

**EAST TENNESSEE DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING  
JANUARY 12, 2021  
MINUTES**

The East Tennessee Development District's Executive Committee held a meeting on Tuesday January 12, 2021, via Zoom Video Web Conferencing. The following Executive Committee members were present:

Roland (Trey) Dykes, III, City of Newport Mayor  
Mark Potts, Jefferson County Mayor  
Joe Brooks, Claiborne County Mayor  
Jeff Tibbals, Scott County Mayor  
Terry Frank, Anderson County Mayor  
E.L. Morton, Campbell County Mayor  
Crystal Ottinger, Cocke County Mayor  
Mike Byrd, Grainger County Mayor  
Bill Brittain, Hamblen County Mayor  
Mitch Ingram, Monroe County Mayor  
Brian Langley, Morgan County Executive  
Ron Woody, Roane County Executive  
Larry Waters, Sevier County Mayor  
Richard Briggs, State Senator

**Guests**

Rick Yakubic, ETDD  
Stacy Chambers, Monroe County Development Representative  
Anna Beth Walker, Claiborne County Development Representative  
Jack Qualls, Loudon County Development Representative  
Gary Human, State of TN Economic & Community Development  
Bill Darden, Congressman Phil Roe's Office

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Trey Dykes called the meeting to order and requested roll call.

## **MINUTES**

Chairman Trey Dykes presented the minutes of the December 10, 2020 meeting to the Executive Committee for approval. Roane County Executive Ron Woody made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, it was seconded by Claiborne County Mayor Joe Brooks, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

The Treasurer's Report for the month ending November 30, 2020 was presented by Scott County Mayor Jeff Tibbals. Mayor Tibbals made the motion to accept the report as presented and it was seconded by Knox County Mayor Glen Jacobs, and it was approved by all.

## **APPOINT NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

Chairman Trey Dykes reported to the Executive Committee, that each year the Chair appoints a Nominating Committee to recommend a slate of officers to the full Board during the annual business meeting that is scheduled to be held on March 9, 2021. Chairman Dykes would like to appoint the following members to the Nominating Committee:

Anderson County Mayor Terry Frank, Chair  
Morgan County Executive Brian Langley  
Hamblen County Mayor Bill Brittain  
Cocke County Mayor Crystal Ottinger  
Union County Mayor Jason Bailey  
Campbell County Mayor E.L. Morton

The Nominating Committee will be provided with historical data regarding past officers by ETDD soon. The Nominating Committee will meet immediately prior to the February ETDD Executive Committee meeting and report its recommendations to the full Committee.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Terry Bobrowski, ETDD Executive Director, gave his Director's report:

Mr. Bobrowski mentioned first that a letter from the Comptrollers office is included in your packets. It is a letter that indicates that the Comptroller has accepted our FY 2020 audit – its addressed to the Board of Directors so I wanted to make sure that you got it. There is also a letter

from the TDOT auditors in your packets. They recently completed a desk audit of our RPO program and listed one audit finding. This was a non-monetary finding and had to do with syncing up our purchasing policy with federal regulations. We did not feel like this should have been categorized as a finding, but it is so minor that we did not feel like it was worth the time to dispute it. We fixed our purchasing policy and sent it to them, and the new version was accepted.

## **Grants Update**

### **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**

Mr. Bobrowski reported that the State of Tennessee held a statewide virtual workshop on December 8, 2020 to provide information on grant management for the community development grant. This year's guidelines for submittal of grant applications are the following:

- One grant per community.
- An existing grant must be closed by March 31, 2021.
- Grant applications are due on February 26, 2021. If you do not close your existing grant by March 31, 2021, the new application will be returned and will not be scored for funding opportunities.

The level of funding is determined annually through Federal Congressional appropriations. Each state receives a projected allocation of CDBG funds, based on a federal formula and does not compete with other states for funding allocations.

There are five application categories:

1. Water line extensions
2. Water line plant improvements and waterline collection system improvements.
3. Wastewater line plant improvements and wastewater collection system improvements.
4. Community livability that includes fire trucks, ambulances, drainage, etc.
5. Housing

Every application requires a match except Housing, which is 100% match. Community development grant rates are based on the "ability-to-pay" of the applicant as calculated by the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Tennessee.

Maximum grants are \$600,000 for lines, systems, and housing rehabilitation. Maximum grants for community livability projects are \$400,000. Communities that participate in the Three-Star program are eligible for up to \$25,000 (\$15,000 for community livability projects) in additional funding.

