MINUTES

UPPER COASTAL PLAIN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

# May 18, 2021

## BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Greg Browning, Chairman Alternate Board Member City of Roanoke Rapids

Bobbie Jones, Vice-Chairman Mayor Town of Princeville

Miranda Boykin, Sec./Treasurer Mayor Town of Sims

James Alston Mayor Town of Castalia

Fred Belfield, Jr. Commissioner Nash County

Roy Bell Mayor Town of Garysburg

Natalie Bess Alternate Board Member Edgecombe County

Eddie Braxton Mayor Town of Scotland Neck

Brenda Brown Mayor Town of Nashville

Tony Brown Manager Halifax County

Eddie Coats At-Large Board Member Nash County

Alice Delbridge Mayor Town of Gaston

Doug Hughes At-Large Board Member Northampton County

Jeff Johnson Mayor Town of Lucama

Brenda Lucas Commissioner Town of Spring Hope

Martha Lucas Commissioner Town of Momeyer

Sherry Lucas Commissioner Wilson County

Jason Morris Mayor Town of Jackson

Joshua Pair At-Large Board Member Northampton County

Jesse Petteway Commissioner Town of Conetoe

Stacie Shatzer Assistant Manager Nash County

Barbara Simmons At-Large Board Member Halifax County

Grady Smith Mayor Town of Elm City

Denise Stinagle Manager Wilson County

Charles Tyner Board Chairman Northampton County

Mary Wells Commissioner Nash County

Othar Woodard Mayor Pro-Tem Town of Tarboro

\*If your name is missing, you may not have been included in the roll call. Please let us know so we can make that correction.

**GUESTS**

Rochelle Small-Toney City Manager City of Rocky Mount

**MEMBERS NOT PRESENT**

Wayne Anderson Mayor Town of Enfield

Randy Beale Mayor Town of Woodland

Michael Bell Council Member City of Wilson

Stevie Cox Town Administrator Town of Sharpsburg

Samuel Davis At-Large Board Member Edgecombe County

Eric Evans (Alt. attended) Manager Edgecombe County

Carl Ferebee (Alt. attended) Mayor Pro-Tem City of Roanoke Rapids

Steven Flythe Commissioner Town of Lasker

Norlan Graves At-Large Board member Halifax County

Reginald Harris At-Large Board Member Wilson County

Wilbert Harrison Mayor Town of Speed

Charles Jackson Manager Northampton County

Andre’ Knight Council Member City of Rocky Mount

Geraldine Langford Mayor Town of Seaboard

Marshall Lassiter Manager Town of Severn

Luther Lewis, Jr. Mayor Town of Middlesex

Julia Meacham Mayor Town of Weldon

Florence Pender Mayor Pro-Tem Town of Pinetops

Esterine Pitt Mayor Town of Whitakers

Thomas Richards Mayor Town of Bailey

Coley Rhodes Mayor Town of Stantonsburg

Dennis Sanderson Mayor Town of Macclesfield

Elaine Saunders Commissioner Town of Saratoga

Owen Scott Mayor Town of Littleton

Tracy Shearin Administrator/Clerk Town of Red Oak

Mack Smith Mayor Town of Black Creek

Marcelle Smith Commissioner Halifax County

Robert Sykes Mayor Pro-Tem Town of Hobgood

Jackie Vick Mayor Town of Dortches

Ralph Webb Commissioner Edgecombe County

John White Mayor Town of Halifax

Reginald White Mayor Town of Rich Square

Tim Wiggs At-Large Board Member Wilson County

Steward Woodard Commissioner Town of Conway

**STAFF**

Robert Hiett Executive Director

Michael Williams Workforce Development Program Director

Mary Marlin Area Agency on Aging Program Director

Ron Townley Planning & Development Services Program Director

Mark Hill Finance Director

Kelly Skinner Executive Assistant/Clerk to the Board

Ben Farmer Economic Development Planner

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice-Chairman Jones called the virtual meeting of the Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments Board of Directors to order at 6:22 p.m. He welcomed all in attendance and introduced special guests. Roll was called and attendance was duly noted.

**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

Vice-Chairman Jones called for a Motion to approve the Consent Agenda items which included approval of the meeting minutes from March 16, 2021; FY 2021 Financial Report; and Job Description & Grade Approvals. A Motion was made by Ms. Mary Wells and seconded by Mr. Doug Hughes. All in favor included: Greg Browning, Bobbie Jones, Miranda Boykin, James Alston, Fred Belfield, Jr., Roy Bell, Natalie Bess, Eddie Braxton, Brenda Brown, Tony Brown, Eddie Coats, Alice Delbridge, Doug Hughes, Jeff Johnson, Brenda Lucas, Martha Lucas, Sherry Lucas, Jason Morris, Joshua Pair, Jesse Petteway, Stacie Shatzer, Barbara Simmons, Grady Smith, Denise Stinagle, Charles Tyner, Mary Wells and Othar Woodard. There were none opposed. The Motion carried and the consent agenda was approved.

