



**MINUTES**  
**LOWER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**  
**FULL BOARD MEETING**  
**Bamberg County Airport**  
**709 Airport Road, Bamberg, SC 29003**  
**October 13, 2022**

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LSCOG Board Members present:

Aiken County: Danny Feagin, Det Haislip, Lessie Price, John Simmons, Thomas H. Williams, Rep. Melissa Oremus  
Allendale County: Larry Cohen, Dorothy Riley, Dawan Smith, Theresa Taylor  
Bamberg County: Jerry Bell, Sharon Hammond, Larry Haynes, Gerald Wright (Treasurer)  
Barnwell County: Freddie Houston, David Kenner, Ben Kinlaw, Jason Stapleton, Thomas L. Williams  
Calhoun County: James Haigler (Chair), Roger Hill, Virgil Jacobs, John McLaughlin  
Orangeburg County: Harry Wimberly

LSCOG Board Members excused:

Aiken County: Gary Bunker  
Allendale County: William Robinson  
Bamberg County:  
Barnwell County: Daniel Alexander  
Calhoun County:  
Orangeburg County: Michael Butler (Vice Chair), Janie Cooper-Smith, Johnny Ravenell, Joseph Garvin

LSCOG Board Members absent:

Aiken County: Willar Hightower, Andrew Siders  
Allendale County: Rebecca Gooding  
Bamberg County: Clint Carter, Marvin Dueck, Rep. Justin Bamberg  
Barnwell County: Rep. Lonnie Hosey  
Calhoun County: Helen Carson-Peterson, John Nelson, Rep. Russell Ott  
Orangeburg County: Sen. Vernon Stephens, Deloris Frazier, Sen. Bradley Hutto

LSCOG staff present: Dr. William Molnar, Nora Sanders, Frances Owens, Kelley Hayes, Christine Chandler, Sally Sharpe, Susan Garen, Mary Ann Keisler

Guests present: Annie Clyde Williams, Linda Bell, Evert Comer, Jr., Nina Haynes, Peggy Kinlaw, Spencer Donaldson, Alice Johnson, Ruthie Brown, Doris Wright, Phil Myers, Randy Pellisero

**WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman James Haigler called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

**ROLL CALL AND RECOGNITION OF VISITORS**

Dr. William Molnar (*Executive Director*) conducted roll call. A quorum was present. Guests were introduced.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chairman Haigler asked for approval of the board meeting agenda.

*Mr. Danny Feagin made a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. John Simmons seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*



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**APPROVAL OF FULL BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

Chairman Haigler asked for approval of the August 22, 2022, full board meeting minutes  
*Mr. Feagin made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 22, 2022, full board minutes Mr. Larry Haynes seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

**APPROVAL OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

Chairman Haigler asked for approval of the September 8, 2022, Executive Committee meeting minutes.

*Ms. Sharon Hammond made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 8, 2022, Executive Committee minutes and Ms. Theresa Taylor seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

**STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS**

Dr. Gerald Wright presented the financial report for November 2022 for information.

**LOAN PROGRAM UPDATE**

Mr. Randy Pellisero provided an update on the Revolving Loan Fund program and loan efforts in the Lower Savannah region.

The Program works with 7 of the 10 COGs in the state to provide Economic loans throughout the state. Primarily, we manage the EDA RLF funds. We lend money to small businesses in partnerships with banks. We had \$8M of capital to lend in this region and across the state prior to July 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. EDA decided that CARES Act funds should be given to the communities that we support and to higher-performing RLFs, which brought the \$8M to \$16.2M that we can now offer.

Most of the activity during COVID was through the PPP loan program. After coming out of COVID, we are picking up more business and we have picked up SBA loan businesses for a brewery and a bowling alley in Aiken. We are hoping to loan to new businesses such as an assisted living facility and new franchise restaurant in the Santee area.

Recently, EDA awarded an additional \$2.7M, which is \$1.7M more than requested. This brings up to over \$20M that we can offer to our communities. We took in over 111 applications since July 2020 and made approximately 37 loans (roughly 33% of the applications).

If you know of any businesses or people interested in this program, please contact me directly or via Dr. Molnar at the COG.

