

**HIGH COUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
JULY 15, 2019
MINUTES**

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments met July 15, 2019, 7:00pm, at the High Country Council of Governments Office in Boone. The following members were present at the meeting: Charles E. Vines, Brenda Lyerly, Robert L. Johnson, Gary D. Blevins, Todd McNeill, Dale Baldwin, Reneé Castiglione, Theresa Coletta, Dennis Aldridge, Jesse Smith, Mark Evans, Chris Jones, Sandra Simmons, Jim Blevins, Rennie Brantz, Larry Fontaine, Larry Turnbow, Paul Robinson Jr., Valerie Jaynes, and Johnny Riddle. The following staff and guests were present at the meeting: Chris Wall, Angie Chandler, Millie Barbie, Julie Wiggins, Jeff Hedrick, Phil Trew, Keith Deveraux, Julie Page and Victoria Potter.

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

Chairman Riddle welcomed and thanked everyone for attending and called on Robert L. Johnson to lead the invocation. Chairman Riddle then led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

Robert L. Johnson made a motion to approve the Executive Board minutes for June 17, 2019. Charles E. Vines seconded the motion. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Financial Highlights

Chairman Riddle called on Finance Officer, Julie Page to give a report on the Financial Highlights as of June 30, 2019 (Attachment A). Mrs. Page explained that her current priorities are preparing for the audit in August and fulfilling their requests for information, looking at investment options, getting the FY2020 Budget entered to gain appropriate comparisons for each department, etc. Chairman Riddle noted that the Advisory Committee gave their recommendation for approving the current Financial Highlights. Rennie Brantz made a motion to approve the Financial Highlights. Chris Jones seconded the motion. Motion carried.

BLUE RIDGE NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA PRESENTATION

Angie Chandler, BRNHA Executive Director shared some overview information (Attachments B & C) about the organization and mentioned that the area includes 25 western NC counties and is one of the largest in the country. BRNHA was reauthorized in 2018, aced their National Park Service Evaluation in 2017, and have awarded 173 grants to over one hundred organizations equaling 7.9 million dollars over the past 15 years. Blue Ridge Craft Trails is a new project of BRNHA and began 2 years ago, there are several key partners and sponsors to fulfill the goals of this project. The main goal is to connect visitors to makers and key places in the region using website and online/social marketing. Another project, Doughton Park on the Blue Ridge Parkway is still a working progress, funds are being raised to complete the project. Millie Barbie, BRNHA Board member was in attendance and encouraged the board to tell everyone about and encourage legislatures to keep moving forward/support Doughton Park.

POLICY/LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Chris Wall, Principal for the Policy Group explained that Raleigh is a little crazy right now due to the budget being vetoed by the Governor. Now it's a waiting game to see which party wins the Public Relations battle. Mr. Wall anticipates they will have a budget by September. Mr. Wall mentioned that The Policy Group has had some wins, has kept some items from being passed, and still have a few items tied up in the budget. They helped garner support for the Viable Utility Fund to have more resources for water infrastructure and planning, they are working on the broadband initiative and are always keeping an eye out for anything that needs lobbying.

WORKFORCE UPDATES

Mr. Deveraux presented the current unemployment rates for each of our seven counties and mentioned that the High Country WDB is working in partnership with Project Lazarus of Wilkes for a Rural Initiative Grant. This grant would help facilitate trainings/preparation for employment, combined with rehabilitation and recovery steps for opioid users. Mr. Deveraux also commented that it is the one year anniversary for Finish Line Grants and that the program continues to grow in the High Country and has had good numbers of completed trainings resulting in credentials to assist in entering employment.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Ms. Wiggins explained that the proposed policy changes were sent out to the board last month to review. The primary change is to catch up the maximum accrued paid leave policy, making it consistent with comparable entities. Charles E. Vines made a motion to approve the proposed changes to Policies and Procedures. Robert L. Johnson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

REPORT FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

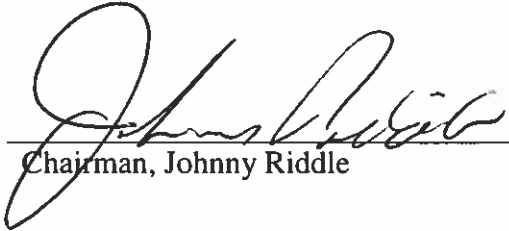
Ms. Wiggins announced that the 45th Annual Banquet will be held at Linville Ridge on Friday, September 6, 2019. She explained that we are currently soliciting sponsorships for the banquet as well and encouraged board members to let her know if there was an organization she should reach out to. Ms. Wiggins recapped that there were funds set aside in the FY2020 Budget for website and logo redesign and that she and Victoria Potter, Communications and Marketing Manager have been gathering proposals from several local businesses. The process is ongoing, but Ms. Wiggins will keep the board updated moving forward. Ms. Wiggins also mentioned that at the Advisory Committee Retreat they discussed updating the Strategic Plan. It was proposed that the full board engage in a work session around the strategic plan at a regular board meeting in either October or November. Ms. Wiggins will send the current Strategic Plan to the full board for review. Ms. Wiggins mentioned that she and department heads will be meeting with representatives from Senator Tillis' office this Friday at the COG. Ms. Wiggins announced upcoming events including the Homegrown Leaders Training in Wilkes and the ARC Summit in Asheville, both to be held this September. More information will be included in our weekly newsletters.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Chairman Riddle thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no other comments or business, Robert L. Johnson made a motion to adjourn. Larry Turnbow seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:11 pm.



Chairman, Johnny Riddle



Clerk to the Board, Victoria Potter

Date 8/19/19