

**MINUTES OF  
THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL MEETING  
9 A.M., THURSDAY, AUGUST 5, 2021  
IN-PERSON AND VIA ZOOM  
COCHISE COLLEGE BENSON  
1025 HWY 80, BENSON, ARIZONA**

OFFICERS PRESENT: Blaschke, Caleb – City of Willcox (Chair) (phone)  
Vivian, Vicki – City of Benson (Vice-Chair) (in person)

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bigman, Barney – San Carlos Apache Tribe (zoom)  
Brown, Heath – Town of Thatcher (in-person)  
Cassella, John – City of Safford (zoom)  
Pauken, Steve – City of Bisbee (zoom)  
Pedroza, Luis – City of Douglas (zoom)  
Robinson, Ron – Town of Patagonia (zoom)  
Thorpe, Brandye – Town of Huachuca City (zoom)

STAFF PRESENT: Curtiss, Dina – Accounting Manager (zoom)  
Dennis, Keith – Community Development Program Manager (zoom)  
Glenn, Heather – Administrative Assistant (in-person)  
Heiss, Randy – Executive Director (in-person)  
Merideth, John – GIS Analyst (zoom)  
Porter, Maria – Economic Development Program Manager (zoom)  
Vertrees, Chris – Transportation Program Administrator (in-person)  
Villa, Laura – AAA Program Director (zoom)

GUESTS: Hatfield, Crystal – City of Willcox  
Adam, Kevin – RTAC (zoom)  
Searle, Richard (in-person)

**I. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/ INTRODUCTIONS**

Vice Chair Vivian called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m.

**II. MEMBER ENTITIES' DISCUSSION**

**Caleb Blaschke**, Willcox, announced the addition of a baby boy his family this morning. **Heath Brown**, Thatcher, stated he would like to have a discussion with the members about how they are planning to spend their share of the ARPA funds to get ideas. **John Cassella**, Safford, advised that he's had staff discussions and they are struggling to find out how to use the money just like everyone else. **Steve Pauken**, Bisbee, advised that the Tintown paving and drainage project asphalt is nearly finished and the affordable housing project at Hillcrest Apartments is moving forward with SEAGO's help. He gave a shout out to Keith, Melissa and other SEAGO staff for their help. Caleb Blaschke introduced Crystal Hatfield, Willcox Finance Director and City Clerk, and advised she would be taking his spot to ensure a quorum for the meeting so that he could go spend time with his family. **Luis Pedroza**, Douglas, announced that ADOT has agreed to fund a design concept report for a connector road to the Port of Entry and they are monitoring the infrastructure bill to see if the Port will be funded. He also stated Douglas is allocating their ARPA monies to EMS and those directly involved in Covid response, and to parks and recreation and tourism. Those allocations free up already budgeted items to pay for other capital one-time expenses. A half million dollars has committed to sewer and water for the Port, working with the County to get grants to fund the infrastructure project. Randy Heiss thanked ADOT Transportation Board member Richard Searle (in attendance) for his advocacy to ADOT for the access road to the Douglas Port of Entry project and getting them to fund the study. **Vickie Vivian**, Benson, stated they will be holding the lantern festival again this year on September 11 with tributes to first responders. They are working on a temporary City Hall facility that they hope to be in by December 1<sup>st</sup>. Once moved in, they will demolish the current building and build a new City Hall. The Lions Club donated their building to use

for City Council Chambers and they hope to have that ready by end of year. They are having difficulty finding and keeping employees citing vacancies in HR and animal control officer as examples. She announced their recent ribbon cutting on the fuel farm at the airport, but stated she had learned they cannot collect tax on jet fuel unless they have selected that option in the model city tax code, so she is working on that. Vickie also advised members that if they don't have a use tax for online sales, they may want to ask their Council to adopt one. Last year, Benson collected \$66,000 for online sales.

### III. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

State Transportation Board Member, Mr. Richard Searle stated he has wanted to attend a SEAGO meeting, and since this one is right in his back yard, he wanted to attend to see what he can learn.

### IV. ACTION ITEMS

1. Consent Agenda
  - a. Approval of the May 6, 2021 Minutes

Vice Chair Vivian asked for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda; Heath Brown made the motion; seconded by Steve Pauken.

**MOTION:** Heath Brown  
**SECOND:** Steve Pauken  
**ACTION:** Unanimous

2. Discussion and possible action to recommend a revision to the SEAGO Bylaws to provide for the annual rotation of Administrative Council Officers

Randy Heiss explained that after the election of officers in May, Chair Blaschke mentioned he would like to see the officer duties rotated between the four counties similar to the Executive Board, and this amendment is designed to establish that. He explained that the current officers consist of a Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary. The Bylaws revision would establish a Treasurer position and the new structure would begin next May if approved by the Executive Board. Randy stated that he doesn't foresee a problem with this structure but shared that it is sometimes difficult to get a representative from Santa Cruz to participate. The current slate of officers would continue serving until the election of officers in May 2022 and the new slate of officers would be seated in July.

