

**HIGH COUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
DECEMBER 16, 2019
MINUTES**

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments met December 16, 2019, 7:00pm, at the High Country Council of Governments Office in Boone. The following members were present at the meeting: Charles E. Vines, Robert L. Johnson, Brenda Lyerly, Gary D. Blevins, Todd McNeill, Tom Hartman, Kelly Melang, Doug Matheson, Theresa Coletta, Dennis Aldridge, Joel Whitley, Eddie Yarber, Mark Evans, Wes Brinegar, Rocky Buchanan, Sandra Simmons, Jim Blevins, Andrew Soots, Paul Robinson, Jr., Valerie Jaynes, and Johnny Riddle. The following staff and guests were present at the meeting: Alan Thompson, Darla Harding, Julie Wiggins, Jeff Hedrick, Phil Trew, Nicole Hiegl, Keith Deveraux, Julie Page, and Victoria Potter.

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

Chairman Riddle welcomed and thanked everyone for attending and called on Charles E. Vines to lead the invocation. Chairman Riddle then led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

RECOGNITION OF OUTGOING/INCOMING MEMBERS

Chairman Riddle recognized and welcomed new Executive Board Members including: Council Member Kelly Melang (replacing Renee Castiglione) from the Town of Beech Mountain, Mayor Eddie Yarber (replacing Jesse Smith) from the Town of Crossnore, Mayor Wes Brinegar (replacing Chris Jones) from the Town of Sparta, Council Member Rocky Buchanan (replacing Darla Harding) from the Town of Spruce Pine, Mayor Tom Hartman (replacing Dale Baldwin) from the Town of West Jefferson, and Council Member Andrew Soots (replacing Russell Ferree) from the Town of Wilkesboro.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

Robert L. Johnson made a motion to approve the Executive Board minutes for November 18, 2019. Charles E. Vines seconded the motion. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Financial Highlights

Chairman Riddle called on Finance Officer, Julie Page, to present the financial highlights as of November 30, 2019 (Attachment A). Mrs. Page gave updates on current balances and projects she is focusing on including updates to SmartFusion, preparation for W-2s and 1099s, and training in accounts payable and payroll. Charles E. Vines made a motion to approve the financial highlights. Paul Robinson, Jr. seconded the motion. Motion carried.

AUDIT PRESENTATION

Alan Thompson from Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams & Co. P.A. presented a summary of the audit for year ended June 30, 2019 (Attachment B). Mr. Thompson explained that there were no significant findings other than a legacy finding regarding account reconciliations that had now been resolved. Mr. Thompson noted the importance of program compliance in COG audits and programmatically, the HCCOG was in compliance. Mr. Thompson and other board members commended Mrs. Page on her hard work and timely efforts this year. Chairman Riddle thanked Mr. Thompson for his work and presentation.

AREA AGENCY ON AGING UPDATES

Nicole Hiegl, Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Director gave a quick overview of department programs, preventative services, steady funding and statistics from the current annual report. Mrs. Hiegl stated that the amount of revenues received for AAA compared to the 60,000 residents ages 60+ in our 7 counties averages roughly \$46 per person. Mrs. Hiegl also mentioned that the AAA will be working on their four year plan in Spring 2020 and that they still have surveys if anyone is interested in participating.

PLANNING UPDATES

Phil Trew, Planning and Development Director reviewed recent grants and awards in the region. Sparta received the PARTF Award for Crouse Park, Mayland Community College is in the final round of consideration for an ARC grant for updates to their welding facility, as is the Towem of Boone for Howard Street restoration in downtown, and Crossnore for water and sewer updates. Mr. Trew also mentioned the 205j grant program for water quality improvement. Mr. Trew notes if any of the region is interested in this program, HCCOG planning department can do storm water mapping and more to help with the application process.

WORKFORCE UPDATES

Keith Deveraux, Workforce Development Board (WDB) Director reviewed his top five workforce updates (Attachment C) and listed the unemployment rates for each county. Mr. Deveraux explained that the true barriers to unemployment include criminal records, substance abuse, and job experience. That's where NCWorks Career Centers come into play, to help with resume building, and job training. Mr. Deveraux was happy to announce that the High Country WDB recently received the Partnership Award from Goodwill Industries of Northwest NC. Mr. Deveraux mentioned that they will be releasing an RFP for contracted workforce services as they are required to bid these services out every three years by the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act. Mr. Deveraux directed board members to the Ready, Set, Engage handout (Attachment D) as it gives an overview of the goals and strategic plan of the NC Association of Workforce Development Boards. Mr. Deveraux also pointed out the myFutureNC handout (Attachment E) as High Country WDB signed on to help facilitate these future goals.

REPORT FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director echoed Chairman Riddle's welcome to the new board members. Ms. Wiggins directed board members to view the Fiscal Year 2019 Annual Report (Attachment F). Ms. Wiggins updated the board on our recent strategic planning session in November and hopes to have a draft of the updated plan in early 2020. Ms. Wiggins mentioned that she and Phil Trew had a meeting scheduled with Senator Ballard on Thursday, December 19th and that Ms. Wiggins/all department heads would be meeting with Senator Daniel later that day as well. Ms. Wiggins will have more information to come about a legislative luncheon in February 2020. Ms. Wiggins mentioned the recent NCARCOG Forum she and Gary D. Blevins attended in Winston

Salem and how beneficial those have been. Ms. Wiggins also mentioned the Dogwood Health Trust Immediate Needs Grant available to government and non-profit entities in Avery, Mitchell and Yancey counties. Lastly, Ms. Wiggins directed everyone to their giftbags as a small token of appreciation and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

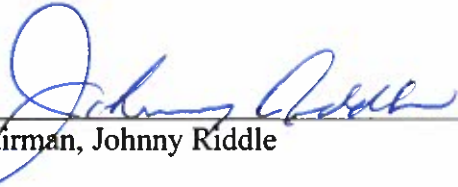
Robert L. Johnson expressed thanks and wished everyone a Merry Christmas from Dale Baldwin. Gary D. Blevins wished everyone a Merry Christmas and commented on how well the new logo looks on everything and how well put together the website is and mentioned that the website includes a lot of great information including the CEDS report. Dennis Aldridge commented on how much he enjoys the HCCOG weekly bulletin and information displayed in that publication. Todd McNeill thanked Phil Trew for the help with Ashe County's five year plan recently. Mark Evans mentioned that this was likely his last meeting, as a new Commissioner Chair has been selected in Alleghany county. Mr. Evans thanked everyone and has enjoyed his time serving on the board. Andrew Soots said that he is looking forward to working on this board and is willing to help in anyway.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Chairman Riddle thanked everyone for being here and for the service and knowledge they bring to the table. February 2020 will be Chairman Riddle's last meeting as chair and he has selected a Nominating Committee (Joel Whitley, Larry Fontaine and Rennie Brantz) that will work with Julie Wiggins to have a slate of officers to vote on at the February 2020 board meeting. Chairman Riddle also commented on how much he loves the new logo and is always impressed by the helpfulness of the HCCOG staff.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no other comments or business, Gary D. Blevins made a motion to adjourn. Robert L. Johnson seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:07 pm.



 Chairman, Johnny Riddle



 Clerk to the Board, Victoria Potter

Date 2-17-2020