



## Eastern Carolina Council

### *Minutes*

#### ***Executive Committee Meeting***

***6:30 p.m. - Thursday, April 10, 2025***

***Third Floor Conference Room***

***233 Middle Street, New Bern, NC***

#### **Executive Committee in Attendance:**

Jay Bender, Caucus Rep., Jones County (Mayor of Pollocksville)  
Roland Best, Lenoir County Commissioner  
Kyle DeHaven, County Manager Caucus Rep. (Greene County)  
Jesse Dowe, Duplin County Commissioner  
Cindy Edwards, City of Jacksonville  
Frank Emory, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President (Jones County Commissioner)  
Tim Harrell, Wayne County Commissioner  
Bennie Heath, Greene County Commissioner  
Rick Prill, City of New Bern  
Ed Riggs Jr, President (Pamlico County Commissioner)  
Cynthia Evans-Robinson, City of Havelock  
Bill Taylor, Treasurer (Town of Morehead City)  
Shane Turney, Caucus Rep., Craven County (Town of Trent Woods)  
Lorraine Washington, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President (Caucus rep, Greene County)

#### **General Membership Board in Attendance:**

John O'Daniel, Town of Atlantic Beach, via Zoom  
Ryan Kelley, Town of Indian Beach  
Barbara Jones, Town of Cove City

#### **ECC Staff in Attendance:**

David Bone, Executive Director  
Carol Bell, Finance Director  
Kim Baker, Finance Specialist  
David Rosado, AAA Director

#### **Guests in Attendance:**

Knox Proctor, Attorney, Ward & Smith  
Chris Woelkers, Regional Director, Office of Congressman Don Davis  
Austin Eubanks, Thompson, Price, Scott, and Adams

1. **Welcome, Invocation, and Call to Order** – Ed Riggs, Jr., President, called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. President Riggs welcomed everyone. Commissioner Bennie Heath provided the invocation.
2. **Adoption of Agenda** – President Riggs asked for a motion to adopt the agenda. *Commissioner Heath motioned to adopt the agenda, seconded by 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Lorraine Washington; the motion was approved unanimously.*

Executive Director introduced Chris Woelkers from the Office of Congressman Don Davis. Mr. Woelkers stopped by briefly to introduce himself to the board and to talk about their new constituent services office located in Goldsboro. Mr. Woelkers gave a brief overview of the services they offer. In our region, Wayne, Lenior and Greene counties are served by his office. He left business cards with his contact information.

3. **Consent Agenda** – *Ed Riggs, Jr., President*
  - a. **Minutes** – Executive Committee Meeting – February 13, 2025
  - b. **Economic Development Update** – funded through E.D.A. Partnership Planning and Southeast Crescent Regional Commission
  - c. **Area Agency on Aging Update**
  - d. **Community Planning/Technical Assistance Update**
  - e. **Transportation Update**

President Ed Riggs then asked if there were any questions about the consent agenda or any items for discussion. *1st Vice President Frank Emory motioned to approve the Consent Agenda as presented, seconded by Commissioner Best; the motion was approved unanimously.*

4. **FY 2022-23 Audit Presentation** – Austin Eubanks with Thompson, Price, Scott, and Adams gave a brief overview of the 22/23 audit. He stated that all information requested from ECC Finance was provided in a timely manner. He stated there were two findings, mostly dealing with internal controls, which have been addressed.

- Finding 2023-001: Timeliness of Audit Report Submission. Due to staffing transitions and other challenges, the FY 2022-23, audit was submitted passed the required due date.
- Finding 2023-002: Failure to Perform Reconciliations of significant accounts timely. Due to significant staff transitions and related challenges, ECC is behind in the completion of its audits, but is working to get caught up. Getting caught on the audits will assist us with this effort. Additional training with the Accufund software has been identified by the auditor as a strategy to help address this issue.

