

**HIGH COUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
FEBRUARY 15, 2021
MINUTES**

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments met February 15, 2021, 7:00pm, virtually via Zoom. The following members were present at the meeting: Robert L. Johnson, Brenda Lyerly, Eddie Settle, Johnny Riddle, Andrew Soots, Todd McNeill, Kelly Melang, Doug Matheson, Dennis Aldridge, Bill Osborne, Wes Brinegar, Kevin Reece, Rocky Buchanan, Tom Hartman, Rennie Brantz, Larry Fontaine, and Valerie Jaynes. The following staff and guests were present at the meeting: Alan Thompson, Julie Wiggins, Jeff Hedrick, Keith Deveraux, Phil Trew, Nicole Hiegl, Julie Page, Caroline Briggs 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.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

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

REPORT FROM THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Chairwoman Jaynes called on Larry Fontaine to present the slate of officers recommended by the nominating committee. Mr. Fontaine announced that after discussion with Charles E. Vines and Brenda Lyerly that the committee would like to nominate the same slate of officers from 2020 including: Valerie Jaynes - Chair, Todd McNeill - Vice Chair, Doug Matheson - Secretary, and Dennis Aldridge - Treasurer. Mr. Fontaine thanked the officers for their service. Brenda Lyerly made a motion to approve the nominated slate of officers for 2021. Kelly Melang seconded the motion. Motion carried.

RECOGNITION OF INCOMING MEMBERS

Chairwoman Jaynes welcomed and introduced two new board members. Kevin Reece, Commissioner from the Town of Ronda and Eddie Settle, Chair of Wilkes County Board of Commissioners.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Financial Highlights

Finance Officer, Julie Page presented the Financial Highlights (Attachment A) and reviewed revenues versus expenditures. Mrs. Page mentioned that this year is the highest unassigned fund balance HCCOG has had in years. Mrs. Page also mentioned that because the budget has gone up so much this year, the unassigned fund balance may go below 16%, but a resolution is in place for a corrective action plan if needed. Mrs. Page announced that the audit is complete with no findings. Mrs. Page and the finance team have also completed W-2s and 1099s and are working to integrate our timesheets into the iSolved payroll system.

Johnny Riddle made a motion to approve Financial Highlights as of January 31, 2021. Robert L. Johnson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

HCCOG AUDIT PRESENTATION

Alan Thompson from TPSA CPAs presented the HCCOG Audit Results Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2020 (Attachment B). Mr. Thompson echoed Mrs. Page's comment that there were no findings and have issued a "clean report." There were no problems with compliance in any programs, which speaks well of HCCOG Finance and management staff. Mr. Thompson reviewed highlights and graphs from the report.

WORKFORCE UPDATES

Keith Deveraux, Workforce Development Board (WDB) Director presented his Workforce updates report (Attachment C). Mr. Deveraux reviewed unemployment rates as of October 2020 for each county, the region, North Carolina, and the United States. Mr. Deveraux introduced Caroline Briggs, the new Financial and Compliance Specialist for the High Country Workforce Development Board. Mrs. Briggs thanked Mr. Deveraux for the introduction and thanked the HCCOG Executive Board and staff for their warm welcome. Mr. Deveraux also announced that Governor Cooper has appointed Machel Sanders as the new Secretary for the NC Department of Commerce. Also, Jessica Englert who is the current Assistant Secretary for the Division of Workforce Solutions has resigned and will be moving back to Governor Cooper's administration as a Policy Director and Analyst. Mr. Deveraux also briefly reviewed the labor market overview and unemployment insurance claims for December 2020.

AREA AGENCY ON AGING UPDATES

Nicole Hiegl, Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Director discussed a few updates. Mrs. Hiegl discussed the challenge of access to the COVID-19 vaccine for some older adults. The AAA is here to be a resource and connection to help our region's older adults gain access to the vaccine. The supply of the vaccine is still limited but hopefully that will become less of an issue moving forward. Mrs. Hiegl gave kudos to our regional county health departments for their rollout of the vaccine. Dennis Aldridge and Mrs. Hiegl noted that NCDHHS is partnering with county transportation agencies to provide transportation to vaccine sites. Mrs. Hiegl discussed the extra Families First and CARES funding her department has received due to COVID-19 and that they have until September 2021 to spend it. The AAA has been working with the state and with providers to prioritize the spending and increasing reach as much as possible. Mrs. Hiegl discussed a nutrition based funding source that was just approved at the federal level and there will be more information to come on that. The AAA Long-term Care Ombudsman, Stevie John will be giving her annual report in March 2021. Eddie Settle asked about the county transportation funding to help provide transportation to access the vaccine. Mrs. Hiegl shared a link with the information and there was discussion among members about the priority.

RECESS OF HCCOG EXECUTIVE BOARD SESSION AND CONVENING OF REGION D DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION SESSION

Robert L. Johnson made the motion to recess the HCCOG Executive Board session and convene the Region D Development Corporation session. (Attachment D) Kelly Melang seconded the motion. Motion carried.

[Please reference RDCC Minutes for February 15, 2021]

REPORT FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director echoed Chairwoman Jaynes welcome to the new board members and echoed Alan Thompson's compliment to staff on a clean audit. Ms. Wiggins discussed the planning for a second annual Legislative Day. She asked that the Executive Board please hold the following dates: Monday, March 22nd and Monday, March 29th, until we have confirmation on one and will then send a Save the Date. We are anticipating another 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM timeframe in a virtual format. A legislative subcommittee has been established by Chairwoman Jaynes to help finalize the agenda and come up with questions of regional importance to present to the panel. Mrs. Wiggins encouraged everyone to look at the Annual Report (Attachment E), as it is a great snapshot of the impact HCCOG has on our region. Mrs. Wiggins also discussed the return on investment for FY2020. Ms. Wiggins noted that the Advisory Committee has begun to discuss the FY2022 budget which includes the 3-year phased in increase of membership dues (matching dollars). The dues exclusively go to leverage federal grants, primarily in the planning and aging departments. The Advisory Committee supports moving forward with phase two as there was 100% participation in the first phase. The Charter updates that the board recommended have been sent out to member governments and continue to be approved and sent back to us.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Johnny Riddle and Robert L. Johnson thanked Julie Wiggins, Julie Page and all the staff for a clean audit report. Kevin Reece thanked the board for a warm welcome and is honored to serve.

CHAIRWOMAN'S COMMENTS

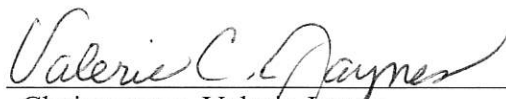
Chairwoman Jaynes was happy to be back together (virtually).

OTHER BUSINESS

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director welcomed Eddie Settle to the HCCOG Advisory Committee.

ADJOURNMENT

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



 Chairwoman, Valerie Jaynes



 Clerk to the Board, Victoria Potter

Date 3-15-21