



**SEDA-Council of Governments
Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 23, 2024
Start Time: 1:00 P.M.**

MEMBERS

County	Member	Present
Centre	Commissioner Mark Higgins	x
	Ms. Lisa Strickland	x
Clinton	Commissioner Jeffrey A. Snyder	x
	Mr. Steve Stevenson	x
Columbia	Commissioner Randy Karschner	x
	Mr. Paul Eyerly	x
Juniata	Commissioner Mark R. Partner	x
	Mr. Scott Fritz	x
Lycoming	Commissioner Scott L. Metzger	x
	Mr. Howard Fry III	x
Mifflin	Commissioner Kevin P. Kodish	x
	Allana Hartung	
Montour	Commissioner Rebecca Dressler	x
	Mr. Chris Benjamin	
Northumberland	Commissioner Joseph M. Klebon	x
	Vacant	
Perry	Commissioner Frank Campbell	x
	Colin Reynolds	
Snyder	Commissioner Joseph E. Kantz	x
	Mr. Dennis Van Benthuyzen	x
Union	Commissioner Preston R. Boop	x
	Mr. Fred Hoffman Jr.	x

STAFF

Kim Wheeler, Jamie Carnes, Amanda Owens, Rose Orner, Nancy Osborn, Denise Rhodes-Wolf, Tina Showers, Brooks Luzier, Steve Herman, Karen Smith, Jenn Heebner, Mandy Fox, Betsy Lockwood, Patti Kirkner, John Reichard, Doug Wilburn

GUESTS

Harold Hurst

CALL TO ORDER

The SEDA-COG Board of Directors meeting was called to order at 1:02p.m., by President Metzger, there being a quorum present.

MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Van Benthuyzen moved for approval of the September 25, 2024, meeting minutes. Commissioner Partner seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.

OPEN FORUM

Opportunity for Public Comments

No public comment was offered.

Non-Agenda Items of General Interest to the Members

Commissioner Kantz provided electoral data by County, which included the following:

- Registered voters - there are around 240,000 registered Republicans, 130,000 Democrats, and 50,000 with no affiliation. There is also a notable number of smaller parties.
- Party-to-Party switching - 1,576 people in the region switched to the Democratic Party and 3,600 from Democrat to Republican. There were also nearly equal numbers of people switching to third parties from both Republicans and Democrats.
- Demographic trends showed an aging population, with younger voters being more prominent among Democrats and older voters more concentrated among Republicans.
- The 2020 election had the highest turnout in Pennsylvania, with around 66% of eligible voters participating. High voter turnout is also expected in the current election cycle, but there are challenges related to in-person voting and mail-in ballots.
- Voter turnout and the impact of legislation, especially regarding mail-in ballots and early voting, were discussed.
- The issue of postal service delays was raised, especially in light of the large volume of mail-in ballots. The concern was that understaffed local post offices might affect the timely delivery of ballots, which could pose challenges in this election cycle.

Commissioner Kantz noted that the information will be made available for any Board Members that wish to see it.

OLD BUSINESS

Nothing was presented under Old Business.

NEW BUSINESS

Local Loan Review Committee Report

Chairman Snyder offered a brief overview of the Local Loan Review Committee Report to the Board of Directors:

Parks Pest Control, Inc. and Z R and P, LLC

Howard, Centre County
\$181,000 SEDA-COG SSBCI

Commissioner Kantz moved to approve the loan for Parks Pest Control, Inc. and Z R and P, LLC, as presented. Mr. Fritz seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2024 Draft Annual Report

Ms. Betsy Lockwood, Director of Project Development/Grants presented the Draft 2024 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Annual Report. As a designated Economic Development District (EDD), SEDA-COG is required to regularly update its Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) in order to maintain eligibility for U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding for the 11-county region. The CEDS contains seven goals and accompanying objectives, developed as part of the five-year CEDS, which is used by staff to identify and evaluate projects within the region.

Mr. Eyerly moved to approve the submission of the Annual Report to the Economic Development Administration (EDA). Mr. Stevenson seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Resignation of SEDA-COG Board & LDC Member, Northumberland County Additional Representative

President Metzger shared the resignation of Mr. Joseph Moralez, Additional Representative, Northumberland County, which was submitted on September 25, 2024. His service began in January 2024. A new Representative has not yet been appointed by the Northumberland County Commissioners.

Commissioner Klebon moved to accept the resignation of Mr. Joseph Moralez, Northumberland County Additional Representative, as presented. Commissioner Kantz seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.

COMMITTEE & STAFF REPORTSWeatherization Program Report

Ms. Mandy Fox, Chief of the Weatherization and Housing Rehabilitation Programs, provided a report on the activities of the Weatherization program:

- Locations - The program operates out of two warehouses in Lewistown and Lewisburg, serving the counties of Columbia, Juniata, Mifflin, Montour, Perry, Snyder, and Union. Utility work expands into parts of Centre, Huntington, Lycoming, and Northumberland.
- Jobs - Last year, the program completed 769 jobs with a total value of \$3.2 million in energy-saving measures.
- Revenue - The program reflected a \$55,000 surplus as of August, due to improved invoicing practices and better management of costs. There's an expectation that this surplus will continue, as revenues from utility and PHARE funds are higher than the previous year. The team is also planning to apply for \$1 million in PHARE funds.
- Vehicles - Some weatherization vans are showing wear, but efforts are underway to sell or replace them.

The board expressed appreciation for the team's dedication, especially for clients who rely on these services. The program not only provides energy savings but also personal care for residents in need.

Ms. Fox noted that overall, the Weatherization Program is making significant strides in helping the community, while maintaining fiscal responsibility and improving operational efficiency.

