HIGH COUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
FEBRUARY 21, 2022
MINUTES

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG) met February 21, 2022, 7:00pm, at the High Country Council of Governments Office in Boone. The following members were present at the meeting: Brenda Lyerly, Eddie Settle, Jeff Whitson, Bill Osborne, Kelly Melang, Otis Church, Bill Wheeler, Doug Matheson, Dennis Aldridge, Steve Pitman, Wes Brinegar, Kevin Reece, Jim Blevins, Rocky Buchanan, Tim Futrelle, Tom Hartman, Paul Robinson Jr., and Todd McNeill. The following staff and guests were present at the meeting: Assistant Secretary Chet Mottershead, Keith Elmore, Casey Johnson, Jeff Dryer, Casey Reece, Julie Wiggins, Julie Page, Jeff Hedrick, Phil Trew, Keith Deveraux, Zack Green, Stevie John, and Victoria Potter. The following guests/staff joined via Zoom: David McRae and Lola Benfield.

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

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

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Vice-Chairman McNeill welcomed a new member to the Executive Board: Steve Pitman, Chair of the Mitchell County Board of Commissioners.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

Wes Brinegar made a motion to approve the December 20, 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 January 31, 2022 (Attachment A) and reviewed year to date revenues versus expenditures and balances.

Budget Amendment #4

Finance Officer, Julie Page presented Budget Amendment #4 (Attachment A1) which includes a Home and Community Care Block Grant increase. The proposed total increase ($66,130) accounts for a proposed reduction and reallocation of previous amendment ($41,765) to a grant project ordinance. Budget Amendment #4 also includes an increase in the Workforce Development Department, as they received an additional ($36,068) for the Finish Line Grant.

Grant Project Ordinance

Finance Officer, Julie Page presented the Grant Project Ordinance (Attachment A2) and explained that because this grant crosses over fiscal years, we can more easily track revenue and expenses through a project ordinance. This grant expands access to the COVID-19 vaccines managed through the Area Agency on Aging department. This grant expires on 9-30-22.

Eddie Settle made a motion to approve the Financial Highlights as of January 31, 2022, Budget Amendment #4, and the Grant Project Ordinance. Tom Hartman seconded the motion. Motion carried.

ARC FUNDING UPDATE

David McRae, NC ARC Assistant Program Manager presented a slideshow (Attachment B) reviewing ARC structure, funding programs, competitive programs, and priorities/policies. Mr. McRae discussed ARC's long-term goals including infrastructure and creation and retention of jobs in the region.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD RE-ALIGNMENT UPDATE

Chet Mottershead, Assistant Secretary of Workforce Solutions gave an overview of the study on the Workforce Development Board system. The North Carolina General Assembly, under the Governor McCrory administration, passed a law outlining 8 Prosperity Zones, which is how resources get channeled out across the state for economic development. Mr. Mottershead noted that many state organizations use this model. Mr. Mottershead reviewed maps and Prosperity Zones. All the counties that make up the High Country Workforce Development Board (WDB) are contained in the same Prosperity Zone. The NCWorks Commission is the overarching body that coordinates all federal dollars that go to Division of Workforce Solutions and funneled to the 23 Workforce Development Boards. Federal workforce dollars also go to community colleges and vocational rehabilitation. In November 2021 the Chair of the NCWorks Commission asked the NCWorks Commission to do a study of the Workforce Development Board system. Mr. Mottershead noted that between November and now there has been misinformation spread. Any system or board realignment is still a local decision. The study concluded on February 18, 2022 and the NCWorks Commission put out 8 Guiding Principles for Realignment (Attachment C). Mr. Mottershead reviewed and explained the 8 Guiding Principles. Mr. Mottershead also explained that the realignment is a state initiative but a local decision, with no repercussions if the local decision makers want to keep everything the same. Mr. Mottershead discussed the upcoming timeline of the realignment project, vote, and implementation. There was much discussion amongst Executive Board members, guests, and Mr. Mottershead on this re-alignment. Mr. Mottershead offered to come back and present the findings of the study and Executive Board members asked to see localized data and numbers when he returns.

OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REPORT

Stevie John, Long Term Care Ombudsman presented her Annual Report (Attachment D) and explained that numbers are lower because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the time she wasn't allowed into the Long Term Care Facilities per federal and state guidelines. Ms. John is now able to make in-person visits to facilities and will be working to fill CAC vacancies in all 7 counties soon. Zack Green, Area Agency on Aging Director commended Ms. John on her work, compassion, and dedication.

RECESS OF HCCOG EXECUTIVE BOARD SESSION AND CONVENING OF RDDC SESSION

Paul Robinson Jr. made a motion to recess the HCCOG Executive Board session and convene the Region D Development Corporation (RDDC) session. Kevin Reece seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Jeff Hedrick, HCCOG Attorney announced that Mr. Trew was in attendance to present the minutes from the 2021 RDDC meeting but suggested that we recess this meeting and reconvene it next month in the interest of time and the need to present a potential additional agenda item he has discussed with Mr. Trew. Approval of the RDDC 2021 Minutes (Attachment E) will be tabled until the next appointed meeting.

CLOSING OF RDDC SESSION AND OPENING OF HCCOG EXECUTIVE BOARD SESSION

Tom Hartman made a motion to table the items and close the RDDC session and open the HCCOG Executive Board session. Brenda Lyerly seconded the motion. Motion carried.

REPORT FROM THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

In Charles E. Vines absence, Vice-Chairman McNeill called on Brenda Lyerly to present the slate of officers recommended by the nominating committee which is made up by Charles E. Vines, Brenda Lyerly, Tom Hartman, and Eddie Settle. The nominating committee unanimously determined that the HCCOG Executive Board slate of officers for 2022-2023 should be: Chair: Todd McNeill, Vice-Chair: Doug Matheson, Secretary: Dennis Aldridge, and Treasurer: Larry Fontaine. Wes Brinegar made a motion to approve the nominated 2022-2023 slate of officers. Jeff Whitson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE HIGH COUNTRY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD REGION

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director presented the Resolution in Support of the High Country Workforce Development Board Region (Attachment F). Kevin Reece made a motion to approve the Resolution in Support of the High Country Workforce Development Board Region. Otis Church seconded the motion. Motion carried.

REPORT FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director reiterated that there is increased ARC project grant funding this year. Ms. Wiggins reviewed handouts including the FY 2021 Audit Report, FY2020-2021 Annual Report, Workforce Development Board Report and the Local Development District report provided to one of our funders: the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC).

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Tom Hartman noted that WRAL has a short segment on the current renovations of the historic hotel in West Jefferson.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no other comments or business, Otis Church made a motion to adjourn. Wes Brinegar seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:32 pm.

Chairman, Todd McNeill

Clerk to the Board, Victoria Potter

Date 03-21-22