MINUTES

UPPER COASTAL PLAIN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

# JANUARY 21, 2025

## BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Miranda Boykin, Chairperson Mayor Town of Sims

James Alston, Secretary/Treasurer Mayor Town of Castalia

Randy Beale Mayor Town of Woodland

Michael Bell Council Member City of Wilson

Roy Bell Mayor Town of Garysburg

Derrick Bennett Alternate Northampton County

Eddie Braxton Mayor Town of Scotland Neck

Brenda Brown Mayor Town of Nashville

Gregory Browning Adjustment/Planning City of Roanoke Rapids Delane Bryant At-Large Board Member Edgecombe County

Paolo Ceyrolles At-Large Board Member Wilson County

Eddie Coats At-Large Board Member Nash County

Beverly Davis Commissioner Town of Sharpsburg

Mark Frohman At-Large Board Member Nash County

Doris Garner Mayor Town of Weldon

Ophelia Gould-Faison Commissioner Town of Littleton

Jenny Hinnant Commissioner Town of Conetoe

Meredith Holdford Commissioner Town of Halifax

Sammy Hopkins Mayor Town of Whitakers

Bobbie Jones Mayor Town of Princeville

Currie Joyner At-Large Board Member Wilson County

Geraldine Langford Mayor Town of Seaboard

Marshall Lassiter Commissioner Town of Severn

Brenda Lucas Commissioner Town of Spring Hope

Sherry Lucas Commissioner Wilson County

Tawanda Moore Mayor Town of Elm City

Victoria Newcombe Mayor Town of Rich Square

Joshua Pair At-Large Board Member Northampton County

Julian Phillips County Manager Northampton County

Mondale Robinson Mayor Town of Enfield

Cathy Scott At-Large Board Member Halifax County

Stacie Shatzer County Manager Nash County

Jimmie Silver Commissioner Halifax County

Barbara Simmons At-Large Board Member Halifax County

Ralph Webb Commissioner Edgecombe County

Jean Wooten-Jiles Commissioner Town of Macclesfield

\*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.

**MEMBERS PRESENT BY PROXY**

Dia Denton, Vice-Chairperson County Manager Halifax County

Eric Evans Manager Edgecombe County

Matthew Lassiter Commissioner Town of Jackson

Luther Lewis, Jr. Mayor Town of Middlesex

Martha Lucas Commissioner Town of Momeyer

Walter Wells Mayor Pro-Tem Town of Bailey

**MEMBERS NOT PRESENT**

Fred Belfield Commissioner Nash County

Vicky Bennett At-Large Board Member Northampton County

Dannie Flanary Mayor Town of Hobgood

Steven Flythe Commissioner Town of Lasker

Ron Hunt County Manager Wilson County

Deborah James Mayor Town of Gaston

Jeff Johnson Mayor Town of Lucama

Richard Joyner Council Member City of Rocky Mount

Coley Rhodes Mayor Town of Stantonsburg

Sandra Russ Commissioner Town of Red Oak

Elaine Saunders Commissioner Town of Saratoga

Mack Smith Mayor Town of Black Creek

Barbara Taylor Commissioner Town of Pinetops

Charles Tyner Board Chairman Northampton County

Jackie Vick Mayor Town of Dortches

Bobby Wheeler Town Administrator Town of Speed

Othar Woodard Mayor Pro-Tem Town of Tarboro

Stewart Woodard Mayor Pro-Tem Town of Conway

**GUESTS**

Bryashia Buggs Office of Rep. Don Davis

Lois Elbert Town of Sims

Tamica Gray Town of Whitakers

Marla Jerman Town of Seaboard

John Tayloe Office of U.S. Senator Ted Budd

Amanda Turner Finance Consultant

Hunter Wiseman Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams & Co., P.A.

**STAFF**

Robert Hiett Executive Director

Kelly Lancaster Finance Director

Mary Marlin Aging Director

Ben Farmer Planning and Development Services Director

Kelly Skinner Executive Assistant/Clerk to the Board

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Boykin called the virtual meeting of the Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments Board of Directors to order at 6:45 p.m. She welcomed all in attendance, introduced special guests and thanked them for taking the time to attend. Roll was called and attendance was duly noted.

**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

Chairperson Boykin called for a Motion to approve the Consent Agenda items which included approval of the October 15, 2024 meeting minutes, financial reports for September, October and November, 2024, budget amendments for Aging services and Workforce Development and removal of fixed assets as well as method of disposal. A Motion was made by Mr. Roy Bell and seconded by Mr. Bobbie Jones. All voted in favor. The Motion carried and the consent agenda was approved.

**ACTION ITEMS**

**Audit Presentation – Hunter Wiseman, Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams & Co., P.A.**

Mr. Hunter Wiseman presented the audit results for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2024. There were no significant audit findings. After several questions were asked and answered, Chairperson Boykin called for a Motion to approve the report. A Motion was made by Mr. Gregory Browning and seconded by Ms. Sherry Lucas. All voted in favor, the motion carried and the audit report was approved.

