APPALACHIAN
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

MINUTES

APPALACHIAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
FRIDAY, AUGUST 28, 2026 – 10:30 A.M.
COUNCIL BOARD ROOM WITH ZOOM OPTION
GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA

Members Present:

Sen. Thomas Alexander, Tom Allen, Bill Blanton, Bob Briggs, Rocky Burgess, Grady Butler, Garey Collins, Rick Danner, Lyman Dawkins III, Joe Dill, Ed Elliott, Ensley Feemster, Mike Forrester, Don Godbey, Karry Guillory, Robert Halfacre, Jane Hall, Laura Hinty, Henry Jolly, Claiborne Linvill, Ruth Littlejohn, Sherry Marrah, Saraí Melendez, Alan Mitchell, Jason Peterson, David Posner, E Riley, Jeff Roberts, Cindy Wilson, Wayne Wright

Guests Present:

Sam Davis, Matt Hudson-Flege, Daniel Gamble, Todd Glover, Natalie Hill, Penny Phillips, Tamika Thomason

Staff Present:

Chip Bentley, Tiffany Bland, Trey Eubanks, Brooke Ferguson, Jill Francisco, Jeffrey Guilbault, Steve Pelissier, Tim Womack

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Call to Order

Chairman Godbey called the meeting to order. Mr. Riley offered the invocation. Mr. Pelissier introduced the guests. Chairman Godbey asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the June 26, 2026, board meeting. Mr. Riley made a motion to adopt the minutes. The motion was seconded by Ms. Wilson. The motion was unanimously approved. No financial statement was included in the board packet due to the early timing within the fiscal year.

Recognition of ACOG Employees' Milestone Anniversaries

Chairman Godbey recognized Tiffany Bland for 10 years of service and commended her for her leadership and implementing the heating and air program within the Family Services Program. Chairman Godbey also recognized Jeffrey Guilbault for five years of service, including his promotion to Planning Director during that time.

Upstate Greenways & Trails Alliance (UGATA)

Chairman Godbey asked Mr. Matt Hudson-Flege, Executive Director of UGATA, to provide an overview of the organization's work. Mr. Hudson-Flege highlighted three specific trail projects including the Gold Line of the Swamp Rabbit Trail, Piedmont Riverfront Park, and the Nicholtown Connector. UGATA has built over fifty miles of trails and secured over $22 million in funding since its founding in 2021, working to make trails accessible to communities throughout the region. Mr. Hudson-Flege answered several questions from the board.

Report on Data Centers

Chairman Godbey asked Mr. Chip Bentley, Deputy Executive Director, to report on the growing demand and challenges of data centers. Mr. Bentley presented a framework for addressing data center development in communities, outlining five key areas for consideration: site fit and compatibility, power capacity, water supply, financial impacts, and community effects. The presentation detailed a structured approach involving pre-application processes, development agreements, and ongoing monitoring to balance economic benefits with community concerns. Mr. Bentley emphasized the need for communities to have informed discussions about data center development and consider developing regulations rather than immediately rejecting such developments.

OMB Proposed Rules Change on Federal Financial Assistance

Chairman Godbey asked Mr. Steve Pelissier, Executive Director, to update the board on upcoming changes to federal grant regulations. Mr. Pelissier explained that regulatory changes proposed by the administration are set to take effect on October 1, 2026. It would give the president greater discretionary authority over grant awards, including mandatory political review of grants and expanded termination authority based on national priorities as defined by the administration.

Legislative Report

Chairman Godbey requested Brooke Ferguson to provide the board with the legislative report. Ms. Ferguson reported that 261 bills were signed into law and over $91 million in funding for local government programs, infrastructure projects, and community investments in the ACOG region. She provided highlights from the state budget, including that the COGs received full funding this year.

Executive Director Report

Chairman Godbey asked Mr. Pelissier to give the Executive Director's report. Mr. Pelissier stated his appreciation for Rep. Neal Collins's sponsorship of an allocation for the building fund. He reported that the SCCOG Conference registration deadline is set for September 21, 2026.

Member Updates

- Ms. Wilson shared how board member, Tom Allen, was a champion for the Fant's Grove Trails in Anderson County.
- Ms. Littlejohn invited everyone to the topping out ceremony planned for Morgan Square in Spartanburg on September 9, 2026.

The next board meeting will be held on October 23, 2026, at 10:30 AM in the ACOG Board Room. Members may also attend through Zoom.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:05 PM.

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Don Godbey, Chairman

The South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments has complied with the Freedom of Information Act in scheduling and conducting this meeting.