

Smart Growth Partnership

Since 2000, the Board of Directors has provided organizational and policy direction to the Smart Growth Partnership (SGP).

Board of Directors

Jennings F. Womack, President – Founding Member (term ends June 30, 2010)

Mr. Womack serves as a trustee of Excelsa Health which is the parent governing body of Westmoreland Regional Hospital, Frick Hospital, Latrobe Area Hospital and numerous primary care centers. As a trustee of Excelsa Health, he serves on several committees, as well as serving as the president of the Westmoreland/Frick Hospital Foundation. After a very successful thirty-five year career at Sears, Womack served as president and CEO of the Westmoreland Trust and President of the Community Foundation of Westmoreland County. Womack was born and educated in Charleston, WV. He and his wife, Eleanor, have two sons. They reside between their home in Westmoreland County and their home at Sea Pines on Hilton Head Island, SC.

Gary L. Sheppard, Vice President – Appointed January 2002 (term ends June 30, 2010)

Mr. Sheppard currently serves as the County Extension Director for Penn State Cooperative Extension in Westmoreland County. Sheppard provides administrative support and leadership for the Westmoreland Extension Office and develops educational programs for dairy producers in all aspects of farm management. Sheppard is an ex-officio board member of the Westmoreland Fair and Recreation Association, member and past president of the Pennsylvania Association of County Agricultural Agents. He serves as the secretary/treasurer of the Westmoreland Agri-business Council and was a charter director for the Ag Choice Farm Credit Association. He has received various honors including a Distinguished Service Award from the National Association of County Agricultural Agents and recognition from the Pennsylvania Forage and Grassland Council for his work in pasture management education. Sheppard received a M.B.A. from Youngstown State University and a B.S. in Agricultural Mechanization from the Pennsylvania State University. He enjoys free time with his wife and three children on a small sheep farm in Westmoreland's rolling hills.

Kim E. Miller, Treasurer – Appointed September 2005 (term ends June 30, 2012)

Mr. Miller is the President of Wolf Lake, Inc. He is a developer and farmer with interest in livable & green communities and building and sustainable agriculture. Miller received a B.S. in Economics from the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. Miller is the retiring president for the Pennsylvania Association for sustainable agriculture from 2000 – 2007. He is a current board member of the Westmoreland Conservation District and Board President of Green Forge. Miller is married with four adult children.

Dr. Sharon P. Smith, Secretary – Appointed September 2007 (term ends June 30, 2012)

Dr. Smith currently serves as the president of the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg and professor of economics. She formerly served at National University, LaJolla, California, first as provost and vice president for academic affairs, then as special advisor to the chancellor. Smith received her masters and doctoral degrees in Economics from Rutgers University. Smith serves on several boards including NASD, and Security Traders Association Foundation. She resides in Greensburg.

David C. Cannon, Jr. – Appointed February 2009 (term ends June 30, 2011)

Mr. Cannon currently serves as Vice President, Environment, Health & Safety for Allegheny Energy. Prior to this position, he was at PPG Industries for 23 years, working in several capacities including Vice President, Environment, Health & Safety, and Associate General Counsel. He also worked at the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, DC. Cannon received a B.S. in Biology from the University of Notre Dame, and J.D. from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law. Mr. Cannon is a former director of the Environmental Law Institute. He has also served as a board member of the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC) and the Western Pennsylvania Chapter of ACC, and as a board member and past president of the Fox Chapel Area Land Trust. He currently serves as a member of the Fox Chapel Borough Environmental Advisory Council and the YMCA Camps Kon-O-Kwee/Spencer. He and his wife Louise are the parents of three sons and live in a suburb of Pittsburgh.

