



## Eastern Carolina Council

### Minutes

#### Executive Committee Meeting

6:30 p.m. - Thursday, May 9, 2024

Third Floor Conference Room

233 Middle Street, New Bern, NC

#### Executive Committee in Attendance:

Jay Bender, Caucus Rep., Jones County (Pollocksville)  
Roland Best, Lenoir County Commissioner  
Kyle DeHaven, County Manager Caucus Rep., via Zoom (Greene County)  
Jessie Dowe, Duplin County Commissioner  
Cindy Edwards, City of Jacksonville  
Bennie Heath, Greene County Commissioner  
Chadwick Howard, Craven County Commissioner, via Zoom  
Mark Price, Onslow County Commissioner  
Ed Riggs Jr, President (Pamlico County Commissioner)  
Bill Taylor, Treasurer (Town of Morehead City)  
Shane Turney, Caucus Rep. Craven County (Town of Trent Woods)  
Billy Ward, Caucus Rep. Duplin County (Town of Faison)

#### General Membership Board in Attendance:

Barbara Jones, Town of Cove City  
Linda Marshall, Town of Alliance

#### ECC Staff in Attendance:

David Bone, Executive Director  
Melinda McGuire, Assistant Executive Director/Finance Director  
Heather O'Connor, Deputy Finance Director  
Kim Baker, Finance Specialist  
Larry Faison, Planning Director  
David Rosado, Human Services Manager – AAA

#### Guests in Attendance:

Knox Proctor, Attorney, Ward & Smith

1. **Welcome, Invocation, and Call to Order** – Ed Riggs, Jr., President, called the meeting to order at 6:39 p.m. President Riggs welcomed everyone. Commissioner Heath provided the invocation.
2. **Adoption of Agenda** – President Riggs advised there were a few minor changes to be made to the to the agenda. He asked for the agenda be adopted with the following changes: the deletion of (3b) because ECC did not get the Benefits Cap Report from the state in time for the meeting; the deletion of (4c) because there is no budget amendment; and the

addition of (5a) to add a discussion request for a lease for additional space. *Commissioner Bennie Heath motioned to adopt the amended agenda, seconded by Commissioner Roland Best; the motion was approved unanimously.*

3. **Consent Agenda – Ed Riggs, Jr., President**
  - a. **Minutes – Executive Committee Meeting – April 11, 2024**
  - b. **Economic Development Update – funded through E.D.A. Partnership Planning and Southeast Crescent Regional Commission**
  - c. **Human Services / Area Agency on Aging Update**
  - d. **Community Planning/Technical Assistance Update**
  - e. **Transportation Update**

President Ed Riggs asked if there were any questions about the consent agenda or any items for discussion. *Council Member Cindy Edwards motioned to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Commissioner Mark Price; the motion was approved unanimously.*

4. **Budget & Audit Committee Report**
  - a. **Check Register**
  - b. **Financial Statements**
  - c. **Committee Information & Recommendations**

Treasurer Bill Taylor stated the Budget and Audit Committee met. He stated they reviewed the check register and financial statements. He advised the meeting was routine. He turned it over to Assistant Executive Director / Finance Director Melinda McGuire for any questions or concerns. President Riggs advised the financials are included in the board packets to review at any time. He stated that anyone with questions can bring these up to Ms. McGuire or David Bone.

5. **Draft FY2024-25 Budget Presentation**
  - a. **Discussion for Lease for Additional Space**

President Riggs introduced Executive Director / Finance Director Melinda McGuire. He stated that after Melinda's presentation, we would like to consider a motion to recommend the FY2024-25 Budget to the General Membership Board at the June 13<sup>th</sup> meeting for a vote.

Ms. McGuire spoke about the proposed budget that was chosen by the Budget & Audit Committee from the three draft budgets she originally presented. She briefly went over the Departmental Budgets handout and the Cost Saving sheet given out with the agenda packet. Ms. McGuire stated we are requesting a 1% cola and an up to 5% one-time merit bonus for employees, which is based on performance. Ms. McGuire discussed the reduction of expenses by \$29,894.16, which is shown on the included cost-saving sheet. The cost-savings were achieved by changing IT support providers, a new phone system that was installed with a lower monthly rate, and a change in broadband providers.

Ms. McGuire went on to speak about how the cost-savings affect the general fund and expenses. To maintain our current indirect cost rate, we must spend money in certain categories such as rent, utilities, supplies, etc. She stated to maintain a consistent indirect cost rate, ECC has included the proposed new lease amount of \$2,900/month plus broadband costs in the proposed FY2024-25 Budget. If the indirect rate goes down, we

would have to pull from the fund balance for expenses next year. Executive Director Bone added that ECC does not want to have to continually supplement from the general fund. Ms. McGuire stated the budget also has funding for the vacant administrative position. She asked if there were any questions about the proposed budget.

