

**HIGH COUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING  
MAY 20, 2024  
MINUTES**

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG) met May 20, 2024, 7:00pm, in the HCCOG Board Room in Boone. The following members were present at the meeting: Charles Vines, Brenda Lyerly, Todd McNeill, Timmy Evans, Bill Wheeler, Jeff Whitson, Harley Masters, Teresa McCoy, Rocky Buchanan Tim Futrelle, Tom Hartman, Ray Russell, Paul Robinson Jr., Dennis Aldridge, and Doug Matheson. The following staff and guests were present at the meeting: Ben Massey, Jeff Hedrick, Julie Wiggins, Julie Page, Caroline Briggs, Chris Grubb and Victoria Oxentine. The following guests were present via Zoom: Chris Wall and Abigail Holdsclaw.

**CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION**

Chairman Matheson called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees. Harley Masters led the Pledge of Allegiance and Jeff Whitson offered the invocation.

**CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES**

Tim Futrelle moved to accept the minutes of the April 15, 2024 meeting, seconded by Charles E. Vines, the motion carried.

**FINANCIAL MATTERS**

**Financial Highlights**

Finance Officer, Julie Page presented the Financial Highlights as of April 30, 2024 (Attachment A) and reviewed year to date revenues versus expenditures and balances. Mrs. Page introduced Caroline Briggs, Finance Technician, who will become the next Finance Officer when Mrs. Page retires at the end of June. Tim Futrelle made a motion to approve the Financial Highlights as of April 30, 2024. Tom Hartman seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**Budget Amendment #5**

Finance Officer, Julie Page presented Budget Amendment #5 (Attachment A1) which is an increase of \$45,000.00 to the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Lifespan Respite program and an increase of \$50,000.00 to the Workforce Development In-School Youth Program. Budget Amendment #5 is a total increase of \$95,000.00. Todd McNeill made a motion to approve Budget Amendment #5. Charles E. Vines seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

Chris Wall, Principal for EQVStrategic joined the meeting via Zoom and gave an update on the NC General Assembly. Mr. Wall discussed the recent COG Legislative Day and ARPA funding among other things. Mr. Wall noted that if any of our board members have questions they can always reach out.

**NC PANDEMIC RECOVERY REGIONAL FOCUS GROUP REPORT**

Abigail Holdsclaw, Research Associate for ncIMPACT joined the meeting via Zoom to give an overview of the NC Pandemic Recovery Office (NCPRO) Regional Focus Group Report (Attachment B and B1). ncIMPACT was launched by UNC School of Government in 2017 and has partnered with HCCOG for different projects. NCPRO was launched after the COVID-19

pandemic. Ms. Holdsclaw discussed the focus group findings for the High Country region, versus the statewide findings. The top concerns being high-speed internet, transportation, impact of stimulus checks, affordable housing, and healthcare. Ms. Holdsclaw also discussed the implications of the results related to our current Strategic Plan.

### **FY2025 BUDGET PRESENTATION**

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director presented the FY2025 Budget packet (Attachment C) and a PowerPoint (Attachment C1) giving an overview of how the HCCOG functions and how our budget works. Ms. Wiggins noted that the dues/match is critical to leveraging our grant funds and maintaining supportive services to the region. Ms. Wiggins discussed budget highlights including current dues, a 4% COLA, increased rental income, fringe and indirect rate, and some expected expenses for FY2025. Ms. Wiggins noted that the board can continue to review the proposed budget and bring any questions or discussion to the June 17<sup>th</sup> meeting when the FY2025 budget is brought forth for adoption.

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

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director gave a quick overview of recent happenings including the AAA Aging Well Conference held at Appstate last week where several HCCOG staff members presented and tabled the event and COG Legislative Day in Raleigh. Ms. Wiggins also discussed the WIOA proposed reauthorization bill and noted that representatives from Senator Budd's and Senator Tillis' offices were present at the Workforce Development Board meeting for discussion earlier this month. Ms. Wiggins acknowledged that housing continues to be a priority in the region and that a small task force will meet at the COG this week.

### **BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Brenda Lyerly introduced Adriana Ingle, a college student shadowing her to learn more about local government. Todd McNeill noted that they broke ground on the new high school football and track field in Ashe County. Rocky Buchanan acknowledged his grandson for being the 3x State Champion for high school golf. Other board members acknowledged their local high school teams for recent accomplishments.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Victoria Oxentine, Communications Manager announced that Summer ReCOGnition submissions are due this Friday, May 24<sup>th</sup>. Mrs. Oxentine also noted that the COG is celebrating 50 years and has revamped the logo for the special occasion.

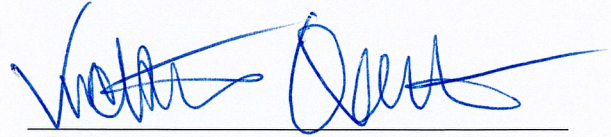
### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ben Massey, who is running for NC House District 93 introduced himself and was happy to attend to listen, learn, and engage with the community.

**ADJOURNMENT**

As there were no other comments or business, Todd McNeill made a motion to adjourn. Paul Robinson Jr. seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:03 pm.

  
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Chairman, Doug Matheson

  
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Clerk to the Board, Victoria Oxentine

Date 6/17/24