Brian J. Hill – Appointed September 2009 (term ends June 30, 2011)

Mr. Hill is a program officer with the Richard King Mellon Foundation, which is based in Pittsburgh. The Foundation's priorities include regional economic development, improving the quality of life in southwestern Pennsylvania, land preservation, and watershed restoration and protection. Prior to joining the Foundation, Hill served as the CEO and President of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, a statewide non-profit group headquartered in Harrisburg. He has also worked for or served three Pennsylvania Governors, most recently as an executive policy specialist on environmental and transportation policy for Governor Rendell, earlier as a member of the 21st Century Environment Commission created by Governor Ridge and as Chairman of the Citizens Advisory Council to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection under Governor Casey. Hill has served as Chairman of the Board for the First Energy Sustainable Energy Fund, on the board of trustees for the PA Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association, the Allegheny Valley Land Trust, and the French Creek Valley Conservancy. He served as a councilman and deputy mayor for the City of Meadville for six years. He has a BS in Environmental Resource Management from Allegheny College and MS in Natural Resource Management from the University of New Hampshire.

April Kopas – Appointed September 2009 (term ends June 30, 2012)

Ms. Kopas is the Executive Director of the Redevelopment Authority of the County of Westmoreland (RACW). The focus of the (RACW) is on reenergizing the county's core communities and enticing new business, residential, and recreational opportunities. The RACW works closely with community leaders and volunteers on community revitalization efforts, and administers programs to improve conditions for lower income families throughout Westmoreland County. Ms. Kopas was the former business development director for the Westmoreland County Industrial Development Corporation where she coordinated state and local business assistance programs for more than 1,000 companies. Ms. Kopas holds a Masters of Urban and Regional Planning degree from the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh and a B.S. in Political Science from West Virginia University. She lives in Hempfield Township with her husband Ted and their children, Elle, Alex, Quinn and Jack.

Allen G. Kukovich – Founding Member (term ends June 30, 2010)

Mr. Kukovich serves as Executive Director of the Regional Visioning Project, a two-year process to provide an opportunity for every resident of the 30-county, four-state region to participate in creating a shared vision for the region's best future. Kukovich formerly served as Director of the Southwest Regional Office of the Governor. Prior to this position, Kukovich served as State Senator, and represented the Southwest region in the General Assembly for 27 years, serving from 1977-1996 in the House of Representatives and from 1996-2004 as a State Senator. He received his B.A. in Political Science from Kent State and J.D. from Duquesne Law School. Kukovich has received more than 90 statewide awards and national recognition for his dedication on behalf of families and children. He and his wife, Nancy, have one daughter, Alexandra.

Michael Langer – Appointed March 2007 (term ends June 30, 2011)

Mr. Langer currently serves as the President of the Westmoreland Cultural Trust in Greensburg. Before joining the Trust, he was Vice President and Product Group Manager in the Funds Transfer Division at PNC Bank. Langer also worked for the Consolidated Natural Gas Company system and AT&T where he held numerous positions. He currently serves on the Westmoreland County Community College Board of Trustees. He has a B.S. in Business Administration and a B.S. in Psychology from Carnegie Mellon University. He lives with his wife and two daughters in New Kensington.

Larry J. Larese – Founding Member (term ends June 30, 2011)

Mr. Larese currently serves as Director of the Westmoreland County Department of Planning and Development and Executive Director of the Westmoreland County Industrial Development Corporation. Larese has over thirty years' experience in the economic development, community development, redevelopment and planning fields; responsible for implementation of an aggressive economic development strategy that began in 1987. Larese received a Bachelor of Arts in Geography and a Master of Planning from Eastern Kentucky University. He is married with two children.

Michael J. O'Barto – Appointed March 2002 (term ends June 30, 2012)

Mr. O'Barto currently serves as the Chairman of the Unity Township Board of Supervisors. Prior to joining the board of supervisors in 1994, he served as Unity Township Auditor for eight years. O'Barto graduated from Latrobe High School and has attended classes at Westmoreland Community College and California University of Pennsylvania. O'Barto is a lifelong resident of Unity Township and is committed to the practice of "smart growth". He and his wife, Gina, have four children.

