



MINUTES

APPALACHIAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2024 – 10:30 A.M.
COUNCIL BOARD ROOM WITH ZOOM OPTION
GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA

Members Present:

Tom Allen, Bill Blanton, Rick Bradley, Bob Briggs, Rockey Burgess, Grady Butler, Rep. Neal Collins, Roy Costner, Rick Danner, Joe Dill, Ed Elliott, Ennis Fant, Ensley Feemster, Lillian Brock Flemming, Mike Forrester, Don Godbey, Jane Hall, Laura Hinty, Henry Jolly, Butch Kirven, Saraí Melendez, Alan Mitchell, E Riley, Russell Stall, Bob Walker, Cindy Wilson

Guests Present:

Guillermo Espinoza, Ronnie Esquivel Perez, Lance Estep, Daniel Gambrell, Marcy Loucks, Mary Mason Jolly, Rob Moser, Patricia Ravenhorse, Alex Sanchez Irazo, Ivan Segura, A. Stone, Jim Walden, YiYun Zou

Staff Present:

Chip Bentley, Trey Eubanks, Brooke Ferguson, Jill Francisco, Jeff Guilbault, Jake Whitmire, Tim Womack, Arlene Young, Don Zimmer

Call to Order

Chairman Collins called the meeting to order. Mr. Riley offered the invocation. Mr. Bentley introduced the speakers and guests. Mr. Elliott introduced the new board member, Bill Blanton, a County Council member from Cherokee County. Mr. Blanton is the former sheriff and former interim administrator. Chairman Collins asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the October 25, 2024, board meeting. Mr. Riley made a motion to adopt the minutes. The motion was seconded by Ms. Wilson. The motion was unanimously approved. The financial statement was accepted as information.

Appalachian Council of Governments FY 2024 Annual Audit

Chairman Collins introduced Ms. Marcy Loucks of Mckinley, Cooper, and Co., to present the ACOG FY 2024 audit report. Ms. Loucks commended the ACOG finance staff for doing a good job. She referred to the management discussion and analysis, reviewed the balance sheets, and explained the net pension liability. She reviewed the statement of activities and noted that the total revenue for the year was \$14.3 million, and expenses were \$13.8 million. Ms. Loucks stated that ACOG is a low-risk entity and has good policies, procedures, and budgeting. The audit is unmodified.

South Carolina Research Authority (SCRA)

Chairman Collins introduced Rob Moser, the Senior Investment Manager from SCRA. Mr. Moser gave an overview of the agency and its mission of fueling South Carolina's innovation economy. He discussed SCRA's economic impact for 2023, success stories, and their four key areas of focus: advanced manufacturing and materials; information technology; life sciences; clean tech, sustainability, and resilience. Mr. Moser explained funding opportunities available, the SC Launch program for investors, and the Industry Partnership Fund, which all support entrepreneurs and technology startups.

Transportation Update on US 29 Corridor Study

Chairman Collins called on Jake Whitmire, Transportation Planner, to update the board on the US 29 Corridor Study. Mr. Whitmire explained that the project was moved from ACOG's to ACATS' management. He explained that the project is divided into short-term, medium-term, and long-term improvements. He reviewed the purpose of the study, crash rates, and the recommended short-term, actionable improvements on each intersection. Mid-term improvements are focused on necessary policy changes such as code updates and comprehensive plan updates. Long-term capacity improvements involve widening sections of US 29.

SC Legislative Preview

Chairman Collins asked Brooke Ferguson, Economic Development Director, to provide a preview for the legislative session beginning in January. Ms. Ferguson explained that several big agenda items passed legislation last year. The Republican caucus identified six pillars of success that outline main priorities for the session. Ms. Ferguson gave the list as well as information on other policy proposals. She reviewed some of the challenges that the Republican party is facing from the Freedom Caucus. Ms. Ferguson will review the pre-filed legislation and will choose relevant information to discuss in January. She handed out a list of house and senate leadership and committee assignments.



Executive Director's Report

Chairman Collins asked Mr. Bentley to give the Executive Director's report. Mr. Bentley congratulated Tim Womack and the Aging Services Program on receiving a Pinnacle Award for their commitment to home preservation, specifically their work with Rebuild Upstate on helping seniors with minor home repairs. He also shared that administrative assistant, Mia Fuller, retired after 20 years of service to ACOG. The job will be posted in the next couple of weeks.

Member Updates

Mr. Elliott congratulated Mr. Jolly on receiving an Honorary Doctorate from Limestone University. As a graduate of Limestone University, he was honored for his years of public service.

Chairman Collins invited everyone to the Easley parade tomorrow at 11:30 AM.

The next board meeting will be held on January 24, 2025, at 10:30 AM in the ACOG Board Room. Members may also attend through Zoom.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 AM.

Rep. Neal A. Collins, Chairman

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

