

Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission
Minutes of the Meeting
Westmoreland County Community College
Westmoreland County
and
Cisco WebEx Meeting
4:00 p.m. – August 28, 2023

The one hundred and sixty-third meeting of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission was called to order by Chairman, Leslie Osche.

Members: Darin Alviano, Jennifer Beer, Mike Belding, Brad Berlin, Kevin Boozel, Tom Ceraso, Douglas Chew, Amber Davis, Pat Fabian, Rich Fitzgerald, Ed Gainey, Kim Geyer, Kelly Gray, Aadil Grinwala, Lynn Heckman, Sherene Hess, Mark Hillard, Charles Jones, Fred Junko, Ted Kopas, Bill Kovach, Brian Leach, Bob Lesnick, Dave Lohr, Bob Macey, Larry Maggi, Jack Manning, Jeff Marshall, Don Myers, Leslie Osche, Mavis Rainey, Aurora Sharrard, Nick Sherman, Larry Shifflet, Loretta Spielvogel, John Timney, and Vince Vicites.

Others: Ann Ogoreuc, Allegheny County Department of Economic Development; Mark Rafail, Fayette County; Brain Burick, Lawrence County Board of Commissioners; Kyle Chintalapalli, Mayor Gainey's Office; Lisa Frank, Mayor Gainey's Office; Julia Cornell, PennDOT; Betty Barnes, EPA; Samantha Phillips Beers, EPA, and Dusty Kirk, Reed Smith LLP.

Staff: Bel Ayele, Dan Bernazzoli, Mary Brangan, Kirk Brethauer, Faith Collins, Ronda Craig, Dom D'Andrea, Linda Duffy, Margaret Fonner, Lillie Gabreski, Ryan Gordon, Zach Hollingshad, Chuck Imbrogno, Tom Klevan, Jenn Lasser, Nick Mannone, Caitlin O'Connor, DJ Ryan, Mason Secreti, Russell Singer, Josh Spano, Ailisa Sobien, Cathy Tulley, Vincent Valdes, and Andy Waple.

1. Vice- Chairman Fabian called to order the August 28, 2023 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 June 26, 2023 Meeting.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the June 26th meeting by Commissioner Fitzgerald which was seconded by Commissioner Ceraso. The affirmative vote was unanimous.

3. Public Comment – None

4. Action on Resolution **9-23** to Welcome Commissioner Ted Kopas – Vince Valdes

A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION to elect MEMBER for the remainder of calendar year 2023.

WHEREAS, a vacancy exists on the Commission due to the resignation of former Westmoreland County Commissioner Gina Cerilli Thrasher to accept a position on the Pennsylvania Workers' Compensation Appeals Board, and

WHEREAS, Westmoreland County Commissioner Ted Kopas has been named as a new MEMBER of the Commission effective August 28, 2023.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Commissioner Ted Kopas is elected to serve as a MEMBER of the Commission from the date hereof.

A motion was made to approve Resolution 9-23 by Commissioner Macey which was seconded by Commissioner Chew. The affirmative vote was unanimous.

5. Action on Resolution **10-23** to Welcome Aadil Ginwala – Vince Valdes

A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION to elect MEMBER for the remainder of calendar year 2023.

WHEREAS, a vacancy exists on the Commission due to the resignation of Aurora Sharrard from the City of Pittsburgh's member appointments, and

WHEREAS, Aadil Ginwala has been named as a new MEMBER of the Commission effective August 28, 2023.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Aadil Ginwala is elected to serve as a MEMBER of the Commission from the date hereof.

A motion was made to approve Resolution 10-23 by Commissioner Fitzgerald which was seconded by Commissioner Kopas. The affirmative vote was unanimous.

6. Action on Adoption of Commission Resolution No. **11-23**, U.S. Department of Transportation's Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant (MPDG) program—Dom D'Andrea

A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION (SPC) to endorse SPC staff, in partnership with Pittsburgh Regional Transit (PRT) and PennDOT District 11-0, in applying to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant (MPDG) program.

WHEREAS, it is critical for southwestern Pennsylvania to recognize the I-376 Parkway East Corridor and MLK Jr. East Busway in Allegheny County, as an integrated, multimodal facility of regional and national significance for the safe, efficient movement of people and goods; and

WHEREAS, the I-376 Parkway Corridor, which carries upwards of 100,000 vehicles per day, is a critical segment of the national highway network that connects the Great Lakes and the Appalachian and Northeast Megaregions of the United States, as well as a key regional link providing access from eastern and western parts of the region, including Pittsburgh International Airport, to Downtown Pittsburgh, the Pennsylvania Turnpike and points east; and

WHEREAS, the MLK Jr. East Busway is a two-lane corridor serving the City of Pittsburgh and many of its eastern neighborhoods and suburbs. Owned and maintained by PRT, the Busway offers quick, direct links between key employment and growth areas in the region and quality of life amenities for shopping, medical and health necessities, and recreational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, this funding will enable PennDOT and the PRT to continue a series of projects designed to modernize, integrate and improve safety on these critical corridors to better serve the region, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and points to both the east and west; and

