

**HIGH COUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
MAY 19, 2025
MINUTES**

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG) met May 19, 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, Bill Wheeler, Larry Fontaine, Jeff Whitson, Bobby Munsey, Mike Parlier, Jeff Harding, Rocky Buchanan, Teresa McCoy, Tom Hartman, Braxton Eggers, and Dennis Aldridge. The following staff and guests were present at the meeting: Julie Wiggins, Jeff Hedrick, Caroline Briggs, Misty Bishop-Price, Cory Osborne, Chris Grubb, and Victoria Oxentine.

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

Vice-Chairman Aldridge called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees. Braxton Eggers led the Pledge of Allegiance and Todd McNeill offered the invocation.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

Todd McNeill moved to accept the minutes of the April 21, 2025 meeting, seconded by Braxton Eggers. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Financial Highlights

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented the Financial Highlights as of April 30, 2025 (Attachment A) and discussed revenues versus expenditures. Charles E. Vines made a motion to approve the Financial Highlights as of April 30, 2025. Todd McNeill seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Budget Amendment #6

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented Budget Amendment #6 (Attachment A1), which is an increase of \$78,445 in the general fund, an increase of \$1,335,849 in the Workforce Development department and a decrease of \$34,648 in the Planning and Development department. Jeff Whitson made a motion to approve Budget Amendment #6. Charles E. Vines seconded the motion. Motion carried.

National Council on Aging's ACL Innovations Lab Grant Project Ordinance

Finance Officer Caroline Briggs presented a Grant Project Ordinance for the National Council on Aging's ACL Innovations Lab, which focuses on home modifications and assistance (Attachment A2). This ordinance includes additional funding of \$289,973, allocated to the Area Agency on Aging department, and is effective through May 31, 2027. Charles E. Vines made a motion to approve the National Council on Aging's ACL Innovations Lab Grant Project Ordinance. Brenda Lyerly seconded the motion. Motion carried.

HCCOG Contract to Audit

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented the FY2025 Contract to Audit and noted that the price remains the same at \$26,500. The only change is that the deadline to submit the audit is now December 31, 2025. Todd McNeill made a motion to approve the HCCOG Contract to Audit. Charles E. Vines seconded the motion. Motion carried.

CONSIDERATION OF 2025 HCCOG LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director presented a draft version of the proposed 2025 HCCOG Legislative Priorities (Attachment B) for consideration. Todd McNeill suggested that a statement opposing House Bill 765 and any component therein be added to the priorities list. Todd McNeill made a motion to approve the draft 2025 HCCOG Legislative Priorities with the new addition forementioned. Brenda Lyerly seconded the motion. Motion carried.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

Misty Bishop-Price, Workforce Development Director provided an update on the Workforce Development department, highlighting recent grant funding achievements including an additional \$1,335,849 from the state, Dislocated Worker funds and Business Recovery funds due to the impacts of Hurricane Helene in our region. Vice-Chairman Aldridge praised Mrs. Bishop-Price and her team for their outstanding efforts and dedication to supporting the community during this challenging time.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

Chris Grubb, Planning and Development Director provided an update on recent projects and grant applications/administration that his department has been actively pursuing. Mr. Grubb noted upcoming deadlines for programs and introduced Judson Belvins, the new Planner/Housing Coordinator. Mr. Grubb also announced that the Planning department will host a Lead NC Intern from the UNC SOG later this summer at no cost to the COG.

FY2026 BUDGET PRESENTATION

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director, delivered a comprehensive presentation outlining the workings of the HCCOG's budget, including the proposed budget resolution for fiscal year 2026, which totals \$7,578,641 (Attachment C). Ms. Wiggins emphasized that the HCCOG is predominantly funded through federal grants from five primary sources. She also highlighted the introduction of new revenue streams and various grant project ordinances. Furthermore, Ms. Wiggins indicated that the board will be required to take action on the proposed FY2026 budget resolution following the public hearing scheduled for the Executive Board meeting on June 16, 2025.

REPORT FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director announced that HCCOG hired Mackenzie Tipton as Finance Technician. Ms. Wiggins handed it over to Cory Osborne, Economic Recovery & Resilience Director, who provided a handout (Attachment D) highlighting the NC Commerce Small Business Infrastructure Grant Program (SmBIZ). Ms. Wiggins also commended Victoria Oxentine on her hard work compiling the Spring 2025 ReCOgnition newsletter. Mrs. Oxentine noted that the newsletter would be available online soon.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Todd McNeill announced that the Paddy Mountain Park Grand Opening in West Jefferson was a great success.

VICE-CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Vice-Chairman Aldridge expressed his gratitude for the HCCOG and all the work they do for the region.

ADJOURNMENT

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



Chairman, Doug Matheson



Clerk to the Board, Victoria Oxentine

Date 6/16/25