



COG Meeting Minutes  
September 27, 2024

**Members present:** Commissioner Mahar, Commissioner Mortensen, Commissioner Zoller  
**Members present by phone/Zoom:** Commissioner Cothren, Councilor Marshall

**Members absent:** none  
**Members Excused:** none  
**Alternates present:** none

**Staff present:** Mike Reardon, Claire Steiner, Karen Wolfe, Lois Chauncey, Christina Marnaris  
**Advisory Council member present:** none  
**Visitors present:** Staff member Julia Lester; Debi Ewing, Fuller Group

The meeting was called to order at 1:01 p.m. by Commissioner Mahar.

**The Pledge of Allegiance** was recited.

- 1. Agenda Review:** Mike added a report from the State Auditor's office to the agenda.
- 2. Review of Minutes:** **Commissioner Mortensen moved to approve the July 26, 2024 minutes. Commissioners Zoller & Cothren seconded the motion. Motion carried.**
- 3. Public Comment (3-minute limit):** none
- 4. Anniversary Recognition.** Mike recognized Melissa Cozadd for her five-year anniversary. Melissa could not attend today.

Mike recognized Julia Lester, Medicaid nurse/case manager for her five-year anniversary.

- 5. Advisory Council:** Community Services manager Christina Marnaris reported at the September meeting there was a new Clark County member approved and an existing Cowlitz County member who renewed for another 3 years. The Council celebrated Jodi Oliver's term.

**Commissioner Zoller moved to approve Apryl Schneider to join the Advisory Council representing Clark County effective October 1, 2024. Councilor Marshall seconded. Motion carried.**

- 6. Review of Financials.** Claire reviewed the July and August 2024 expenditures of \$2,737,604 and \$2,543,059 respectively. Claire explained that July expenditures were higher due to state contract renewal. August was significantly less.

**Commissioner Cothren moved to approve the July and August 2024 expenditures of \$2,737,604 and \$2,543,059 respectively. Commissioner Mortensen seconded the motion. Motion carried.**

Claire reported on the June balance sheet. Strong position, with about 6-7 months of cash on hand. Assets exceed liabilities. The majority of our cash stays in investment accounts except for what is actually needed for expenses. Claire reviewed the June revenues and expenditures. We are earning between 4.25% and 4.5% interest on the investment accounts. Claire reported on the Washington Financial Officers Association (WFOA) conference last week; the State Accountant did not express any concerns about the recent Fed interest rate drop. Claire will provide an amended operating budget and Fund Balance amendment at an upcoming COG meeting. Mike noted our Area Plan Grant program will be finalized this year in November.

Claire reviewed the June 2024 dashboard. YTD expenditures are broken out by type. She created a monthly snapshot of the YTD expenditures by type. Other government revenue and expenditures and net income for 2024; this is non-Medicaid revenue. Commissioner Mortensen asked how we make up for shortfall. Claire explained that our budget is a deficit budget and we use planned Fund Balance for the shortfall. Commissioner Mortensen complimented Claire on her work on the budget and the dashboard reports. Claire reviewed the 12 month rolling cash payments by type. Commissioner Mortensen asked for some clarification on the title of the chart. Claire will make the suggested title changes.

**7. Resolution # 2024-4, Investing officers.** Claire explained the updates to the investment accounts to add Keegan Patterson as an investing officer signatory on the US Bank investment accounts. Keegan will act as Claire's backup, if approved. Mike explained it is a break from tradition to give Claire some backup.

**Commissioner Mortensen moved to approve Resolution # 2024-4, Investing officers, to add Keegan Patterson as an investing officer signatory on the US Bank investment accounts. Commissioner Zoller seconded. Motion carried.**

**8. SOPPADA #2024-3** Lease Agreement Letter of Intent, Tenant Improvement, and Moving Costs (Action). Mike presented SOPPADA #2024-3 for the COG's approval. Mike explained we are seeking approval to sign a lease for new office space in Longview at the Twin City Shopping Center. Mike reviewed the comparison lease options for the current space and the new space. Our Commercial real estate agent, Debi Ewing of Fuller Group joined in the discussion and answered questions. Ms. Ewing shared the site search efforts. The site we've settled on has ample parking for staff and clients, and good anchor tenants. Advantage of the 15-year lease is there will be certainty of what the ongoing rent will be. The landlord also will have costs associated with moving one of the tenants. Triple net costs are higher than the existing location but lower or on par with the average in the area. The landlord provided historical data on the Triple net charges over the years. Commissioner Mortensen asked if there is an escape clause if the rent increase goes up over a certain threshold, to protect ourselves of an automatic increase in a bad market. Ms. Ewing noted during COVID and recessions there have been rent decreases. 3%-5% is a fair market increase. Commissioner Mortensen asked if the 3% increase can be indexed to some benchmark in the case of a downturned market. Ms. Ewing noted that the Commercial real estate market no longer uses

