

**HIGH COUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING  
MARCH 17, 2025  
MINUTES**

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG) met March 17, 2025, 7:00pm, in the HCCOG Board Room in Boone. The following members were present at the meeting: Charles E. Vines, Brenda Lyerly, Todd McNeill, Bill Osborne, Otis Church, Bill Wheeler, Larry Fontaine, Jeff Whitson, Bobby Munsey, Mike Parlier, Rocky Buchanan, Tim Futrelle, Braxton Eggers, Dennis Aldridge, and Doug Matheson. The following staff and guests were present at the meeting: Holly Jones, Julie Wiggins, Jeff Hedrick, Caroline Briggs, Zack Green, Cory Osborne, Tatiana Magee, Stevie Welborn, Chris Grubb, and Victoria Oxentine.

**CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION**

Chairman Matheson called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees. Charles E. Vines led the Pledge of Allegiance and Jeff Whitson offered the invocation.

**CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES**

Tim Futrelle moved to accept the minutes of the February 17, 2025 meeting, seconded by Otis Church. Motion carried.

**FINANCIAL MATTERS**

**Financial Highlights**

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented the Financial Highlights as of February 28, 2025 (Attachment A) and discussed revenues versus expenditures. Charles E. Vines made a motion to approve the Financial Highlights as of February 28, 2025. Jeff Whitson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**Budget Amendment #4**

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented Budget Amendment #4 (Attachment A1), which is an increase of \$56,000 for the total budget. This increase is for Meals on Wheels and Hurricane Helene relief funding for the Area Agency on Aging department. Tim Futrelle made a motion to approve Budget Amendment #4. Braxton Eggers seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**ARPA NCWorks WBL Grant Project Ordinance**

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented a Grant Project Ordinance for ARPA NCWorks Small Business Work-Based Learning (Attachment A2), which is additional funding of \$500,000 that goes through December 2026 allocated to the Workforce Development department. The Workforce Development department will use the funds to establish a work-based learning program targeting small businesses with 25 or less employees in its region. Dennis Aldridge made a motion to approve the ARPA NCWorks Small Business Work-Based Learning Grant Project Ordinance. Brenda Lyerly seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**ARC – Disaster Funding Grant Project Ordinance**

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented a Grant Project Ordinance for Appalachian Regional Commission – Disaster Funding (Attachment A3) of \$276,000 for the COG to carry out activities to support disaster recovery in the region. Charles E. Vines made a motion to approve the NCARCOG Helene Grant Project Ordinance. Tim Futrelle seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**HCCOG AUDIT PRESENTATION**

Alan Thompson, TPSA CPAs presented the FYE June 30, 2024 audit results (Attachment B). Mr. Thompson noted that there were no findings in the audit and reviewed the analysis of fund balances and revenues.

**OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REPORT**

Stevie Welborn, Regional Long-Term Care Ombudsman presented her program's 2024 Annual Report (Attachment C). Mrs. Welborn reviewed resident complaint data and trends, program assistance and facility visitation data, and advocacy/outreach programs.

**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DISASTER RESOURCE CENTER: CONNECTING COMMUNITIES IN CRISIS**

Rodney Cooper, Technical Programs Director could not attend due to traveling to a disaster site in California, but Tatiana Magee, HCCOG GIS Tech and Planner gave a brief update on Digital Opportunities funding and programs she is working on in the region.

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

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director thanked everyone for attending the rescheduled 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Banquet and noted to save the date for the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Banquet on October 10, 2025. Ms. Wiggins announced that there are a few open positions within the COG, including a Planner/Housing Coordinator, Finance Technician, and Aging Services Coordinator-Compliance and Administration. Ms. Wiggins also announced that the Advisory Committee would soon be working on updating the Legislative Priorities to present to the Executive Board. Ms. Wiggins welcomed new Executive Board Members, Bobby Munsey, Town of Ronda Commissioner and Mike Parlier, Town of Sparta Mayor Pro Tem.

**BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Todd McNeill discussed the potential for wildfires post-Helene and noted that the NC Forest Service needs legislative support/funding. Ashe and Watauga Counties have drafted letters of support, and Commissioner McNeill asked other jurisdictions to do the same. Dennis Aldridge discussed other legislative goals.

**CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS**

Chairman Matheson also welcomed the new Executive Board members.

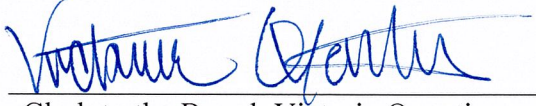
**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Holly Jones, Director of NC Governor Stein's Western Office noted that after a meeting tomorrow, she will have visited all the High Country counties and appreciates everyone's hospitality. Mrs. Jones also announced a new website launch for Hurricane Helene Recovery Resources in WNC: [wncrecovery.nc.gov](http://wncrecovery.nc.gov).

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

  
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Chairman, Doug Matheson

  
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Clerk to the Board, Victoria Oxentine

Date 4/21/25