

**HIGH COUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
JUNE 15, 2020
MINUTES**

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments met June 15, 2020, 7:00pm, virtually via Zoom. The following members were present at the meeting: Charles E. Vines, Robert L. Johnson, Brenda Lyerly, Gary D. Blevins, Johnny Riddle, Todd McNeill, Andrew Soots, Doug Matheson, Dennis Aldridge, Rocky Buchanan, Tom Hartman, Jim Blevins, Rennie Brantz, Larry Fontaine, and Valerie Jaynes. All board members maintained connection throughout the entire meeting. The following staff and guests were present at the meeting: Julie Wiggins, Jeff Hedrick, Phil Trew, Keith Deveraux, Nicole Hiegl, Julie Page and Victoria Potter.

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

Chairwoman Jaynes welcomed everyone to the Zoom meeting and called roll. Chairwoman Jaynes called on Dennis Aldridge to lead the invocation. Chairwoman Jaynes then led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

Johnny Riddle made a motion to approve the Executive Board minutes for May 18, 2020. Robert L. Johnson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Financial Highlights

Finance Officer, Julie Page presented the Financial Highlights as of May 31, 2020 (Attachment A) and explained that while we are still maintaining our minimum 16% fund balance, per the Minimum Fund Balance resolution adopted in May 2017 (Attachment A1), we risk running below that policy in FY2021 due to increased budget. The board discussed the possibility of amending the resolution to require a minimum of 16% based on an average of 5 budget years. (Attachment A2) Mrs. Page stated she would check with the auditor to ensure this would meet their needs and prevent a potential audit finding.

Dennis Aldridge made a motion to approve Financial Highlights as of May 31, 2020. Larry Fontaine seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Budget Amendment #7

Mrs. Page also discussed Budget Amendment #7 (Attachment A3) which is an addition of an in-kind match of \$4,528.00 in Area Agency on Aging and \$69,000.00 of EDA funding into Planning and Development. The EDA funds will be drawn down early from a three-year grant in anticipation of a new grant for the next two fiscal years and to avoid appropriating fund balance. Budget Amendment #7 increases the FY2020 budget by \$73,528.00.

Charles E. Vines made a motion to approve Budget Amendment #7. Brenda Lyerly seconded the motion. Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARING TO ALLOW CITIZEN COMMENT ON THE FY2021 PROPOSED BUDGET

Executive Director, Julie Wiggins asked if there were any public comments submitted via email, posted on YouTube live stream or from anyone present at the meeting. Clerk to the Board, Victoria Potter checked all of the above and there were no public comments.

AREA AGENCY ON AGING UPDATES

Nicole Hiegl, Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Director noted that June 15, 2020 is recognized as World Elder Abuse Prevention and Awareness Day and the month of June is Vulnerable Adult and Elder Abuse Awareness Month for the state of North Carolina. (Attachment B) Mrs. Hiegl explained that Long-term Care Ombudsman, Stevie John has been distributing activity books and ombudsman outreach to residents in regional long-term care facilities. AAA is also co-hosting a free webinar on Thursday, June 18, 2020 to create a dialogue and coalition to address elder abuse awareness in the region. Mrs. Hiegl also discussed budgetary changes and new funding due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Attachment B). Lastly, Mrs. Hiegl discussed the High Country Area Aging 2020-2024 Plan (Attachment B2). This work plan will be reevaluated each year and updated as needed. Mrs. Hiegl discussed the process and the top four goals for the AAA plan which will be sent to the state for approval.

WORKFORCE UPDATES

Keith Deveraux, Workforce Development Board (WDB) Director presented his report (Attachment C) and compared the unemployment rates for our region: 11.2%, versus North Carolina: 12.5% and the United States: 14.4%. Mr. Deveraux also presented the unemployment rate for each county in our region. Mr. Deveraux explained that workforce services are still being provided remotely and virtually at NCWorks Career Centers, and that their team is developing a plan for safely reopening the NCWorks Career Centers in the region. Mr. Deveraux announced that WDB received a National Emergency grant (\$175,000.00) for dislocated workers in the High Country. Mr. Deveraux also announced that the US Department of Labor and NC Department of Commerce-Division of Workforce Solutions approved for Rescare to provide workforce services from July 1-September 30, 2020. Starting October 1, 2020, Goodwill of North Western NC will provide workforce services for Alleghany, Ashe, Watauga and Wilkes counties.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

Phil Trew, Planning and Development Director gave an update on Appalachian Regional Commission grant pre-applications. Four local projects got invited for full applications including: West Jefferson's Downtown WiFi Project, Avery County Chamber of Commerce's Broadband Expansion Project, Ashe County Industrial Sites Infrastructure Project and Partnership for Ashe to construct training facility for Preschool teachers. Planning and Development staff helped with

three of the four project pre-applications. Mr. Trew announced that the Planning and Development department recently submitted an application for EDA funding through the CARES Act, no match is required. The grant, if and when awarded, will pay Planning and Development staff to assist local governments, primarily with pandemic recovery efforts. Also, through EDA funding, HCCOG is partnering with Southwestern Commission and Land of Sky Regional Council to complete a region-wide technical assistance project to help businesses that are engaged in outdoor recreation equipment manufacturing that have pivoted toward COVID-19 PPE production. The HCCOG Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) process will begin again this fall with completion by summer 2021. Lastly, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) infrastructure grant applications are due this September. Planning and Development staff are currently working with the Town of Burnsville and the Town of West Jefferson on applications. Gary D. Blevins complimented Planning and Development staff on their work on a previous CDBG project in Wilkes county.

