

**HIGH COUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING  
OCTOBER 21, 2024  
MINUTES**

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG) met October 21, 2024, 2:00pm, in the HCCOG Board Room in Boone. The following members were present at the meeting: Todd McNeill, Greg Minton, Timmy Evans, Kelly Melang, Otis Church, Bill Wheeler, Larry Fontaine, Harley Masters, Teresa McCoy, Rocky Buchanan, Tom Hartman, Tim Futrelle, Dennis Aldridge, and Doug Matheson. The following staff and guests were present at the meeting: Kevin Leonard, Jeff Hedrick, Caroline Briggs, Chris Grubb, Zack Green, Misty Bishop-Price, Sarah Price, and Victoria Oxentine.

**CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION**

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

**CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES**

Todd McNeill moved to accept the minutes of the August 19, 2024 meeting, seconded by Tom Hartman. Motion carried.

**FINANCIAL MATTERS**

**Financial Highlights**

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented the Financial Highlights as of September 30, 2024 (Attachment A) and discussed revenues versus expenditures. Tim Futrelle made a motion to approve the Financial Highlights as of September 30, 2024. Todd McNeill seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**Budget Amendment #1**

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented Budget Amendment #1 (Attachment A1) which is an increase of \$615,063.00 since the actual Area Agency on Aging and Workforce Development funding has been awarded. Tom Hartman made a motion to approve Budget Amendment #1. Otis Church seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**Digital Inclusion Grant Project Ordinance**

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented a grant project ordinance for Digital Inclusion awarded to the Planning and Development department in the amount of \$800,000 to appoint a full-time Digital Inclusion & Equity Coordinator and establish a regional funding pool (Attachment A2). This grant project ordinance will run through December 31, 2026. Tom Hartman made a motion to approve the Digital Inclusion Grant Project Ordinance. Timmy Evans seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**Area Agency on Aging Choosing Home Grant Project Ordinance**

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented a grant project ordinance for a Choosing Home grant awarded to the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) department to support housing needs for vulnerable older adults in the amount of \$132,889.00 (Attachment A3). This grant project ordinance will run through December 31, 2026. Otis Church made a motion to approve the AAA Choosing Home Grant Project Ordinance. Greg Minton seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**Area Agency on Aging ARPA Grant Project Ordinance Amendment**

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented a grant project ordinance amendment extending the end date for ARPA funding awarded to the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) department (Attachment A4). This grant project ordinance will now run through September 30, 2025. Todd McNeill made a motion to approve the AAA ARPA Grant Project Ordinance Amendment. Otis Church seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**CEDS UPDATE**

Chris Grubb, Planning and Development Director thanked Executive Board members that were able to attend and applauded their hard work in the region, in the wake of Hurricane Helene. Mr. Grubb reminded the Executive Board that the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a 5-year document, last adopted on November 21, 2022. The annual report will be due by December 1, 2024. Mr. Grubb discussed the progress of our CEDS program and will have an annual report resolution to bring forth for adoption at the November 2024 meeting.

**HURRICANE HELENE DISASTER RECOVERY DISCUSSION AND RESOURCES**

Chris Grubb, Planning and Development Director noted that the COG is preparing to help however we can with FEMA applications, recovery efforts, grant writing, etc. He also noted that we understand some of our counties and towns were more fortunate than others, so we are prepared to work with them business as usual and work with our more affected areas on disaster relief and recovery efforts. Mr. Grubb opened the floor for discussion amongst board members. Chairman Matheson asked board members to discuss their jurisdiction's status and current needs. After much disaster recovery discussion amongst board members, Todd McNeill introduced Kevin Leonard, NC Association of County Commissioners Executive Director. Mr. Leonard thanked the board for allowing him to sit in on the conversation. Mr. Leonard wants to work with the COGs in the affected WNC region and the League of Municipalities to get compiled lists of needs to present to the General Assembly in early November. It was decided that Victoria Oxentine, Communications Manager, would send out a digital form for Executive Board members to complete for each of their jurisdictions. Board members will submit their most dire 3-5 needs for disaster recovery, knowing that the needs are ever changing. Mrs. Oxentine will then compile the High Country list and send it to Mr. Leonard in early November.

**CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS**

Chairman Matheson noted that it was great to be together and have this discussion. Chairman Matheson thanked Kevin Leonard for attending and helping get the list of needs to the General Assembly.

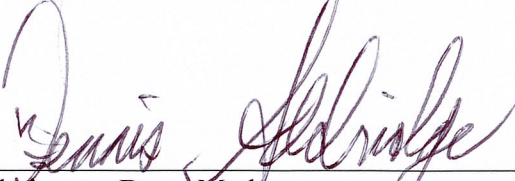
**OTHER BUSINESS**

Victoria Oxentine, Communications Manager noted that Julie Wiggins, Executive Director sent her deepest regrets for not being able to attend the Executive Board meeting. She was attending the NADO conference in Louisiana. Mrs. Oxentine also noted that the Fall ReCOgnition

newsletter will be paused for now and that she will work with Julie Wiggins on a plan to announce the 2024 Annual Banquet award winners soon. Sarah Price, Resiliency Planner discussed the FEMA grants portal and public assistance documentation. Misty Bishop-Price, Workforce Development Director announced a new grant her department has received in the wake of the recent disaster. The Hurricane Helene Disaster Relief Employment Grant (Attachment B) provides funding to offer temporary disaster-relief employment opportunities to assist with local recovery efforts. All seven COG counties are eligible.

**ADJOURNMENT**

As there were no other comments or business, Otis Church made a motion to adjourn. Kelly Melang seconded the motion, Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 3:37 pm.

  
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~~Chairman, Doug Matheson~~  
Vice-Chair, Dennis Aldridge

  
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Clerk to the Board, Victoria Oxentine

Date 11/18/24