**WORKFORCE COUNTY OFFICE REDUCTION**

Dr. Molnar spoke about Workforce programs funded by SCDEW for the Adult Dislocated Worker and Youth programs. At the February 2022 LSCOG board meeting in Orangeburg, Director Dan Ellzey informed us about the cuts that we have been experiencing. The budget dwindled down to \$23M in PY 2022. The census was not helpful to obtain more funding. Although South Carolina grew by 500,000 people, our region did not grow.

Solutions for the loss of funding is to cutting personnel and brick and mortar costs, add grants, regionalization, and add projects. Mr. Andre Anderson has been finding additional grants and funding,



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as well as regionalizing different positions. We now share a position with Central Midlands COG in Columbia.

Clients were not utilizing the Allendale, Bamberg, and Calhoun centers much prior to the pandemic and even less during the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic each of those centers were opened one or two days per week with very little traffic. We utilized funds we received several years ago to buy the Mobile SC Works vehicle. This unit goes out in the field two or three times a week. We send information to the public of the dates and locations the Mobile Center will be as well as request suggestions for additional locations and dates. We also attend weekend events. We do everything we can do to make sure we are assisting the clientele that needs this help. However, keeping brick and mortar offices is neither generating increased client traffic nor cost effective. The Workforce Development Board approved the closing of the three satellite SC Works offices. The Staff and I propose to close the Allendale, Bamberg, and Calhoun centers while maintaining the other three centers and the mobile unit.

*A motion was made by Mr. Feagin to approve the closing of three of the SC Works Centers and seconded by Mr. Ben Kinlaw. The motion passed unanimously.*

#### **OPEB LANGUAGE**

Mr. Freddie Houston presented to the board language suggested by the Executive Board during the meeting on 9/8/2022. The Ad Hoc committee's understanding from the labor attorney representing LSCOG and from PEBA's language approved at the full board meeting August 26, 2021, could not be implemented as written due to lack of clarity and possible contradiction with SC Retirement guidelines. The new wording was included in the board meeting materials, which explains who it affects and how it affects staff members. During the Executive Board meeting it was requested that staff be allowed to present to the board their concerns with the new policy. Some staff members are present at tonight's board meeting to discuss their standpoint. Mr. Houston's recommended that the board support the proposal presented by the Ad Hoc Committee as it stands with the corrections that have been made, reviewed by the Executive Board and by the attorney.

Ms. Nora Sanders spoke on behalf of the staff members to present the staff's concerns with the newly proposed language. Ms. Sanders introduced the 7 staff members that were present; and informed the board that 8 staff members in total are affected by the proposed change, the 7 present and herself. A fact sheet from the staff's perspective was included in the board meeting materials. When the ad hoc committee was formed, it was our understanding that they were looking at the other post-employment benefits, which is a part of PEBA. LSCOG does not have a retirement policy but instead we are a part of the SC Retirement Systems. An employee cannot retire from LSCOG without meeting eligibility of the SC Retirement Systems.

She presented a brief history of how and why the current policy had two categories hired before April 1, 2009, and after April 1, 2009. Changes in SC Retirement system eligibility have two categories, depending on the hire date and was put in place in 2012, by LSCOG to shore up the retiree benefit.

There were some concerns that the counties would have to pay LSCOG insurance premiums for the retirees should LSCOG go out of business. SC Retirement, PEBA, the attorney, and the actuaries, and Cavanaugh have all said that is not true because the counties do not pay the retiree benefits. These costs come from LSCOG Fringe and Indirect cost funded by grants. If at any time LSCOG ceases to



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exist and all money has been exhausted, then anyone, retired or current staff, that had benefits loses those benefits.

In 2012, SC Retirement changed its policy where you would have to fall under the Rule of 90. The number of years you paid into the retirement system plus your age, must equal 90. Currently, based on our current employee population of those hired after 2009, we do not have anyone that can reach that in the next 25 years, which is why what is being proposed is only affecting the current working staff hired before April 1, 2009. During the whole history of LSCOG we only had maximum of 7 retirees participating at the same time, which is the average based on attrition for LSCOG. If you pass what is being proposed, it gives a time limit to January 1, 2024, to retire and keep the benefit. There are 4 of us that are qualified to retire now. This could force the number of retirees from 7 to possibly 11 to 14 by the end of next year, which will prematurely increase your unfunded liability sooner than anticipated.

