

**HIGH COUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING  
DECEMBER 20, 2021  
MINUTES**

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG) met December 20, 2021, 7:00pm, at the High Country Council of Governments Office in Boone. The following members were present at the meeting: Charles E. Vines, Eddie Settle, Jeff Whitson, Andrew Soots, Otis Church, Bill Osborne, Bill Wheeler, Derek Roberts, Doug Matheson, Dennis Aldridge, Wes Brinegar, Kevin Reece, Jim Blevins, Rocky Buchanan, Tim Futrelle, Tom Hartman, Larry Fontaine, Paul Robinson Jr., and Todd McNeill. The following staff and guests were present at the meeting: Keith Elmore, Julie Wiggins, Julie Page, Jeff Hedrick, Phil Trew, and Victoria Potter. The following guests joined via Zoom: Alan Thompson and Keith Deveraux.

**CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION**

Vice-Chairman McNeill welcomed everyone to the High Country Council of Governments December Executive Board meeting. Vice-Chairman McNeill called on Dennis Aldridge to lead the invocation and Eddie Settle to lead the board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS**

Vice-Chairman McNeill welcomed four new members to the Executive Board including: Mayor Tim Futrelle, Town of Boone, Councilman Bill Wheeler, Town of Burnsville, Mayor Derek Roberts, Town of Newland, Commissioner Otis Church, Town of North Wilkesboro.

**CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES**

Charles E. Vines made a motion to approve the November 15, 2021 Executive Board minutes. Dennis Aldridge seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**FINANCIAL MATTERS**

**Financial Highlights**

Finance Officer, Julie Page presented the Financial Highlights as of November 30, 2021 (Attachment A) and reviewed year to date revenues versus expenditures and balances.

Eddie Settle made a motion to approve the Financial Highlights as of November 30, 2021. Doug Matheson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**HCCOG AUDIT PRESENTATION**

Alan Thompson, TPSA CPAs commended the board and HCCOG staff for a clean audit report (Attachment B). Mr. Thompson reported that there were no findings and that the HCCOG financials are good and better than they have been in some time.

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD RE-ALIGNMENT UPDATE**

Keith Elmore, Wilkes County Commissioner and Chief Elected Officer for the Workforce Development Consortium Board discussed the potential Workforce Development Board (WDB) Re-Alignment that the state is looking into that would decrease WDBs across the state from 23 to 8. The state is currently studying the workforce development regions and will use the outcome of that study (expected February 9<sup>th</sup>) to make recommendations on realigning (with prosperity zones), and potentially consolidating, the state's Workforce Development Boards. Mr. Elmore said that Chet Mottershead, Assistant Secretary of Workforce Solutions volunteered to come up and present

the study findings to the Executive Board. This re-alignment raises concerns of losing local control and decision making within the current WDB region as well as losing funding and staff from the WDB department and local NCWorks Career Centers. Mr. Elmore noted that the High Country Workforce Development Consortium Board is opposed to this re-alignment because of the negative impact it would have on workforce services in our region. Keith Deveraux, Workforce Development Board Director, discussed the impacts this re-alignment would have and that ultimately this is not good for our rural counties and will affect services tremendously. Mr. Deveraux also noted that a draft resolution and meetings with state legislators is in the works. There was much discussion amongst Executive Board members on this re-alignment. Vice-Chairman McNeill said that the Advisory Committee supports and recommends that HCCOG staff draft a resolution so that each local government in the region can review and consider adopting in support of retaining the High Country's existing seven-county workforce area. In February the Executive Board will vote to adopt the same resolution. Dennis Aldridge made a motion for HCCOG staff to draft a resolution for local governments in the region to adopt in support of retaining the High Country's existing seven-county workforce area. Jeff Whitson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

#### **WORKERS COMPENSATION RESOLUTION**

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director explained that in 2016 the HCCOG housed a Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCEP) and employed part-time employees. Because of this, the NC League of Municipalities (NCLM) would not cover our Workers Compensation, so we switched to a new provider. The HCCOG hasn't administered the SCEP in years which allows for the opportunity to move our workers compensation coverage back to the NCLM. Our current policy expires at the end of January 2022. NCLM has offered to provide coverage for the remainder of the fiscal year and pick us up for the next fiscal year for less cost. Executive Board support is needed to go into this self-insured insurance pool with the signed resolution (Attachment C) and interlocal agreement (Attachment D). Wes Brinegar made a motion to approve the Workers Compensation Resolution. Charles E. Vines seconded the motion. Motion carried.

#### **REPORT FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director commended Finance Officer, Julie Page for a clean audit and apologized for not having received the hard copies of the audit summary in time but will send it out electronically. Ms. Wiggins noted that the building permit was approved by the Town of Boone for our grading project coming up in Spring 2022. Ms. Wiggins echoed Vice-Chairman McNeill's welcome to the new Executive Board members. The Executive Board Orientation Manual will be updated in March and everyone will receive a copy.


#### **BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Wes Brinegar discussed how valuable HCCOG has been to the Town of Sparta and encouraged other member governments to utilize the services offered. Mr. Brinegar mentioned how Phil Trew, Planning and Development Director helped the Town of Sparta receive \$7 million dollars

in state funding and presented Mr. Trew with a “Key to the City.” Dennis Aldridge mentioned that Avery County recently received CDBG grant funding again thanks to the Planning and Development department.

**ADJOURNMENT**

As there were no other comments or business, Wes Brinegar made a motion to adjourn. Doug Matheson seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:59 pm.



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Vice-Chairman, Todd McNeill



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Clerk to the Board, Victoria Potter

Date 02-21-22