



Foothills Regional Commission
Full Board Meeting
June 13th, 2024
Minutes

Board Members Present

- **Vice-Chair:** Max Hopper, Cleveland County
- Doug Bridges, Cleveland County
- Janet Gerald, Town of Kingstown
- David Guy, Town of Ruth
- Rodney Willis, Town of Bellwood
- Ashley Wooten, McDowell County
- Jack Shytle, Town of Polkville
- Scott Webber, Town of Spindale
- Jimmy Dancy, Town of Rutherfordton
- Bob Boyette, City of Marion
- Mike Lugo, Rutherford County
- Steve Garrison, Rutherford County
- Larry Dooley, Cleveland County
- Peter O'Leary, Chimney Rock Village

FRC Staff Present

- Danna Stansbury
- Charlotte Sullivan
- Amanda Scott
- Annette Staley
- Pam Hall
- Laura Lynch
- Alan Toney
- Penny Martinez
- Paloma Garcia Serrano

Board Members Absent

- **Chair:** Fred Baisden, Polk County
- **Secretary:** Bryan King, Rutherford County
- Jeffery Emory, Town of Grover
- Tom Helton, Town of Ellenboro
- Rick Howell, City of Shelby
- Scott Neisler, City of Kings Mountain
- Ray Padgett, Town of Lawndale
- Mark Phillips, Town of Columbus
- Jeff Swink, Town of Bostic
- Dorris Weaver, Town of Fallston
- Carol Pritchett, Town of Lake Lure
- Tommy Greene, Town of Boiling Springs
- Justin Conner, Town of Forest City
- David Moore, Polk County
- Marche Pittman, Polk County
- Dean Buff, McDowell County

Guest Present

- Zachary Parker, Town of Boiling Springs
- Michael Lewis, Rutherford Housing Partnership
- Robin Ramsey, Senator Tom Tillis' Office



Call to Order the Public Hearing

Foothills Regional Commission's (FRC) Public Hearing was held at FRC in the conference room on June 13th, 2024. Vice Chair Max Hopper called the Public Hearing to order at noon. Vice Chair Hopper asked if there were any public comments. No public was present, therefore there was no comment. Vice Chair Hopper closed the Public Hearing at 12:01 pm

Call to order

Vice Chair Hopper called the regular Full Board Meeting to order at 12:24 p.m. and welcomed everyone. Hopper gave an invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and State Salute to the North Carolina flag.

Approval of minutes

Vice Chair Hopper requested a motion to approve the March 28th, 2024, Full Board Meeting minutes. The motion was made by Jimmy Dancy, with a second by Janet Gerald. All were in favor.

Reports

1. Presentation of the 2024-2025 Budget

Charlotte Sullivan:

- Stated that the budget ordinance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, is \$15,616,455.
- Briefed the board of the budget breakdown:
 - i. Aging: \$3,661,155
 - ii. Economic Planning and Development: \$3,087,219
 - iii. Housing: \$6,572,686
 - iv. WIOA: \$2,085,033
 - v. General operations: \$210,362
- Stated the following as the major funding sources:
 - i. Federal dollars: \$11.9 million
 - ii. State funding: \$1.6 million
 - iii. Local funding: \$1.7 million
 - iv. Program/In-Kind: \$326,805
- Informed the board that the budget includes a 3% salary increase due to the cost-of-living rise and the health insurance costs are increasing by approximately 2% while the retirement rates are rising due to state-mandated measures.
- Stated that there will be a decrease in indirect rate.

Action Item

Vice Chair Hopper requested a motion to approve the Budget for FY24/25. The motion was made by Jimmy Dancy, with a second by Bob Boyette. All were in favor.

- Stated FRC had to prepare an indirect cost plan for HUD. HUD approves our indirect cost plan.
 - i. The indirect rate is prepared yearly.
 - ii. The indirect rate funds overhead expenses like utilities, building maintenance, and administrative staff.
 - iii. The indirect rate is calculated at 57% of direct salaries for next year, down from 58% last year, improving department budgets.