Fiscal Report

Ms. Jamie Carnes, Fiscal Controller, provided the Fiscal Report:

- Line of Credit - The current balance on the line of credit is \$256,000. Interest rates are continuing to decrease, dropping from 6.7% last month to 6.5% today.
- Balance Sheet - The primary change compared to last year is the absence of the PHARE Fund balance.
 - As of August 31st, the entire initial allocation of \$300,000 was spent.
 - Although the PHARE Fund revenue will remain on the balance sheet, it will not increase during this fiscal year.
- Income Statement - There are no significant changes from last month - on track with the budget for this fiscal year. The quarterly invoicing process was completed last week, which will be reflected in the September financials.
- New Financials Template - Starting this quarter, staff will provide an additional set of financial reports to the board on a quarterly basis, which will break down the financials for the five internal departments within SEDA-COG:
 - Transportation
 - Community Services
 - Business Services
 - Residential Services
 - Administrative and IT services (under an internal category)

Executive Director Report

Ms. Kim Wheeler presented her Executive Director Report to the Board of Directors:

Regional Update

- Pennsylvania Population Revitalization Commission – The well-attended meeting took place on October 10th in Union County, hosted by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania. The key topics were:
 - Affordable Housing
 - Workforce Development
 - Transportation & Healthcare Access
 - Community Integration
 - Policy Suggestions & Recommendations
 - Community engagement strategies.
 - Strengthening education and workforce development, especially in trades.
 - Childcare support and incentives for community growth.
 - Infrastructure development, and support for nonprofits and municipalities.

A series of pre-meetings are planned by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania in January to further discuss these issues and refine the recommendations. There is a strong desire for continued collaboration, as stakeholders and organizations are encouraged to provide input, especially given their on-the-ground knowledge.

Some attendees expressed concerns about the impact of bringing more people into rural areas without the necessary infrastructure and community support to sustain them. There was a discussion about balancing the desire to grow and maintain the rural lifestyle that attracts people to these areas. Some community members shared that while improvements are needed, they don't want the region to lose its rural character or become an urbanized area.

The Pennsylvania commission is still accepting additional comments and feedback from stakeholders who attended the meeting.

The Board Members discussed the challenges of rural areas, infrastructure strain, population decline, and the importance of sustainable growth rather than simply attracting more jobs that could worsen existing problems.

County Commissioners Tour of SEDA-COG

- The event is scheduled for Friday, December 6th, from 8:00am until noon, at the SEDA-COG offices. All County Commissioners within the region are invited to attend, to introduce and/or reintroduce SEDA-COG's programs and services, with the goal of highlighting needs in counties, and receive feedback on what is working or not working.

Grants Submitted/Awarded

- Penn Highlands Community College, Centre County
 - Awarded a \$50,000 grant to support the opening of a new campus in Centre County, enhancing educational experiences for 300-400 students and training 100 new workers.
- Clearwater Agribusiness, State College, Centre County
 - Awarded an ARC POWER grant in the amount of \$2.0 million, for eco-tourism and an agribusiness hub project, creating a community center and training opportunities for agritourism and conservation.
- Susquehanna River Walk Extension, Lycoming County
 - Awarded a \$1.8 million grant to construct a trail in Lycoming County, promoting eco-tourism.
- Broadcast Arts Initiative, City of Shamokin, Northumberland County
 - Awarded an ARC POWER grant in the amount of \$400,000, to train at-risk youth and adults in creative arts, including animation, graphic design, and game building. It aims to develop new businesses and create jobs.
 - The grants total \$4.3 million for various projects supporting growth, education, and innovation in the region.

Internal Updates

- Deputy Director Position – the recruitment process is ongoing, with interviews to begin next week.
- Employees of the Month
 - September – Susan Shaffer, Program Analyst, Community Development
 - October – Ruth Wiest, Program Assistant, from Rental Housing and Business Finance programs.

Ms. Wheeler noted the new construction located near the parking area, which is the designated smoking area. This location places SEDA-COG in compliance with the 2008 PA Indoor Clean Air Act.

Finance Committee Report

Chairman Fritz stated that a meeting with the Executive Committee of the SEDA-COG Natural Gas Cooperative took place last month. The information will be provided during the Executive Session.

Personnel Committee Report

Chairman Higgins stated that the Personnel Committee met on Thursday, September 19th, to discuss the evaluation process for the Executive Director and benefits for the staff.

Appointment of the Nominating Committee

President Metzger announced his proposed appointments for the Nominating Committee, to select the Officers for 2025: Commissioner Kantz, Commissioner Higgins, Mr. Steve Stevenson, and himself. There were no additional nominations from the floor.

Mr. Eyerly moved to approve the Nominating Committee appointments as presented. Commissioner Snyder seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE/INFORMATION ITEMS

President Metzger noted the items listed under the Correspondence/Information Items section.

ADJOURN

President Metzger adjourned the SEDA-COG Board of Directors meeting at 2:11pm.

The SEDA-COG Board of Directors entered Executive Session at 2:13pm.

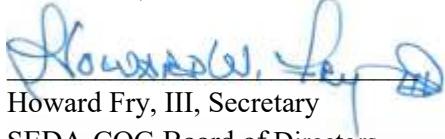
The SEDA-COG Board of Directors Executive Session concluded at 2:22pm, on a motion from Mr. Stevenson, seconded by Commissioner Snyder. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Rosemary Orner, Executive Assistant
SEDA-Council of Governments

I hereby certify that the meeting minutes were approved by the SEDA-COG Board of Directors on October 23, 2024.



Howard Fry, III, Secretary
SEDA-COG Board of Directors