Steve Pauken made a motion to recommend to the Executive Board the proposed amendment to the SEAGO Bylaws establishing an annual rotation of Administrative Council officers between counties as presented by staff; seconded by Vicki Vivian.

**MOTION:** Steve Pauken  
**SECOND:** Vicki Vivian  
**ACTION:** Unanimous

3. Discussion and possible action to recommend approval of Resolution No. 2021-03 establishing SEAGO's Rural Regional Priority List of transportation projects for consideration for funding by the Arizona Legislature

Chris Vertrees stated the state budget was approved on June 14<sup>th</sup> and included more than \$300 million from the general fund earmarked for transportation projects. While virtually all of the transportation revenue bills died during the legislative session, transportation earmark bills advanced (including Safford 20th Avenue). He explained this process is expected to continue into the future as earmarking appears to be the most viable option for securing additional transportation infrastructure funding. However, a significant concern with earmarking transportation projects is that it bypasses state, regional, and local planning and programming processes and priorities. In response, RTAC will be recommending a compromise approach to state legislative

leadership for next year's budget discussions. RTAC will be recommending that \$50 million of next year's earmark funding be designated towards regional transportation priorities. Each COG/MPO in Greater Arizona would be allocated an amount proportional to their population. In preparation, RTAC has requested that Greater Arizona COGs and MPOs develop a list of regional priorities consisting of the top projects to be put forward for the RTAC approach.

Under this proposal, SEAGO had \$4,525,876 million to program into the RTAC List of Projects. On June 4, 2021, SEAGO issued a call for projects to be considered for the RTAC list. The TAC reviewed and ranked the five applications received at the July 15, 2021 meeting. The list on page 15 represents the projects from the SEAGO region that the TAC proposed be included in the RTAC Rural Regional Priority List. The Resolution expresses SEAGO's desire to include this list of priority projects in the RTAC Rural Regional Priority List, formally establishes this list of projects as SEAGO's priority transportation projects, and urges the Legislature to enact legislation appropriating State General Fund revenues for the projects included in the RTAC Rural Regional Priority Project List.

Richard Searle asked where on Ruby Road the Potrero Creek bridge project is located. Randy Heiss stated the bridge is east of the I-19 interchange and just west of the Union Pacific railroad tracks, and the biggest issue is when train goes through the area, traffic backs up and interferes with the flow of freight accessing the industrial park through the I-19 frontage road and blocks the interchange. This project would replace the bridge and create a grade separated crossing over the UP railroad. Heath asked where rest of the money for the project is coming from. Chris Vertrees stated they have committed \$4.5 million and it is eligible for CMAC money to relieve congestion issues. Chris stated they have a three year window to use these funds and over 2 or possibly 3 cycles, they should have the money needed. Richard Searle stated this is an excellent direction that SEAGO is involved in and he supports it.

Vicki Vivian made a motion to recommend approval of the list representing the SEAGO Region's Priority Transportation Projects as developed by the SEAGO TAC, and to recommend approval to the Executive Board Resolution 2021-03 demonstrating regional support for RTAC's efforts to submit a Greater Arizona RTAC Rural Regional Priority List to the Arizona Legislature; seconded by Heath Brown.

**MOTION:** Vickie Vivian  
**SECOND:** Heath Brown  
**ACTION:** Unanimous

4. Discussion and possible action to recommend approval of SEAGO 2022 - 2026 TIP Amendment #1 and to authorize staff to initiate the RFP process for a vendor for the Road Pavement Assessment

Chris Vertrees directed members to page 19 of the packet. He advised he is seeking approval for a TIP amendment to approve the SEAGO Regional Road Pavement Assessment Project and then to proceed to RFP to select a consultant for that project. The project was presented at the July 15<sup>th</sup> TAC meeting and was approved unanimously. He provided details and benefits about the project and how it will be funded. It will include all paved, functionally classified, county and city roads.

Heath Brown made a motion to recommend to the Executive Board the approval of SEAGO 2022-2026 TIP Amendment #1 and authorize staff to develop a Request for Proposals, advertise the project, and select a project consultant; second by Steve Pauken.

**MOTION:** Heath Brown  
**SECOND:** Steve Pauken  
**ACTION:** Unanimous

5. Discussion and possible action to recommend approval of Resolution No. 2021-04 relating to SEAGO's Title VI Plan

Chris Vertrees explained a Title VI plan must be developed each year that focuses on ensuring access to and meaningful participation in SEAGO's transportation planning processes by elderly, disabled, minorities and the poor. The FTA now requires approval of Title VI plans by an agency's governing board. While ADOT will accept the minutes of a meeting as evidence of governing board approval, the minutes do not become official until approved at a subsequent meeting. Because meetings of the SEAGO Executive Board occur quarterly, approval of the August 20th meeting minutes will not be considered until November – well after the deadline for ADOT to submit our Title VI plan to FTA. Because of that, he has prepared a Resolution which will provide immediate evidence of the Executive Board's approval of SEAGO's Title VI Implementation and Public Participation Plan dated August 1, 2021.

Steve Pauken made a motion to recommend approval of Resolution No. 2021-04 to the Executive Board; seconded by Heath Brown.

