



## MINUTES

**APPALACHIAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
FRIDAY, MAY 24, 2024 – 10:30 A.M.  
COUNCIL BOARD ROOM WITH ZOOM OPTION  
GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA

**Members Present:**

Bob Briggs, Rep. Mike Burns, Grady Butler, David Cauthen, Dennis Claramunt, Rep. Neal Collins, Roy Costner, Roel Cruz, Rick Danner, Joe Dill, Ed Elliott, Ensley Feemster, Lillian Brock Flemming, Mike Forrester, Britt Gillespie, Don Godbey, Robert Halfacre, Glenn Hart, Laura Hinty, Butch Kirvin, Rep. Brian Lawson, Ruth Littlejohn, Saraí Melendez, Alan Mitchell, Charles Pinson, Brian Ramey, E Riley

**Guests Present:**

Mark Bloomer, Daniel Gambrell, Danielle Gibbs, Kimberly Penick, Laura Ringo, Carla Whitlock

**Staff Present:**

Chip Bentley, Trey Eubanks, Brooke Ferguson, Jill Francisco, Jeff Guilbault, Steve Pelissier, Arlene Young, Don Zimmer

---

**Call to Order**

Chairman Collins called the meeting to order. Mr. Riley offered the invocation. Mr. Pelissier introduced the guests and speakers. Chairman Collins asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the April 26, 2024, board meeting. Mr. Pinson made a motion to adopt the minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Godbey. The motion was unanimously approved. The financial statement was accepted as information.



### **Recognition of an ACOG Board Member Whose Term is Ending**

Chairman Collins officially recognized Mayor Brian Ramey with a plaque for his term of service with ACOG. Mr. Pelissier expressed his gratitude to Mayor Ramey for being an actively involved board member.

### **SCbio Life Sciences**

Chairman Collins invited Ms. Carla Whitlock, the Director of Investor Relations and Engagement at SCbio to brief the board on the agency. Ms. Whitlock explained that SCbio is an economic development trade association that represents life sciences businesses in South Carolina. She stated that life sciences is the fastest growing industry in the state with an average annual salary of over \$87,000. Ms. Whitlock reviewed medical companies in the upstate and discussed the benefits of companies who join the association. She discussed the agency's major focus areas: workforce, policy, partnerships, innovation and entrepreneurship, and telling the life sciences story. Ms. Whitlock answered several questions from the board.

### **PAL Spartanburg**

Chairman Collins called on Ms. Laura Ringo, Executive Director of PAL Spartanburg to present an overview of the nonprofit in Spartanburg County. She discussed the mission and explained how being a nonprofit helped grow the trail system. She stated that property owners were more likely to have discussions about accessing their land with a nonprofit rather than the government. She discussed the benefits of trails and displayed a map of the highly collaborative Daniel Morgan Trail System. Ms. Ringo explained the importance of relationship building by sharing examples of difficult projects made better by improved relationships. Mayor Briggs pointed out that connecting trails are economic drivers that result in destinations developing along the trails. Ms. Ringo discussed other PAL functions such as childhood wellness and nutrition programs. The board asked questions about funding, corporate buy-in, and safety.

### **InfoMentum**

Chairman Collins asked Ms. Brooke Ferguson, Economic Development Director, to brief the board on the InfoMentum suite of services. Ms. Ferguson provided an overview of InfoMentum and discussed how it helps economic developers attract industry and create jobs. She explained that InfoMentum Online is a data clearinghouse and mapping tool with full access to investors and limited access to the public. Ms. Ferguson showed examples of: how InfoMentum searches work, interactive databases, labor market data, and fact sheets for local municipalities.



### **Legislative Report**

Chairman Collins called on Ms. Brooke Ferguson, Economic Development Director, to provide the Legislative Report. She reported that the legislature adjourned on May 9<sup>th</sup> and will return on June 18<sup>th</sup>. The budget and several other bills that are in conference committees will be considered in June. She highlighted the bill creating the Executive Office of Health and Policy and the Abandoned Buildings Revitalization Act. She reminded the board that the SC Primary will be held on June 11, 2024.

### **Executive Director's Report**

Chairman Collins called on Mr. Pelissier to give the Executive Director's report. Mr. Pelissier announced that the Executive Committee will meet on Friday, June 14, at 9:30am – 12:30pm. Committee members will receive additional information.

**The next board meeting will be held on June 28, 2024, at 10:30 AM in the ACOG Board Room. Members may also attend through Zoom.**

**There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:50 AM.**

---

**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.

