**MINUTES**

**SEARP&DC BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

**MARCH 10, 2022**

**3:00 PM**

The **SECOND** regularly scheduled meeting of the Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission Board of Directors for **FISCAL YEAR 2022** convened on **March 10, 2022** at **3:00 PM.** The meeting was held on the sixth floor of the Houston County Administration Building.

**Board Officers:** Chairperson Lori Wilcoxon (Houston County), First Vice Chairman Sammy Glover (Covington County) and Secretary/Treasurer Rod Morgan (Coffee County).

**Executive Committee Members**: Earl Gilmore (Barbour County), Thomas Crossley (Barbour County), Charles Gary (Dale County), Toby Seay (Geneva County), and David Money (Henry County).

**Board of Directors**: Gladys Yelverton (Coffee County), Tom Maddox (Coffee County), Johnathan Lockett (Coffee County), Joe Richburg (Covington County), Charlotte Hunt (Covington County), Greg White (Covington County), Terry Holley (Covington County), Steve McKinnon (Dale County), Diane Flournoy (Dale County), Leah Harlow (Dale County), Kelli Brannon (Geneva County), John Glover (Henry County), Henry Grimsley (Henry County), Jimmy Money (Henry County), and Kim Trotter (Houston County).

### ITEM 1: Call to Order / Invocation / Establishment of Quorum – Chairperson Wilcoxon

Chairperson Wilcoxon called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM and asked Sammy Glover to begin the meeting with prayer. She welcomed everyone.

**ITEM 2: Review and Approval of Minutes from the December 13, 2021 Meeting – Chairperson Wilcoxon**

Earl Gilmore made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Terry Holley seconded the motion. The motion was passed by a unanimous vote.

### ITEM 3: Report of Officers, Committees, and Departments

1. **Executive Committee Report**
2. Adoption of SEARP&DC Modified Personnel System Project (Updated Job Descriptions, Classification Plan, Pay Plan) – Tiffany Brown

Ms. Brown informed the Board that a Program of Work (POW) was agreed upon between the HR Consulting division of the Government and Economic Development Institute (GEDI) of Auburn University, and the Southeast Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission (SEARP&DC) to provide technical assistance. The

technical assistance consisted of three primary components. This report is submitted to provide information about the processes used in development the proposed personnel system, consisting of job descriptions, a classification plan, and a pay plan for SEARP&DC. SEARP&DC leadership identified and verified jobs in the organization and provided existing job descriptions that were available. She stated the purpose of this report is to provide SEARP&DC Board of Directors the finding related to the POW between GEDI/HR Consulting, and the organization. She noted that the pay plan would go into effect on March 25, 2022 and is requesting that the Board approve the Program of Work. Board members were involved in the discussion and participated in the development and approval of Program of Work. Rod Morgan made a motion to approve the Program of Works. Thomas Crossley seconded the motion. The motion was passed by a unanimous vote.

1. Resolution #431 Revisions to Wiregrass Transit Zero Tolerance Substance Abuse – Mike Crittenden

Mr. Crittenden informed the Board that the Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission (SEARP&DC), through Wiregrass Transit, is dedicated to providing friendly, safe, dependable, and economical transportation services to Dothan and Houston County. The SEARP&DC, through Wiregrass Transit, maintains a substance abuse policy to assure safety-sensitive employee fitness for duty and to protect employees, passengers, and the public from risks posed by the misuse of alcohol and use of prohibited drugs.He stated Wiregrass Transit, regularly updates its substance abuse policy per guidance from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT).Therefore, he is requesting that the Southeast Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission Board of Directors does hereby approve and adopt the Southeast Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission’s revision to the Wiregrass Transit Zero Tolerance Substance Abuse Policy, as amended, to comply with all applicable Federal and State regulations governing workplace anti-drug programs in the transit industry. Board members were involved in the discussion and participated in the development and approval of Resolution #431. Earl Gilmore made a motion to approve the Resolution. Sammy Glover seconded the motion. The motion was passed by a unanimous vote.

