



Eastern Carolina Council

Minutes

General Membership Board Meeting

6:30 p.m. - Thursday, January 8, 2026

Third Floor Conference Room

233 Middle Street, New Bern, NC

Executive Committee in Attendance:

Mark Brewington, County Manager Caucus Rep. (Pamlico County)
Carol DeMoranville, Caucus Rep., Pamlico County (Town of Minnesott Beach)
Jesse Dowe, Duplin County Commissioner
Cindy Edwards, Treasurer (City of Jacksonville)
Frank Emory, 1st Vice President (Jones County Commissioner)
Cynthia Evans-Robinson, City of Havelock
Tim Harrell, Wayne County Commissioner
Bennie Heath, Greene County Commissioner
Maria Robles, Caucus Rep., Jones County (Town of Pollocksville)
Billy Ward, Caucus Rep., Duplin County
Lorraine Washington, 2nd Vice President (Caucus Rep., Greene County)-*via Zoom*

General Membership Board in Attendance:

Paul Jordan II, Town of Oriental
Patty Leonard, Town of River Bend
Tamara Pieratti, Town of Swansboro
Jerry Riggs, Town of Cedar Point
Alesia Sanderson, Town of Emerald Isle-*via Zoom*

ECC Staff in Attendance:

David Rosado, Interim Executive Director
Carol Bell, Finance Director
Kim Baker, Deputy Finance Director
January Brown, Interim AAA Director
Susan Wolf, Administrative Assistant

Guests in Attendance:

Knox Proctor, *ex-officio-via Zoom*

Jay Bender, Caucus Rep., Jones County (Mayor of Pollocksville)

Wesley Boykin, Town of Warsaw

Stella Jackman-Ryan, PhD NC State University-*via Zoom*

Jess Epstein, NC State University-*via Zoom*

1. **Welcome, Invocation, and Call to Order** – Frank Emory, 1st Vice President, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. 1st Vice President Emory welcomed everyone and asked for prayers for President Ed Riggs on the loss of a family member. He then requested Commissioner Bennie Heath to give the invocation. Commissioner Heath spoke eloquently on the passing of Lenoir County Commissioner Roland Best. He gave thanks for the life and service of Commissioner Best to ECC, Lenoir County, friends and family and extending prayers to them; he will be sorely missed.

2. **Adoption of Agenda** – 1st Vice President Emory stated that an item (5a. Audit Contract FY 2024/2025) will be added to the agenda. He continued with a request for questions or comments on this evening’s agenda. No questions or comments were made; therefore, 1st Vice President Emory requested a motion to adopt the agenda as amended.

A motion to adopt the agenda as amended was made by Greene County Commissioner Bennie Heath and seconded by Duplin County Commissioner Jesse Dowe; the motion was approved unanimously.

3. **Consent Agenda** – Frank Emory, 1st Vice President
 - a. **Minutes** – General Membership Board Meeting – October 9, 2025
 - b. **Area Agency on Aging Update**
 - c. **Economic Development – CEDS Update**
 - d. **Local Government Services Update**

1st Vice President Emory asked if there were any questions about the consent agenda or any items for discussion.

A motion to approve the Consent Agenda was made by Lorraine Washington, 2nd Vice President, and seconded by Patty Leonard, Town of River Bend; the motion passed unanimously.

6. **Eastern Carolin Council Digital Inclusion Plan** - *Stella Jackman- Ryan, PhD NC State University*

Stella Jackman-Ryan, PhD NC State University, along with Jess Epsten, presented ECC's first comprehensive Regional Digital Inclusion Plan to the Board. This plan addresses long-standing digital gaps affecting residents, businesses, and essential services in our nine-county region. Regional data, surveys, and listening sessions conducted across all nine counties identified five consistent barriers: Infrastructure Gaps, Affordability, Device Access, Digital Skills, and Cybersecurity Concerns that shaped the plan's goals, strategies, and performance metrics. The plan is comprised of five sections: Introduction to the ECC Region, Planning Process, Current State of Digital Inclusion-Regional Overview, Building a Connected ECC Region (Goals, Objectives, Metrics), and Current State of Digital Inclusion-County Profiles. The Regional Digital Inclusion Plan's initiative formally began in August of 2024, conducted listening sessions from September 2024 to September 2025, convened a Regional Steering Committee on Digital Inclusion in May of 2025, presented a draft in December of 2025 for presentation to ECC's General Membership Board on January 8, 2026 and the final draft is to be completed in March of 2026.

