

**HIGH COUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
FEBRUARY 16, 2026
MINUTES**

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG) met February 16, 2026, 7:00pm, in the HCCOG Board Room in Boone. The following members were present at the meeting: Charles E. Vines, Brenda Lyerly, Wes Greene, Shirley Randleman, Rusty Barr, Bill Wheeler, Valerie Jaynes, Dalton George, John Shepherd, Bobby Munsey, Mike Parlier, Jeff Harding, Teresa McCoy, Rocky Buchanan, Jeff Whitson, Braxton Eggers, Paul Robinson Jr., Larry Fontaine, and Dennis Aldridge. The following member was present via Zoom but did not count toward quorum: Doug Matheons. The following staff and guests were present at the meeting: Arthur Salido, Julie Wiggins, Caroline Briggs, Zack Green, Myles Stacey, Cory Osborne, Chris Grubb, Jackson Marcellus, Judson Blevins, and Victoria Oxentine. The following guests were present via Zoom: Alan Thompson, Kristin Stout, and LaDonte Lee.

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

Vice-Chairman Aldridge 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

Jeff Whitson moved to accept the minutes of the December 15, 2025 meeting, seconded by Braxton Eggers. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Financial Highlights

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented the Financial Highlights as of January 31, 2026 (Attachment A) and discussed revenues versus expenditures. Wes Greene made a motion to approve the Financial Highlights as of January 31, 2026. Jeff Harding seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Budget Amendment #4

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented Budget Amendment #4 (Attachment A1) which is an increase of \$125,000 from Dogwood Health Trust for the Digital Navigator program and \$1,121 for local match in the Area Agency on Aging department. Larry Fontaine made a motion to approve Budget Amendment #4. Wes Greene seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Workforce Grant Project Ordinance Amendment – ARPA Work-Based Learning

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented the Workforce Grant Project Ordinance Amendment – ARPA Work-Based Learning (Attachment A2) which is an additional \$35,000 of ARPA funds through December 30, 2026. Charles E. Vines made a motion to approve the Workforce Grant Project Ordinance Amendment – ARPA Work-Based Learning. Jeff Whitson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Planning Grant Project Ordinance Amendment – NCDIT Digital Champion

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented the Planning Grant Project Ordinance Amendment – NCDIT Digital Champion (Attachment A3) which shifted funds from personnel expenses to equipment. We were able to decrease salaries, fringe, indirect, and direct payments to

subrecipients, and increase the budget for equipment purchased for direct recipients. The grant is still the same amount of \$800,000. Braxton Eggers made a motion to approve Planning Grant Project Ordinance Amendment – NCDIT Digital Champion. Wes Greene seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Planning Grant Project Ordinance – EDA 2025 Partnership Planning Grant

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented the Planning Grant Project Ordinance – EDA 2025 Partnership Planning Grant (Attachment A4) which is a new GPO that runs through December 31, 2027 in the amount of \$420,000; \$210,00 from EDA and \$210,000 from local match. Brenda Lyerly made a motion to approve the Planning Grant Project Ordinance – EDA 2025 Partnership Planning Grant. Charles E. Vines seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Corrected Grant Project Ordinances (Clerical Corrections Only)

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented three Memos regarding Corrected Grant Project Ordinances (Attachment A5) that needed no action. The corrections entailed updating the correct reporting agency listed.

HCCOG AUDIT PRESENTATION

Alan Thompson from Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams, & Co. P.A. joined the meeting via Zoom to review the FY2025 Audit (Attachment B). Mr. Thompson shared that there were no findings, and he appreciated the help of the HCCOG finance staff in completing the audit. John Shepherd moved to approve the HCCOG Audit. Charles E. Vines seconded the motion. Motion carried.

HEALTHY BLUE PRESENTATION

LaDonte Lee and Kristin Stout joined the meeting via Zoom to present a slideshow (Attachment C) about Healthy Blue - Children and Families Specialty Plan (CFSP). Mr. Lee and Ms. Stout discussed the goals of the program, the objectives and 2-phase plan launch, the main goal being to prevent entry/reentry into foster care. There was much discussion among Executive Board members and Healthy Blue presenters regarding foster care, DSS, and members expressed more involvement is needed at the local level.