1. Resolution #432 Delegation of Authority for Temporary Leave of Executive Director – Scott Farmer

Mr. Farmer informed the Board that the Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission appoints an Executive Director to serve as the chief administrative official for the Board of Directors; and there are periods where the Executive Director is unavailable to adequately perform all administrative duties due to an absence (including being on Annual or Sick Leave or representing the Commission at out-of-town events); there is a need to appoint an acting executive director or appoint multiple qualified agency staff to perform certain administrative duties for effective continuity of operations for a short-term basis during those periods the Executive Director (or an authorized deputy) is unavailable. Therefore, he is requesting that the Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission as follows:

1. The Board of Directors approves the Executive Director to delegate certain administrative duties when necessary and advisable for efficient operations of the Commission to qualified agency staff.
2. Delegation of administrative duties shall be in writing and the Executive Director is allowed to place conditions on any delegations.

Board members were involved in the discussion and participated in the development and approval of Resolution #432. Terry Holley made a motion to approve the Resolution. Earl Gilmore seconded the motion. The motion was passed by a unanimous vote.

1. **RLF Board Member Re-Appointment – Rachel Armstrong**

Ms. Armstrong informed the Board that Ms. Velma J. Tribue is an at-large member of the Loan Administration Board and her term has expired. She stated that Ms. Tribue is still willing to serve. Ms. Armstrong recommended the Board reappoint Ms. Tribue. Board members were involved in the discussion and participated in the development and approval of the Re-Appointment of Ms. Velma Tribue. Gladys Yelverton made a motion to re-appoint Ms. Tribue. Rod Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was passed by a unanimous vote.

**B. Agency Administration**

**1. FY 2022 Reports**

* 1. **Finance Department – Lakisha Davis**

Ms. Davis welcome everyone to the meeting. Ms. Davis informed the Board that the Goals/Accomplishments for the current quarter is to transitioned to ADP for payroll and transitioned to PNC (no longer BBVA). Ms. Davis stated that the agency was where it should be. Ms. Davis also stated that the Finance Department continues to assist our programs through a variety of tasks such as payroll, accounts payable, billing, reporting to our funding sources, daily deposits and many other tasks. New staff training on GMS (Grants Management Systems), Head Start/Early Heat Start Fiscal training, and ADP. She noted that Mark Smith, Auditor with Ferguson, Sizemore, and Associated, will begin fieldwork.

* 1. **Community/Economic Development – Emily VanScyoc**

Ms. VanScyoc informed the Board that the Small Business Loan Programs closed a Revolving Loan Fund to: *West Olive, LLC,* Dothan (4 new jobs) and *MMDP Properties, LLC,* Dothan (25 jobs). She stated The City of ***Eufaula*** CDBG Economic Development Infrastructure grant for street improvements to benefit businesses located in the Eufaula Industrial Park is being closed out. Sixty jobs were retained as a result of this project. The CDBG Economic Development Infrastructure grant awarded to the ***Coffee County*** Commission to extend water and sewer infrastructure to Ben E. Keith Company is complete. Currently, waiting on job creation commitment to be met.

The water well and storage tank construction of the ***Henry******County***Commission and the ***Abbeville Water Works & Sewer Board*** Economic Development Administration grant to benefit Abbeville Fiber, LLC is approximately 80% complete. Abbeville Fiber is expected to create over 100 new jobs. The Economic Development Administration grant to the ***Eufaula Water Works*** and the ***City of Eufaula*** to provide improvements to the Eufaula Wastewater Treatment facility is in the design phase. The proposed project will benefit the Medical Industries of Americas Latex Plant and other businesses located in the Eufaula Industrial Park. CED staff is working with the ***City of******Daleville*** to update the City’s existing Comprehensive Plan. Staff will be meeting with the City Planning Commission to update the plan. She stated the CED staff continues to assist the ***City of Taylor*** in developing a Comprehensive Plan. A community survey is currently being developed with Mayor Snell. Assisting the ***Town of Ariton*** in development of a Comprehensive Plan. The town has submitted a formal amendment request to ADECA to adjust the scope of the Comprehensive Plan. The town is interested in studying the possibility of extending the town limits. A kickoff meeting was held in Daleville with community representatives, Fort Rucker officials and members of Friends of Fort Rucker to discuss the Fort Rucker Compatible Use Study. The data collection process and mapping will begin soon. The ***Town of Clayhatchee*** was awarded a $24,000 grant from the ALDOT Local Law Enforcement Equipment program to purchase a new police vehicle.

