

**EAST TENNESSEE DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING  
January 13, 2026  
MINUTES**

The East Tennessee Development District's Executive Committee held a meeting on Tuesday, January 13, 2026, at ETHRA, 9111 Cross Park Dr., Ste D-100, Knoxville, TN. The following Executive Committee members were present:

Joe Brooks, Claiborne County Mayor  
Terrence Carter, Member at Large  
Wade Creswell, Roane County Executive  
Roland "Trey" Dykes, III, Member at Large  
Mitch Ingram, Monroe County Mayor  
Jerried Jeffers, Scott County Mayor  
Scott "Scotty" Kitts, City of LaFollette Mayor  
Brian Langley, Morgan County Executive  
Lori Phillips-Jones, Town of Oneida Mayor  
Neal Pucciarelli, Town of Cumberland Gap Mayor

**Guests**

Emily McCaul, Senator Hagerty's Office  
Cindy Boshears, Congressman Fleischmann's Office  
Derk Lane, Congressman Rose's Office  
Garrett Everett, Congressman Burchett's Office  
Stacy Chambers, Monroe County  
J.R. Tinch, TDEC  
Grady Vanderhoofven, Three Roots Capital  
Tim Hendrick, ETDD  
Eric Seiber, ETDD  
Ron Woody, ETDD  
Sarah Anderson, ETDD  
Gary Holiway, ETHRA  
Bill Brittain, Retired Hamlen County Mayor  
Jessica Hoke, GiGi's Playhouse  
Lesley Koboldt, GiGi's Playhouse

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Secretary Mitch Ingram called the meeting to order.

## **ROLL CALL**

Meeting Recorder did a roll call to collect meeting attendees, and a quorum was reached.

## **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Secretary Mitch Ingram asked for any changes to the posted agenda. There were none, so he called for a motion to approve today's Meeting Agenda. City of LaFollette Mayor Scotty Kitts made the motion, it was seconded by Morgan County Executive Brian Langley and approved by all.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Secretary Ingram asked for any changes to the last meeting's Minutes, dated December 9, 2025, and none were noted, so he called for a motion to approve them. Town of Cumberland Gap Mayor Neal Pucciarelli made the motion, it was seconded by Member at Large Terrence Carter and approved by all.

## **SENATE, HOUSE & PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Secretary Ingram opened the floor to any public comments and asked the House and State representatives if they had any comments, Emily McCaul from Senator Hagerty's office, Cindy Boshears from Congressman Fleischmann's office and Garrett Everett from Congressman Burchett's office all said hello to the group and reminded them to reach out if they needed anything. Then Derek Lane from Congressman John Rose's office introduced himself to the group since it was his first meeting.

## **FINANCIAL REPORT**

Treasurer Wade Creswell presented the financials for November 2025. Treasurer Creswell pointed out that the expenses exceeded revenues for the month by

\$32,384.92. Treasurer Creswell explained that the year-to-date revenues are at 92.92% of budget and year-to-date expenses were at 86.65%, both of which are lower than budget. Treasurer Creswell pointed out that the lower-than-expected revenues are partially due to the Grant Administration, HPG, and ERP programs, with the HPG programs. Treasurer Creswell explained that the lower revenues in the HPG program are due to delays resulting from the government shut down and that the ERP program is expected to see increased activity in 2026. Then Treasurer Creswell explained that personnel expenses for the fiscal year thus far are still less than projected, but they are expected to align with the budget as the fiscal year continues to progress.

Secretary Ingram asked if anyone had any questions for Treasurer Creswell, there were none, so he called for a motion to approve the Financial Report. City of LaFollette Mayor Scott Kitts made the motion, it was seconded by City of Newport Mayor Trey Dykes and approved by all.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Rick Yakubic, ETDD Executive Director, started off his report by mentioning that ETDD is currently administering about 127 grants worth about \$65 million, keeping everyone busy.

Then Director Yakubic mentioned that the RPO staff is currently working on the Cocke County Transportation Plan and that some work has begun on the Roane and Union County Transportation Plans.

Mr. Yakubic then mentioned that ETDD was recently awarded \$250,000 in USDA Rural Development Grants Funds specifically earmarked for disaster assistance to benefit the six counties affected by Helene and that the program will be managed by Shane Carney.

Executive Director Yakubic then introduced J.R. Tinch from TDEC who replaced John LeCroy. Mr. Tinch introduced himself to the group and provided some background information on his 22 years that he has worked at TDEC from a state park ranger to his current position. Mr. Tinch then asked if there was anything he could do for the counties to please reach out.

Next, Executive Director Yakubic introduced Sarah Anderson from ETDD to provide more information on the new Paul Bruhn Revitalization Grant worth \$750,000 and will be used to foster economic development through the rehabilitation of historic buildings in rural communities. Ms. Anderson explained that this will be a sub-grant program with a focus on supporting the rehabilitation

of historic properties to help with fostering economic development in rural communities. She then explained that 12 out of the 16 counties ETDD serves are eligible and there will be a selection committee formed to review all the applications that are received and score them using the created rubric and it will be a collaborative partnership between ETDD and local preservation and economic development professionals. Ms. Anderson said that it is expected that there will be somewhere between 7 and 14 subgrants awarded with the minimum amount awarded, being \$50,000 and the maximum being \$100,000 with subrecipient match being required. The hope is that the outcome of the awards will be the rehabilitation on tourism supporting and commercial properties that are vacant, underutilized or occupied but in need of funding for continued use and the properties must either be listed on the National Register of Historic Places individually or as part of a historic district or be determined eligible for listing on the National Register. Ms. Anderson said that they are hoping to begin taking applications in fall of 2026 and will provide more information as it becomes available.

Next, Executive Director Yakubic recognized retired Hamblen County Mayor Bill Brittain and his daughter, Lesley Koboldt, and Jessica Hoke to discuss GiGi's Playhouse. Ms. Hoke explained that GiGi's playhouse is a center that serves the Down Syndrome community from pre-birth diagnosis to adulthood that will be coming to Knoxville and will serve the entire area. GiGi's Playhouse was created to help people within the Down Syndrome community come together and be a place where individuals with Down Syndrome can grow, learn, and thrive. Ms. Hoke and Ms. Koboldt shared a video about how GiGi's Playhouse was started and its values and goals. One big take away is that no one "ages out" at GiGi's Playhouse, there is something for everyone including school readiness and one on one tutoring, fitness classes where they do everything from yoga to weight training, kitchen classes where they learn independent skills needed for cooking, and for the adults there is also job training because for the first time ever individuals with Down Syndrome are outliving their parents. Ms. Hoke said that the biggest thing they need from the group is their connections and support to reach the down syndrome community in their areas and belief in what they are doing. The hope is that they find a location for the center and that it will be open by the end of 2026. Executive Director Yakubic thanked Ms. Hoke and Ms. Koboldt for their presentation and mentioned what a great program it they are a part of.

Next, Director Yakubic moved on to calendar events reminding everyone that the Executive Committee Retreat is the following week on January 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> and that everyone who RSVP'd has a room. Executive Director Yakubic then reminded everyone that the meeting on March 10<sup>th</sup> will be cancelled because it conflicts with the NADO Conference in Washington D.C.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Secretary Ingram asked if anyone had any other business to discuss, no one had any other business.

## **TOPICAL DISCUSSION – Open Discussion**

Secretary Ingram asked if anyone had anything to discuss, no one had any business to discuss.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Secretary Ingram asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made by City of LaFollette Mayor Scott Kitts, it was seconded by Scott County Mayor Jerried Jeffers and approved by all.