



**Southwest Missouri Council of Governments
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 27, 2021
9:00 a.m.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

Attendance :

Members:

Cameron Smith - Ozark
Cindy Stephens - OTC
Bob Senninger – Lawrence County
Chris Hopkins - Billings
Chris Berndt - SMESO
Shawn Barry – Toth & Assoc
Ralph Phillips – Christian County
Mark Maples – Stone County
Howard Fisk – Fisk Transportation
Gail Noggle – ED Alliance Bolivar/Polk Co
Todd Wiesehan – Christian County
Steve Bodenhamer - Battlefield
Hollie Elliott – Dallas CO Economic Dev.
Jerry Harman – Kimberling City
Cindy Robbins - Nixa
Allen Kunkel – MSU
Megan Bischof - Ozark
Steve Childers - Ozark
Chena Simmons – Branson
Joel Hornickel - Branson
Neil Brady – Bartlett & West
Stan Whitehurst – Webster County
Dana Louderbaugh – Fair Grove
Max Springfield – Mt. Vernon
Sherry Coker - OTC
Chris Coulter – Greene County
Kathy Smith – N-Form Architecture
Duane Lavery – GRO Marshfield
Sam Rost – Marshfield
Brendan Griesemer - Springfield
Bob Dixon – Greene County
Karen Haynes – Republic
Mac Manning – Reeds Spring

Tia Clemens - Olsson
Stephen Short – Fair Grove
Randy Owens – Webster County
Randall Willoughby – Mo DNR

Partners and Guests

Beth Schaller – MoDOT
Clayton Campbell – Senator Hawley’s Of-
fice
Frank Miller -MoDOT
Christa Atchison – MoDED
Laura Larmore – MO Higher Ed
Lindsay Farrow – Rep. Alex Riley office
Zeke Hall - MoDOT
Mark Hultgren – USDA -Rural Development
Stacy Burks – Red Cross
Ron Seyl - MoDED
Pamela Duitsman – MO Extension
Dennis Wiggins – Ozark Region Career
Center
Alicia Wingo – CFO
Drew Cannon – Congresswoman Hartzler’s
Office
Ronda Burnett – MDC
Danny Perches – Spfld Chamber/SREP
Sonya Anderson – Senator Blunt’s Office
Sherri Rhuems – SW Region Career Center

Staff:

Jason Ray
Jane Hood
Dorothy Wittorff-Sandgren
Brandon Jensen

Thomas Cunningham
Jack Weindel
Aishwarya Shrestha
Courtney Pinkham

Alexa Mason
Kjella Page
Hanna Schinstock

Open Meeting

Introductions and Announcements— Chris Coulter

Approval of January 27, 2021 Meeting Agenda—Chris Coulter

Howard Fisk motioned and Gail Noggle seconded to approve the revised Agenda for the January 27, 2021 meeting. Motion Carried.

Approval of December 2, 2020 Meeting Minutes— Chris Coulter

Dana Louderbaugh motioned and Sam Rost seconded to approve the Minutes for the December 2, 2020 meeting. Motion Carried.

Legislative Reports

Sonya Anderson – Senator Blunt's Office

Sonya is the new district office director for Senator Blunt. The impeachment proceeding are continuing and the Senate trial will begin 2/9/21. Senator Blunt has met with the new CDC director. Senator Blunt stressed the need to get more money out including \$8.5 billion for the implementation of the vaccine program.

Clayton Campbell – Senator Hawley's Office

New spending packages may be coming from the new administration and the Senate.

Drew Cannon - Congresswoman Hartzler's Office

Congress has extended the COVID Relief Fund deadline for 1 year, however, Governor Parson has extended the deadline to 1/31/21 if counties have submitted all their receipts and expenditures from last year. If you have questions you can contact the State Treasurers office.

State Legislative Reports

District 134 – Representative Alex Riley's office – Lindsay Farrow

Two of the State's priorities during this session is Covid liability and Education Policy. There is also some good bills being perfected regarding foster care and adoption. Let her know if you have any questions.

Business Meeting

1. Review TAC Letter of Support for State Transportation Funding – Jason Ray

TAC has voted to send a letter of support on transportation funding to all of our region's state representatives and senators. That letter is being finalized. The proposed fuel tax increase of 10 cents on both gas and diesel would generate \$407.1 million. Jason asked if the Board wanted to support this letter. It would be reviewed by Chris Coulter, as Chair, before being sent out.

Howard Fisk motioned, and Cindy Stephens seconded sending the completed letter supporting the increase in fuel tax for transportation. Motion carried.

2. Program Updates – Jason Ray & Staff (Program Reports – 1/27/21 was emailed out prior to meeting)

-Jason reported it has been a year since SMCOG Board has met in person and we are looking at other possible venues to meet as the Library Center is closed until August of this year.

-Jason will be asking the Executive Committee to consider developing a new Strategic Plan for the organization. SMCOG met all the goals from the previous Strategic Plan a couple of years ago. We have now grown from 5 to 15 employees.

-We are using a portion of the CARES Act Grant to hire a consultant to do community market studies. Three communities applied. Those applications will be reviewed by a CEDS sub-committee.

-We are waiting for approval from our EDA application for setting up a Revolving Loan Fund. This will be a 3-year program for gap financing, partnering with traditional lenders.

-Aishwarya Shrestha – Transportation

Deadline for TAP project applications is 1/29/21 at 4:00pm. We are writing letters of support for those communities who requested a letter. Missouri State Parks is accepting applications for RTP and LWCF. (We are currently writing LWCF application for the Billings Park Board.) Both are due 2/17/21. MoDOT Cost Share Program applications are due at the MoDOT district office on 4/16/21 with draft application due 3/16/21. They encourage discussion of your project with Area Engineer Beth Schaller prior to application. A letter of support from SMCOG is required with the application. MoDOT Statewide Planning Partners meeting is scheduled for 2/10/21.