The goal is to complete the FY 2023-24 Audit this summer and to get caught up with audits with the FY 2024-25 Audit. Mr. Eubanks stated as of June 30, 2023, the Council ended the year with a combined fund balance of \$368,845. *Mayor Bender motioned to approve the audit presentation, seconded by Commissioner Best; the motion was approved unanimously.*

**5. Response Letter to the NC Local Government Commission about the FY2022-23**

**Audit** – Executive Director David Bone went over the required response letter to NC Local Government Commission regarding the two findings on the FY 2022-23 audit. The response letter is included in the agenda packet. *Treasurer Bill Taylor motioned to approve the response letter, seconded by Commissioner Dowe; the motion was approved unanimously.*

**6. Budget & Audit Committee Report**

- a. Check Register**
- b. Financial Statements**
- c. FY 2023-24 Audit Contract**
- d. O.Mark's Lease**
- e. Health Insurance Coverage**
- f. FY2025-26 Budget – to be presented next month**
- g. Budget Amendment #4**
- h. Committee Information & Recommendations**

Treasurer Bill Taylor spoke about the completion of the FY 2022-23 Audit and beginning work on the FY 2023-24 Audit. The FY 2023-24 Audit is anticipated to be finished by the end of June or middle of July.

Mr. Taylor stated that the Budget & Audit Committee met and reviewed the check register and financial statements. He mentioned that the check register had three notable entries. There were two entries totaling approximately \$14,000 for Ward and Smith P.A. He explained this amount was high due to grievances. He also spoke about the \$3,491 paid to H. Devan Brown. Mr. Brown is representing ECC and working to negotiate IRS fines due to taxes that were not paid timely. Executive Director Bone spoke to say the fines go back to 2019.

Mr. Taylor moved on to the audit contract for FY 2023-24 and asked Mr. Bone to talk about the audit contract. Mr. Bone stated the new contract with Thompson, Price, Scott and Adams was for the same cost as the one just completed. The audit contract is included in the agenda packet for review. President Riggs asked if there was a motion to approve the audit contract. *Mayor Bender motioned to approve the audit contract, seconded by Caucus Rep. Shane Turney; the motion was approved unanimously.*

Executive Director Bone spoke to the board about ECC's current lease for the O'Marks building. The current lease runs through May 31, 2025. Currently, ECC pays \$54,138 (\$4,511 per month) for office space and nineteen parking spaces. It was noted that there has not been an increase in fifteen years. The landlord proposed an increase to \$6,000 per month (\$72,000 per year) – a 33% increase. The landlord is proposing this as a one-year rate. Mr. Bone also spoke about the office space ECC began leasing in 2024 at 242 Craven Street. The finance department is currently housed there. The additional positions ECC anticipated housing at this location have not been realized due to funding not yet approved

by the state. The rent for Craven Street is \$2,900 per month for four years and includes water, sewer and electricity. Mr. Bone stated there was some discussion with Budget & Audit to sublease the Craven Street location and to try to negotiate the rent increase with the O'Marks location. There was discussion amongst the board members about trying to keep all ECC staff in one place and keep the entire third floor location of the O'Marks building. There was also discussion about requesting language in a new lease if funding for ECC was cut to renegotiate the terms and/or space rented. President Riggs spoke about trying to re-negotiate the lease for the O'Marks Building location and trying to sublease the Craven Street location.

Executive Director Bone spoke about the NC League of Municipalities closing its Health Benefits Trust on June 30, 2025. Many organizations across our region will be impacted, including ECC. ECC has been working with three organizations to secure health, dental, and vision quotes for employees: Hilb Group, Laymon Group, and Mark III. There are challenges with getting a quote for our small group. Quotes have been received from the Laymon Group. Mark III has a stipulation of signing with them as a broker on record to get quotes. ECC is waiting for a proposal from the Hilb Group. President Riggs stated the Budget and Audit Committee has requested a limit of an increase of 8% or less in the cost. Mr. Bone stated he would review any new quotes and discuss them with the Budget and Audit Committee at a special-called meeting. Treasurer Bill Taylor spoke up to say the special-called Budget and Audit Committee meeting would be on April 29, 2025, at 5pm. He stated they would be reviewing the FY2025-26 budget at this meeting before presenting it at the General Board meeting.

Treasurer Bill Taylor stated the final topic for the Budget and Audit Committee is a Budget Amendment. ECC has served as the Local Development District (LDD) for the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission (SCRC) this past year. An application for SCRC funding for the current year was submitted in March and ECC received a grant award of \$24,642 to continue serving in this capacity. Budget Amendment #4 is requested for the following:

- \$24,642 from the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission (SCRC) LDD Capacity Building Program. The period of performance shall be from October 1, 2024 through September 30, 2025.