**Rural Planning Organization (RPO):**

The BUILD grant policy committee has selected Sain Associates, Inc. to conduct the feasibility study on widening Highway 167 and Highway 52. SEARP&DC staff will begin working with Sain to develop the scope of work and execute contract.

**Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA):**

CED staff prepared and submitted a HMGP application to FEMA on behalf of the Geneva County Commission as a result of damage suffered during Hurricane Sally. If approved, the project will construct/install 10 individual safe rooms for citizens in Geneva County that submitted applications. The requested grant amount is $65,471.33 with a local match of 25% ($21,823.77) for a total project cost of $87,295.10.

The Slocomb Water Works and Sewer Board changed the scope of work for the project to two diesel generators instead of natural gas for the Morris and Peters Pump Stations. FEMA has approved this change of scope and the bidding process will begin this month. The Geneva Water Works and Sewer Board received FEMA grant dollars to retrofit pumping station 2 to elevate sewage pumps and control system on elevated platform above 500-year flood plain. Construction is underway.

* 1. **Senior Employment – Gail Clark**

Ms. Clark in formed the Board that current enrollment as of March 10, 2022:

34 – Center for Workforce Inclusion (formally SSAI) – Authorized - 37

13 - Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS) – Authorized – 16

**PROGRAM STATUS – FEDERAL**

This is the third quarter of PY2021-2022. As of March 10, 2022, we are in line for spending for participant wages under the Federal grant.

**PROGRAM STATUS – STATE**

We are also in the third quarter of the 2021-2022 project year on the State grant. We are in line for spending for senior participant wages on the State grant also.

**PROGRAM STATUS-LOCAL**

As of March 10, 2022 spending for local administrative costs under the Federal and State grants are in line.

**UNSUBSIDIZED PLACEMENTS/PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

Federal Grant - As of March 10, 2022, we have had a total of thirteen (13) participants exit the program this project year. Six (6) that left unsubsidized employment and seven (7) that left for various reasons. We have enrolled sixteen (16) new participants this project year.

State Grant – As of March 10, 2022, we have had four (4) participants exit the program this project year. One (1) entered unsubsidized employment and three (3) for various reasons. We have had one (1) enrollment this project year.

At the present time, there are no host agencies closed due to Covid-19. Several of our agencies are only open part-time and do not need a senior participant until they are back to regular hours. The Department of Labor has extended Emergency Paid Sick Leave but only for participants that have an active case of COVID. The Department of Labor has approved at-home-training for senior participants that have not been able to return to their host agencies because they have not fully operational. Since remote work has been approved for both the Federal and State grants, we have one Federal participant working from home. We also have one State participants working from home at this time. The guidelines to get agencies approved for remote work are very stringent. We are working toward getting more agencies approved for remote work.

**PROGRAM LINKAGES/PUBLIC AWARENESS**

Tiffany attended a job fair in Geneva on January 18, 2022, and handed out flyers for the Senior Community Service Employment Program along with flyers about job openings at SEARP&DC. We continue to request that our host agencies help us get the word out about our program and help us recruit in their local area and that the members of the Board of Directors help by spreading the word in their local communities and thank them in advance for their assistance.