WHEREAS, PennDOT will actively manage traffic and provide real-time information to motorists, facilitate the safe and secure movement of people and goods, mitigate flooding, increase options for publicly accessible EV charging, and protect and enhance public health by improving air quality and reducing fatal crashes and injuries; and,

WHEREAS, the funding will enable the PRT to vastly improve the Busway's state of good repair, construct a new bus-only inbound lane from Churchill to Edgewood and a potential bus-only ramp at the Edgewood interchange, purchase electric battery buses and accompanying charging infrastructure, and additional resiliency and accessibility improvements.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, recognizing its collective interests in the well-being of its residents by improving the efficiency, safety and reliability of the National Highway system, as well as improving interactions between roadway and transit users and supporting the equitable, multimodal integration of the I-376 Corridor, supports SPC staff in partnership with the PRT and PennDOT District 11 in applying to the U.S. Department of Transportation's MPDG program.

A motion was made to approve Resolution 11-23 by Commissioner Boozel which was seconded by Commissioner Fitzgerald. The affirmative vote was unanimous.

7. Action on Adoption of Commission Resolution **12-23**, U.S. Department of Transportation's Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Discretionary Grant Program for a Planning Grant—Andy Waple

A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION (SPC) to endorse SPC staff, in applying to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Discretionary Grant Program for a Planning Grant;

WHEREAS, the purpose of the PROTECT Formula and Discretionary Grant programs is to plan for and strengthen surface transportation to be more resilient to natural hazards, including climate change, sea level rise, flooding, extreme weather events, and other natural disasters through formula and competitive discretionary grants; and

WHEREAS, The SPC region's unique topography and geology make it especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change including flooding and landslides; the region has a higher intersection frequency of roads and waterways in addition to an aging infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, this funding will enable SPC to be more proactive in its planning by creating new predictive mapping tools that will allow SPC and its partners to anticipate the occurrence of rainfall, flooding, and landslides, assess vulnerabilities in our infrastructure, and inform existing community response strategies and future planning in our region; and

WHEREAS, this funding will also enable SPC to be complete a Resiliency Improvement Plan which will identify short- and long-range planning activities and investments with respect to the multimodal resilience of the surface transportation network.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, recognizing its collective interests in the well-being of its residents by enhancing the resiliency of our critical surface transportation infrastructure, supports SPC staff in applying to the U.S. Department of Transportation's PROTECT program.

A motion was made to approve Resolution 12-23 by Commissioner Boozel which was seconded by Commissioner Fitzgerald. The affirmative vote was unanimous.

8. Interagency Working Group Stakeholder Session—Jenn Lasser

Ms. Lasser stated as the local development district, SPC was asked to assist the Interagency Working Group and the Pennsylvania rapid response team was helping to organize and provide our input. Thanks to Stakeholder Engagement Meetings within the five counties that have been impacted by the downturn in the coal industry, so the rapid response team is planning to host

meetings in Washington, Indiana, Greene, Armstrong and Beaver Counties. It's going to include representatives from multiple federal agencies. I have reached out already to the planning directors in counties to start scheduling this, and I believe on the call, Betty Barnes and Samantha Beers with EPA are here to join us for this meeting.

Ms. Barnes stated the goal of the engagement meetings is going to be determine by the challenging needs of the communities as they transition in the downturn of culture so that federal agency will be there to discuss resources as well as those that are pursuing economic redevelopment. Again, it's a virtual meeting with community leaders, planning agencies, nonprofits, and these discussions will focus on the effects of these closures to the communities but also the types of assistance that they need and their challenges for redevelopment.

Interagency working group is co-chaired by the director of the National Economic Council and the Secretary national climate advisory administered by the Secretary of Energy. The Department of Energy provides the administrative home from the working group of the sister federal agencies, which include and not in total here, the Department of Energy, Environmental Protection Agency, USDA, the Appalachian Regional Commission, Department of Transportation, EDA, Department of Interior, HUD, Labor and Treasury.

The Interagency Working Group, the way that they work, one on one with these communities is through rapid response teams. These rapid response teams are smaller groups of teams that worked one on one with communities we reach out to different communities what they have been doing, and I've reached out to Jen Lasser, and Kurt Bowman to help me identify some of the challenges are for these communities, as well as some of the opportunities. In April of 2023, the White House to announced that EPA Region III is going to be leader for the rapid response team here in Pennsylvania. The team is charged with making connections to state and local agency leaders, assisting communities to address economic diversification, worker needs and community issues. The RRT assists by connecting communities to federal agencies with funding to address challenges to economic redevelopment. We also host listening sessions with community members, individual communities and the authority. We'd like to conduct engagement meetings. As mentioned earlier with Beaver, Indiana, Armstrong, Greene and Washington counties. We plan on conducting these meetings which will include representatives from EPA, Department of Energy Southwest Pennsylvania Commission, the Northwest Pennsylvania Commission, NEPA Alliance, National Association of Development organization and National Association of Counties. These organizations were helping me plan these engagement meetings so that we have the right people coming to these meetings and we need to be able to talk about what the strengths and weaknesses are, and what are some of the needs and challenges that you would address.