President Riggs asked if there were any questions about the budget amendment. *Mayor Jay Bender motioned to approve the budget amendment, seconded by 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Frank Emory; the motion was approved unanimously.*

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

- **Congratulations to Jay Bender**, who received the State's highest honor, the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, in honor of his service to Pollocksville, ECC, and other organizations across the region. He has served as the Mayor of Pollocksville for over 42 years. This is a well-deserved honor.
- **ECCAAA Volunteer Appreciation Lunch** - ECCAAA honored the volunteers who serve on the Regional Aging Advisory Committee (RAAC), Senior Tar Heel

Legislators (STHL), and the Community Advisory Committees (CAC) for their contributions this past year by hosting a Volunteer Reception on April 3<sup>rd</sup>. The volunteers were thanked, given certificates of appreciation, and heard from speaker, Tom Pike (who spoke on volunteerism). A total of 40 people attended the event.

- **June is Elder Abuse Awareness Month** - June 15th is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD), and many of the communities in the ECC region host events to promote awareness. The purpose of WEAAD is to provide an opportunity for communities around the world to promote a better understanding of abuse and neglect of older persons by raising awareness of the cultural, social, economic, and demographic processes affecting elder abuse and neglect. ECCAAA and various senior centers are preparing for related events in May and June.
- **ECC / Pamlico County Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)** - As part of ECC's Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) efforts, ECC's Sara Deskar coordinated with Pamlico County to hold information sessions and application workshops. The application process is quite detailed and requires detailed information on structural conditions, flood risk, and flood history. Over 75 homeowners received guidance, leading to the successful completion of more than 65 Homeowner Applications.
- **Monitoring the Changing Federal Landscape** - There is a lot of speculation about the potential impacts on federal funding due to the actions of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). Along with colleagues in other COGs, we continue to monitor the changing landscape. Recent developments include:
  - **Reorganization of the Federal Health and Human Services** - Recently the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) announced that the Health and Human Services Secretary will be reorganizing several areas of the Federal Health and Human Services Administrations and programs.

The Administration for Community Living is the organization that administers the Older Americans Act (OAA). The OAA is considered to be a major vehicle for the organization and delivery of social and nutrition services to this group and their caregivers. It authorizes a wide array of service programs through a national network of 56 state agencies on aging, 618 area agencies on aging, nearly 20,000 service providers, 281 Tribal organizations, and 1 Native Hawaiian organization representing 400 tribes.

The key takeaway is that the administration of the OAA will be placed with another entity within the HHS. The NC Division of Aging (NCDOA) sent an announcement regarding the reorganization of the Administration for Community Living (ACL) where reduction in force took place within the federal Health and Human Services totaling about 10,000 jobs. It is currently unknown how this will affect individual states, and the programs




offered under ACL. The Older Americans Act was administered by the ACL and will transition to another administration with the HHS.

- **Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding** - the latest advisory from the National Association of Development Associations (NADO) stated EDA funding appears to be secure at this time.
  - **FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Program** - The BRIC program is an initiative established in 2018 that has made billions of dollars available to communities to prepare for disasters in advance. It has been reported FEMA will not allocate \$750 million planned for this year's BRIC grants and to stop funding BRIC projects that were previously funded but are still underway. This will likely impact several communities across our region, including a project ECC was working on for one community.
8. **Officers Nominating Committee** – President Riggs stated the nominating committee is appointed by the president every two years to make recommendations to fill the slate of officers for the Budget & Audit Committee. The four officers have a term of two years and can serve up to two consecutive terms in one office. He stated each of the current officers are eligible to serve another term in their current position. Treasurer Bill Taylor asked not to be considered but will continue to serve on the Budget & Audit Committee if needed. President Riggs named the nominating committee as the following: Ryan Kelley (Carteret County), Shane Turney (Craven County), Jesse Dowe (Duplin County), Bennie Heath (Greene County), Jay Bender (Jones County), Roland Best (Lenoir County), Cindy Edwards (Onslow County), Linda Marshall (Pamlico County), and Wayne Jackson (Wayne County).
9. **Member Comments** – President Riggs asked if there were any member comments. He stated if there were no comments, it was time to go to a closed session.
10. *Treasurer Bill Taylor motioned to go to closed session, seconded by Mayor Jay Bender; the motion was approved unanimously.*
- a. **Closed session for G.S. 143-318.11(a)(6) for a personnel matter was called to order.**
11. **Adjournment** – The open session resumed about 9:03 p.m. There being no further business, at 9:04 p.m., *a motion to adjourn was made by Mayor Bender, seconded by Commissioner Heath; the motion was unanimous.*

Respectfully Submitted,

  
Ed Riggs Jr., President

  
~~David Bone, Executive Director~~  
David Bone, Interim Executive Director