* 1. **Human Resource – Tiffany Brown**

Ms. Brown informed the Board that Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has deeply impacted Head Start and Early Head Start programs, enrolled children and families, and their communities. With updated CDC recommendations for mask wearing, OHS advises that wearing a mask continues to be a key strategy to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in Head Start programs. Head Start programs serve children under 5 years of age, who are not yet eligible for vaccination. Mask use lowers the risk of spread between people, protects both wearers and those around them, and helps protect those who cannot be vaccinated.

Here is a brief synopsis of the last quarter for the HR department:

We have started the process of updating our job descriptions and pay scale. Auburn University has done a fantastic job on updating all the jobs descriptions and the new positions haves been added to the Accounting and Economic and Community Department.

**NEW HIRES AND PROMOTIONS:**

Brittany Adams –Teacher Assistant, Florala

Jessica Day –Teacher Aide, Opp

Whitney Grant – Teacher, Eufaula

Courtney Blue – EHS Teacher, Andalusia

Jennifer Jorgensen-EHS Teacher, Headland

Brandi Cotton-Promoted to Food Service Manager, Geneva

Demetrus Crittenden -Transit

**TERMINATIONS AND RESIGNATIONS:**

Transit: 2

Head Start: 4

CED: 1

**OPEN POSITIONS:**

Substitute Teachers– Geneva, Florala, Andalusia, Headland, Eufaula, Opp

Associate Planners-CED Department

EHS Teacher-Headland

Teacher-Geneva

Teacher-Eufaula

**Recruiting**

Our Agency will adopt virtual recruiting technologies; shift talent attraction efforts to remote candidates; consider internal talent pools; and focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. In the same way that a hybrid workforce of onsite and remote employees will become more normalized, a hiring process that combines virtual and in-person processes will become increasingly standard due to the associated cost and time savings.

* 1. **Head Start – Jackie Daniels**

Ms. Daniels informed the Board that SEARP&DC Head Start and Early Childhood Development Program employs 58 Head Start/Early Head full-time staff. The staff is made up of a Director, Managers, Center Directors, Teachers, Teacher’s Assistant, Family Service and Food Service staff. Also, we employ approximately 20 part-time staff such as Substitutes & Senior Aides. There are also some Foster Grandparents at some of our facilities. We are fully staffed in 4 of our 6 centers and working with Human Resource to staff the other 2 centers.

**Enrollment:**

SEARP&DC Head Start and Early Childhood Development Program is funded for 316 children (284/HS & 32/EHS). Presently, Stephanie Dawsey is working with the center staff on our recruitment efforts for the 2022-2023 school year for children 6mos-5 years. This school year (2021-22) has been filled with ups & downs with enrollment for the Head Start, but we have been able maintain a 90% average enrollment. However, Early Head Start has maintains its full enrollment all year. We will have 113 children transitioning from our program and 153 children returning.

**Continuation of funds:**

**AL Department of Early Childhood Education Pre-K Grant:**

SEARP&DC Head Start Program has six DECE Pre-K grants and we are in the process of applying for renewal for those classrooms.

**Projects**

We are extremely excited about the partnership with WRC&D, they are supporting our efforts of implementing the Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts and Mathematic (STREAM). WRC&D has provided STREAM labs, supplies & equipment for all 6 centers. We are still working on the Abbeville Project, which consist of expanding classrooms in Abbeville.

**Program Reviews:**

Keith Davis has collaborated with the Center Directors & vendor to have the new playgrounds in Eufaula & Headland installed. The next phase will be for Andalusia & Headland Early Head Start and Geneva Head Start.

**Updates:**

There were 6 people from our agency (including Mr. Holley), who attended the Annual Regional IV Head Start Conference Feb. 15-18 in Atlanta.

She stated we have begun our collaboration with the Alabama Healthy Kids-Alabama Partnership for Children initiative Farm2 ECE Learning.

We are celebrating Read Across America a reading initiative this month, so schedule a day and we’ll do a Zoom meeting for you to read to the children.

We will be conducting our annual Self-Assessment (March/April), and Pat Nobles will be preparing for Advisory Committee Meeting in April.

