

LEADERSHIP CHANGES ON THE HORIZON

Jim Dove, Executive Director at the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission for nearly 32 years, announced his retirement, effective June 30th. During 42 years total service, Dove has seen the organization transition from the Northeast Georgia Area Planning and Development Commission to the Northeast Georgia Regional Development Center (1989) and to the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (2009). When selected as Executive Director, the organization included 10 counties and 47 cities; it has expanded to serve 12 counties and 54 cities with a total population exceeding 600,000. He is a Past President of the Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA), a ten-term Board Member of the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), and served three terms as President of the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions (GARC). In addition, he serves as Contract Administrator for the highly successful Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority (UOBWA). He and wife Nancy have lived for the past 30 years near Nicholson (Jackson County), and will continue to do so while enjoying golf, running, volunteer activities, and supporting the University of Georgia Bulldogs and the institution where he received undergraduate and graduate degrees.



Beck, Dove, Walker

Dove was joined in making the announcement by Executive Assistant **Mott Beck**, as she will also leave the organization on June 30th. Ms. Beck has served the agency for 30 years, after being employed previously by the City of Jefferson School System (17 years) and the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service (3 years). She has been instrumental in supporting efforts of the UOBWA since its inception and has been elected to multiple terms as UOBWA Secretary. She has worked very closely with the NEGRC Council and various committees, and indicates that interaction with those members and local elected officials throughout the region has been one of the more enjoyable parts of her job. Ms. Beck has also been instrumental in assisting with facilitation of approximately 175 retreats with Dove. A native of Jefferson, Ms. Beck will continue to live with her cat Tiger near children and grandchildren.

At its February 21st meeting, the NEGRC Council promoted **Burke Walker** to the position of Executive Director, effective July 1st. This followed a recommendation of the special Search Committee, appointed by Chairman **Jerry Roseberry** (which also included Council members **Billy Pittard, Bill Palmer, Kevin Little, and Amrey Harden**). Walker joined the staff as Historic Preservation Planner in 1994 after serving previously in a part-time role. He has served for the past decade as Director of our Planning & Government Services Division. Walker graduated from Kenyon College in Ohio and received a Master's in Historic Preservation from the University of Georgia. He and wife Julie live in the Five Points area of Athens. He has a reputation as an excellent employee and has worked closely with the NEGRC Council and various committees. Dove stated, "I am very pleased Burke has been chosen to lead this organization, and feel certain he will serve the region in outstanding fashion."

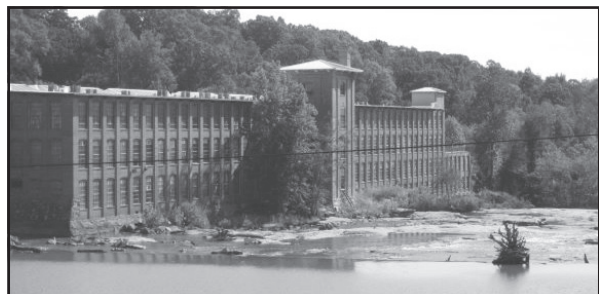
PORTERDALE – A VILLAGE RESTORED

The City of Porterdale, located 35 miles east of Atlanta, sits astride the Yellow River in Newton County. In 1899, the Bibb Manufacturing Company built a twine mill on the River and named it Porterdale Mill after community founder Oliver Porter. The community of mill homes attracted workers looking for jobs and a better quality of life. Porterdale was a typical mill town run in an orderly, patriarchal manner. Homes were owned and maintained by the mill for workers. Those who remember still reminisce about the beauty and strength of the community. In the 1970's, the mill closed, followed by a deterioration of the community due to the sale of homes, many to landlords who allowed the homes to fall into decay. The wonderful Porterdale community was gone.

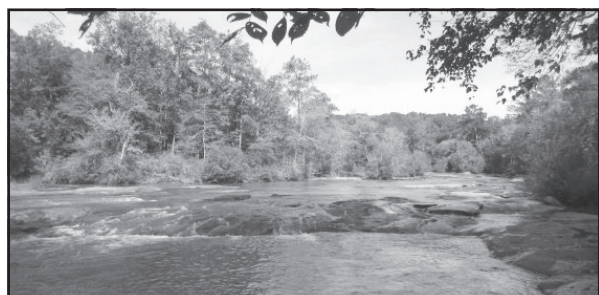
In 2006, the Porterdale Mill, in ruins, was purchased and turned into lofts overlooking the Yellow River. People came from other localities to live in The Lofts, stirring up a small business community that began to grow. A new Police Department began to enforce laws and crack down on those who had contributed to the City's bad reputation, and leaders began enforcing housing codes. People began to take an interest in the historic mill cottages, and many were purchased for owner occupancy.

