

**MINUTES OF
THE EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
10 A.M., FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2022
VIA ZOOM
NOGALES CITY HALL
777 NORTH GRAND AVENUE, NOGALES, AZ 85621**

OFFICERS PRESENT: Garino, Arturo - City of Nogales (Chair) **(In-Person)**
Budge, Ken - City of Bisbee (Treasurer) **(Zoom)**
Gomez, David - Greenlee County (1st Vice-Chair) **(Zoom)**
Ortega, Richard - City of Safford (2nd Vice-Chair) **(Zoom)**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ahmann, Steve - Greenlee County Private Sector Representative **(Zoom)**
Barlow, Bill - City of Tombstone **(In-Person)**
Blake, Titus – Town of Duncan **(Zoom)**
Bracker, Bruce - Santa Cruz County **(In-Person)**
Budd, David - Santa Cruz County Private Sector Representative **(Zoom)**
David, Paul - Greenlee County **(Zoom)**
English, Ann - Cochise County **(Zoom)**
Floyd, Heather - Cochise County Private Representative **(In-Person)**
Lopez, Ed - Graham County Private Sector Representative **(Zoom)**
Montoya, Luis – Town of Clifton **(Zoom)**

STAFF PRESENT: Curtiss, Dina - Accounting Manager **(Zoom)**
Dennis, Keith - Community Development Program Manager **(In-Person)**
Heiss, Randy - Executive Director **(In-Person)**
Merideth, John - GIS Analyst **(Zoom)**
Peterson, Stephen - Economic Development Program Manager **(In-Person)**
Vertrees, Chris - Transportation Program Administrator **(In-Person)**

GUESTS: Adam, Kevin- RTAC **(In-Person)**

I. CALL TO ORDER/ESTABLISH QUORUM

Randy Heiss read off the names of those present at the meeting – a quorum was established.

II. MEMBER ENTITIES' DISCUSSION

Supervisor Ann English, Cochise County, stated that she never wants to miss an opportunity to thank the Board for the support SEAGO has shown for the Douglas Port of Entry project. SEAGO has supported the project from the beginning and when it's finished it will be a boon for all of the counties, all of Southeast Arizona, and the State of Arizona.

III. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

No one from the public was present.

IV. ACTION ITEMS

1. Consent Agenda
 - a. Approval of the August 19, 2022, minutes

Chair Garino called for a motion to approve the minutes. Bruce Bracker made the motion; Second by Councilman Bill Barlow.

MOTION: Bruce Bracker
SECOND: Bill Barlow
ACTION: Unanimous

2. Discussion and possible action to recommend approval of the proposed Calendar Year 2023 SEAGO Policy Principles

Randy Heiss pointed out the memo on Page 5 of the packet that indicates the members of the Administrative Council attending the November 3rd meeting and voting on recommendations made to the Executive Board for matters under consideration at today's meeting. He then presented the updates that staff has recommended for the Calendar Year 2023 Policy Principles. Randy explained that the updates to the Calendar Year 2023 Policy Principles are minor again this year. He explained that these principles enable SEAGO staff with talking points to support or oppose legislation, policies or various initiatives at the state and federal level that impact delivery of SEAGO programs and/or our effectiveness in serving member entities and constituents. Randy then offered to answer any questions.

Supervisor Paul David from Graham County suggested the group consider adding a strategy to study zoning changes to accommodate higher density, infill, or facilitating auxiliary housing units. He asked that the Principle be a little more specific, instead of just support initiatives to increase affordable housing stock. Randy responded that he thought this an excellent idea. However, he mentioned nearly the same language appears in our strategic planning matrix and he suggested that there's an opportunity to insert the idea of exploring zoning changes to support higher density, etc. as tactics for Community Development to pursue. Supervisor David agreed this would be satisfactory.

Supervisor Bruce Bracker made a motion to approve the proposed update to the Calendar Year 2023 SEAGO Policy Principles; second by Councilman Bill Barlow.

MOTION: Bruce Bracker
SECOND: Bill Barlow
ACTION: Unanimous

3. Discussion and possible action relating to the recruitment process for the next SEAGO Executive Director

Randy Heiss presented the two paths the Board could consider in recruiting the next Executive Director; recruiting internally from SEAGO staff, or casting a broad net to recruit someone external to the organization. For the internal option, he strongly recommended the Board consider Chris Vertrees and proceeded to outline some of the many accomplishments Chris has achieved during his many years of service with SEAGO. He stated that both options have their own sets of pros and cons but he encouraged the Board to explore the internal option first and time internal recruitment efforts such that if they still wished to look for external candidates, there would be ample opportunities to do so before he retires. At this point, Randy paused to gather feedback from the Board members as to their preference.