**ITEMS FOR ACTION**

***Presentation of First Budget Draft and Set Public Hearing – Mark Hill, Finance Director***

Mr. Hill presented the Recommended Draft of the Budget for the July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022 Fiscal year. He referred the Board members to the draft that was included in the Agenda packet and explained in detail. He then opened the floor for discussion.

There being none, Vice-Chairman Jones called for a Motion to approve the budget draft as presented as well as the Public Hearing date of June 15, 2021 at 6:15 p.m. Ms. Mary Wells made a Motion to Approve which was seconded by Ms. Barbara Simmons. All in favor included: Greg Browning, Bobbie Jones, Miranda Boykin, James Alston, Fred Belfield, Jr., Roy Bell, Natalie Bess, Eddie Braxton, Brenda Brown, Tony Brown, Eddie Coats, Alice Delbridge, Doug Hughes, Jeff Johnson, Brenda Lucas, Martha Lucas, Sherry Lucas, Jason Morris, Joshua Pair, Jesse Petteway, Stacie Shatzer, Barbara Simmons, Grady Smith, Denise Stinagle, Charles Tyner, Mary Wells and Othar Woodard. There being none opposed, the Motion carried and the Budget and Public Hearing Date were both approved.

**CHAIRMAN’S REPORT**

Chairman Browning stated that he wanted to commend the COG staff and Program Directors for their continued work during the pandemic. He also commended the administrative staff.

He further stated that he would like to commend Executive Director Hiett for his involvement with the NCARCOG and for keeping us well represented throughout the state.

He closed by thanking the Board members for their attendance at the virtual meetings and their continued support of the COG.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

Mr. Hiett referred the Board to his report which begins on Page 17 of the Agenda Packet. He called attention to the first item which he explained gives a high-level view of some of the areas in which we are currently engaged. He stated that more details will be given in each program report which will be given later in the meeting.

He spoke about the current Aging food program and stated that there have been several press releases concerning the program. He called the Board’s attention to the chart located on page 18 which breaks down the number of food boxes per county including the total boxes per week for 24 weeks.

Mr. Hiett also reported that a candidate has been hired as the new Opioid Navigator and that the chosen candidate will begin on June 10. She will be working closely with the local governments, employers and the Workforce and Aging networks regarding opioid treatment and recovery.

He then briefly spoke about Item #7, the UCPCOG Digital Inclusion Plan and shared that it has been put on our website for public viewing as well as e-mailed to the Board. He thanked the several Board members that participated in this planning effort. He spoke about how digital literacy is affecting everyone now, especially with remote learning and stated that Ben Farmer will go into further detail in his report coming up next in the meeting.

Next, Mr. Hiett called the Board’s attention to Item #8 in his report (Page 20) which speaks to ARP funding. He stated that links to recent trainings had been e-mailed to the Board as well as guidance from the UNC School of Government. He referred the Board to the list that was also included in the packet which breaks down anticipated funding per County and reminded Board members that there are restrictions regarding how the funds can be used. He urged the members if they have any questions or need additional information to please contact him.

Mr. Hiett concluded by reminding the Board that we are here as a resource to you and to please feel free to call with any questions or if we can assist any local government in any way.

**REGIONAL BROADBAND TASK FORCE UPDATE – Ben Farmer, Economic Development Planner**

Mr. Farmer presented a PowerPoint presentation to the Board regarding the Broadband and Digital Inclusion Strategies. He gave the history of the Broadband Task Force which was formed with the goal of expanding affordable, reliable broadband throughout our region.

He listed the task force accomplishments and detailed the scope of work for the EDA Broadband grant. He then spoke about the digital inclusion planning process, the prioritized strategies and the three digital inclusion themes being availability, access and adoption.

He shared charts showing the county priorities broken down by County as well as the target audiences. He then listed other county plan recommendations, gave a list of highlights and explained what steps need to be taken to move forward with the initiative.

**IMPACT REPORTS AND PROGRAM UPDATES**

**Area Agency on Aging Report – Mary Marlin, Aging Director**

Ms. Marlin referred the Board to her report located on page 20 in the Agenda packet.

Ms. Marlin began by briefly discussing funding and specifically touched on the use of the Older Americans Act funding. She wanted to reassure members that the spending of these funds has been extended for this year due to COVID so if it doesn’t all get spent by the deadline, it will still be available for use.

Next, she reported that the Nutrition program is going well. They are very excited about the demand for the produce box distribution as well as the robotic pets and tablet programs.

She further reported that although the SCSEP participants have not yet returned to work, they have been given an anticipated date of July 1 for resumption of services. She asked that if you or someone you know is interested in being a partner agency to please contact her and we would be glad to work with you on that.

Finally, Ms. Marlin stated that June is Elder Abuse Awareness month and to please check our website and Facebook pages for updates. She reported that there will be several virtual workshops scheduled during the month of June which will be carried on Facebook live.

**Planning and Development Services Report – Ron Townley, PDS Director**

Mr. Ron Townley referred the Board to his impact report located on Pages 17 – 19 of the Agenda Packet. He began by thanking Ben Farmer and the rest of the Board members who served on the Broadband task force for the work that has been done in that area. He stated that he is very pleased with the progress being made and encouraged all to complete the Broadband State Survey and to adopt the Broadband Digital Inclusion Plan if asked to do so.

