



**Southwest Missouri Council of Governments
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 11, 2025
2:00 p.m.
JVIC 1st Floor Conference**

Attendees: Cindy Stephens, Duane Lavery, Steve Childers, Wayne Blades, Allen Kunkel, Chris Coulter, & J Howard Fisk,

Zoom Attendees: Todd Wiesehan

Staff: Jason Ray, and Courtney Pinkham

Open Meeting – Cindy Stephens

1. Approval of March 11, 2025 Agenda – Cindy Stephens

Motion made by Duane Lavery and seconded by Chris Coulter to approve the March 11, 2025, Agenda, amended to remove item 4, Bank Transfer. Motion carried.

2. Approval of January 14, 2025 Minutes – Cindy Stephens

Motion made by Allen Kunkel and seconded by Steve Childers to approve the January 14, 2025 minutes. Motion carried

3. Approval of February 14, 2025 Minutes – Cindy Stephens

Motion made by J. Howard Fisk and seconded by Steve Childers to approve the February 14, 2025 minutes. Motion carried.

5. Ozarks Region Workforce Development Board Resolution – Jason Ray

Jason discussed funding options for engaging a consultant through private funds. An initial request was made to the city to utilize board funds; however, the request was denied due to the lack of proper procurement procedures. Greene County then offered assistance with

funding, leading to the involvement of SMCOG. While Greene County does not have a direct relationship with the workforce development board, they do have a relationship with SMCOG as a paying member. This is to authorize Jason to implement all necessary agreements to facilitate investment in workforce development.

-Duane asked what the workforce development board's legal status

-Jason stated they had set up a nonprofit. He believes they are a quasi-governmental and work through the CLEO

-Wayne asked if this might come back on SMCOG

-Jason stated that the final agreements would state SMCOG is not financially responsible. Since this has been a hot issue, SMCOG stepping in might help to smooth some if this over.

-Howard asked if the Workforce Development Board had the money.

-Chris stated that Greene Co is backing financially.

Motion made by J Howard Fisk and seconded by Steve Childers to approve the Ozarks Region Workforce Development Board Resolution. Motion carried. Chris Coulter abstained.

-Allen asked if the EC would then have to review the final agreement.

-Jason stated no, that this is authorizing him to implement the necessary agreements.

6. Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Update – Jason Ray

Jason stated 2/18/2025 was the last day to De-obligate, now we are in the revolving stage. On 2/18/2025, we drove to Miller to sign a loan agreement and promissory note to get that loan in before the deadline as per EDA. We will stay in contact with them to make sure everything carries on accordingly. We are waiting for EDA to dispense funds for sister's mill, with federal government layoffs, NOAA is short staffed. NOAA acts as the Fiscal office for several Department of Commerce agencies such as EDA so there is a delay in processing payments.

7. Program/Project Updates – Jason Ray

Jason noted we got a new-to-us copier from SEES, ours was very old and having difficulties. The office move date has been postponed from April 1st, with no new date provided. Final renderings of the new space and office furniture have been reviewed.

EDA has accepted the CEDS update, and a letter of confirmation has been received. The Denver Regional EDA training, which occurs every other year, will take place in the coming weeks, and Jason will attend. While there, EDA will conduct an in-depth peer review.

EDA funds are not currently frozen, but the Homeland Security program remains frozen with about \$750,000 of SMCOG funds frozen. The program was already behind schedule,

and while the Springfield bomb robot has been received, Branson's Bearcat is still pending. The total amount distributed so far is not confirmed, and Morganza is working to gather that information. Homeland Security staff has requested that this information not be publicized.

Hazard Mitigation funding under the BRIC program is currently frozen. Additionally, the EPA had established the Heartland Environmental Justice Center to support new grants, but the center has since closed, leaving those grant programs in limbo. A brownfield training grant application submitted under one of these programs is now on hold as a result.

Branson's State of the City Address is scheduled for today at 5 PM, with SMCOG representatives, including Jason and Aishwarya, attending.

There are four ongoing affordable housing projects that SMCOG is administering in Branson. The tiny home project is under construction, though excavation work was started prematurely and will not be paid for. The other three projects, including Cedar Ridge and two identical developments, are funded through CDBG, with each containing approximately 48 units.

An amendment to the Branson Wastewater Treatment Wall contract for an additional \$20,000 is needed, as the administration budget was exceeded due to much more work needed to address wage restitution issues with contractors regarding prevailing wage requirements.

The Branson comprehensive plan is progressing, though the community survey has had a low response rate. Buffalo's comprehensive plan community survey will be distributed soon, while Rockaway Beach's has just been sent out.

Monett needs a budget amendment related to the transportation portion and has appointed a new city administrator.

We received CDBG feedback on the seven unsuccessful proposals. Greenfield's project to repaint the water tower was rejected, as it should have gone through a different program. However, we provided emails from a CDBG staff member confirming its eligibility. We are now exploring alternative funding options and applying for a CDBG Downtown Revitalization Grant. CDBG acknowledged that only two staff members were reviewing

applications, which led to an overwhelming workload. Brandon Jenson, CDBG Manager, will be leaving at the end of the month to join United Way.

Two bills to increase the RPC state funding cap have been voted out and are now on the Senate calendar. House Bill 837 is progressing, and Senate Bill 797, which proposes restructuring RPC membership based on population, is also moving forward.

The two planner positions have been advertised for some time but were temporarily paused. Currently, there are two top candidates, both of whom are in unique situations that align with the timeline of the staff augmentation grant submission. Hiring is contingent on receiving the grant award, and both candidates are able to wait for the outcome before proceeding.

8. Adjourn