

**HIGH COUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
DECEMBER 21, 2020
MINUTES**

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments met December 21, 2020, 7:00pm, virtually via Zoom. The following members were present at the meeting: Charles E. Vines, Robert L. Johnson, Brenda Lyerly, Johnny Riddle, Andrew Soots, Todd McNeill, Doug Matheson, Bill Osborne, Wes Brinegar, Rocky Buchanan, Jim Blevins, Tom Hartman, Rennie Brantz, Larry Fontaine, Paul Robinson Jr., and Valerie Jaynes. The following staff and guests were present at the meeting: Chris Wall, Gary D. Blevins, Julie Wiggins, Jeff Hedrick, 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 Robert L. Johnson to lead the invocation. Chairwoman Jaynes then led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

Robert L. Johnson made a motion to approve the November 16, 2020 Executive Board minutes. Paul Robinson Jr. seconded the motion. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Financial Highlights

Finance Officer, Julie Page presented the Financial Highlights (Attachment A) as of November 30, 2020. Mrs. Page discussed the highlights, revenues, expenses, and the year-to-date comparison. Mrs. Page also mentioned that the audit is progressing and will be completed by January 31, 2021 and hope to present it to the Executive Board in February 2021. Mrs. Page is also implementing the benefits module in iSolved/HR application program.

Charles E. Vines made a motion to approve Financial Highlights as of November 30, 2020. Rennie Brantz seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Finance Officer, Julie Page also presented Budget Amendment #3 (Attachment A1) which is additional funding to the Area Agency on Aging department for falls prevention and a new grant through Dogwood Health Trust. Budget Amendment #3 is also additional funding for the Workforce Development department for the Finish Line Grant. Budget Amendment #3 is a \$88,512 increase to the HCCOG budget, totaling \$7,819,880.00.

Robert L. Johnson made a motion to approve Budget Amendment #3. Johnny Riddle seconded the motion. Motion carried.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Chris Wall, Principal for EQV Strategic discussed that the US House of Representatives will be voting on an end of year spending package and a fourth COVID-19 relief package tonight (December 21, 2020) and gave a summary (Attachment B) of the provisions included in the package. Mr. Wall mentioned that there is not any state or local funding included in the bill. Direct payments to localities are not included in this bill, like they were in the CARES Act. This bill provides more funds, extends payment protection program, extends unemployment insurance and

adds an additional \$300.00 a week for unemployment from the government, it provides new programs for small businesses, rental/utility assistance, loan programs, SNAP provisions, funds for farmers, and additional broadband funds. This bill extends the CARES Act deadline to December 31, 2021 so we do not have to give back broadband funds from the CARES Act. Mr. Wall also mentioned COVID-19 cases surging in the state and that Governor Cooper will have to decide about another lockdown soon to prevent hospital overload. Lastly, Mr. Wall mentioned that there should not be any new sessions for the General Assembly due to this new bill and that Congress has already started discussing the fifth COVID-19 relief package. There are 18 new faces coming into the General Assembly in 2021. Mr. Wall wants to make sure the importance of the COGs is known.

WORKFORCE UPDATES

Keith Deveraux, Workforce Development Board (WDB) Director presented his top three Workforce updates report (Attachment C). Mr. Deveraux reviewed unemployment rates as of October 21, 2020 for each county, the region, North Carolina, and the United States. Mr. Deveraux also briefly reviewed the labor market overview and unemployment insurance claims. Mr. Deveraux mentioned that NC Commerce Secretary, Anthony M. Copeland is resigning to return to the private sector effective January 2021. Mr. Deveraux also notified the board that Lynda Greene, WDB Finance and Compliance Specialist will be leaving full-time employment effective December 31, 2020. The job posting is out and the search is underway. Ms. Greene will help train the new hire and will keep WIOA finances/reports in compliance in the meantime.

HCCOG RESOLUTION TO APPLY

Phil Trew, Planning and Development Director presented the Resolution to Apply for Water Resources Development Grant (Attachment D). Mr. Trew apologized for the short notice on this resolution and reminded the board that it had been sent out via email a week ago for review. HCCOG has worked as a sponsor for New River Conservancy before and will execute a memorandum of understanding for New River Conservancy to specify obligations of the application. Charles E. Vines made a motion to approve the resolution. Johnny Riddle seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Mr. Trew also gave a brief overview of recent grants received that HCCOG Planning Department worked on for local governments.

CONSIDERATION OF AMENDMENTS TO HCCOG BYLAWS AND CHARTER

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director presented the Bylaws (Attachment E) and Charter (Attachment F) as red-lined documents with proposed amendments. Ms. Wiggins mentioned that she had sent these documents out after the November board meeting for review. Most of the changes are just making the language more consistent and up to date. Since the proposed amendments were sent out, Paul Robinson Jr. and Ms. Wiggins spoke about the proposed changes to the minority

representation on the board. Mr. Robinson recommends that we stick with the original language because changes would have to be reviewed and approved by our federal funders. Mr. Robinson said that it has worked well as written and doing otherwise might be opening a can of worms. Johnny Riddle made a motion to approve the amendments to the Bylaws, except for the minority representation section and to approve the amendments to the Charter, except for the minority representation section and to forward the amendments to the Charter on to local governments for approval. Andy Soots seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Ms. Wiggins plan is to email the original Charter and the redlined version to the Chair or Mayor, or HCCOG Board member in care of the clerk and the manager on the week of January 4, 2021. Ms. Wiggins is also happy to attend board meetings to address the changes if needed. Mr. Riddle also suggested all our HCCOG board members mention and explain this to their boards as well.

REPORT FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director mentioned some recent press coverage for Area Agency on Aging programs. They were able to purchase robotic pets for local long term care facilities to help combat loneliness during the pandemic. Ms. Wiggins also gave an update on our Strategic Plan; she has reached out to Darren Rhodes with Commerce and has been working with him on drafts, more to come on that soon. Lastly, Ms. Wiggins thanked everyone for their patience this year. Ms. Wiggins wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Andy Soots thanked the board for taking him in and has enjoyed being a part this year, he also wished everyone a Merry Christmas. Johnny Riddle thanked HCCOG staff for the Christmas giftbags and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Other board members thanked HCCOG staff for the gift bags and wished Happy Holidays to everyone. Mr. Riddle also thanked Chairwoman Jaynes for her work as Chair during this difficult year.

CHAIRWOMAN'S COMMENTS

Chairwoman Jaynes wished everyone a safe and happy holiday season.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no other comments or business, Robert L. Johnson made a motion to adjourn. Johnny Riddle seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:12 pm.

Chairwoman, Valerie Jaynes

Clerk to the Board, Victoria Potter

Date 2-15-2021