

**HIGH COUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
JULY 17, 2023
MINUTES**

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG) met July 17, 2023, 7:00pm, at the Blue Ridge Energy Community Room in Boone. The following members were present at the meeting: Charles E. Vines, Brenda Lyerly, Jeff Whitson, Otis Church, Jim Blevins, Kelly Melang, Timmy Evans, Dennis Aldridge, Steve Pitman, Bill Wheeler, Rocky Buchanan, Wes Brinegar, Tom Hartman, Tim Futrelle, Paul Robinson Jr., Doug Matheson, and Todd McNeill. The following staff and guests were present at the meeting: Jeff Hedrick, Julie Wiggins, Julie Page, Cory Osborne, Phil Trew, Misty Bishop-Price, Zack Green, Rebecca Bloomquist, and Victoria Oxentine.

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

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

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

Tim Futrelle made a motion to approve the June 19, 2023 Executive Board minutes. Wes Brinegar seconded the motion. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Financial Highlights

Finance Officer, Julie Page presented the Financial Highlights as of June 30, 2023 (Attachment A) and reviewed year to date revenues versus expenditures and balances. Mrs. Page noted that these financials are not final because they are accruing and spending from the fiscal year. Kelly Melang made a motion to approve the Financial Highlights as of June 30, 2023. Otis Church seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Amended Grant Project Ordinance

Finance Officer, Julie Page presented the Amended Grant Project Ordinance (Attachment A1) for Disaster Recovery – NC Association of Regional Councils of Governments. Mrs. Page explained that only line items have changed from the previous amended ordinance, it is still the same amount of funding.

Charles E. Vines made a motion to approve the Amended Grant Project Ordinance. Brenda Lyerly seconded the motion. Motion carried.

CHMURA ECONOMICS AND ANALYTICS PRESENTATION

Rebecca Bloomquist, Communications & Business Services Coordinator discussed CHMURA, an Economic Forecasting Software that the High Country Workforce Development department has had for eight years and is a great tool for counties and businesses seeking data. Mrs. Bloomquist discussed the High Country Region Economic Overview report (Attachment B) that includes a demographic profile, employment trends, unemployment rate, wage trends, industry snapshot, and much more. Mrs. Bloomquist noted that the data on CHMURA is updated quarterly. Mrs. Bloomquist also presented a handout about Labor Market Data and how to contact her if you are

interested in seeing a report (Attachment B1). Mrs. Bloomquist can email reports out by county quarterly to councils, boards, and EDC's. Several Executive Board members requested that Mrs. Bloomquist come present to their town or county boards as well.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Phil Trew, Planning & Development Director discussed recent projects in all seven COG counties. NAPCO, Inc. Expansion Grant Application for Department of Commerce in Alleghany County, Town of West Jefferson application for funds from DEQ for Lead Service Line in Ashe County, Cell Tower Ordinance in Avery County, Spruce Pine 226 Waterline Replacement seeking EDA funding to match in Mitchell County, Kill & Chill Facility lease work (public-private partnership) in Watauga County, Growth Management Plan (third iteration) in Wilkes County, and Burnsville CDBG and DEQ funding for water/sewer in Yancey County. Mr. Trew also announced that he will be retiring on January 10, 2024 and will work with Julie Wiggins to ensure a smooth transition for his replacement. Mr. Trew thanked the Executive Board for their support and their predecessor's support over the years.

REPORT FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director announced that the restoration should be completed in the building this week and that hopefully we will be back in the building for the August meeting. Ms. Wiggins announced that the Strategic Plan with Jim Youngquist is coming up. Mr. Youngquist wants to do online surveys, focus groups, work session, and findings session to complete the updated Strategic Plan. The Advisory Committee proposed having the focus group session during our September board meeting and the work session during the October board meeting. These meetings will start earlier than 7PM and last a couple of hours each. Ms. Wiggins also announced the next Department of Commerce High Country Region meeting is next Wednesday in North Wilkesboro. Ms. Wiggins also discussed the transition into the new fiscal year and congratulated the Area Agency on Aging department on a partner-organization awarded EDC grant for Tai Chi.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Rocky Buchanan made the board aware that First Amendment Auditors came to Spruce Pine Town Hall and they are going around to other local government buildings. Dennis Aldridge announced a Harm Reduction event in Avery County. Wes Brinegar announced the upcoming Fiddler's Convention and 100 Mile Yard Sale in Sparta.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Chairman McNeill congratulated his municipal colleagues for filing for this year's election.

OTHER BUSINESS

Misty Bishop-Price, Workforce Development Director announced that a Wilkes County resident/NCWorks participant has won the Governor's Award that the Workforce Development

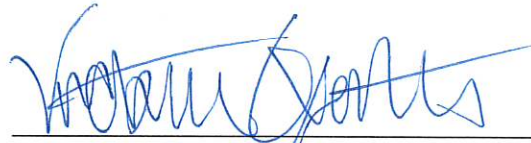
Board nominated him for, and he will be presented with the award at the Workforce Development Conference in October. Victoria Oxentine, Communications Manager announced that 2023 Annual Banquet award nomination forms will be emailed out this week, invitations will be mailed out in early August and the RSVP deadline is September 22, 2023. The Annual Banquet is October 6, 2023.

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 7:54 pm.



Chairman, Todd McNeill



Clerk to the Board, Victoria Oxentine

Date 9/18/23