GASB 44 and 45 changed the way this information had to be recorded in the audit. It did not change any liabilities, only the way it had to be reported. This has been documented in the audit and in the actuarial. We get an ORBET Actuarial every two years, and we track to see how much it changes over time. The information in the packet shows that the actuarial has been trending downward due to what was put in place in 2009 and 2012.

The staff is requesting that the board votes to leave the language as it was prior to the August 2021 vote because it was working. By changing, you risk losing long term, dedicated and knowledgeable staff, that are not easy to replace in this economy. What this staff does, takes a minimum of 3 years to learn since we are specialized, most of the things we do require certification and hands on training. You also increasing your unfunded liability which is my understanding the opposite of what you were seeking to accomplish.

#### **Health Insurance(policy prior to 8/2021 vote)**

*The Council may offer group health coverage, the terms of which change from time to time. Employees should see the Finance Clerk/Benefits Administrator and/or the Executive Assistant for details.*

*The Council currently participates in the retirement insurance program of the S. C. State Health Plan administered by the S.C. Public Employee Benefit Authority (PEBA). Employees hired prior to April 1, 2009 are eligible for retirement health insurance benefits for themselves and their dependents at the same participation cost rate as a full-time employee of the Council, after attaining 20 years of service with the Council or reaching the age of 65 if they retire from the Council. Employees hired on or after April 1, 2009 will only receive retirement health insurance benefits for themselves (no dependent coverage) if they reach 28 years of service and are age 65 (or Medicare eligible) and retire from the Council.*

*A motion to keep the OPEB wording/policy as it was prior to the vote by the full board in August 2021 was made by Ms. Theresa Taylor and seconded by Mr. Harry Wimberly. The motion passed unanimously.*

#### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Dr. Molnar presented the Executive Director's Report:



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1. NADO Impact Award (An Economic Assessment of the Six-County Region) - We will be receiving an Impact award for the Dr. Von Nessen study at the NADO Conference in Pittsburgh, PA.
2. SCCOGs Training Conference, Myrtle Beach – November 20-22, many of you are signed up to attend the training conference in Myrtle Beach in November. LSCOG is hosting the conference this year and we predict a good turnout. The agenda for this conference is included in your packet and the conference is longer than the usual this year. Several interesting topics will be discussed including asset-based development, finding and using value in your communities, etc.
3. SCIIP Applications - South Carolina's governor and legislator used part of their ARPA funds to fund water and wastewater projects through the Rural Infrastructure Authority. Approximately \$900M is being funded from over \$2.1B requests. We helped with 15 different applications throughout the region. We were tasked by the legislature to be working with all the communities under 10,000 in population.
4. Roof Update – Roof construction work will begin the end of November 2022, and we anticipate that construction will last until March at the earliest.
5. American Rescue Plan Funds (ARP)– \$400M ARPA funds are set aside for broadband and will be administered by the Office of Regulatory Staff. These grants go to the carriers and not through us. If you go to their website and look at the map, you'll see the areas that are underserved. Several broadband companies are competing to put services out in these areas.
6. SCDOT – We are currently working with SCDOT to understand how much Guideshare funding we have. Last year our allocation increased by \$1.7M, bringing us to a total of \$7M annually.
7. OPIOID Recovery Fund – The Opioid money is out. We will be looking at regional opportunities to request additional funding.

**ADJOURN**

Chairman Haigler requested a motion to adjourn the full board meeting.

*A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Houston and seconded by Ms. Dorothy Riley. The motion passed unanimously. Chairman James Haigler adjourned the meeting at 8:50 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

William Molnar, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

NOTICE OF THE MEETING AND A COPY OF THE AGENDA FOR THE MEETING WAS DISTRIBUTED TO LOCAL NEWS MEDIA PRIOR TO THE MEETING AND A NOTICE OF THE MEETING POSTED ON THE LOWER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS WEBSITE AND BULLETIN BOARD AT LEAST 24 HOURS PRIOR TO THE MEETING.