REPORT FROM THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Braxton Eggers, Nominating Committee Chair announced the proposed 2026 HCCOG Executive Board slate of officers: Dennis Aldridge - Chairman, Larry Fontaine – Vice-Chairman, Jeff Whitson - Secretary, and Rocky Buchanan - Treasurer. Jeff Harding made a motion to approve the 2026 slate of officers. Wes Greene seconded the motion. Motion carried.

RECESS OF HCCOG EXECUTIVE BOARD SESSION AND CONVENING OF REGION D DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION SESSION

Jeff Whitson made a motion to recess the HCCOG Executive Board session and convene the Region D Development Corporation (RDDC) session. Brenda Lyerly seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Consideration of February 17, 2025 RDDC Minutes

Vice-Chairman Aldridge noted that the RDDC is a nonprofit that was founded in the 1980s that performs a specific function apart from the HCCOG and we meet each year to hear a report and approve minutes from the prior year. Chris Grubb, Deputy Executive Director/Planning & Development Director discussed the Mountain BizWorks investment and presented the February 17, 2025 minutes (Attachment D) for approval. Larry Fontaine made a motion to approve the February 17, 2025 RDDC Minutes. Jeff Whitson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

CLOSING OF REGION D DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION SESSION AND OPENING OF HCCOG EXECUTIVE BOARD SESSION

As there was no other business of the RDDC, Brenda Lyerly made a motion to close the RDDC session and open the HCCOG Executive Board session. Charles E. Vines seconded the motion. Motion carried.

REPORT FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director announced that CDBG-DR grants are open for pre-screening for infrastructure and community revitalization, noting that the Planning and Development team are ready to help our local governments through this process. Ms. Wiggins also presented the FY2024-2025 Annual Report noting the record high ROI of \$108.73. Ms. Wiggins noted what a great snapshot the Annual Report is of the work HCCOG does and expressed appreciation for the partnership with our local governments.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Braxton Eggers thanked Doug Matheson for her service as Executive Board Chairman and noted how appreciated he was. Doug Matheson thanked everyone for the kind words of appreciation.

VICE-CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

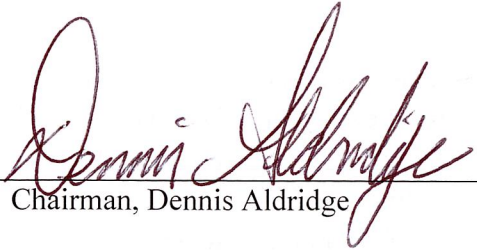
Vice-Chairman Aldridge welcomed four new board members including: Shirley Randleman - Wilkes County Commissioner, Rusty Barr – Mayor of West Jefferson, Valerie Jaynes – Mayor of Newland, and Dalton George – Mayor of Boone. Vice-Chairman Aldridge noted that two other new board members could not attend due to illness and injury.

PUBLIC COMMENT

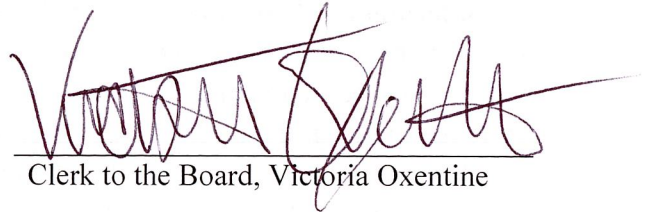
Todd McNeill, NCARCOG Executive Director congratulated HCCOG on a great ROI this year. Arthur Salido from 3 Notch Group Engineering introduced himself.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no other comments or business, Jeff Whitson made a motion to adjourn. Valerie Jaynes seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:11 pm.



Chairman, Dennis Aldridge



Clerk to the Board, Victoria Oxentine

Date 4/20/26