* 1. **Wiregrass Transit Authority – Mike Crittenden**

Mr. Crittenden informed the Board that Wiregrass Transit Authority (WTA) personnel currently consists of 3 dispatchers, 11 full- time bus drivers and 2 part-time bus drivers. We are continually recruiting for part-time drivers. All drivers must have a CDL with a passenger endorsement. The current fleet consists 6 twenty-passenger buses, 1 fourteen-passenger bus, 2-twelve passenger buses, and 5 ten-passenger buses (total of 14).

**Capital**

We have ordered and are awaiting delivery of 8 new fifteen-passenger high-roof vans which were approved in the FY 21 Capital budget. These vehicle are being ordered through the ALDOT state contract.

For FY-22 we will acquire 3 fifteen passenger high-roof vans, 3 twenty-five passenger cutaways and an administrative support vehicle.

We have completed the ITB process for the procurement of a demand response software system and are in the process of completing the bid award.

Environmental and Civil Rights requirements have been completed and we are at the appraisal stage of acquiring the Dothan Eagle Building to become the new home of Wiregrass Transit.

**Future Plans**

We have begun the development of a core training curriculum which will consist of the following:

New Driver Training

In-service Training

Annual refresher training

Remedial training

Continuing discussions are planned with Dale County regarding the expansion of the pilot program that began in November of last year. Initial discussions are planned with the City of Enterprise for possible service options.

* 1. **Executive Director – Scott Farmer**

Mr. Farmer informed the Board that we are in the due diligence phase for the purchase of the current Dothan Eagle location on North Oates Street. We recently received clearance on the required NEPA Environmental Review and are proceeding to the Title Search and Appraisal phase.

* **Redistricting:**
* Finalized information for:
* Coffee County Commission
* Coffee County Board of Education
* Geneva County Commission
* Henry County Commission / Board of Education
* Currently working through the redistricting process for:
* Dale County Commission (for 2024)
* City of Enterprise (for 2025)
* Will began looking at Geneva and Headland soon
* **Recreation Programs:**
* City of Andalusia Rail-Trail Conversion (Recreational Trail Program)

City of Andalusia is still trying to coordinate with CSX Transportation on the possibility of acquiring the 43-mile corridor. Assisting them with being a liaison to ADECA.

* **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA):**
* City of Elba HMGP
* The City is continuing to implement its acquisition/demolition project pertaining to floodprone structures
* City of Hartford HMGP
* The City is currently completing installation of three generators for the water wells.
* The City also recently received a grant award for two generators for the wastewater lagoon and the final design and bid process will commence soon.
* **Planning/Zoning:**
* Made a presentation to Hartford City Council with a draft Ordinance for their review.
* **Wiregrass Transit:**
* Assisted in administering Wiregrass Transit between directors from November-January, including grant applications, annual reporting, equipment procurement, and budgeting.
* **Other:**
* Appointed to the Main Street Alabama Board of Directors (Ex-Officio) – Representative of the Alabama Association of Regional Councils
* Will be visiting Governor Ivey (with AARC) on Friday, March 11
* **Conferences, Workshops, Events, or Webinars attended:**
* AARC Executive Committee Meetings (Multiple)
* ALDOT PTASP/Safety Teleconference
* Main Street Alabama New Board Member Orientation Webinar
* Alabama League of Municipalities Economic Development Academy (Evergreen)
* Main Street Alabama Board of Directors Meeting (Alexander City)
* Region IV Head Start Association Annual Conference (Atlanta, GA)
* SouthEast Regional Directors Institute (SERDI) Executive Director Training (Atlanta, GA)
  + - * 1. **Executive Director’s Evaluation**

Chairperson Wilcoxon informed the Board that the Executive Committee evaluated Mr. Farmer positively and recommended a Step increase and received Board approval.

**ITEM 4: New Business**

None Noted

**ITEM 5: Announcements and/or Other Business**

None Noted

**ITEM 6: ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:50 PM.

Chairperson Executive Assistant