ETDD staff is currently talking with the following communities for 2021 applications: Claiborne County, Monroe County, Rocky Top, Blount County, Jellico, Caryville, Harrogate, Cocke County, Scott County, Norris, Campbell County, Loudon, Oakdale, and Roane County.

ETDD staff is currently assisting 28 communities with the administration of their awarded CDBG projects.

## **Historic Preservation Grants**

Mr. Bobrowski announced mentioned that we routinely submit applications to assist with the preservation of cultural assets in our region. This year the applications are due in Nashville on January 31<sup>st</sup>. We are submitting applications for projects in Grainger County and the City of Sevierville.

## **FEMA Fire Fighters Grants**

Mr. Bobrowski announced the FEMA Fire Fighters Grant Program continues to be a very popular program for our rural volunteer fire departments. Fire Departments can use these funds to buy equipment such as turn out gear, buy trucks or make safety modifications (sprinklers, exhaust systems, generators) to fire halls. Grants are very affordable, usually in the 90 – 95% range with only a small local share required. The application period opened on January 4<sup>th</sup> and will continue until February 12<sup>th</sup>. The applications will then be reviewed by an independent review team in Washington over the next 9 months or so. They review the applications in batches, so they make funding announcements throughout the coming year.

Please keep in mind that all applicants must be registered with their new on-line system, FEMA Go, in order to apply for a grant. If you or anyone you know needs help with the registration process, contact Tim Hendrick at [thendrick@etdd.org](mailto:thendrick@etdd.org).

## **Home Program**

Mr. Bobrowski mentioned that he expects that THDA will soon announce that they will be accepting HOME program applications again this year. The applications will probably be due around March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The HOME program provides grant funds for owner occupied housing rehabilitations for low- and moderate-income persons. Local governments can apply for a minimum of \$100,000 up to a maximum of \$500,000. No match is required. We would be happy to assist anyone who might be interested in submitting an application.

## **Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)**

Mr. Bobrowski announced that in December, ETDD staff assisted the following communities to submit a 2021 ARC pre-application: Parrottsville for wastewater system improvements, Campbell County for Elk Tower, Monroe County for Industrial Spec Building, Grainger County for Agri-Business Development, Cocke County for Rural Waterlines, Claiborne County for Boat Dock and fishing pier, Blount County for wastewater system replacement at Lanier School, Jefferson City for water tank, and Loudon for Marina Development.

ETDD staff is currently assisting 16 communities with the administration of their funded ARC projects.

## **Recreation**

Mr. Bobrowski mentioned that the State Recreation Education Service is currently accepting full applications from communities who successfully submitted pre-applications by October 8, 2020. To be eligible for the first round of applications, communities must have a Parks and Recreation Systemwide Master Plan that is no older than 5 years. A second round of pre-applications will be accepted August 3, 2021, once eligible communities have completed a Master Plan.

## **Local Parks and Recreation Fund (LPRF)**

Mr. Bobrowski mentioned the LPRF program provides state funding for the purchase of land for parks, natural areas, greenways, and the purchase of land for recreational facilities. Funds also may be used for trail development and capital projects in parks, natural areas, and greenways. Recreation Educational Services administers the LPRF grants. These grants are a 50% match. For the 2021 LPRF Grant Application Cycle, the grant application minimum request is \$20,000 (\$40,000 total project) and the grant application maximum request is \$500,000 (\$1,000,000 total project).

ETDD Staff assisted Union County in submitting a pre-application for a multi-sports complex in the region and assisted the City of Clinton with mapping for a pre-application to upgrade and add new features to their pool.

## **Agribusiness Loan Program and COVID Loan Program**

Mr. Bobrowski informed the committee that we are still looking for applications for our new loan program from the TN Dept. of Agriculture. The purpose of the program is to stimulate farm and agri-business income. We intend to provide low interest financing for the purchase of farm equipment and machinery in order to create new markets for locally produced farm products. Loans can be for up to \$75,000, 7 years maximum term and we anticipate the interest rate to be around 4%. Loans can be used for building, harvesting equipment, production equipment, fencing, irrigation equipment, grain storage and variety of other things. No rolling stock such as trucks or trailers are eligible. I will be placing a press release in most of your local newspapers in the next few days in order to make sure that the work gets out in your community regarding the availability of this program.