7. **ECC's Executive Director's Report** – *David Rosado, Interim Executive Director*

The following are some highlights of Interim Executive Director David Rosado's Report:

- **ECC to host Ethics Training for Elected Officials** - ECC is partnering with Attorney Trey Ferguson of Sumrell Sugg to provide the required ethics training for newly elected and re-elected local government officials. The event will be held from 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 5, 2026. Registration for the training can be found on the ECC website www.eccog.org under News and Events.
- **Appointments to ECC Board** – During January of each year, the Council will solicit appointments from the member counties and municipalities; these appointments will be due by mid-February. The most current roster can be found at the back of the Agenda Packet or Online at www.eccog.org/about-us/board and meeting information. Please return or send new or re-appointed member's Yearly Municipal or County Appointment forms via mail to 233 Middle St, New Bern, NC 28560 or email to Susan Wolf at swolf@eccog.org.

Once the form is returned, New Members will be sent a "New Member" packet that includes 2 required forms (Conflict of Interest and New Member Profile) which must be signed, dated, and returned to ECC via mail to 233 Middle St, New Bern, NC 28560 or email to Susan Wolf at swolf@eccog.org.

- **ECC Orientation** – ECC will provide an orientation for new members to familiarize them with the organization’s mission, operations, and Board responsibilities. This orientation can be conducted in-person at ECC or ECC can come to you. To schedule orientation please contact Interim Executive Director David Rosado at 252-638-3185 ext. 3013 or drosado@eccog.org.
- **New Bern MPO** - The New Bern Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is seeking to expand its planning area to include Cove City, Dover, Vanceboro, and Havelock within Craven County that are currently participating in the Eastern Carolina Council’s Down East Rural Planning Organization (ECC DERPO). ECC has met with leadership from the City of Havelock and Vanceboro (Cove City and Dover are still pending) to discuss the potential implication of how it may affect the level and scope of services they currently receive through the DERPO.
- **Regional Opioid Project** – ECC and RAI continued the regional collaboration to address Substance Use Disorders (SUDS) by forming a task force at the December 4, 2025 meeting held at the Hope Restoration office in Kinston. This task force is designed to address transportation issues, one of the three issues identified in the regional survey: housing, transportation, and workforce. Patrick Flanagan, Transportation Services Director for Carteret County Area Transit, and Danny Ferucci, Executive Director of Onslow United Transit System will share an overview of state-level transportation coordination, funding pathways, and how IMD and NCDOT programs can support regional transportation effort at the next task force meeting to be held from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., Thursday, January 29, 2026.
- **Roland Best Jr. Passing** – Roland Best Jr. served as a Lenoir County Commissioner from 2013 until his passing on December 16, 2025. A respected leader with decades of experience in law enforcement and local government, he honorably represented Lenoir County on ECC’s Board since 2015. His approachable style, commitment to “people-first” leadership, and steadfast advocacy for his community will be deeply missed.

8. Closed Session – Attorney-Client Privilege & Personnel

- a. ***NC General Statute § 143-318.11 (a)(3)***
- b. ***Attorney-Client Privilege and § 143-318.11 (a)(6)***
- c. ***Personnel. G.S. 143-318.11(1) – Confidential Information***

1st Vice President Emory stated that a Closed Session was needed this evening and asked for a motion.

A motion to go into Closed Session was made by Maria Robles, Jones County Caucus Representative, and seconded by 2nd Vice President Lorraine Washington; motion passed unanimously.

Closed Session was called at 7:50 p.m.

The Open Session resumed at 7:55 p.m.

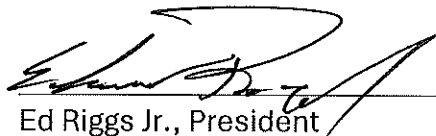
9. Member Comments –

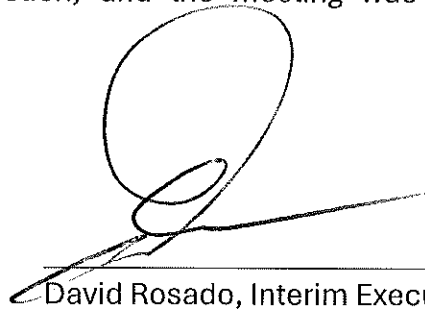
There were no members' comments.

10. Adjournment –

Mayor Jay Bender moved to adjourn, and Commissioner Jesse Dowe seconded. The Board unanimously approved the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:56 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,


Ed Riggs Jr., President


David Rosado, Interim Executive Director