

**HIGH COUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
DECEMBER 16, 2024
MINUTES**

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG) met December 16, 2024, 6:00pm, in the HCCOG Board Room in Boone. The following members were present at the meeting: Charles E. Vines, Brenda Lyerly, Todd McNeill, Otis Church, Bill Wheeler, Larry Fontaine, Jeff Harding, Teresa McCoy, Rocky Buchanan, Tom Hartman, Tim Futrelle, Braxton Eggers, Dennis Aldridge, and Doug Matheson. The following staff and guests were present at the meeting: Senator Ralph Hise, Senator Eddie Settle, Representative Dudley Greene, Representative Ray Pickett, Representative Blair Eddins, Justin Somers, Rebecca Powell, Tommy Laughter, Drew Christy, Wes Greene, Allyson Greene, Matt Settle, Bryan Frydenborg, Jeff Hedrick, Caroline Briggs, Chris Grubb, Zack Green, Cory Osborne, Debra Foxx, and Victoria Oxentine.

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

Chairman Matheson called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees. Larry Fontaine led the Pledge of Allegiance and Dennis Aldridge offered the invocation. Chairman Matheson also welcomed new Executive Board members, Braxton Eggers, Watauga County Commissioner Chair and Jeff Harding, Mitchell County Commissioner Chair.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

Charles E. Vines moved to accept the minutes of the November 18, 2024 meeting, seconded by Otis Church. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Budget Amendment #2

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented Budget Amendment #2 (Attachment A) which is an increase of \$265,000 for the total budget. This increase includes \$20,000 for a Digital Opportunity grant for the Planning Department, \$10,000 from US Aging and \$35,000 from AARP for the Area Agency on Aging Department, and \$200,000 for the Emergency Dislocated Worker Fund for the Workforce Development department. Todd McNeill made a motion to approve Budget Amendment #2. Charles E. Vines seconded the motion. Motion carried.

HURRICANE HELENE RECOVERY LEGISLATIVE DISCUSSION

Chairman Matheson opened the roundtable discussion by reading a letter from U.S. Senator Thom Tillis as he was unable to attend. Chairman Matheson then asked each guest to introduce themselves. Guests included: Senator Ralph Hise-District 47, Senator Eddie Settle-District 36, Representative Dudley Greene-District 85, Representative Ray Pickett-District 93, Representative Blair Eddins-District 94, Justin Somers-Office of U.S. Senator Ted Budd, Rebecca Powell-Office of Congresswoman Virginia Foxx, Tommy Laughter-Office of Congressman Chuck Edwards, and Drew Christy-Office of Governor Roy Cooper. After introductions, Chairman Matheson opened the floor for Hurricane Helene recovery discussion amongst Legislators and Executive Board members.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Todd McNeill introduced a new Ashe County Commissioner in attendance, Wes Greene.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Chairman Matheson thanked HCCOG staff for all their hard work this year and wished everyone a Merry Christmas. Chairman Matheson also offered a suggestion for town and county boards to create their own resolutions to send to other state senators encouraging them to pass relief funding for Western NC.

OTHER BUSINESS


Victoria Oxentine, Communications Manager, noted that the wooden barn quilt square from Yancey County in the Christmas gift bags was all salvaged wood from the Cane River after Hurricane Helene.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Bryan Frydenborg with the US SBA introduced himself and thanked the board for allowing him to speak. Mr. Frydenborg noted that there is currently no money for SBA loans, but he hopes that will change in the new year.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no other comments or business, Otis Church made a motion to adjourn. Brenda Lyerly seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:07 pm.



Chairman, Doug Matheson



Clerk to the Board, Victoria Oxentine

Date 2-17-25