

## **SOUTHWEST IOWA PLANNING COUNCIL**

### **SWIPCO Policy Council Meeting**

June 26, 2025, 1:30 p.m.  
SWIPCO Conference Room (1501 SW 7th St., Atlantic, IA)  
OR via Zoom

#### **Minutes**

1. **Call to Order.** Chair Green called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.
2. **Roll Call.** SWIPCO Policy Council Members Present: Fran Brannan, Alex Burton, Richard Crouch, Grace Garrett, Joe George, Steve Green, AJ Lyman, Susan Miller, Charlie Parkhurst, Jenna Ramsey, Jeff Shearer, Tony Smith, Sherman Struble, Todd Valline. SWIPCO Staff Present: John McCurdy, Daurine Petersen, Mark Lander, Rhonda Brown, Chris Parks. Others: None.
3. **Discuss/Approve Agenda** Crouch moved to approve the agenda. Parkhurst seconded. The motion carried with all ayes.
4. **Discuss/Approve Minutes – May 22, 2025.** Garrett moved to approve the May 22, 2025 minutes. Miller seconded. The motion carried with all ayes.
5. **Discuss/Approve Financial Report.** Brown discussed the financials. She pointed out lead grant expenses and a deposit return. FTA money has come in and McCurdy talked about a billing focus to get things as regular and in sync as they can be. Parkhurst moved to approve the financials. Struble seconded. The motion carried with all ayes.
6. **Discuss/Approve Payment of Bills.** Brown pointed out insurance pool payments for workers comp Iowa Municipalities, which went up 5.3%, and an engine replacement. Brannan moved to approve the payment of bills. Smith seconded. The motion carried with all ayes.
7. **Discuss/Approve Agency Expenditures**
  - a. **Expanding Parking Lot with Gravel.** McCurdy discussed the plan to add a gravel pad next to the bus barn to get some older vehicles out of the way for parking and maintenance efficiency. Three bids were received, with the low bid coming from Stamp Construction in Atlantic. McCurdy said staff recommended approving the Stamp Bid. Struble moved to approve the bid from Stamp Construction. Burton seconded. The motion carried with all ayes.
  - b. **I-Cubs Outing.** McCurdy discussed a staff appreciation outing that is being planned for July 20<sup>th</sup>. He asked the board to approve purchase of tickets at \$9 each and transportation for staff and guests. Parkhurst moved to approve the expense. Valline seconded. The motion carried with all ayes.
8. **Discuss/Approve FY 26 Budget.** McCurdy discussed the proposed FY 2026 budget at length. Some notable changes were the impending end of SWITA operating the City of Council Bluffs Special Transit Service. Drivers will be absorbed into other routes if they choose to once the STS

service ends. McCurdy said the budget committee recommended a 3% across the board wage increase for all employees that started prior to April 1, 2025. The new driver starting wage will also be bumped up to \$16.75. Fuel was budgeted at \$4/gallon to account for worst case scenario of market fluctuation. Valline asked if it would be valuable to contract fuel services in Council Bluffs. It was agreed that was worth looking into in the future. On the planning and housing side there is a significant reduction of larger projects and no lead grant was accounted for since its future status is uncertain. George expressed concern about deficits in back to back years and the previous hope to make up for the gap when flood projects closed. McCurdy said that flood project revenue did fall short due to percentages being doled out vs original expected amounts. The building addition isn't really being made up for. George suggested communities and counties could probably handle higher dues if they understand the full scope of services. Garrett moved to approve the FY2026 budget. George seconded. The motion carried with all ayes.

