

**HIGH COUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
OCTOBER 19, 2020
MINUTES**

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments met October 19, 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, Kelly Melang, Doug Matheson, Theresa Coletta, Dennis Aldridge, Bill Osborne, Wes Brinegar, Rocky Buchanan, Tom Hartman, Rennie Brantz, Paul Robinson Jr., and Valerie Jaynes. The following staff and guests were present at the meeting: Julie Wiggins, Jeff Hedrick, Nicole Hiegl, Keith Deveraux, Phil Trew, Julie Page and Victoria Potter.

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

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

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

Todd McNeill made a motion to approve the September 21, 2020 Executive Board minutes. Robert L. Johnson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Financial Highlights

Finance Officer, Julie Page presented the Financial Highlights (Attachment A) as of September 30, 2020. Mrs. Page discussed the highlights, revenues and expenses. Mrs. Page also mentioned that the audit on-site date is still unconfirmed and that through the new program, iSolved, she is adding the benefits module and going with paperless W2s.

Charles E. Vines made a motion to approve Financial Highlights as of September 21, 2020. Rennie Brantz seconded the motion. Motion carried.

AREA AGENCY ON AGING UPDATES

Nicole Hiegl, Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Director discussed their newest employee, Sarah Price who was hired through the CARES Act Funding which is available through September 2021. Sarah will be assisting Amber Chapman with expanding the Family Caregiver Support Program and tracking/maintaining the CARES spending and projects. Mrs. Hiegl also mentioned that the AAA would like to create programs for kinship caregiving that would be sustainable even after the CARES funding is gone. As of next Friday, regional Ombudsmen are able to re-enter Long-term Care Facilities. This visitation, when necessary is very important and will be done safely. Some area providers in the region are beginning to open, others are still providing services virtually/remotely. The big concern is still continued isolation for our older adults during this pandemic.

WORKFORCE UPDATES

Keith Deveraux, Workforce Development Board (WDB) Director presented his report on unemployment rates for each county in the region (Attachment B). Mr. Deveraux also reviewed unemployment rates for North Carolina and the United States. Unemployment rates in our region

continue to go down. Mr. Deveraux reminded everyone that Goodwill Industries of the NW is the new WIOA provider for Alleghany, Ashe, Watauga and Wilkes counties. Staff has been hired and are currently undergoing training. They have also hired a new Case Manager for Ashe county. Workforce Services are being provided at the NCWorks Career Centers by appointment, but also taking walk-ins on case by case basis to meet all needs. Mayland Community College provides WIOA in Avery, Mitchell and Yancey counties. Mr. Deveraux also briefly discussed the Labor Market Overview and DES Program updates. Andy Soots asked where jobs are currently being created. Mr. Deveraux explained that most employers have jobs available but are having a hard time filling those jobs. Mr. Deveraux listed several regional organizations listed on the Labor Market Overview that have been hiring in the last 90 days. Mr. Deveraux also explained that after 12 weeks, unemployment benefits drop off, unless the additional federal unemployment grant is extended. After 12 weeks if someone does not find employment, the state of North Carolina does not count them in the total unemployment. Mr. Soots also asked about the food industry, Mr. Deveraux said he is still hearing that workers are not coming back. The jobs are there but people are still worried to go back to work during COVID-19. Some jobs have also changed, so there will be additional training needed.

REPORT FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director discussed the recent amendment to the Charter and that Chairwoman Jaynes has appointed a Charter review committee comprised of, Dennis Aldridge, Larry Fontaine, Valerie Jaynes, Robert L. Johnson, Johnny Riddle, and Charles E. Vines. Jeff Hedrick and Julie Wiggins will facilitate the upcoming review committee meeting on November 5, 2020. Ms. Wiggins also discussed the NC State COG Forum that is comprised of one member from each COG. Gary D. Blevins has served on the forum but is rolling off this December. Chairwoman Jaynes has appointed Todd McNeill as the High Country COG delegate and Dennis Aldridge as an alternate delegate. The meetings have been held virtually since COVID-19. From the recent Forum meeting, Ms. Wiggins mentioned a project that Phil Trew's staff is collaborating on with Land of Sky Regional Council and Southwestern Commission. This project is in the running for EDA funding. The specific topic is around Outdoor Economy Asset Mapping. There is an ongoing conversation around legislative priorities and one hot topic is broadband. There is also advocacy for the COG to deliver services.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no other comments or business, Robert L. Johnson made a motion to adjourn. Wes Brinegar seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:41 pm.

Chairwoman, Valerie Jaynes

Clerk to the Board, Victoria Potter

Date 11-16-20