

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

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG) met November 15, 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, Eddie Settle, Jeff Whitson, Andrew Soots, Kelly Melang, Theresa Coletta, Dennis Aldridge, Doug Matheson, Kevin Reece, Tom Hartman, Larry Fontaine, Paul Robinson Jr., Todd McNeill, and Valerie Jaynes. The following staff and guests were present at the meeting: Julie Wiggins, Julie Page, Jeff Hedrick, Keith Deveraux, Caroline Briggs, Phil Trew, and Victoria Potter. The following guests joined via Zoom: Michael Trew.

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

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

Charles E. Vines made a motion to approve the October 18, 2021 Executive Board minutes. Robert L. Johnson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Financial Highlights

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director introduced Caroline Briggs, Finance Technician who is replacing Kathy Combs as she retires at the end of December with 17 years of service to the COG. Caroline has been training with Kathy for a month and a half and is excited for this opportunity. Finance Officer, Julie Page presented the Financial Highlights as of October 31, 2021 (Attachment A) and reviewed year to date revenues versus expenditures and balances. Mrs. Page announced that the FY2021 audit is complete but needs to be approved by the LGC and should be presented to the board in December. We did meet our resolution to have unassigned fund balance above 16%. The unassigned fund balance was 18.34% for FY2021. For FY2022 if we spend all the unassigned funds, which we usually don't, the unassigned fund balance could go down to 14.33%, but there is a resolution in place if this happens.

Budget Amendment #3

Mrs. Page explained that Budget Amendment #3 (Attachment A1) includes an increase in the Planning and Development department for state funds passing through to New River Conservancy. The Planning and Development department will retain \$6000 for completing this project. Budget Amendment #3 is also an increase in the Area Agency on Aging due to an increase in CARES funding.

Robert L. Johnson made a motion to approve the Financial Highlights as of October 31, 2021 and Budget Amendment #3. Jeff Whitson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

POST-EMPLOYMENT HEALTH BENEFIT POLICY RESOLUTION

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director explained that in 2007 a resolution was passed for Post-Employment Health Benefits. One retiree requested reimbursement several months after the fiscal

year. Ms. Wiggins and Mrs. Page verified with the auditor and it's not an issue to reimburse. Ms. Wiggins also discussed this with Attorney Jeff Hedrick and this is more of a legal concern rather than auditing concern. Ms. Wiggins explained that the draft resolution to reimburse (Attachment B) had been emailed in the meeting packet, but there were a few minor grammatical errors, so an updated copy is at your seat. As a recommendation from the Advisory Committee, Brenda Lyerly made a motion to approve the Post-Employment Health Benefit Policy Resolution. Robert L. Johnson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE SELECTION

Chairwoman Jaynes explained that she lost the mayoral election in the town of Newland and has selected a nominating committee to present a new slate of officers for 2022. Chairwoman Jaynes selected Charles E. Vines, Brenda Lyerly, Eddie Settle, and Tom Hartman to serve on the Nominating Committee.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD UPDATE

Keith Deveraux, Workforce Development Board Director presented an update (Attachment C) and discussed recent job fairs in the region, unemployment rates, On the Job (OTJ) Training opportunities, and the tight labor market/compressed workforce we are currently dealing with. Executive Board member, Kevin Reece commented on what a wonderful program OTJ is and how it has helped the Town of Ronda find a maintenance employee. Mr. Deveraux also discussed an issue arising about possible realignment of Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) in NC. Currently there are 23 WDBs in NC which follow geographical areas and like-minded counties are grouped together. The NC Works Commission is conducting a study to review the current service areas and are comparing them to the eight prosperity zones. A report by the commission is due February 6, 2022. Mr. Deveraux discussed how this issue would affect our region and that we need to make our voices heard to the General Assembly that we want to maintain our WDB and local decision making. Many board members expressed their concern and plans to discuss this issue with others.

HCCOG PROPERTY DRAINAGE REMEDIATION

Michael Trew, PE, Senior Engineer for Municipal Engineering Services Co. P.A. discussed a drainage issue at the back of the COG building that came up after a big rainstorm this summer. Surveyors found that there are elevations higher than the finished floor that is blocking surface runoff. Right now, the water cannot get out, and a good section of the back bank is not vegetated. Municipal Engineering recommends the best option to alleviate this is to reestablish grass line swale and get a good grade to move water away from the building. Mr. Trew and his team have established a plan that can be presented to the Town of Boone for permitting purposes and to contractors for grading bids. Establishing vegetated cover on that back bank is also important, and periwinkle is recommended for best coverage. Mr. Trew and Ms. Wiggins feel that starting this process in early Spring 2022 will be best. Mr. Trew and board members recommend applying for

the permit soon and getting bids out for grading. Ms. Wiggins noted that this does not require board action. Ms. Wiggins intends to cover this expense with existing funds.

REPORT FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director congratulated HCCOG 2021 Award Winners. We were happy to have had great weather and accommodations at the small ceremony at Chetola Resort in October. Ms. Wiggins also discussed staff changes and noted that the Area Agency on Aging has hired a Caregiver Program Coordinator. Pat Guarnieri will be retiring in early December after 5 years of service to the COG. Ms. Wiggins expressed her appreciation and recognized out-going board members: Mayor Valerie Jaynes with 16 years of service, Mayor Robert L. Johnson with 16 years of service, Mayor Theresa Coletta with 8 years of service, and Mayor Rennie Brantz with 6 years of service.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS


Kevin Reece thanked Robert L. Johnson for his service. Robert L. Johnson said it was an honor to serve on this board and thanked everyone. Theresa Coletta said she has enjoyed serving on the board. Andrew Soots announced that he would be transitioning off of the board as well, as the Mayor of Wilkesboro will be serving for the next two years, and he enjoyed the camaraderie. Vice-Chairman McNeill recognized Chairwoman Jaynes for her service and presented her with an Outgoing Chair Plaque with great appreciation.

CHAIRWOMAN'S COMMENTS

Chairwoman Jaynes thanked everyone that took her in on this board and helped her grow and learn over the past 16 years. Chairwoman Jaynes said that this board was like her family, and she will truly miss serving with everyone.

ADJOURNMENT

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



Vice-Chairman, Todd McNeill



Clerk to the Board, Victoria Potter

Date 12-20-21