Chair Garino described some of his experiences with recruiting external candidates for management positions within the City of Nogales and agreed that internal recruitment may be the Board's best option. Supervisor Paul David pointed out that Chris has done excellent work in the Transportation program and has been delegated responsibility for oversight of the AAA operations to broaden his understanding of those programs. Although he understands the optics of internal recruitment can be a concern for individuals looking from outside the organization, he stated he is much more concerned about the success of SEAGO and supports the internal recruitment option.

Supervisor Ann English stated that while she believes it's important to look at the staff available internally, she also noted that it's a big jump from a program management role to a leadership role. She suggested that they should move forward with giving Chris an opportunity and determine how he relates to that kind of growth, as being in charge of the whole organization is different and requires a different persona.

Councilman Bill Barlow stated that he has a lot of respect for the work that Chris has done and would support whatever decision the Board makes. But he also pointed out that if the Board never looks at who may be available externally, they will never know if they made the best decision.

Mayor Luis Montoya expressed that Chris is more than qualified to assume the responsibility, but asked if there were others internal to SEAGO that might be interested in the position. Randy suggested that there was at least one other individual at SEAGO that could possibly do the job but he was putting Chris forward based on his assessment of all of those on the SEAGO team. Mayor Montoya stated that he felt it would be in our best interest, out of fairness, and for the morale of our employees for all staff to be given an opportunity to throw their hat in the ring. Vice-Mayor Richard Ortega agreed that while he is comfortable with Chris, he feels that it would be better to open it up, to give everybody a chance to apply.

Supervisor Bruce Bracker agreed that Chris appears well qualified for the position but noted some of the comments about the leadership role Chris would be assuming and wondered if Randy could provide information relating to Chris's leadership training and experience. Randy offered that Chris is a graduate of ASU's Certified Public Manager Program that has at least one module that focuses exclusively on leadership. He also pointed out that Chris served in the Air Force and developed a lot of leadership characteristics from that experience. And he had served as an officer with the Arizona Department of Corrections - also a leadership role. Randy stated that it was his opinion that Chris has the leadership characteristics to become the next SEAGO Director. Supervisor Bracker asked if there was funding in SEAGO's budget for continuing education and leadership education. Randy responded that there will be next year.

Supervisor David Gomez stated that he had been with SEAGO for quite some time and had dealt with Chris in his performance with SEAGO and felt he'd be an excellent choice for this position. So it was his opinion the internal option would be the best option for SEAGO especially with Randy still being here for the amount of time that he's going to be here and bringing Chris under his wing.

Private Sector Representative David Budd commented that it's not uncommon for a subcommittee of the Board to handle the recruitment process so the full Board doesn't necessarily need to be involved in screening candidates. He asked if anybody thought a committee looking at this could be an idea. Randy thanked Mr. Budd for his comment and stated it was the Executive Committee who led the recruitment process when he was hired. It was this Committee who updated the job description, created the job announcement and screened the initial applicants down to a short list of candidates to be interviewed by the Executive Board. But that doesn't mean it has to be just those people if there were others who had an interest in participating in the process. He stated he'd be happy to send an email to the Board asking for others to respond if they're interested. Supervisor Bracker suggested that he would be in favor of forming a small committee that would meet in the first quarter of next year to look at the internal recruitment option in time to look at outside recruitment if needed, and if not, then provide a good transition period for Chris. This could be the Executive Committee and maybe two or three others who wanted to participate.

Mayor Ken Budge stated that he would like to see a resume for any parties interested in the job regardless if internal or external. And in order to determine the applicants' qualifications, he would like to have a current copy of the Executive Director job description.

Supervisor Bracker made a motion to form a seven member committee that includes the Executive Committee and three other members of the Executive Board to look at the internal applicants for the Executive Director position and report back to the Executive Board in the first quarter of 2023; Second by Chair Arturo Garino.

MOTION: Bruce Bracker
SECOND: Arturo Garino
ACTION: Unanimous

4. Discussion and possible action to recommend approval of Resolution No. 2022-04 establishing SEAGO's Rural Regional Priority List of transportation projects for consideration for funding by the Arizona Legislature

Chris Vertrees explained the process used by the TAC to establish the RTAC Rural Regional Priority Projects list for the SEAGO region. He further explained that Resolution 2022-04 expresses SEAGO's desire to include this list of priority projects in the RTAC Rural Regional Priority List and urges the Legislature to enact legislation appropriating State General Fund revenues for the projects included in the RTAC Greater Arizona Regional Priority Project List. Chris offered to answer any questions.

Supervisor Paul David pointed out that while Cochise and Greenlee counties did not have projects on the list under consideration, they do have projects on the SEAGO TIP and those projects have more certainty of being funded than the projects on this list. Kevin Adam explained the legislative process that the proposed projects will be subject to and that stated that engaging the legislative delegation to advocate for specific projects on the list will be key to success.

