

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

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG) met March 21, 2022, 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, Jeff Whitson, Mike Inscore, Bill Osborne, Otis Church, Bill Wheeler, Dennis Aldridge, Steve Pitman, 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: Julie Wiggins, Julie Page, Jeff Hedrick, Phil Trew, and Victoria Potter. The following guests/staff joined via Zoom: Chris Wall.

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

Chairman McNeill welcomed everyone to the High Country Council of Governments March Executive Board meeting. Chairman McNeill called on Dennis Aldridge to lead the invocation and Jeff Whitson to lead the board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Chairman McNeill welcomed a new member to the Executive Board: Mike Inscore, Mayor of the Town of Wilkesboro.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

Charles E. Vines made a motion to approve the February 21, 2022 Executive Board minutes. Tom Hartman seconded the motion. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Financial Highlights

Finance Officer, Julie Page presented the Financial Highlights as of February 28, 2022 (Attachment A) and reviewed year to date revenues versus expenditures and balances.

2022 Contract to Audit

Finance Officer, Julie Page presented the 2022 Audit Contract (Attachment A1) with Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams & CO., P.A. (TPSA) and explained that there is a \$1,000 increase to enter into the contract this year and that TPSA has been great to work with in the past.

Jeff Whitson made a motion to approve the Financial Highlights as of February 28, 2022, and the 2022 Contract to Audit. Dennis Aldridge seconded the motion. Motion carried.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Chris Wall, Principal for EQVStrategic joined the meeting via Zoom to give a quick legislative update. Mr. Wall announced that the North Carolina General Assembly has officially adjourned their long session and the short session will begin May 18, 2022. Mr. Wall discussed the new state house and senate maps and that all High Country COG counties are now in the 5th Congressional District except Yancey County. Mr. Wall announced that there is an abundance of funding the General Assembly will want to spend soon to keep the economy strong, so if your local government has any requests, now is the time to discuss with your state representatives.

RECESS OF HCCOG EXECUTIVE BOARD SESSION AND CONVENING OF RDDC SESSION

Tim Futrelle made a motion to recess the HCCOG Executive Board session and convene the Region D Development Corporation (RDDC) session. (Attachments B & C). Jim Blevins seconded the motion. Motion carried.

[Please reference RDDC Minutes for March 21, 2022]

CLOSING OF RDDC SESSION AND OPENING OF HCCOG EXECUTIVE BOARD SESSION

Charles E. Vines made a motion to close the RDDC session and open the HCCOG Executive Board session. Mike Inscore seconded the motion. Motion carried.

REPORT FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director announced the FY2023 budget is in the works and will be presented in April or May. Ms. Wiggins also announced that we are in the early stages of planning this year's Annual Banquet at Linville Ridge. Ms. Wiggins announced that due to the state allocating ARPA funds to the 16 COGs, we were able to make a new hire. Cory Osborne will be re-joining the HCCOG on April 11, 2022 as the Director of Recovery and Resilience. Mr. Osborne will be a wonderful resource for the local governments in the region as they navigate their ARPA funding. Ms. Wiggins noted that the Workforce Development Guiding Principals will be voted on by the NCWorks Commission next week and there will be more information to come following that vote. Ms. Wiggins announced that the COG will be hosting a virtual Ethics Training for Local Elected Officials through the UNC School of Government and that the clerks in each county and municipality have been notified of this training opportunity. Lastly, Ms. Wiggins was pleased to announce that Jessica Welborn, GIS Planner presented at a virtual international conference.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Dennis Aldridge noted that Avery County was expecting ARP funding (GREAT Grant) for Broadband Expansion, but because of the ranking from North Carolina Department of Information Technology) NCDIT there is now a very little chance they will receive any funding for broadband expansion. Mr. Aldridge warned Executive Board members about this issue and advised them to look into the NCDIT statistics that have been misconstrued because of the 2020 census. Tom Hartman announced that WRAL has a short segment on the Ashe County Cheese Factory in West Jefferson.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

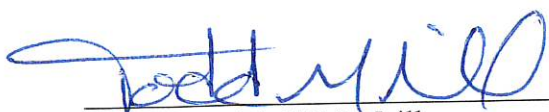
Chairman McNeill announced that in the near future there will be a sub committee to create Legislative goals and advocacy to present to our representatives.

OTHER BUSINESS

Victoria Potter, Communications Manager announced that the COG will be hosting a regional Clerks Gathering on May 4, 2022 to celebrate the 53rd Annual Professional Municipal Clerks Week. Ms. Potter is working with Town of Seven Devils Clerk, Hillary Gropp who is now the North Carolina Association of Municipal Clerks (NCAMC) 10th District Director, to plan this event for clerks to meet each other and learn about the resources available to them. More information coming to clerks soon regarding this event.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no other comments or business, Otis Church made a motion to adjourn. Bill Osborne seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:53 pm.



Chairman, Todd McNeill



Clerk to the Board, Victoria Potter

Date 04-18-22