- 9. Discuss/Approve FY 26 Capital Budget.** McCurdy discussed the FY26 Capital Budget which includes 5 buses, 3 minivans, and a couple of computers on the transit side. Permitting software procurement, 3 computers, and 2 staff cars on the community development side. Crouch asked about cost of permitting software moving forward and Burton asked if there would need to be growth in community utilization to support cost of it. McCurdy said there would be annual cost but this was the initial setup. Cost would be built in to service charges to communities using the service and he sees some growth coming.
- 10. Discuss Possible Transit Rate Increases.** McCurdy discussed that rates have not increased ever during his tenure and the time has come to possibly do so. Chart of rates was shared and will be sent with public notice. George asked how the "uberfication" of transit has impacted what we do. McCurdy said changes toward that model certainly have become more prevalent. We are working on upgrades to make the system as easy as possible to use. Burton asked if fare increases would harm ridership. McCurdy said with the growth we've seen in recent times we wouldn't expect that to be the case and the minimal increases shouldn't infer too much of a burden we hope on riders. Proposed rate increases: School- \$1.50 to \$1.75. Taxi- \$2-\$2.50 to \$2.50-\$3, Medical \$30/hr to \$35/hr, Special Trips \$40/hr to \$45/hr, Charter \$55/hr to \$75/hr.
- 11. Set Date and Time for Transit Rate Increase Public Hearing.** July 24, 2025 at 1:30 p.m. was suggested as the date and time for the public hearing for SWITA rate increases. George moved to approve that date and time. Parkhurst seconded. The motion passed with all ayes.
- 12. Transit Report.** Ride numbers were comparable year-to-year. McCurdy discussed the recent passing of driver Doug Klahn and former driver Ron Baumbach. He praised staff for how they handled Doug's situation at the Council Bluffs facility. We also welcomed new Transit Scheduler Jacque Howell. Valline asked about drivers being affected by STS change and their status was discussed.

**13. Directors Combined Report.** McCurdy discussed budget prep and a greater emphasis being put on billing and aligning accounting timeframes. He has been working with staff on some specific working groups and getting everyone in sync on their goals and tasks. He also is working with staff to make them more comfortable with selling ourselves to communities. RLF has remained fairly quiet with a few inquiries.

**14. Public Comment Period.** None.

**15. Board Sharing.** None.

**16. Other Business.** None

**17. Adjourn.** Struble moved to adjourn. Crouch seconded. Chair Green adjourned the meeting at 2:48 p.m.

## **Transit Report 06-26-2025 Meeting**

We are currently missing our Trivium number from May, so our numbers are lighter than usual. All in all with the missing numbers added in I would expect to see a 150/200 ride increase over FY24.

Rides—33,255    Miles—154,259 Hours—9271

Student rides—6,618-- +1,139

Taxi—4,999 -104

Workroute—7,013---+199

## **June 26, 2025 Executive Director's Report**

Obviously we have had the FY26 budget on this agenda and that has been an important activity over the last few weeks. I would say that finances in general have been a major emphasis of what I've been working on. On the transit side that is primarily looking at the impacts of discontinuing the STS transit service, as well as keeping an eye on our rates. We have seen an improvement in our federal grant reimbursement situation, and I am more confident than I have been in a while that those will become more timely. On the planning and housing side of the operation we're just beginning some deep dives into our processes across the board as we transition from a few large projects to multiple small ones.

I attended a National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) board meeting in Rhode Island earlier in the month in my capacity as a board member for that organization. That is always interesting because it is made up of organizations like SWIPCO from across the nation, almost all rural and doing many of the same things we do. I think my underlying take away from that board meeting is that we are better positioned than most in that we are diversified in our programs. Also, we need to take a harder look at non-traditional sources of revenue as federal priorities change. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but it primarily means spending more time in the private fundraising space, which has not tended to be where we operate, but we have the ability to deliver services that is almost unique in our region. While in Providence the Commerce Secretary signed the EDA planning agreements (of which we have one at \$70,000 a year), that was a big relief as they had been sitting on the Secretary's desk for a while and we didn't know if that was a statement of a policy change, or if it was simply administrative backlog, and it ended up being the latter.

Housing Specific Updates: Ann Anstey has been promoted to housing programs coordinator. This is a very important role and one that she has been performing in reality since Sandy Hansen retired. We submitted for an Iowa West Foundation grant for \$150,000 for housing rehab that I have good reason to believe will be awarded. Our HUD lead program is winding down and overall our programs are chugging along.

Planning Specific Updates: Dani Briggs is back from maternity leave which is a huge benefit. Daurine and I are spending a decent amount of time working with the planning staff on formally organizing the staff around work group areas. Without a community development director its very important that we stay very organized and give the staff themselves more tools to manage projects as time is money. The six primary work groups are; Community Planning, Transportation Planning (RPA), Economic Development (EDA), Disaster Recovery, Grant Writing/Administration, and Government Services.

Business RLF: I've fielded a few calls of inquiry and had some administrative things to do, but otherwise the RLF is fairly quiet right now.

Finally, I will be out starting after this meeting, will be in July 3<sup>rd</sup>, then of course out on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, so you may not hear much from me if you are looking for me until July 7<sup>th</sup>.