

**NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING
ATHENS HOLIDAY INN
FEBRUARY 19, 2015
NOON**

MINUTES

The February meeting of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Council was held on Thursday, February 19, 2015 at Noon at the Athens Holiday Inn. Vice Chairman Frank Turner called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m.

Members Present:

Eisenman, Emily
Lyon, Tommy
Palmer, Bill
Bullard, Ed
Plott, Roy
Trammell, Gene
Dyer, David
Dove, Anthony
Gandy, Roy
Ainslie, Andy
Perriman, Fred
Bentley, David
Ellis, Keith
Roseberry, Jerry
Turner, Frank
Davis, Melvin
Ivie, Charles
Harden, Amrey
Pittard, Billy
Boggs, Ronnie
Johnson, Jesse
Fordyce, Cary

Members Absent:

Graham, Pat
Blechinger, Linda
Graham, Ernie
Denson, Nancy
Houston, Lamar
Guest, Larry
Brock, Phil
Duvall, Valerie
Crow, Tom
Fenn, Josh
Blackmon, Jody
Little, Kevin
Thompson, Greg
Roberts, Roy

Associate Members Present:

Seymour, Joel
Crawford, Charlie

Guests Present:

Mike White
Josh Findley
Peggy Hackett
Kathy Papa
Tom Krobot
Carol Williams

Staff Present:

Jim Dove, Executive Director
Mott Beck Executive Assistant
Evans Brinson, Comptroller
Carol Cofer, Workforce Development Director
Burke Walker, Planning & Government Services Director

CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF JANUARY MEETING MINUTES

Vice Chairman Frank Turner called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. He welcomed members, guests, and staff. He asked for a motion to approve the January meeting minutes. Such a motion was made by Commissioner Gene Trammell and seconded by Mr. Roy Gandy. The motion carried unanimously.

ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

Barrow County: No report.

Clarke County: Winterville Mayor Emily Eisenman gave a report on activities in Winterville. As reported earlier, the old high school is being renovated to serve as a senior center, and this project is progressing very well. 2005 SPLOST funds are being utilized for Pittard Park improvements, and some of the things included are disc golf, walking trails, new pavilions, and a restaurant. Mayor Eisenman invited everyone to an Economic Development Tourism Forum that is being held on January 20th at 10:00 a.m. at the Historic Train Depot.

Elbert County: The County will take over Bobby Brown State Park on April 1st. Regarding economic development, the County is negotiating with CSX to make the connection to the Hartwell rail line, which is a short track that runs from Elberton to Toccoa and connects to the Norfolk-Southern. This would allow Elberton to be an inland port. The County is preparing a resolution and seeking help from DOT with this initiative.

Greene County: Trey Rhodes was recently elected to replace Mickey Channell as State Representative. Commissioner Ed Bullard complimented Council member Jesse Johnson for running very well against the opposition. He advised that Greene County has three new Commissioners. The Lake Oconee Academy Elementary School is rated the number one elementary school in the State of Georgia and was a National Blue Ribbon Recipient which was awarded by the Department of Education in Washington, D.C. The school is also ranked number thirty-eight in the United States. The County is approximately 1/3 through with road expansions going east to west. The second of three EMS stations is almost complete. Commissioner Bullard advised of the excellent job Valerie Duvall is doing as Economic Development Director and reported that Baby Scarlet Colleen has arrived and was born on the 75th anniversary of "Gone With the Wind".....thus the name!

Prior to Committee reports, Mr. Charlie Crawford advised that Council Member Ronnie Boggs had been named Hometown Hero for the month of January by the Real Estate Association.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit & Finance: The Committee met prior to the Council meeting and reviewed the financial statements for the seven-month period ending January 31, 2015. Revenues exceeded expenses by \$9,079. Financial activity for the period was approximately 7/12ths of the annual 2015 Budget projections. A motion to approve the report as presented was made by Commissioner Anthony Dove and seconded by Mr. Amrey Harden. The motion carried unanimously.

Program of Work: The Program of Work Committee met prior to the Council meeting to review the following technical assistance request for the month.

1. **ELBERT COUNTY** – Assistance in preparing an application for Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development (GRAD) certification. This certification would apply to 120 acres in the Elberton Industrial Park. Any applicable fees for this assistance will be quoted upon the review of the application's requirements.

Based upon recommendation from the Executive Director, a motion to approve the technical assistance request for the month for inclusion in the 2015 Program of Work, effective February 19, 2015, was made by Commissioner Billy Pittard and seconded by Mr. Roy Gandy. The motion carried unanimously.

Planning & Government Services (PGS): The PGS Committee met prior to the Council meeting and received several updates on PGS activities. Members reviewed information on two upcoming workshops organized by staff. The first will be hosted this Friday by Mayor Eisenman at the Winterville Train Depot at 10:00 a.m. and addresses economic development through tourism. Council member Andy Ainslie will be on the program for this workshop. A second workshop is scheduled for March 24th that covers "Environmental Planning" and looks at financing opportunities for individual projects. Five state and federal agencies will participate and present specifics on their respective programs. Information on both workshops is available on the Commission website at www.negrc.org. No action by the Council was needed.