Mr. Townley then gave an update on the Brownfields grant funding and reported on the cleanup efforts taking place in Littleton.

He then spoke about the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding that the local municipalities are expected to receive shortly. He reminded everyone that they will have up to three years to spend the funds, so after emergency needs are met it is best to think strategically and be sure that the funding is wisely spent.

Next, he gave an update on the food project that is currently underway in the Region. He said it is obvious that demand far exceeds supply and that it is nice to be able to serve the citizens of the region who need the assistance.

Lastly, he spoke about the Healthy Food Access Mapping effort and reported that four of our five counties will be going under contract with the State to help implement the Visit NC Farms Agritourism app and that counties should be receiving the contracts soon.

**Workforce Development Services Report – Michael Williams, WFD Director**

Mr. Michael Williams referred the Board to his impact report located on Page 20 of the agenda packet. He reported that local Workforce centers have been busy trying to hire and recruit new employees. They have held several drive-through career fairs, one of which had over 800 attendees. He also reported that they have been partnering with our PDS department and have purchased a new virtual career platform that will be in operation soon.

Mr. Williams thanked Chairman Greg Browning for inviting him to speak with the Roanoke Rapids Sanitary District to share opportunities and resources that they have available.

Next, Mr. Williams reported that there are 23 local Workforce Development Boards and of those there are only 7 who have successfully met the current requirements for youth programs and we were one of those 7. He stated that he was very proud of our youth program providers for achieving this.

He reported that the State plan has been submitted and we are waiting to hear about funding allocations for next year’s Workforce programs.

Lastly, he highlighted a few Labor Market Information statistics. He reported that although there has been a decrease in the number of new Unemployment Insurance claims during this period, there are still fewer people working now than this time last year so there is still work to be done in that area. He closed by thanking the local NC Works career center managers for their help in assisting jobseekers to secure gainful employment.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT UPDATES**

**Halifax County**

Mr. Tony Brown, Halifax County Manager, shared a PowerPoint presentation with the Board and gave updates on things happening in the County.

He spoke about the Halifax County Intergovernmental Association (HCIA) and explained that this was a group of local government elected officials that meet every other month to discuss issues and concerns in the County. He shared that this helps to keep the lines of communication open. They have legislative goals that are actually reviewed annually with the area Legislators.

Next, Manager Brown discussed the Charters of Freedom displays and gave a history of the Halifax Resolves, which was a precursor to the Declaration of Independence.

He then explained about both the Community Paramedic and the Detention Center Liaison. The paramedic position, which is funded by Rural Health Group, works with patients to form a relationship with them and to do follow-up with them following hospital visits, which greatly reduces the number of re-admissions. The detention center liaison works with repeat offenders in the detention program and helps to address their needs in an effort to keep them out of the detention centers.

Next, he spoke about and showed pictures of the 4-H Rural Life Center improvements which include a new basketball court, playground, frisbee golf and a new pond that can be used for canoeing and fishing.

Lastly, Mr. Brown closed by showcasing the annual Harvest Days celebration that will be held this year on Friday, October 8th and Saturday October 9th. The purpose of the harvest days is to showcase the rich agricultural history in the County. He stated that their motto is “working together works.”

**Town of Jackson**

Mayor Jason Morris gave a brief update on events and places in the Town of Jackson, which is located in Northampton County. Mayor Morris reported that there are several new businesses open in Jackson which include a new grocery store, a restaurant, a barber school, a dry cleaners and a new bait and tackle store which was opened in anticipation of a new State boat landing coming soon. He also reported that there is a state-of-the-art shooting range which brings in a lot of out-of-town visitors as well as the Northampton County visitor’s center and farmer’s market.

Next, Mayor Morris spoke about the placard for the Lafayette farewell tour and told that Jackson was one of only 7 stops in the state. He told the history of the tour and spoke about the possible re-creation of the tour.

He reported that they are working with Dominion Power to replace the street lights for a new look downtown. He also stated that they work closely with the County law enforcement in an effort to keep the citizens safe in the area.

Mayor Morris closed by stating that the Town of Jackson is listed on the National Historic Register and that he was pleased to report that the County is looking into building a new courthouse which will be located in Jackson.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Vice-Chairman Jones announced that our next meeting is scheduled for June 15, 2021 and asked for a Motion to adjourn. Ms. Alice Delbridge made the Motion which was seconded by Mr. Tony Brown . Those voting in favor included: Greg Browning, Bobbie Jones, Miranda Boykin, James Alston, Fred Belfield, Jr., Roy Bell, Natalie Bess, Eddie Braxton, Brenda Brown, Tony Brown, Eddie Coats, Alice Delbridge, Doug Hughes, Jeff Johnson, Brenda Lucas, Martha Lucas, Sherry Lucas, Jason Morris, Joshua Pair, Jesse Petteway, Stacie Shatzer, Barbara Simmons, Grady Smith, Denise Stinagle, Charles Tyner, Mary Wells and Othar Woodard. There were no opposing votes. The Motion carried and the meeting was adjourned.

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Gregory Browning, Chairman Miranda Boykin, Secretary/Treasurer