

**HIGH COUNTRY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
APRIL 20, 2026
MINUTES**

The Executive Board of the High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG) met April 20, 2026, 7:00pm, in the HCCOG Board Room in Boone. The following members were present at the meeting: Charles E. Vines, Brenda Lyerly, Shirley Randleman, Rusty Barr, Kelly Melang, Kristopher Hurley, Bill Wheeler, Valerie Jaynes, John Shepherd, Bobby Munsey, Mike Parlier, Jeff Harding, Teresa McCoy, Doug Matheson, Rocky Buchanan, Jeff Whitson, Braxton Eggers, Paul Robinson Jr., Larry Fontaine, and Dennis Aldridge. The following staff and guests were present at the meeting: Arthur Salido, Todd McNeill, Lake Silver, Kristin Stroup, Jordan Thompson, Kaili Matiaco, Julie Wiggins, Caroline Briggs, Stevie Welborn, Zack Green, Cory Osborne, Jackson Marcellus, Judson Blevins, and Victoria Oxentine.

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

Chairman Aldridge called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees. Braxton Eggers led the Pledge of Allegiance and Jeff Whitson offered the invocation.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

Doug Matheson moved to accept the minutes of the February 16, 2026 meeting, seconded by Charles E. Vines. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Financial Highlights

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented the Financial Highlights as of March 31, 2026 (Attachment A) and discussed revenues versus expenditures. Mrs. Briggs also noted she had physical copies of the audit if anyone was interested in receiving one. Braxton Eggers made a motion to approve the Financial Highlights as of March 31, 2026. Paul Robinson Jr. seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Budget Amendment #5

Finance Officer, Caroline Briggs presented Budget Amendment #5 (Attachment A1) which is an increase in the Area Agency on Aging department of \$100,00 for an ACL grant and \$7,774 for the Lifespan program. It is also an increase in the Workforce Development department of \$40,570 of federal money for IFA and \$50,000 in Adult WIOA funds transferred from Mountain Area Workforce Development Board, who could not spend those funds before the end of this fiscal year. Additionally, it is an increase of \$32,398 in local funds for the Workforce Development department. Budget Amendment #5 is a total increase of \$230,679. Larry Fontaine made a motion to approve Budget Amendment #5. Charles E. Vines seconded the motion. Motion carried.

FLOOD RISK MITIGATION FOR CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE: A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMMING SUPPORTED BY APPALACHIAN VOICES IN WNC

Kristin Stroup, Senior Program Manager, Energy & Climate Resilience for Appalachian Voices presented a slideshow (Attachment B) regarding the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) program with goals to strengthen the WNC/ETN region's capacity to prepare for, respond to, and

recover from future extreme weather events with in-depth flood risk assessments and robust microgrid and communication solutions that ensure the continuity of critical operations. The geographic scope covers 26 counties in Western NC. Ms. Stroup also discussed tasks and project deliverables.

BROWNFIELD SITE DEVELOPMENT

Jordan Thompson, Grants Manager for NCDEQ presented a slideshow (Attachment C) overviewing Brownfield Site development. NCDEQ redevelops brown sites to help preserve greenfield spaces using clean up methods making them safe for reuse. Ms. Thompson discussed Smoot Tannery in North Wilkesboro as an example of a brown site redevelopment in the HCCOG region. Ms. Thompson discussed an HHR Grant of \$5 million dollars for feasibility studies, property assessments, etc. to redevelop properties that were closed due to Hurricane Helene damage. The property would need to be put back into use in five years.

OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REPORT

Stevie Welborn, Regional Long-Term Care Ombudsman presented an annual report (Attachment D) overviewing the program's data for FY2025. Mrs. Welborn reviewed complaints and data trends, program assistance and facility visitation hours, as well as advocacy efforts and events. Zack Green, Area Agency on Aging Director gave a shoutout to Stevie for her hard work at the facilities in the region and her leadership amongst her peers across the state.

MERGER/REGIONALIZATION FEASIBILITY GRANT RESOLUTION

Jackson Marcellus, Lead for NC Fellow presented a resolution (Attachment E) for a NCDEQ grant application that will allow HCCOG to assist smaller municipalities with managing grant funding. The municipalities include the Town of Crossnore, the Town of Elk Park, and the Town of Lansing, but we are able to add any other small municipalities within the HCCOG region struggling to manage grant funding, at any time. Jeff Whitson made a motion to approve the Merger/Regionalization Feasibility Grant Resolution. Charles E. Vines seconded the motion. Motion carried.

REPORT FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Julie Wiggins, Executive Director discussed the concept of creating a new nonprofit leg of the HCCOG that would serve our local governments better than the way the current Region D Development Corporation (RDDC) can. The intent is to transition to a nonprofit with a broader scope so that we can better serve local governments/apply for more funding and eventually dissolve the current RDDC. Ms. Wiggins also reminded board members about the CDBG-DR open grants and pre-screenings the Planning and Development department can assist local governments with. Ms. Wiggins also noted that the FY2027 draft budget will be presented at the May meeting.

CHAIRMAN’S COMMENTS

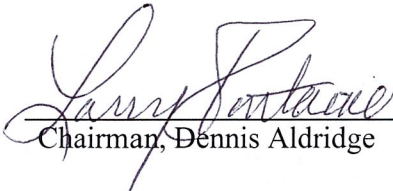
Chairman Aldridge welcomed Commissioner Kristopher Hurley from the Town of North Wilkesboro. Chairman Aldridge also presented immediate past Chair, Doug Matheson with a plaque and thanked him for his service as Chairman to the board from 2024-2025. Chairman Aldridge also gave kudos to NCDOL/Commerce and the Workforce Development board after recent discussions, reports, and impact on utilizing resources post-Helene.

PUBLIC COMMENT


Lake Silver, Senior Field Manager for the NC Auditors Office introduced himself and discussed upcoming initiatives from the Auditor Boliek’s office.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no other comments or business, Rocky Buchanan made a motion to adjourn. Jeff Whitson seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:04 pm.



Chairman, Dennis Aldridge



Clerk to the Board, Victoria Oxentine

Date 5/18/26