The long neglected Yellow River is now clean, and a part of the Georgia Rivers Network and a local hub for kayaking. A room in the renovated railroad depot is being used as a library, and Porterdale is part of the Little Free Library movement. The National Park Service has designed an extensive park that will be constructed along the river linking Porterdale to a major walking trail system. The existing depot will serve as the trailhead. The Historic Porterdale Memorial Gym, damaged by fire in 2005, is being repurposed as an open air venue by retaining the original brick exterior.

Today the population of Porterdale is approximately 1640 persons. The Village is led by Mayor **Arline Chapman**, Councilmembers **Lowell Chambers, Linda Finger, Terry Grady, Mike Harper, Tim Savage**, and Manager **Bob Thomson**.



The Lofts at Porterdale Mill



Yellow River



Church and Historic Gym

THREE COMMUNITIES HOLD PLANNING RETREATS

Three more communities held planning retreats since the most recent newsletter went to press. The Elbert County Planning Retreat was held on February 22nd at Bobby Brown Park. The session included the Board of Commissioners, County Administrator, and key staff. Several items were addressed including the upcoming T-SPLOST, Code Enforcement/Property Maintenance Codes, Specific County Needs/Requests, Bobby Brown Park, EMS Update, and Financial Update/2020 Budget. The session provided opportunity for expert presentations, questions from attendees, and considerable discussion leading to consensus building.

The City of Jefferson held its Annual Planning Retreat on February 28th at the Civic Center. This meeting included the Mayor and Council, City Manager, key staff, and the Jefferson City Schools Superintendent. Agenda items included a School System Update, Discussion/Input on Vision and Mission Statements, Comprehensive Plan, Tax Revenues, Financial Report Modifications, Solid Waste Pickup, Building Standards,

Personnel Hiring, and Administration. Consensus was reached on several items.

The City of Elberton held its Planning Session for Fiscal Year 2020 on March 9th at the Elberton Arts Center. The session included Members of the Mayor and Council, City Manager, and key Department Heads. The agenda included a complete Financial Report, Public Works, Electric Operations, Water/Wastewater Operations, Natural Gas Operations, ElbertonNET, Update on Downtown Projects and Potential Projects, Discussion of Staffing and Budget for Fire Department, and Economic Development prior to lunch. After the break, the meeting resumed with a Community Development Discussion and a review of Priorities for FY2020.

A Planning Retreat for the Jefferson Downtown Development Authority was held after the newsletter was finalized for publication, and will be highlighted in the next edition.



Above: Elbert County BOC Retreat

Right: Finance Director Phil Pitts



Jefferson Mayor and Council and Key Staff



Above: Elberton Council and Staff



Left: Mayor Larry Guest with Beck and Dove

WINTERVILLE DELEGATION AND NEGRC STAFF LEARN FROM TRAVELERS REST, SC

As local governments along the route of the Firefly Trail plan to develop their communities' respective segments of the 39-mile rails-to-trails project, some officials have become interested in learning more about "trail towns" that have benefitted from similar conversions in the Southeast. In February, Winterville Mayor **Dodd Ferrelle** led city councilmembers and other local officials, as well as NEGRC Principal Planner, John Devine, on a visit to Travelers Rest, South Carolina, a small city outside of Greenville that is home to a two-mile section of the Swamp Rabbit Trail.

The idea for the trip stemmed from discussions in meetings for Winterville's recent comprehensive plan update (facilitated by the NEGRC) – how could city leaders maximize the projected benefits of the Firefly Trail and minimize any potential missed opportunities or growing pains? A trip to Travelers Rest ("TR," as Mayor **Brandy Amidon** calls it), was not only to see the Swamp Rabbit Trail, but to talk about successes and challenges with local counterparts. It was also considered an effective way to 'peer into the future' of Winterville.

Since the Swamp Rabbit Trail opened in 2009, Travelers Rest has made tremendous progress. With additional local revenues – the number of businesses increased three-fold after the trail was developed – TR has built a new city hall, park, fire station, and police station. Other successes and plans in the works include redevelopment of struggling districts, beautification, and corridor improvement projects. The 22-mile trail's estimated 500,000 users have an impact of about \$7 million annually.

Mayor Amidon and City Manager **Eric Vinson**, who took time out of their schedules to meet with the Winterville delegation, attributed the majority of TR's recent successes to the popularity of the Swamp Rabbit Trail. Mayor Amidon, who was raised in the city, indicated that while TR was previously the subject of local jokes, people now flock there to ride and walk, enjoy the new farmer's market, listen to live music as part of TR's outdoor concert series, and eat, drink, and visit the city's many local restaurants and shops.

The group learned a great deal from the trip and discussions have already begun to define specific types of work to help ensure the Firefly Trail's success in Winterville (construction on the city's segment is set to begin this year). Potential undertakings include creating a strategic plan, researching the benefits and mechanisms of instituting a hotel/motel tax, developing a rest and comfort station, establishing a partnership program for parking and restrooms with churches and other community members, and streetscaping and "road diet" opportunities. The NEGRC expects to work closely with the local government to provide assistance, where possible.