We still have funds available within our COVID loan program as well. Virtually any use is permitted – real property acquisition, building construction, building rehabilitation, equipment purchases, working capital and others. Terms and interest rates are very flexible and attractive. Also, non-profits are eligible applicants – we are working with a food bank in Scott County right now – so let me know if any likely candidates come to mind.

## **COVID Grant Workplan Update**

Mr. Bobrowski announced that ETDD is currently implementing a work plan that is associated with

a CARES ACT grant that we received back in the summer. We have been able to hire a staff person to work directly on COVID response activities on behalf of our local governments and I wanted to just briefly update the Committee on our current activities.

As funding for COVID relief becomes available, communities and organizations will need to act quickly to complete the application tasks that are generally processed through grants.gov. However, many communities of ETDD are not registered with grants.gov or sam.gov, and the process of completing the registration is both time consuming and complex, often taking months from start to finish. ETDD staff is working to determine which communities, community organizations, public utilities, volunteer fire departments, police departments, and other grant-eligible entities are not registered with the primary federal government grant application systems and will provide the necessary technical assistance to complete the registration process. ETDD staff will also assist eligible entities with registering for any necessary public and private grant application portals, such as FEMA Go, as required. If your community or organization is not registered to apply for federal grants and you need assistance to complete the process, please contact Tim Hendrick at [thendrick@etdd.org](mailto:thendrick@etdd.org) to request support.

ETDD staff is working to determine the effects of the pandemic on the local level and working with county and municipal governments and other public entities to address their needs. All communities of the ETDD region have been sent a survey to discuss their COVID-related issues and what steps have been taken for mitigation. **Your timely response to any solicitation for survey responses is very much appreciated.** The collected data will be compiled and analyzed at the municipal and county levels. ETDD staff will develop county-specific reports on the pandemic's affects and local solutions, eventually producing a regional overview.

Also, we were able to build into the work plan a special emphasis on assisting counties with the preparation of their Annual Solid Waste Report that identifies their solid waste diversion efforts over the past year. This is a report that is mandated by TDEC and required by law. In the past, TDEC has provided substantial funding to ETDD to assist counites with this effort but those funds were eliminated this year. Our COVID grant work plan will allow us to continue to assist communities as we have in the past.

### **RPO Overview and Highway Projects Update**

Mr. Bobrowski mentioned we recently sponsored meetings by our North RPO and South RPO and prioritized projects that are being considered for inclusion in this year's Transportation Improvement Plan that will be recommended to the legislature by TDOT.

#### **In the South RPO, projects in prioritized order included:**

##### **In Jefferson County and Sevier County:**

US Highway 411 from Sims Road to SR 9 – Construction

##### **In Monroe County:**

State Road 322 from Sweetwater to Acorn Gap Road - ROW

**In Monroe County:**

State Road 322 from Acorn Gap Road to Sheppard Road - ROW

**In Sevier County:**

Veterans Blvd from SR 35 to Robert Henderson Drive – Construction

**In Roane County:**

US Highway 70 from SR 382 to SR 29 – construction

**In Monroe County:**

State Road 322 from Sheppard Road to SR 72 - Construction

**In Cocke County:**

US 321 from Cosby Highway near Winton Springs Road – ROW

**In Sevier County:**

US 321 from Buckhorn Road to SR 416 – Construction

Prioritized projects from last year that were funded were the improvements on US 321 in Sevier County for ROW and improvements on Veterans Blvd for ROW.

**In the North RPO, prioritized projects in order included:**

**In Campbell County:**

Highway 63 from SR 297 to Stinking Creek Road (truck climbing lane) - Construction

**In Morgan County:**

US Highway 27 from SR 328 to Ray Cross Road - Construction

**In Scott County:**

SR 29 from Wolfe Creek Road to Old US 27 in Robbins – ROW

**In Union County:**

SR 61 from North David Drive to Tater Valley Road – ROW

**In Union County:**

SR 61 from Archer Road to Jim Town Road – ROW

**In Campbell County:**

IPS fog and sever weather detection over Jellico Mountain – Construction

**In Morgan County:**

US Highway 27 from Ray Cross Road to SR 62 in Wartburg – Construction

**In Scott County:**

SR 29 from Morgan County line to SR 29 – Construction

**In Grainger County:**

US Highway 11 from Helton Road to Bean Station – Construction

**In Grainger County:**

US Highway 11 from Rutledge to Helton Road – Construction

**In Campbell County:**

I-75 improvements from Campbell County line to Royal Blue Exit – ROW

**In Campbell County:**

ITS improvements on I-75 near Exit 134 - construction

Three projects on Highway 62 in Morgan County were also recommended for the funding of the preliminary engineering stage.