**MOTION:** Steve Pauken  
**SECOND:** Heath Brown  
**ACTION:** Unanimous

6. Discussion and possible action to recommend approval of the SEAGO 2021 - 2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Maria Porter directed members to page 24 of the packet. She stated that this CEDS was the result of a six month strategic planning process and was developed by a committee with representation from all four counties. It was submitted to EDA by April 30<sup>th</sup>. The report contains EDA's response although the formal letter of acceptance has not yet been received. She advised that Board approval is not required, but having that approval opens doors for additional funding opportunities.

Heath Brown made a motion to recommend approval the SEAGO 2021 – 2025 CEDS to the Executive Board; seconded by Steve Pauken

**MOTION:** Heath Brown  
**SECOND:** Steve Pauken  
**ACTION:** Unanimous

7. Discussion and possible action to recommend approval of Resolution No. 2021-05 authorizing a grant application to EDA to develop a regional broadband strategic plan

Maria Porter advised that this Resolution will authorize an EDA partnership planning and local technical assistance grant in the amount of \$173,800 to improve regional economic development capacity and develop a regional broadband expansion master plan covering SEAGO's four-county region. The Resolution also commits up to \$34,760 in matching funds consisting of member entity staff time and program deliverables. Randy Heiss disclosed that if the in-kind match of staff time was insufficient, SEAGO funds may be required to fulfil the matching requirements. He reminded members that SEAGO has budgeted \$50,000 in contingency funds just for these kinds of things and broadband expansion is an excellent use of these funds.

Steve Pauken made a motion to recommend to the Executive Board approval of Resolution 2021–05 for an EDA Partnership Planning and Local Technical Assistance Grant in the amount of \$173,800 and matching funds of up to \$34,760 funded through in-kind match from SEAGO and its member entities; seconded by Heath Brown.

**MOTION:** Steve Pauken  
**SECOND:** Heath Brown  
**ACTION:** Unanimous

8. Discussion and possible action to recommend approval of the FY 2022 – 2024 CDBG Regional Account Method of Distribution

Keith Dennis stated that SEAGO is required to develop a three year Method of Distribution to distribute CDBG Regional Account funds from ADOH throughout the region. He stated the formulas for distributing the RA funds among the counties and MOD are in the agenda packet. He asked if there were any questions, suggestions or changes, and there were none.

Heath Brown made a motion to forward the updated Method of Distribution for FY2022 – FY2024 to the Executive Board with a recommendation of approval; seconded by Steve Pauken.

**MOTION:** Heath Brown  
**SECOND:** Steve Pauken  
**ACTION:** Unanimous

**V. INFORMATION ITEMS**

A. Future Meeting Dates

Randy advised that he sends out meeting invites a year in advance so that the meetings automatically appear on your calendars and conflicts can be avoided. The next Administrative Council meeting is November 4<sup>th</sup>. He reminded the officers that there is a Joint Committees meeting scheduled for September 30<sup>th</sup> and if there was no program related, time sensitive business to conduct, it would be cancelled.

B. Strategic Plan Progress Report

Randy provided a verbal update on the status on some of the key Tactics and advised that items that had been completed are highlighted in green and progress highlighted yellow in the written report in the agenda packet.

C. Quarterly Finance Report

Dina Curtiss provided an update on SEAGO finances and responded to questions.

D. Community Development Report

Keith Dennis provided an update on Community Development Programs and responded to questions. Randy Heiss emphasized that the SEAGO CARES program is doing what we had hoped it would do by helping people behind on their mortgage keep their homes.

E. SEAGO Economic Development District Report

Maria Porter provided an update on Economic Development and responded to questions. She reminded members that the SEAGO EDD resiliency survey is live on the SEAGO website and she would appreciate if it could be shared.

F. AAA Updates

Laura Villa provided an update on AAA Programs and responded to questions. Vicki Vivian shared that her mother and didn't know about the services that SEAGO AAA offers. She asked if SEAGO could Facebook tag the various member entities to help get the word out about AAA programs. Laura stated she will follow up.

G. Transportation Program Updates

Chris Vertrees provided an update on Transportation Programs and responded to questions.

## **VI. RTAC REPORT**

Kevin Adam provided an update and responded to questions.

## **VII. STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS / CURRENT EVENTS**

Randy stated the recent NOFOs for Economic Development Administration don't present a lot of opportunities for infrastructure in rural areas. One that offers an opportunity is for tourism and he is contemplating how SEAGO can further this discussion. He also mentioned the upcoming strategic planning retreat. Staff plans to meet to brainstorm tactics to bring to the strategic plan retreat.

## **VIII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Randy reminded the members that they can always request an item be put on the agenda similar to the bylaws revision on today's agenda. Upcoming agenda items include an update of the SEAGO Policy Principles and a resolution regarding use of HURF funds.

## **IX. ADJOURNMENT**

Vice Chair Vicki Vivian called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Steve Pauken made motion to adjourn the meeting; Heath Brown seconded.

**MOTION:** Steve Pauken  
**SECOND:** Heath Brown  
**ACTION:** Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned at 10:57 a.m.