

**HIGH COUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
OCTOBER 18, 2021
MINUTES**

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG) met October 18, 2021, 7:00pm, at the High Country Council of Governments Office in Boone. The following members were present at the meeting: Charles E. Vines, Brenda Lyerly, Robert L. Johnson, Jeff Whitson, Andrew Soots, Bill Osborne, Dennis Aldridge, Doug Matheson, Kevin Reece, Tom Hartman, Jim Blevins, Rennie Brantz, Paul Robinson Jr., Todd McNeill, and Valerie Jaynes. The following staff and guests were present at the meeting: Julie Wiggins, Julie Page, Jeff Hedrick, Zack Green, Tatiana Magee, Stephanie Blair, Phil Trew, and Victoria Potter. The following guests joined via Zoom: Chris Wall, Carolyn Ward, and Becky Anderson.

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

Chairwoman Jaynes welcomed everyone to the High Country Council of Governments October Executive Board 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

Dennis Aldridge made a motion to approve the August 16, 2021 Executive Board minutes. Robert L. Johnson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Financial Highlights

Finance Officer, Julie Page presented the Financial Highlights as of September 30, 2021 (Attachment A) and reviewed year to date revenues versus expenditures and balances. Mrs. Page noted that we will remain above the 16% unassigned fund balance now and in 2022 also. So far, there have been no issues with the audit and Mrs. Page announced that the FY2021 audit should be presented to the board in November.

Budget Amendment #2

Mrs. Page explained that Budget Amendment #2 (Attachment A1) includes an increase in the Area Agency on Aging due to an increase in LCA Funds. Budget Amendment #2 is also a decrease in the Workforce Development Board allocation.

Charles E. Vines made a motion to approve the Financial Highlights as of September 30, 2021 and Budget Amendment #2. Robert L. Johnson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Chris Wall, Principal for EQVStrategic joined the meeting via Zoom to present updates in the North Carolina General Assembly including budget negotiations, Medicaid expansion discussion with Governor Cooper, and the length of the current session. Mr. Wall mentioned that if the budget is passed there is significant funding for all sixteen COGs in the state to assist with disaster relief and pandemic assistance.

BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY FOUNDATION UPDATE

Carolyn Ward, CEO of the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP) Foundation joined the meeting via Zoom and presented an overview and update of the BRP Foundation (Attachment B). Mrs. Ward noted that the BRP receives more visitors than Yosemite, Yellowstone, and the Grand Canyon combined making it a true economic engine for the region. Becky Anderson, Chair of the New Initiatives Committee also joined the meeting via Zoom to discuss their plan to establish more community involvement and identify key stakeholders within all 29 counties linked by the BRP for the Gateway Community Initiative.

AREA AGENCY ON AGING DIRECTOR INTRODUCTION

Zack Green, Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Director introduced himself to the board and briefly discussed his background. Mr. Green is excited and honored to work with such devoted staff in the AAA department.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Phil Trew, Planning and Development Director discussed new hires and introduced GIS/Regional Planner, Tatiana Magee, and Regional Planner, Drew Plettner who could not attend the meeting. Mr. Trew also reviewed many recent grant awards and projects throughout the region that his Planning and Development team assisted with. Mr. Trew discussed the upcoming HCCOG Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) plan that will be completed early next calendar year and will be presented to the board for consideration. The COG must complete this plan every five years to keep EDA funding and establish eligibility for new projects. High Country Workforce Development Board will serve as the CEDS committee once again.

REPORT FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director discussed a potential resolution to be considered at the November meeting concerning Post-Employment Benefits. The resolution would allow a one-time approval to reimburse in a different fiscal year. The Advisory Committee recommends this draft resolution be considered by the Executive Board at the November meeting. Ms. Wiggins announced that in light of the Annual Banquet being cancelled, there will be a small, outdoor gathering on October 27th at Chetola Resort to present the 2021 awards. The event will be filmed and shared on the HCCOG YouTube Channel. Ms. Wiggins thanked everyone for the great submissions for the October ReCOGnition and thanked Victoria Potter, Communications Manager for putting it together. Ms. Wiggins discussed recent building issues and needs. Ms. Wiggins will work with Julie Page on a Capital Improvement Plan to estimate costs and access needs for the next few years. Ms. Wiggins also echoed the welcome to new employees and discussed future retirements coming up for Finance Technician, Kathy Combs and AAA Caregiver Program Coordinator, Pat Guarnieri.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Todd McNeill and several other board members thanked Phil Trew for he and his team’s great work in the region.

CHAIRWOMAN’S COMMENTS

Chairwoman Jaynes notified the board that the Town of Newland has hired a new Administrator.

OTHER BUSINESS

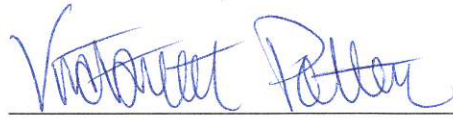
Stephanie Blair, Regional Representative for Senator Thom Tillis was in attendance and discussed a lot going on federally. Ms. Blair covers Alleghany, Ashe, Watauga and Wilkes counties. Ms. Blair also noted that anytime local governments are applying for federal grants to contact her or other Regional Representative, Jordan Barnes who covers Avery, Mitchell and Yancey counties, so that they can get a letter of support from Senator Tillis.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no other comments or business, Robert L. Johnson made a motion to adjourn. Todd McNeill seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm.



Chairwoman, Valerie Jaynes



Clerk to the Board, Victoria Potter

Date 11-15-2021