the CPI index. Councilor Marshall asked how long the space has been vacant. Ms. Ewing does not have the data handy, but noted the Agency opened the negotiations. The agency does not bear any burden on the cost of the tenant that needs to move. Councilor Marshall also asked if there is some out due to catastrophic failure, we need larger space, or if the Agency loses its State contract. Ms. Ewing shared that we could approach the landlord to renegotiate the lease or get out of the lease if we close our doors. If we needed additional space the landlord would work with us. Commissioner Mortensen mentioned the Three Rivers Mall and the Triangle Shopping Center. Mike reported we looked at them a couple years ago, under the new owner. Neither would subdivide or expand to accommodate us. Ms. Ewing also noted a deeper space would end up not really working for us. The landlords typically are looking for retail tenants to take that type of space. Commissioner Mortensen asked what we are getting for the extra money we will be spending. Mike noted the growth of the senior population and continued growth of our client base and we will need more space in the coming years. The new location is better for our staff and our clients in terms of accessibility. Councilor Marshall noted this option looks good to her. She feels Mike has done his due diligence. Commissioner Zoller asked about mass transit and if the new space is on the bus line. Mike reported yes it is; it's one of the terms of our agreement with the State. Commissioner Cothren noted it's a lot of money but costs are costs. Mike also noted the costs to move and the improvements to the new space are somewhere in the range of \$60 - \$75 per square foot. Ms. Ewing noted if the letter of intent is approved by the COG, the next step is the architect finalizes the plan, submits to two contractors to bid, and the landlord will draft the lease. We are not obligated to sign the lease if something pops up unexpectedly. The signed letter of intent is a good faith act to move forward. Commissioner Zoller stated if we commit to a lease and the build-out costs come in higher, then the contractors could come in with the highest cost. Ms. Ewing noted when the bids go out, the contractors are bidding against themselves. If the costs came in higher, we would be done and not have to move forward. We could also look at the costs with the contractors and try to get the costs down. The letter of intent is not a binding contract for either party. The landlord could be approached by another prospective tenant with better terms and the landlord could back out on our deal. The landlord is taking on the prevailing wage bid process. Mike confirmed the architect has been paid for his work; approximately \$33,000. Councilor Marshall asked if even if we stay where we are at and expand would we incur some costs; yes, but we don't know what they are. Commissioner Zoller emphasized that the current location is not a long-term solution given parking, homeless, and the elevator issues. Commissioner Mortensen would like to see police reports on the existing space as well as the new space. Our current lease expires November of 2025 so we still have some time. Mike summarized Commissioner Mortensen's concerns of comparables and safety issues. Commissioner Zoller and Councilor Marshall stated they are comfortable moving forward but have respect for Commissioner Mortensen's concerns. Ms. Ewing stated in the LOI we would need to commit to 10 or 15 years. Ms. Ewing also noted the with the legal drafting time plus permits and build out time we have sufficient time. She summarized the issues at hand and she will work on the crime rate stats for current location, proposed location and comparable locations. She will also work on gathering data of the availability of other locations.

**Councilor Marshall suggested and the COG members agreed, to pause to gather answers to the concerns expressed in the discussion, and subsequently schedule a special COG meeting to ask for approval of the SOPPADA.**

**9. SOPPADA #2024-4** Longevity Pay Policy (Action). Mike and Human Resources Manager Lois Chauncey presented SOPPADA #2024-4 for the COG's approval. Mike shared that he wants to incentivize longevity with the agency, address recruiting issues, and reward longevity milestones. We currently have 9+ openings. Flexible scheduling and pay were the two biggest concerns shared during recent listening sessions with staff. 26 employees would be eligible for the Longevity pay in 2024. Mike would also like to add for any current staff that have previously hit the most recent benchmark to reward their longevity. Lois shared that in the current economic situation staff are struggling financially.

Commissioner Mahar stated he was not aware this would only be paid out every 5 years. I.e. an employee could wait until they hit their 5 years, get the longevity pay, and then leave. Skamania County adds the longevity pay into their employees' hourly rate. Commissioner Zoller shared that Klickitat staff gets an additional rate added to their monthly salary every 5 years. Commissioner Mortensen shared that he is not in favor of seniority-based rewards. Both Commissioners Mortensen and Zoller shared the thought to adjust the pay schedules. Councilor Marshall shared this may not be the best solution. She asked if we are having trouble recruiting. Lois shared that yes, we get feedback that our pay is low in comparison to other similar employers. Our benefits package is very generous. Councilor Marshall asked if we have done any salary surveys. Mike shared we did salary studies about 1.5-2 years ago. The State SS3s are making about \$500 per month more than our TXIX Case managers. Commissioner Cothren shared Wahkiakum County is always struggling with attrition to other counties. They have to negotiate with the Unions on the pay scales. They negotiate with the union members on the longevity benefits. The longevity pay was a main issue this year for the unions they negotiate with. He feels our proposal is a good start. Commissioner Mahar shared his thought to include this in with the union negotiations.

**Commissioner Mortensen moved to approve to approve SOPPADA # 2024-4 to approve the Longevity Pay Policy as presented. Commissioners Cothren and Zoller seconded. Motion carried.**

## **10. Director's Report (Information)**

- State Auditors Office Audit. Mike congratulated Claire and her team on another outstanding audit. Mike shared some quotes from the SAO's report. Unmodified opinion. No findings or deficiencies.
- Legislative priorities around senior nutrition and additional funding.
- Contracts – 2 new provider contracts. Another home care agency.
- Senior Prom in Cathlamet.

- Union Negotiations this fall for Vancouver Case Managers and Aging & Disability Resource Specialists.

**11. Good of the order.** Commissioner Zoller reported they are losing their volunteer coordinator position and are seeking grant funding for the position. She and Mike will meet to discuss.

**10. Adjourn.** There being no further business, **Commissioner Mortensen moved, and Commissioner Cothren seconded to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.** The meeting was adjourned at 3:21 p.m.