Gregory M. Phillips – Founding Member (term ends June 30, 2010)

Mr. Phillips is the District Manager/CEO of the Westmoreland Conservation District, an organization dedicated to the conservation, restoration, and proper use of our natural resources. In addition to his District pursuits, Mr. Phillips helped to found, and continues to support, a number of grassroots conservation organizations on the local, regional, and state level. Some of those organizations are the local Sewickley Creek Watershed Association, PA CleanWays, and Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation. Mr. Phillips holds a B.S. degree in geography and rural/urban planning from Slippery Rock University. He and his wife, Leanne, and son, Brandon, live in Youngwood, PA.

Rob Ritson – Appointed November 2006 (term ends June 30, 2010)

Mr. Ritson is the Chief of Staff for Senator Kim Ward. Prior to this position, Ritson served as Township Manager for Hempfield Township. Before that, Ritson was Chief of Staff to Westmoreland County Commissioner, Tom Balya for six years. Ritson received a B. A. in Political Science from the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg. Ritson is the former President of Westmoreland County Drug & Alcohol Commission, member of the Board of Directors for Central Westmoreland Chamber of Commerce and a member of Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors and secretary - manager committee.

John A. Robertshaw, Jr. – Founding Member (term ends June 30, 2012)

Mr. Robertshaw serves as Chairman of Robertshaw Management, Ltd. He was the former Chairman of Laurel Vending, Inc., a full-line vending and food service company and past co-chairman of Laurel Group Limited, owner of a Pepsi-Cola bottling and various other soda franchises. Robertshaw was the former Vice President & Director of Robertshaw Controls Co. Robertshaw received a B.S.A.I. from Yale University. He serves on many boards, including Excelsa Health, First Commonwealth, Greensburg Community Development Corporation, The Westmoreland Trust, University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg, and Diocese of Greensburg. He and his wife, Anne, have five children.

John A. Skiavo – Founding Member (term ends June 30, 2012)

Mr. Skiavo is the President/CEO of the Economic Growth Connection of Westmoreland County. Skiavo is a graduate of Hempfield High School in Westmoreland County and Bucknell University, where he received a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in Economics. Following a teaching and coaching career, Skiavo served as a Township Supervisor and Secretary for Hempfield Township. In 1986 Skiavo assumed the president's position for the Central Westmoreland Chamber of Commerce and Central Westmoreland Development Corporation. Following that job, he was hired as President and CEO of Johnstown Area Regional Industries (JARI). Skiavo has served as president of the Pennsylvania Economic Development Association, a statewide association of economic development professionals. In 1996, Skiavo was honored by PEDAs and received the outstanding Economic Development Professional of the year award. Skiavo currently serves on the Board of Directors for several professional and community organizations.

Michael A. Walsh – Founding Member (term ends June 30, 2011)

Mr. Walsh currently serves as Deputy Secretary for Administration for the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Prior to this position, Walsh served as Director of Administration at the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board. Before joining the Gaming Board, he was a Special Assistant to Governor Rendell, and also served as the Executive Assistant to then-Secretary of Administration Robert Barnett. Walsh formerly served as Director of Policy and Communications for then-Senator Allen Kukovich. He received the partnership's Distinguished Service Award in 2003. Walsh holds a Master of Public Management degree from the H. John Heinz III School of Public Policy and Management at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh and a B.S. in Political Science from St. Vincent College in Latrobe. He lives in Harrisburg.

Past Members

Scott D. Izzo – Served from 2007 – 2009. He is currently the Director of the Richard King Mellon Foundation.

Gene Zurawsky – Served from 2007 – 2009. He is currently the Vice President and In-House Counsel for Jennmar Corporation.

Dr. Frank A. Cassell – Served from 2000 to 2007. He is retired after serving as President of the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg for ten years.

William Mitchell, II – Served from 2000 – 2007. He is retired from Westmoreland County's Office of Planning & Development.

Linda McKenna Boxx – Served from 2000 – 2006. She is currently the Chairman of the Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation.

Ronald A. Magnuson – Served from 2000 – 2006. He is currently the Director of Administration for the University of Pittsburgh.