President Riggs stated we will now go into (5a) Discussion for the Lease for Additional Space, because it is part of the budget. Ms. McGuire spoke about space being an issue. She stated ECC has found space downtown on Craven Street that will help house our growing staff. Mr. Bone stated there is no available space in the O'Marks Building. Ms. McGuire went on to speak about the new Disaster Recover position and the Aging Digital Navigator position (starting 7/1/24) and possibly other positions funded with new grant funds. Ms. McGuire stated if we choose not to do a new lease, we probably need to hire another employee to keep up our indirect rate. There was a discussion among members with some voicing concerns about ECC growing too fast and possibly running out of funding. Attorney Knox Proctor spoke up to say if ECC's funding dries up and there is a lease situation, you may be able to sublease the space. This would be a better situation than having employees you cannot continue to fund. *Jay Bender motioned to send the Budget Presentation to the General Membership Board and call a public hearing for the June 13, 2024, meeting, seconded by Chadwick Howard; the motion was approved unanimously.*

President Riggs asked if the board wanted to give direction to staff about moving forward with the lease. President Riggs said he would not sign anything until the board gives their blessing on this. He stated the staff wants to move forward with the lease on June 1, 2024. Mayor Bender asked about funding for June if the lease was to go in effect before the new budget year. Ms. McGuire advised that the funding was available through lapsed salary from the vacant admin position. President Riggs stated that even though the lease for the new space is included in the new proposed budget, this should have a separate vote to negotiate the lease. *Commissioner Howard motioned to move forward with negotiating the lease subject to attorney review, seconded by Commissioner Heath; the motion was approved unanimously.*

- 6. Draft Strategic Priorities for FY2024-25** – Executive Director David Bone spoke about ECC's goal of developing strategic priorities each year. The first Strategic Priorities were adopted at the June 8, 2023, General Membership meeting. An update on the 2023-24 Strategic Priorities was given at the March 14, 2024, Executive Committee meeting. The staff has drafted Strategic Priorities and Goals for 2024-25. Mr. Bone went over the draft Strategic Priorities 2024-25 included in the agenda packet. He spoke about ECC hosting an annual membership meeting/event in September. Ms. McGuire spoke up to say that she has planned for the annual meeting in the 2024-25 proposed budget. Mr. Bone advised that ECC plans to develop and share an annual report for 2023-24 in September. He mentioned the plan to update and expand the ECC website to make it more user-friendly. He spoke about seeking out additional grant opportunities, including applying for grants through the 501(c) (3). Some of these goals are ongoing.

Mr. Bone briefly went over the draft Department Goals for 2024-25. He complemented the Human Services - Aging Department with the recruitment of the CAC volunteers. Mr. Bone asked the Executive Committee for any suggestions for changes before the Strategic

Priorities are presented to the General Membership committee. *Mayor Bender motioned to present the draft Strategic Priorities for 2024-25 to the General Membership Board at the June 13, 2024, meeting, seconded by Cindy Edwards; the motion was approved unanimously.*

**7. Executive Director's Report** – The following are some highlights of Executive Director David Bone's report:

- ECC has distributed 2 RFQs. Responses for both are due later this month.
  - Audit Services
  - Engineering/Planning Services
- IEDC will be helping ECC with another regional project to help implement strategies in our 2023 -2027 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The Talent Attraction and Retention Strategies (tentatively planned for the week of Jul 24-28). Be on the lookout for more information.
- ECC Welcomed its newest Community Planner, Sara Deskar, to our staff. Through a partnership with the NC Department of Public Safety, Sara will be focusing on promoting FEMA's Flood Mitigation Assistance Program in our region.
- Digital Navigator Program – ECC is receiving funding from the North Carolina Division of Aging to support the role of a Digital Navigator, their equipment, and their travel for the region. This will provide funding for one position for one year. Digital Navigators provide individualized or small group assistance and guidance to older adults who need affordable home internet service, affordable internet-capable devices, and/or coaching in introductory digital skills in order to become effective home internet users and be able to participate online fully.
- The followin training/workshops will take place soon:
  - Disaster Recovery Training on May 14<sup>th</sup>, in Goldsboro, and May 21<sup>st</sup>, in Morehead City.

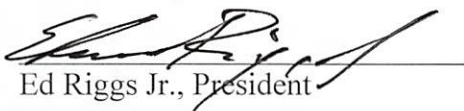
**8. Member Comments**

Commissioner Heath spoke up to acknowledge the accomplishments of ECC and its leadership compared to where we were two years ago. He also noted that he is appreciative that our attorney Knox Proctor decided to represent ECC again.

**9. Closed Session pursuant to NC General Statute § 143-318.11 (a)(6) – Personnel** – President Riggs asked for a motion to go to closed session. *A motion was made by Commissioner Heath; seconded by Mayor Bender; the motion was unanimous.*

**10. Adjournment** – *At 7:58 p.m., a motion to adjourn was made by Mayor Bender; seconded by Shane Turney; the motion was unanimous.*

Respectfully Submitted,

  
Ed Riggs Jr., President

  
David Bone, Executive Director