For information about the Firefly Trail or Travelers Rest and the Swamp Rabbit Trail, please contact Principal Planner **John Devine**, AICP, at jdevine@negrc.org or **(706) 369-5650**.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEMBERS AND WORKFORCE STAFF ATTEND SPRING 2019 SETA CONFERENCE

Workforce Development Staff and Workforce Development Board Members recently attended the Southeastern Employment and Training Association (SETA) Spring Conference in Asheville on March 3rd-6th.

SETA provides training and networking opportunities to professionals in the Workforce Development Industry and its partners. Speakers and presenters from across the country convened to provide workshops including WIOA Administration and Performance, Serving Priority Populations including Veterans and People with Disabilities, Providing Services to Youth, Apprenticeships, Business Services Financial Systems, One-Stop System Procurement and Operations and much more.

Of particular note, the Athens Technical College team of Dr. **Andrea Daniel**, President, and **Stephanie Benson**, Vice-President of Adult Education, joined with NEGRC staff **Rima Sullivan**, Youth Program Coordinator and Workforce Development Director **Carol R. Cofer** to present a workshop on "Connecting Youth to Employment through Partnerships". In addition, attendees were able to network with other agencies and organizations, as well as interact with vendors/exhibitors to identify ways to better serve citizens of Northeast Georgia.

Attendees included Workforce Development Board members **Carol Williams**, **Brenda Lazarus**, **Ronnie Boggs** and Dr. Daniel and Workforce Development Staff Ms. Cofer, **Kim Meadows**, **Olivia Wintz**, **Arun Hariani**, and **Rima Sullivan**. Athens Technical College staff attending included **Stephanie Benson**, **Shelby Maxwell**, **Susan Perdue**, **Marchelle Sandoval**, **Stephony Lewis**, and **Philip Cortese**. **Rene Spires**, GDOL One Stop Operator and **Sid Jessup**, Business Services Consultant, were also in attendance.

For information on workforce development activities in Northeast Georgia, please contact the NEGRC Workforce Development Division at **(706) 369-5703**.



MANUFACTUREADY ATHENS TECHNICAL COLLEGE GRADUATION

Congratulations to the graduating class of the Athens Technical College's ManufactuREADY course offered in Clarke County. The graduation took place on February 22nd. ManufactuREADY is a six-week program offered by Athens Technical College and WorkSource Northeast Georgia to help individuals gain the skills and knowledge needed to obtain full-time employment. Upon completion of the course, students earn six certifications, including Forklift and OSHA-10. Classes are offered on a rolling basis in Athens, Greensboro and Monroe.

For further information about the program and to apply, contact **Kelsie Walker**, Athens Technical College at **(706) 369-5763**. For information on other workforce development assistance available in the Northeast Georgia region, contact the NEGRC Workforce Development Division at **(706) 369-5703**.



Graduating Class



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Athens, GA 30605

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OLDER AMERICANS MONTH 2019: CONNECT, CREATE, CONTRIBUTE

Each year, more and more older adults are making a positive impact in and around their communities. As volunteers, employees, employers, educators, mentors, advocates, and more, they offer insight and experience that benefit the entire community. That's why Older Americans Month (OAM) has been recognizing the contributions of this growing population for 56 years. Led by the Administration for Community Living (ACL) each May, OAM provides resources to help older Americans stay healthy and independent, and resources to help communities support and celebrate their diversity. This year's OAM theme, *Connect, Create, Contribute*, encourages older adults and their communities to:

- **Connect** with friends, family and local services and resources.
- **Create** through activities that promote learning, health, and personal enrichment.
- **Contribute** time, talent, and life experience to benefit others.

It is becoming more apparent that remaining socially engaged can improve the quality of life for older adults. Northeast Georgia Area Agency on Aging will use OAM 2019 to focus on how older adults in our area are engaging with friends and family, and through various community activities. Throughout the month, activities will be conducted and information will be shared to highlight local programs and resources. Communities that support and recognize older adults are stronger! Join us in strengthening our community – this May and throughout the year. Visit the Official OAM Website: <https://oam.acl.gov/> for ideas and inspiration, or contact the Northeast Georgia Area Agency on Aging at **1-800-474-7540** to find ongoing opportunities to celebrate and support older Americans.

Update

REGIONAL MEETINGS

APRIL

17th @ 1:30 p.m.

Aging Advisory Council
E. H. Culpepper Conference Room

18th @ Noon

NEGRC Council
Athens Holiday Inn

18th @ 3:30 p.m.

Firefly Trails Advocacy Group
E. H. Culpepper Conference Room

19th @ 8:30 a.m.

City of Braselton Retreat
E. H. Culpepper Conference Room

Sincerely & Respectfully,