-Thomas Cunningham – Hazard Mitigation Plans & Homeland Security

Currently working on Barry County Hazard Mitigation Plan and preparing work on 5 upcoming plans which will take us through 2023. We continue to work with Cassville in getting them reinstated in the NIFP. Jason thanked Senator Blunt's office and Congressman Long's office for their assistance with federal agencies in this process.

Thomas reported that the Homeland Security quarterly meeting was held last week and the agriculture representative was filled at that meeting. The next meeting is 4/21/21. Dorothy reported FY20 has been submitted.

-Brandon Jenson – Economic Development & Comprehensive Plans

Brandon reviewed the use of EDA funds used in projects over the past years and the technical assistance provided. We have written 7 grants totaling over \$13 million. EDA has transitioned us from a one year to a 3-year Planning Partners Program funding cycle. We are updating the budget and scope of work to a 3- year extension with the total operating amount of \$210,000 in federal funds. The CEDS Committee will be reviewing the draft budget and scope of work and sending the budget on to the Executive Committee. This will allow us to expand some of our services. We have been working with the SBDC to support their efforts in entrepreneurial work. Working on comprehensive plans for Battlefield, Republic, and Christian County. We will begin a comprehensive plan for Aurora this summer.

-Lexie Mason – Grant Writing

SEMA closeouts for Monett and Bull Creek buyouts are completed. SMCOG has submitted an EDA application and 2 CDBG applications for the Branson Compton Wastewater Treatment Plant. We are assisting Rockaway Beach and Billings with grant applications.

-Jason welcomed back Courtney Pinkham as Administrative Assistant. She previously was the 2020 Census Coordinator. Howard Fisk asked if SMCOG could help find information in the census data. SMCOG can assist with locating that information.

Partner Updates

USDA Rural Development – Mark Hultgren

Rural Development is currently operating without full allocations at this time but continue to deliver programs to the rural areas. RD staff can go to DC to request funds for most of their programs.

Cannot request funds for CF Grant Program and EII Program. The Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) application deadline is 2/26/21. Howard Fisk asked about the CARES Act helping with broadband. Drew Cannon reported that of the \$2.3 billion that Missouri received in CARES Act, the legislature allocated \$100 million for broadband. Discussion held on the frustration of poor broadband service and what is being done.

MoDOT – Frank Miller

They will be working on the STEP updates and the statewide project selection. In the OTO area, over half of the funding is needed to take care of the existing roads and bridges. Nearly all of the funds in the remainder of the region goes to existing roads. It looks like there may be an additional \$230 million coming from Congress. They will be working with Aishwarya and TAC to determine the prioritization for use of the funds for this region. The needs list will be updated. The 2020-2021 construction project guide is online on their website. MoDot is looking at Glenstone Ave to see what changes need to be made to make it safer and more efficient.

MO Dept of Natural Resource (DNR) – Randall Willoughby

DNR has had some staff changes recently. They continue to work from home most of the time. DNR had to postpone training for wastewater and drinking water operators. Those have now started again online. DNR has been trying to regionalize water and wastewater systems. Through SRF they have \$3 million regionalization grants for connection of small treatment plants to municipalities. The goal is to impact 25% of their 2500 wastewater systems. Those grant applications are due by 3/1/21 and it is a competitive grant. DNR has partnered with DHHS and University of Missouri on their Covid Sewer Sampling Project. Since June DNR has been partnering with several municipalities to sample raw wastewater going into their treatment plants to test for Covid RNA and they are seeing about a 5 day lag time of increased positive cases. It has been getting national attention.

MO Dept of Conservation (MDC) – Ronda Burnett

The end of 2020 they completed the Roaring River Hatchery renovation project. They had their 1st Elk hunting season last year. Deer hunting season has ended with harvest reaching almost 300,000. The MO Conservation Commission has given approval for the 1st black bear hunting season framework. The hunting season should occur in October. There are a couple of online series in partnership with Deep Roots from Kansas City which promotes native plants.

Ozark Region Workforce Development Board – Dennis Wiggins

All job centers open by appointment only at this time. Must have an appointment. The annual Momentum Survey is out and online. He encouraged everyone to take the survey. <https://www.research.net/r/Momentum2021a>. The Momentum meeting will be recorded and all virtual.

Dept of Higher Education - Workforce Development - Laura Larmore

Continuing the virtual job fairs which will continue throughout 2021.

MO Dept of Economic Development (MoDED) – Ron Seyl

DED will be having a Community Engagement Summit on 2/4/21 at 1pm. DED has been allocated \$43 million to help communities prepare and respond to Covid pandemic.

Community Foundation of the Ozarks (CFO) – Alice Wingo

They are accepting communities for their GRO Program. Their Scholarship program opens 2/1/21. They have \$1.75 million in scholarships to give away. Ozarks Coming Up which begins

3/24/21. It is 12-hour online giving program that raises funds for non-profits. Fair Grove is working to become their 53rd affiliate foundation.

American Red Cross – Stacy Burks

The Red Cross has kicked off their Ready Rating Program. It has been revamped and assists organizations and businesses, children and families, to help them determine how prepared they are for disasters.

Member Updates

Jason Ray has received the MSU 2021 Community Service Award.

Adjourn

Todd Wiesehan motioned, and Cindy Stephens seconded. Motion Carried.

Todd Wiesehan, Secretary/Treasurer

Date Approved