The engagement meetings will consist of virtual roundtable discussions with community leaders, planning agencies, nonprofits, locals, LDDs and representatives from federal agencies. The goal of these meetings is to provide a forum for the county representatives to discuss their community's challenges and opportunities. The meetings will be 90-minute virtual meetings to allow for robust participation.

There is going to be a larger event that's going to be held in the fall. We're looking tentatively, for October. Invitees will include dignitaries such as Senator Casey administration, principals, state representatives, effective community leaders and worker representatives, federal and state funding program officials. As we hold these meetings with these individual counties, we'll be taking copious notes as to why you all think it's important that you need for your economic redevelopment, and then we'll be feeding this back up to the Department of Energy, which is the sort of the host agency for the whole IWG to say, these are the issues that are affecting the communities, the coal communities here in Pennsylvania.

Commissioner Boozel asked how did you develop your criteria on just these five counties?

Ms. Barnes replied it was based on the data the Department of Energy collected and also looking at communities that had a large number of mine closings.

9. EDA Update — Jenn Lasser

Ms. Lasser gave a very brief EDA Update. She stated first and foremost, our workforce investment boards are starting to do their training, our community colleges are starting to host these classes. IUP hosted a great robotic summer camp. I've also asked for an October meeting, if our regional economic competitiveness officer can come and give a Build Back Better update for you all like they did about six months ago. So just know that's coming. In terms of Build Back Better, all is still going well and moving forward with no issues.

10. Action Item—Adoption of Resolution **13-23** in support of the Tech Hub Letter of Support—
Jenn Lasser

A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION to provide a letter of support on behalf of the full Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission Board for the Pittsburgh Life Science Alliance (PLSA)'s application to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) Tech Hubs Program.

WHEREAS, the EDA Tech Hubs Program is an economic development initiative designed to drive regional technology- and innovation-centric growth by strengthening a region's capacity to manufacture, commercialize, and deploy critical technologies. This program will invest directly in regions with the assets, resources, capacity, and potential to transform into globally competitive innovation centers in approximately 10 years while catalyzing the creation of good jobs for American workers at all skill levels, both equitably and inclusively.

WHEREAS, The Pittsburgh Life Science Alliance (PLSA) Tech Hubs EDA application proposes to unite the region's life sciences, manufacturing, and artificial intelligence strengths – overlapping advantages unique to Pittsburgh – to develop a fully U.S.-based biomanufacturing hub. The hub will equitably engage Pittsburgh's regional workforce; accelerate technology transfer based on existing local, state, and federal investments in biotechnology, manufacturing process improvement, robotics; seed a new domestic supply chain for biomanufacturing across Southwestern Pennsylvania; and improve access to healthcare delivery and individual and community health outcomes for urban and rural patients alike.

Within the Tech Hubs application, the PLSA will build that platform, with an intentional focus on workforce development, domestic supply chain, and equitable economic opportunities, along four integrated lines of (1) New Ecosystem Investments, (2) New Domestic Supply Chain for biomedical manufacturing, (3) Disruptive biomanufacturing investments and (4) Democratize the delivery of personalized medicine.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission Board will support this project by issuing a letter of support on behalf of the full board and commission for its inclusion in the full EDA application being submitted by Pittsburgh Life Science Alliance in August 2023.

A motion was made to approve Resolution 13-23 by Commissioner Fitzgerald which was seconded by Commissioner Macey. The affirmative vote was unanimous.

11. Brief on Safe Driving Video Campaign (Safety & Ops) – Caitlin O'Connor

Ms. O'Connor stated this video is our way to help educate and generate awareness among the public and our audiences by providing safe driving/road safety tips.

A collaboration between the Transportation (Safety & Ops team) & Communications departments. Designing, writing, and creating/editing these videos in-house. Featuring and promoting the

videos on our owned channels (social media platforms and newsletter). Also distributing to specific publics/audiences.

Videos have a timely theme dependent upon the season we're in.

12. Message from the Executive Director – Vincent Valdes
Next Meeting Date – **October 23, at 4 p.m.**

Mr. Valdes also stated that the October 23rd meetings will be the last set of meetings he will be attending. He is resigning from his position as Executive Director of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission. The search committee is in full swing to find his replacement. He thanked the members for the opportunity to serve the region and to be part of such an important organization, such as the Commission. He is very grateful for the opportunity.

13. Other SPC Business

Commissioner Osche stated the next meeting is going to be October 23rd, and we will be meeting at the new SPC offices in the Terminal Building.

14. Adjourn – 5:01 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Vincent Vicites, Secretary-Treasurer