

**HIGH COUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
DECEMBER 15, 2025
MINUTES**

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG) met December 15, 2025, 7:00pm, in the HCCOG Board Room in Boone. The following members were present at the meeting: Charles E. Vines, Brenda Lyerly, Wes Greene, Kelly Melang, Bill Wheeler, Larry Fontaine, John Shepherd, Bobby Munsey, Mike Parlier, Jeff Harding, Rocky Buchanan, Teresa McCoy, Braxton Eggers, Dennis Aldridge, and Doug Matheson. The following staff and guests were present at the meeting: Brian Glish, Heather Hogan, Kristopher Hurley, Nicole Hurley, Julie Wiggins, Caroline Briggs, Judson Blevins, Zack Green, Cory Osborne, Chris Grubb, Jackson Marcellus, 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 Rocky Buchanan offered the invocation.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

Rocky Buchanan moved to accept the minutes of the November 17, 2025 meeting, seconded by Kelly Melang. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Matheson asked the board to advance the public comment portion of the agenda so that Todd McNeill, NCARCOG Executive Director, could present his update prior to leaving the meeting early. Mr. McNeill reported that he has visited 12 of the 16 COGs across North Carolina and stated that the High Country Council of Governments stands out as one of the strongest. He added that board members are fortunate to have this resource in the region and commended Julie Wiggins and the entire HCCOG staff for their work.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Financial Highlights

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented the Financial Highlights as of November 30, 2025 (Attachment A) and discussed revenues versus expenditures.

Dogwood Health Trust (DHT) Dementia Caregivers Network Grant Project Ordinance

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented the DHT Dementia Caregivers Network Grant Project Ordinance (Attachment A1) of \$163,200 which will provide caregiver support in Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey counties through December 2027.

Dogwood Health Trust (DHT) COG Capacity Grant Project Ordinance

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented the DHT COG Capacity Grant Project Ordinance (Attachment A2) of \$600,000 which will help support COG operations and Helene recovery work through August 31, 2027.

NCARCOG Helene Funding Tranche Two Grant Project Ordinance

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented NCARCOG Helene Funding Tranche Two Grant Project Ordinance (Attachment A3) of \$532,000 which is the second round of funding for Helene recovery and will go through June 2030.

Charles E. Vines made a motion to approve the Financial Highlights as of November 30, 2025, DHT Dementia Caregivers Network Grant Project Ordinance, DHT COG Capacity Grant Project Ordinance, and the NCARCOG Helene Funding Tranche Two Grant Project Ordinance. Brenda Lyerly seconded the motion. Motion carried.

HCCOG 2025 Amended Contract to Audit

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented an amended 2025 Contract to Audit (Attachment A4) noting that the audit is delayed because of the State's delay in release of the 2025 compliance supplements. There is now a 43-day extension. Wes Greene made a motion to approve the HCCOG 2025 Amended Contract to Audit. Braxton Eggers seconded the motion. Motion carried.

NC NATIONAL GUARD CYBER SECURITY RESPONSE FORCE OVERVIEW

Brian Glish, LTC MPCyber/MC Deputy presented a PowerPoint overview (Attachment B) of the NC National Guard Cyber Security Response Force (NCNGCSRF). LTC Glish noted that the Response Force, which is grant funded, was started in 2013 and fully established in 2022. The NCNGCSRF provides incident responses to cyber-attacks throughout NC. LTC Glish reviewed activities from 2020-2025 and provided contact information if needed.

TACKLING COMPLEX WASTE STREAMS & IMPROVING THE ECONOMICS OF RECYCLING THROUGH REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Heather Hogan, CEO of Sustainable Development Solutions, presented a PowerPoint (Attachment C) regarding the work of Sustainable Development Solutions, a local environmental management firm rethinking how communities grow, consume, and connect. Ms. Hogan discussed the issue of critical minerals, program components, and a grant opportunity with Golden Leaf.

ESFRLP GRANT POLICIES APPROVAL

Judson Blevins, Planner/Housing Coordinator presented two policies needing approval for the Wilkes County 2027 Essential Single-Family Repair Loan Pool (ESFRLP) cycle. A minimum of two homes will be included for repairs in this cycle. Mr. Blevins noted that the policies have been reviewed and approved by the NC Housing Finance Agency.

Assistance Policy – ESFRLP 2027 (Attachment D)

Jeff Harding made a motion to approve the Assistance Policy – ESFRLP 2027. John Shepherd seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Procurement & Disbursement Policy – ESFRLP 2027 (Attachment D1)

Braxton Eggers made a motion to approve the Procurement & Disbursement Policy – ESFRLP 2027. Wes Greene seconded the motion. Motion carried.

ANNUAL CEDS UPDATE

Chris Grubb, Deputy Executive Director/Planning & Development Director presented the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) Annual Report and a Resolution in Support of the CEDS (Attachment E). Larry Fontaine made a motion to approve the Resolution in Support of the CEDS. John Shepherd seconded the motion. Motion carried.

REPORT FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays. Ms. Wiggins noted that the High Country COG had assisted the region with applications for SRF, OSBM, and Small Business Infrastructure grant applications resulting in \$30.5M of funding. Ms. Wiggins welcomed North Wilkesboro Commissioner, Kristopher Hurley and his wife to the meeting. Ms. Wiggins asked Victoria Oxentine, Communications Manager to share a few updates including her work on the Christmas giftbags, the 2025 Fall/Winter ReCOgnition that was just printed and the 2026 meeting schedule.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Dennis Aldridge discussed a 1st amendment auditor situation in Avery County and legislative guardrails on this topic.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

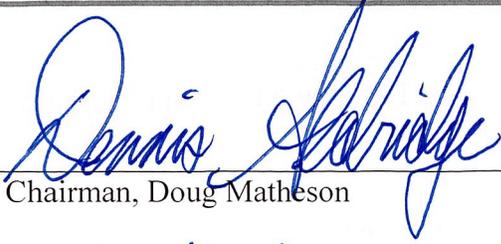
Chairman Matheson welcomed Town of Jefferson Alderman, John Shepherd to the Executive Board. Chairman Matheson thanked the COG staff for a great year and wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Matheson has chosen Charles E. Vines, Brenda Lyerly, and Braxton Eggers to be on the 2026 nominating committee for officer nominations. Those nominations will be presented for a vote in February.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no other comments or business, Jeff Harding made a motion to adjourn. Braxton Eggers seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:18 pm.


Chairman, Doug Matheson


Clerk to the Board, Victoria Oxentine

Date 2/16/26