Action Item

Vice Chair Hopper requested a motion to approve the indirect rate for FY24/25. The motion was made by Doug Bridges, with a second by David Guy. All were in favor.

2. HUD Home Presentation

Michael Lewis (Rutherford Housing Partnership):

- Explained that Rutherford Housing Partnership's (RHP) main goal is to provide housing repairs and affordable rentals for low-income residents of Rutherford County.
- Stated that RHP's goals are to identify and renovate blighted and abandoned properties and to convert properties into affordable rentals to generate sustainable income.
- Informed the board of RHP's accomplishments:
 - i. Renovated three properties with low-income renters already in place.
 - ii. Currently renovating two more properties.
 - iii. Breaking ground on two duplexes in Spindale in partnership with Gateway Wellness.
- Explained that they are now focused on Spindale due to existing property ownership but are open to opportunities throughout the county.
- Informed the board of their future goals:
 - i. Identify and renovate 10 additional properties in the next five years.
 - ii. Accommodate 10 new families in these homes within the next decade.
- Briefed the board of their process of acquiring properties:
 - i. Focus on acquiring tax-foreclosed properties or identifying properties for acquisition.
 - ii. Engaging directly with homeowners to negotiate property acquisition.
 - iii. Securing grant funds to facilitate property purchases.
 - iv. Working closely with town and county to identify properties.

- Assured the board that they also work with the Grahamtown Team.
- Informed the board that the cost of property fluctuates depending on the property's condition.
- Explained that RHP tries to follow Section 8's guidelines, and they don't charge over \$900 monthly for any of their properties.
- Stated that they work closely with Habitat for Humanity which receives most of the board's funding.

3. Finance Update

Charlotte Sullivan:

- Currently focusing on year-end closure and preparing for the audit process.
- Engaged in financial cleanup activities, particularly addressing federal and state fund allocations.
- Informed the board of the budget amendment, implemented to reallocate funds and adjust budget figures accordingly.
- Stated that the budget amendment amounts to \$2,634,797.37 to enhance grant funding and program allocations.

Action items

Vice Chair Hopper requested a motion to approve the budget amendment. The motion was made by Bob Boyette with a second by Janet Gerald. All were in favor.

4. Aging Department Update

Laura Lynch:

- Briefed the board about World Elder Abuse Awareness Day which is recognized annually. This day aims to address physical, emotional, financial, and sexual abuse and neglect of older adults. It also promotes community awareness and action to safeguard older adults' safety, dignity, and well-being.
- Informed the board of the outreach events the department will be doing for Elder Abuse Awareness in Polk and Rutherford Counties.
- Briefed the board about the delay for the housing and home repair money; they are now being told September or October.
- Informed the board of the plans to partner with local organizations like Habitat for Humanity (Polk County) and Rutherford Housing Partnership for efficient distribution of housing and home repair money. Cleveland and McDowell Counties will be handled in-house.
- Informed the board that they plan to purchase 20 air conditioners, to give to those in need.

5. Housing Department Update

Pam Hall:

- Informed the board that they applied for extra funding for the VASH Program, which is a program to help Veterans who are homeless or those at risk of being homeless.
- Informed the board that they applied for a Lower-than-Average Leasing Funding Opportunity.
- Explained that they hope to open the waiting list soon.
- Informed the board of the 30 slots available for Veterans, with 25 slots already filled.
- Thanked the board for their approval of making local veterans one of their local preferences, which will put them at the top of the waiting list.

6. Workforce Development Update

Annette Staley:

- Briefed the board of the Regional Labor Market Overview (first quarter of 2024):
 - i. State unemployment rate: 3.5%; Foothills Region unemployment rate: 3.4%.
 - ii. Comparison to previous month: Decreased from 3.8%.
 - iii. Overview includes county-specific data: Cleveland, McDowell, Polk, and Rutherford.
 - iv. Total unemployment for our region is 3,515 with 100,113 employed.
- Briefed the board of the State Monitoring Reports for the fiscal year 2023:
 - i. Programmatic monitoring with minor issues including redactions and updating case notes.
 - ii. ARPA Grant monitoring with no findings.
 - iii. Fiscal monitoring from 2021 to 2023 with no findings, comments, or recommendations.
- Appreciated the leadership from the board, and staff, especially Danna and Charlotte.
- Informed the board of the Workforce Board Initiatives:
 - i. Active role in job fairs and support for small employers.
 - ii. ARPA OJT grants for employers with 25 or fewer employees.
 - iii. Encouraged people to contact WIOA for support or partnership opportunities.