**UCPCOG Executive Committee Elections Policy – Robert Hiett, Executive Director**

Mr. Hiett explained that the Executive Committee election process has been carefully structured to ensure fair representation across all member counties while maintaining compliance with the bylaws.

The process would work like this: Each January, the Board is notified of upcoming elections, and open Executive Committee seats are identified. Elections are conducted exclusively for EC at-large representatives, with nominations opening after the March Board meeting and closing on the second Friday of April. Following the nomination period, electronic ballots are distributed to eligible voters, with voting results tallied and reported by the end of May. Results are then presented in the June Board meeting. Members take office on July 1, serving two-year terms, except during the inaugural year when all EC at-large will serve one year.

If approved, there will need to be three EC at-large elections: Edgecombe, Halifax and Northampton Counties. He further explained that in cases where no eligible nominees are available for a vacant seat, the Vice-Chairperson may propose a qualified replacement, subject to Board approval.

There being no questions, Chairperson Boykin called for a Motion to approve. A Motion was made by Mr. Eddie Braxton and seconded by Mr. Gregory Browning. All voted in favor and the Motion carried.

**CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT**

Chairperson Boykin discussed the AI Academy training that began on January 17th. She mentioned that, thanks to Executive Director Hiett, we are at the forefront of learning to use AI productively and responsibly. She urged all who have not enrolled to become involved in the next class that will be offered.

**NCARCOG UPDATE**

Mr. Gregory Browning shared a brief update from the North Carolina Association of Regional Councils of Government. He relayed information about their latest meeting which was held in December at the Lumber River COG in Pembroke. He also spoke about how far ahead of the other COGS we are with our AI initiatives and how impressed he was with Mr. Hiett’s leadership and knowledge in that area.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT – Robert Hiett, Executive Director**

Mr. Hiett called the Board’s attention to his report beginning on Page 43 of the agenda packet. He briefly highlighted the charts on pages 48 and 49 which show the participation in the AI Academy. He discussed the importance of using AI responsibly and to recognize trustworthy AI.

Next, he reported that our Assistant Finance Director, Rhonda Sommer, has left due to the long commute. We will be relying more on our Finance Consultant, Ms. Amanda Turner. She does have over 20 years of experience working with COGs and is very knowledgeable. We will also be using a CPA firm in an effort help with load balancing. We are in good shape at the moment, but we are exploring more long-term options. One of these options may be partnering with Carolina Pines COG and Mid Carolina COG to pool our resources and have a tri-COG approach to finance operations. He promised to keep the Board up to date as this partnership evolves.

**PROGRAM IMPACT REPORTS AND UPDATES**

**Aging – Ms. Mary Marlin, Aging Director**

Ms. Marlin called the Board’s attention to the Aging report located on Page 53 in the Board packet. She gave an update on Ask Ashleigh, the virtual caregiving assistant. There was a very high number of users in the last month, but it is still very important to keep sharing the information to increase those numbers. She shared that they will be presenting at the North Carolina Association on Aging conference in February. She also reported that the Aging Department is busy preparing for the annual Caregiver conference to be held in June. They will be applying for an AARP grant to hopefully expand their AI work in the Aging Department.

**Planning and Development Services – Mr. Ben Farmer, PDS Director**

Mr. Farmer called the Board’s attention to the PDS Impact Report beginning on Page 54 in the Board packet. He spoke about an upcoming webinar on electric school buses on February 5th in partnership with the Clean Energy Technology Center. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Ron Townley. He also shared a new on-call Planning Consultants list. Please let Ben know if you reach out to anyone on the list. He welcomed Ms. Sarah Medlin, our new Planning Technician. He spoke about NC Forest Service grants that we will be applying for. Next, he discussed the My Town AI pilot program. Please reach out to him if you have questions. Lastly, he called the Board’s attention to the information on Pages 61 and 62 in the Board packet regarding Kramden, which is a resource used for donating old computers to be repurposed to help North Carolina families.

**Workforce Development Services – Mr. Michael Williams, Workforce Development Director**

Mr. Hiett gave the Workforce Development report in the absence of Mr. Williams. He called the Board’s attention to the Workforce Development Board Impact Report on Page 68 of the Board packet. He reviewed the numbers and passed along that we just finished with the State compliance monitoring and there were no issues. We are still waiting for the Federal Workforce Act to be authorized and there will be meetings in the near future. We are also awaiting funding numbers for the year. We will brief everyone after the meetings.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Chairperson Boykin announced that our next meeting will be held on March 18, 2025, in the Brown Auditorium on the campus of Nash Community College at 6:45 p.m. She then called for a Motion to adjourn. A Motion was made by Mr. Currie Johner and seconded by Mr. Bobbie Jones. All voted in favor. The Motion carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned.

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Miranda Boykin, Chairperson James Alston, Secretary/Treasurer