REPORT FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director discussed the FY20 and FY21 budgets. In regard to this fiscal year, HCCOG is working to not use any of the appropriated fund balance. Due to the pandemic, expenses have been reduced significantly. One funding source the Planning department will receive from EDA spans for three years, and we will be able to draw and use some funding for FY20. HCCOG is also anticipating more funding for all three departments due to COVID-19. When final notification comes through, we will amend the proposed budget. Ms. Wiggins briefly discussed key points of the FY21 budget. Ms. Wiggins also announced that HCCOG has begun providing interim clerical services for the Town of Seven Devils. Larry Fontaine thanked Julie and said it is a great addition for a three-person office. Ms. Wiggins reminded everyone that we will be recessing tonight's meeting and reconvening on Thursday June 18th at 6:00 pm, so that we allow at least 24 hours for public comment on the proposed FY21 budget. We must have a quorum and the majority of board members in attendance tonight, also in attendance to approve the budget on Thursday. Ms. Wiggins announced that the Advisory Committee discussed asking Linville Ridge about a deadline for cancelling the Annual Banquet due to COVID-19 and then bringing back more information to the full board at a later date. Lastly, the Advisory Committee has discussed starting to convene in person, with social distancing and Zooming together for the July Executive Board meeting. We will be monitoring the trends and hope to move back toward normalcy soon and safely.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Larry Fontaine thanked Victoria Potter for all of her technical assistance and for keeping everyone up to date.

RECESS

As there were no other comments or business, Robert L. Johnson made a motion to recess until Thursday, June 18th at 6:00 pm. Todd McNeill seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting recessed at 8:05 pm.

RECONVENING

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments reconvened on June 18, 2020, 6:00pm, virtually via Zoom. The following members were present at the meeting: Robert L. Johnson, Brenda Lyerly, Gary D. Blevins, Johnny Riddle, Todd McNeill, Andrew Soots, Kelly Melang, Doug Matheson, Dennis Aldridge, Bill Osborne, Rocky Buchanan, Tom Hartman, Jim Blevins, Larry Fontaine, and Valerie Jaynes. All board members maintained connection throughout the entire meeting. The following staff and guests were present at the meeting: Julie Wiggins, Jeff Hedrick, Julie Page and Victoria Potter.

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

Chairwoman Jaynes welcomed everyone to the Zoom meeting. Chairwoman Jaynes called on Dennis Aldridge to lead the invocation. Chairwoman Jaynes then led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADOPTION OF THE FY2021 BUDGET ORDINANCE

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director reported that HCCOG had received no public comments over the more than 24-hour period following the public hearing. As there were no further questions or public comments Doug Matheson made a motion to adopt the FY2021 budget ordinance. Kelly Melang seconded the motion. Motion carried.

OTHER BUSINESS

Executive Director, Julie Wiggins reported that Linville Ridge has cancelled all of their outside organization events for the remainder of the year. Brenda Lyerly asked if we may be interested in a less formal event with fewer people in attendance. Chairwoman Jaynes mentioned a location in Newland that might be worth checking into. Kelly Melang suggested we postpone the Annual Banquet and wait until Governor Cooper announces restrictions moving into Phase 3 of reopening. Board members agreed with that suggestion. Gary D. Blevins suggested we communicate with Linville Ridge that we want to preserve our slot for 2021. Ms. Wiggins will work with Victoria Potter and gather more information before the July Executive Board meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no other comments or business, Robert L. Johnson made a motion to adjourn. Kelly Melang seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:33 pm.

**HIGH COUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
SPECIAL EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
JUNE 30, 2020
MINUTES**

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments met June 30, 2020, 6:00pm, virtually via Zoom. The following members were present at the meeting: Charles E. Vines, Brenda Lyerly, Gary D. Blevins, Johnny Riddle, Todd McNeill, Andrew Soots, Kelly Melang, Doug Matheson, Theresa Coletta, Dennis Aldridge, Eddie Yarber, Rocky Buchanan, Tom Hartman, Jim Blevins, Rennie Brantz, Larry Fontaine, Larry Turnbow, and Valerie Jaynes. All board members maintained connection throughout the entire meeting. The following staff and guests were present at the meeting: Julie Wiggins, Julie Page and Victoria Potter.

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

Chairwoman Jaynes welcomed everyone to the Zoom meeting and called roll. Chairwoman Jaynes called on Dennis Aldridge to lead the invocation. Chairwoman Jaynes then led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADOPTION OF THE FY2021 BUDGET ORDINANCE

Executive Director, Julie Wiggins thanked everyone for their willingness and flexibility to join the meeting so quickly. Ms. Wiggins explained that the Charter and Bylaws define our quorum differently. According to the Charter, 17 members present defines a quorum. Ms. Wiggins will be working with an attorney and the clerk to get the quorum definition sorted out. As there were still no public comments or further discussion Theresa Coletta made a motion to adopt the FY2021 Budget (Attachment E). Kelly Melang seconded the motion. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no other comments or business, Charles E. Vines made a motion to adjourn. Kelly Melang seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:14 pm.

Chairwoman, Valerie Jaynes

Clerk to the Board, Victoria Potter

Date 07-20-20