation and its proposed uses that include acquisition/rehab of rental units for affordable housing and single family owner-occupied housing rehabilitation, which is the most sought activity. Administrative costs are set at 10%. Barbara presented proposed 2015-2016 projects—funds are divided evenly among the four counties. The plan has been available to the public since April 1 and must be submitted to HUD by May 15, 2015. Discussion followed. There were no comments from the public, and the hearing closed at 6:43 p.m.

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With no Items of Old Business on the Agenda, Chairman Shaffer addressed New Business and called for action on the Regional HOME Consortium 2015-2016 Annual Action Plan as presented during the public hearing. Barbara Johnson said staff and the Affordable Housing Committee recommended approval. She reviewed the plan's proposed projects summary by county and requested Board approval, which must be followed by HUD approval. Brian Flewelling moved to approve as recommended, and Gerald Dawson seconded the motion. Barbara responded to a question from Henry Etheridge about funds for Jasper County owner-occupied units and said none are included in the 2015-2016 Plan; however, other existing funds may be transferred to that activity. The Chairman asked for further discussion, and hearing none, called for a vote on the motion. It unanimously carried.

Barbara continued with a review of Down Payment Assistance (DPA) noting difficulty in applicants qualifying for a mortgage. DPA has \$92K that must be spent. One application is in process, and if the mortgage is approved, the program plans to assist with the down payment. Staff and the Affordable Housing Committee recommend reallocating the remaining funds to regional single-family owner-occupied housing rehabilitation. Buddy Phillips moved to approve the Committee recommendation, and Esther Black seconded the motion. Discussion followed, after which the Chairman called for a vote, and the motion unanimously carried.

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Chairman Shaffer recognized SCDOT Lowcountry Project Manager Joy Riley for an SCDOT Project Progress Report. Copies were in meeting packets. Ms. Riley reviewed comprehensive funding summaries and projects across the four counties, including bridge replacement, road resurfacing, pavement improvement/preservation, intersection improvements, drainage improvement, sidewalk improvement, and Interstate rehabilitation/preservation. Discussion included SC-68 widening in Hampton County and US-17 in Jasper County. Both projects faced several issues; the current letting schedule for SC-68 is expected spring 2016 and winter 2017-2018 for US-17. More information will be available next quarter. Ms. Riley said there is a lot of coordination work to be done with Georgia on the proposed second Back River Bridge including a bi-state agreement. Ginnie Kozak confirmed the board will receive updates from SCDOT. The Chairman thanked Ms. Riley for the information.

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Chairman Shaffer recognized Finance Director Sherry Smith to present information about the Outside Audit Engagement. A summary was in meeting packets. Twelve companies requested RFP copies, and Sherry reviewed proposals from the three that responded. She recommended extending Crowley Wechsler & Associates for a second term, which is in line with established COG practice. Brian Flewelling moved to approve the recommendation, and following a second from Henry Lawton, the motion carried with all in favor.

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The Chairman asked Sherry Smith to continue with the March Finance Report. Sherry noted the report represented 75% of the fiscal year. Equipment Maintenance & Lease and Supplies are over but will be partially reimbursed by SCDEW by June as part of its resource agreement with the COG. Legal fees are over and represent new funds received since the first of the year to help senior citizens with legal services through

the COG's Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC). The overages will be adjusted in the May budget revisions.

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Sabrena Graham was recognized for the Director's Report. She reviewed selected items. COG employees are getting new ID cards. An Executive Committee planning retreat facilitated by Dr. Bill Tomes will be scheduled May 7, and all board members are encouraged to submit a survey. Results will come before the Board at a future meeting. The Executive Committee will also meet June 11 to review next year's budget, which will be presented to the full Board for action at the June meeting. The website update is going well, and a contract is expected to be issued soon. Telling the COG story continues with presentations scheduled at an April 27 Municipal Association Meeting with Hampton County Council and the County's Municipal Councils and at another meeting May 25 with the Pathway & Steps Healthy Church group.

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Michelle Knight was unable to attend the meeting, and Chairman Shaffer submitted the Community & Economic Development Report as well as the 208 Report, and Regional Unemployment Chart as information.

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During Council Time, Gene Whetsell invited everyone to the Rice Festival in Walterboro. Gerald Dawson reported that Jim Outlaw, because of other commitments, had resigned as Beaufort County's At-Large LCOG Board Member and that former Beaufort County Councilman Herbert Glaze has submitted a letter of interest regarding the seat. Mr. Dawson also asked Ginnie Kozak about an upcoming LATS/MPO community workshop. Ginnie confirmed the date is April 28, and details will be posted to the COG website and MPO Facebook page.

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With no additional business to address, and on motion duly made, seconded and approved, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 7:30 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,

Sabrena P. Graham  
Executive Director

Attachments