Supervisor Bracker made a motion to approve Resolution No. 2022-04 establishing SEAGO's Rural Regional Priority List of transportation projects for consideration for funding by the Arizona Legislature; Second by Private Sector Representative Heather Floyd

MOTION: Bruce Bracker
SECOND: Heather Floyd
ACTION: Unanimous

5. Discussion and possible action to recommend approval of the 2022 CDBG Regional Account applications.

Keith Dennis gave an overview of the CDGB Regional Account projects (Benson, Clifton, Safford, and Santa Cruz County) that were awarded for fiscal year 2022, along with two Colonias set-aside projects (Bisbee and Patagonia) and one State Special Projects set-aside project (Tombstone) that were also awarded. Keith explained the SEAGO bylaws require Executive Board approval of fees and/or assessments such as those charged for application preparation or administration of new CDBG contracts by SEAGO for member entities and offered to answer any questions.

Supervisor Bruce Bracker made a motion to approve the 2022 CDBG Regional Account applications; Second by Private Sector Representative Heather Floyd.

MOTION: Bruce Bracker
SECOND: Heather Floyd
ACTION: Unanimous

6. Discussion and possible action to recommend approval of Resolution No. 2022-05 authorizing the development of a coalition of private and public entities to build a Bi-National Workforce Program and diversify regional talent pools

Stephen Peterson explained the purpose of the Resolution was to request approval for the formation of a coalition to develop a Bi-National Workforce Program. The intent is to diversify the regional talent pool by supporting the recruitment of technically skilled workers residing in Sonora, Mexico, whom are either US Citizens, or qualify for temporary work visa programs. Many the region's major employers are unable to recruit qualified applicants and the hope is establishing the program will help employers fill critical vacancies with workers with degrees or technical certifications earned in Mexico that can be converted to US degrees or technical certifications. Stephen offered to answer any questions.

Mayor Luis Montoya asked if the amount of the fee to participate in the program had been determined, and if so, how much was the fee. Stephen Peterson indicated that the group he's been working with had suggested a fee of \$5,000. Mayor Montoya asked if Freeport MacMoRan had been approached to participate in the program. Stephen responded that they had not been approached to date but they intend to engage them as the program is developed.

Private Sector Representative David Budd asked Stephen if he foresaw any political opposition to the program. Stephen acknowledged that it was certainly possible and he would prepare to face that. Supervisor Ann English stated that she anticipated that there would be political opposition to the program but it was still worth pursuing.

Supervisor Bruce Bracker made a motion to approve Resolution No. 2022-05 authorizing the development of a coalition of private and public entities to build a Bi-National Workforce Program and diversify regional talent pools; Second by Private Sector Representative Heather Floyd.

MOTION: Bruce Bracker

SECOND: Heather Floyd

ACTION: Unanimous

V. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Future Meeting Dates

Randy Heiss mentioned that the next meeting of the Executive Board will be held February 24, 2023. He also mentioned that there would likely be a need for the Administrative – Executive Committees to meet December 1st telephonically to conduct program related, time sensitive business between regular meetings of the Administrative Council and Executive Board. He asked the officers to please mark their calendars.

B. Strategic Plan Progress Report

Randy Heiss gave a brief overview of the Strategic Planning retreat to be held following the February 9th meeting of the Administrative Council and continuing on February 10, 2023. He then went through the matrix of Strategic Plan objectives and tasks that staff had prioritized for consideration at the retreat and asked for any feedback or suggestions.

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.

E. SEAGO Economic Development District Report

Stephen Peterson provided an update on Economic Development and responded to questions.

F. AAA Updates

Randy Heiss provided an update on AAA programs and responded to questions.

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 Heiss announced that Marisa De La Cruz had moved on from SEAGO with her last day being November 11, 2022. He also mentioned that SEAGO received a request from the Arizona Eastern Railroad;

they would like SEAGO to be the applicant for a Federal Railroad Administration grant to help finance to improvements to their infrastructure to make it more resistant to climate change. Randy stated that SEAGO was working with AZER on an agreement that would compensate SEAGO for administration of the grant if awarded and to protect SEAGO from having to contribute matching funds or bear the expense of any cost overruns on the project. He also mentioned that he was meeting with the other rural COGs to develop strategies to pursue with the new Governor such as updating the State Travel Policy, permanent increases for direct care workers, and the RTAC priority projects legislation.

VIII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Randy Heiss reminded the Board that the next meeting will include the annual election of Executive Board officers. He also stated that he intends to bring an agenda item to de-designate SEAGO as the regional Water Quality Management Agency. And he mentioned that an update to SEAGO's classification and compensation plan is badly needed due to the lack of competitiveness of SEAGO's salary structure which will require procurement of consulting services to perform the work.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Garino adjourned the meeting at 12:35 p.m.