7. Community and Economic Development Update

Alan Toney:

- Thanked Michael, Penny, and Ashley Wooten for their hard work on the HUD home program.

- Stated that HUD is a challenging federal agency, and they worked hard to overcome obstacles to deliver housing funds.
- Announced they will offer drone services, a new program launching in July, pending drone pilot licensing and insurance. Their intended uses and benefits are demonstrated through video. Drone technology will be used for mapping projects, infrastructure planning, and visual documentation.
- Introduced Paloma Garcia-Serrano as lead for NC Fellows starting in August.
- Announced the Regional Housing Studies in Polk and upcoming in Rutherford. Which will encourage community engagement and input in regional projects.
- Informed the board of the Broadband expansion initiatives in Cleveland, Rutherford, and McDowell and their collaboration with ISPs to address broadband needs and negotiate improvements.
- Informed the board of the upcoming disaster recovery training on June 25th. This is important in preparing for disasters like tornadoes, floods, and wildfires. He encouraged attendance from board members and staff.

8. Executive Directors Report

Danna Stansbury:

- Informed the board of the direct appropriation the COG Association received from the general assembly to do disaster recovery training in every region.
- Announced that Penny will conduct the presentation and training on disaster recovery because of her previous experience and expertise.
- Requested approval of the meeting calendar for FY24/25.

Action Item

Vice Chair Hopper requested a motion to approve the meeting calendar for FY24/25. The motion was made by Larry Dooley, with a second by Jimmy Dancy. All were in favor.

- Informed the board of the Council of Government Advocacy Day in May when councils of government visited our state legislatures in Raleigh
- Mentioned 10 important COG policy priorities but emphasized advocating for specialized allocation for an FRC building funded from the General Assembly.
- Informed the board of her involvement in promoting the building allocation request.
- Requested board members to advocate and support the funding request.
- Appreciated Manager Garrison's putting our allocation in the Rutherford County legislative request.
- Informed the board that she was elected in May to serve on the NADO Board representing North Carolina. NADO is the National Association of Development Organizations, comprising 435 regional organizations nationwide.
- Briefed about the NADO board meeting in Santa Fe in May which focused on strategic planning and marketing strategies to enhance organizational membership across different regions. She

gained valuable learning experience from other directors, sharing best practices to implement locally.

- Recognized Alan's achievement: Obtained his American Institute of Certified Planners certification.
- Recognized Charlotte's promotion: Promoted to Deputy Director.
- Announced the commission applied for and was approved for a .gov, new emails will end in frc.nc.gov.

9. Deputy Executive Directors Report

Charlotte Sullivan:

- Introduced a benefits Committee initiative as Deputy Director and sought appointees from the leadership team to participate and represent their departments. The goal is to review current benefits, explore enhancements, and ensure competitive offerings for employees.
- Informed the board of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) standards requiring reporting the value of sick leave in our financial statements.


Announcements

- Doug Bridges announced that September 26th will be the first day of the 100th Cleveland County Fair.
- Vice Chair Hopper introduced the new Deputy Director Charlotte Sullivan.
- Thanked Robin Ramsey for attending and representing Tom Tillis' office.
- Vice Chair Hopper appreciated Kingstown Mayor Janet Jerald for her presence.
- Mayor Janet Jerald informed the board that the local government commission is granting Kingstown 100% control of its finances. Informed the board of their partnership with FRC in managing their finances.
- Mayor Janet Jerald announced that on Saturday Kingstown will be celebrating Juneteenth.

Adjournment

Vice Chair Hopper adjourned the meeting at 1:24 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,


Chairman, Fred Baisden
Max Hopper


Secretary, Bryan King