Prioritized projects from last year that were funded were construction improvements on Highway 33 in Union County, construction improvements on Highway 63 and construction improvements in Campbell County on Highway 63.

### **Solid Waste Program Update**

Mr. Bobrowski informed the committee that for over twenty years, ETDD has been awarded a contract from the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation to conduct regional solid waste planning. We used the funding to hire a qualified staff person that assisted local governments with recycling grant applications, preparation of long-range needs assessments plans, management and archival document retention for county solid waste boards and the preparation of annual waster reduction reports for at least nine counties per year. In July of 2020 we were informed by TDEC that our funding contracts were being revised and we should suspend all solid waste activities until the revisions were complete. Soon after that, without any prior notification, we were informed that our funding had been eliminated. We were also informed that the funding for all solid waste recycling grants programs for the upcoming fiscal year had also been eliminated. Luckily, we were awarded supplemental COVID response funds from a federal agency and were able to maintain our very skilled staff persons and include the preparation of the annual solid waste reports in the grant's workplan. However, this is just a short-term solution to a long-term problem. Currently, there are no grant funds for recycling efforts at the municipal and county levels and your local programs are already overloaded due to the massive increase in solid waste volumes because of COVID. Also, although we have pledged to assist counties with the preparation of their annual reports this year, we may not be able to assist them in the upcoming fiscal and beyond without specific funding for this effort. TDEC mandates the preparation and submission of these reports and has been known to sanction those communities that do not comply.

When all of this began back in the summer of 2020, we were told that our planning funding and the recycling grant funding all came from a reserve account maintained by TDEC. Since the state's budget was anticipated to have big problems with revenue collections, all reserve accounts were taken over by the administration and programmed to supplement the general fund. As we are all now aware, the dire budget projections simply have not materialized, and the outlook appears to be much better for the future. We believe strongly that the restoration of the solid waste planning funding and the recycling grant programs funding is a priority need for local governments and will push hard with the state legislature and the administration to restore this funding. Once our statewide organization pulls together a plan for the effort on a comprehensive basis, I will be asking our local government partners to contact their legislators and any contacts in the administration that you might have in order to restore this important funding back into the budget for next year. I will have more to report on this effort later.

### **Legislative Agenda**

Mr. Bobrowski informed the committee that he finalized our state and federal legislative agendas for the upcoming state and federal legislative sessions. We use these agendas to identify our

legislative priorities to our state and federal legislative delegations. We have a large state delegation from our district – eight senators and twenty-one representatives. On the federal side we have portions of the first, second and third congressional districts within our boundaries. I have sent these recommendations to our Legislative Committee for a closer review and this is the final version of the recommendations. Let me briefly go over the proposed main talking points:

The Federal recommendations have not changed substantially from last year - we are still pushing for full funding of the ARC, the EDA and re-authorization of the SBA and support for a funding level of \$7.5 billion in loan guarantee authority, expressing support for the CDBG program, Chickamauga Lock funding, TVA non-power programs and support for full funding of the Y-12, ORNL and the Uranium Processing Facility in the Anderson/Roane county area.

Regarding our State Legislative agenda - we have examined the legislative agendas of TSCA, TML and TDDA and attempted to coordinate agenda items as much as possible. Of course, our main objective is to deal with the recurring budget cut that was implemented several years ago and continues to impact our budget.

### **Calendar Matters**

We will try to hold our meetings on February 9<sup>th</sup> here at the ETHRA offices. Also, for a long-term hold, we anticipate holding our Annual Business meeting on March 9<sup>th</sup> at Rothchilds in Knoxville. We are not sure at this time whether this will be an in-person meeting – Rothchilds is definitely big enough to have social distancing in place but it is still too early to guess what the situation might be.

### **Other Business**

Chairman Trey Dykes informed the committee with an update for Mr. Bobrowski's replacement. The search committee has narrowed the selection down to four candidates and will be getting with the other members of the search committee to start the interviewing process very shortly. He hopes that this can be done in person rather than zoom but will be determined.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

With no other business, Chairman Trey Dykes entertained a motion to adjourn. Scott County Mayor Jeff Tibbals made the motion, it was seconded by Roane County Executive Ron Woody and it was approved by all.