Human Services: The Committee met at 11:00 a.m. to hear reports on two initiatives. The first one was in regard to DHS Coordinated Transportation. The past year's subcontractors have been providing a very satisfactory level of service and have been very responsive to any issues that have arisen. Through six months of the contract; 50% of the estimated 15,165 trips have been provided, and funding appears to be stable for the remainder of the Fiscal Year. Total funding was projected to be \$1,888,144. The Regional Transportation Office has invited the Regional Commission to continue contracted services for FY2016 and submit a proposal for renewal. The Regional Commission will continue to use the current subcontractors covering their existing areas/counties, and they have agreed to continue providing services for FY2016. The Human Services Committee recommends to the Council that NEGRC submit a proposal for renewal for the undertaking of the DHS Coordinated Transportation Program for FY 2016. A motion to accept the Committee's recommendation as stated was made by Commissioner Melvin Davis and seconded by Mr. Joel Seymour. The motion carried unanimously.

Second, the Committee was briefed by Workforce Development Director Carol Cofer on activities within the Workforce Development Division. Local Governments and other interested parties will be receiving requests for Summer Work Experience packets by the end of March. Everyone is encouraged to consider employment opportunities for approximately 175 youth throughout the region. Wages are paid through Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds. The planned implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) which was signed on July 22, 2014 will begin on July 1, 2015. This will replace the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) legislation. While some parts of the WIOA legislation will remain similar to WIA, there will be some adjustments that will be made including 75% of the youth funds must be spent on out of school youth. Youth program age requirements will be 14-24 under WIOA versus 14-21 under WIA. Other rules and guidelines will be forthcoming.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Each year, Executive Director Dove and Executive Assistant Mott Beck do some work with the Georgia Local Government Personnel Association. They requested that we make the Council aware of their mid-year conference on March 3rd and 4th at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center in Forsyth. It will provide attendees with the opportunity to improve technical proficiencies, build managerial skills, and exchange information with peers in an informal setting, and participants will be awarded Continuing Education Units (CEUs). Sessions will focus on hearings and appeals, discipline and grievances, human resources, and job analysis for selection training, evaluation, and appraisal. The session is being coordinated by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government.

The Deadline to submit an application to be recognized as a PlanFirst Community by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) is fast approaching. This will mark the second year of the new program established by DCA to reward communities that have demonstrated a commitment to implementing their local comprehensive plan. In the first year, 30 communities applied for designation, with 10 ultimately being selected. Within our region, Athens-Clarke, the City of Madison, and the Town of Braselton were all recognized for efforts in working toward realizing their community's vision. There are a number of incentives that awardees have access to; and all communities, regardless of size, are encouraged to apply. The application deadline is May 15th.

Executive Director Dove and Ms. Beck have facilitated three planning sessions or retreats for local governments since the last Council meeting. These included the Walton County Board of Commissioners, the Oconee County Board of Commissioners, and the City of Madison Mayor and Council. Next on the list are the Newton County Board of Commissioners, Winder Housing Authority, Elbert County Board of Commissioners, Town of Braselton Mayor and Council, and the City of Elberton Mayor and Council. All of these will be held prior to the next Council meeting.

Executive Director Dove advised that Nina Kelly of the Planning & Government Services staff has left to return to Michigan. Ms. Kelly was with the Regional Commission over six years and did a tremendous job. She wanted to be closer to her family, and accepted a job with a Watershed District in the Metropolitan Detroit area.

At this time, Executive Director Dove presented a resolution designating the Regional Commission as the Northeast Georgia Area Agency on Aging. A motion to adopt said resolution was made by Commissioner Tommy Lyon and seconded by Commissioner Billy Pittard. The motion carried unanimously.

IMPACT OF WIA SHORT TERM TRAINING IN THE REGION

The next item on the agenda was an update by Workforce Development Director Carol Cofer regarding short term training programs being operated in the 12-county region. These programs are being operated by Athens Technical College in Athens and Greene County, Georgia Piedmont Technical College in Morgan County, and in conjunction with the Covington Housing Authority in Newton County. There are two focuses of the short term training programs. Athens Technical College is offering Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training in both Athens and Greensboro. They have also offered Workplace Fundamentals which focuses on basic work expectations that are referred to as "soft skills" and have included OSHA certification and in some courses fork-lift certification. Georgia Piedmont Technical College has offered Workplace Fundamentals in Morgan County as well as in partnership with the Covington Housing Authority. To date, 50 persons have participated in these "short term" training programs which last between five and seven weeks, depending upon the specific content of the training. The purpose of this training is to prepare persons for employment.

CATERPILLAR STATUS REPORT

At this time, Human Services Director Mike White gave a status report on Caterpillar. In 2012, Caterpillar, Inc. chose a site in Athens-Clarke County and Oconee County to construct a plant that builds small tractors and excavators. This is a \$200 million investment that shifted some production from Japan. The 892,063 sq. ft. facility employs approximately 1,400 people. The company moved production from Japan to be closer to customers in North America and Europe, and this site was chosen because of its proximity to the ports in Savannah and Charleston; as well as the Atlanta Airport. Mr. White discussed the wage scale and benefits offered to employees. He also indicated that a Caterpillar facility in Toccoa, Georgia is closing, and employees have been offered the opportunity to transfer to this facility. He answered numerous questions and addressed comments from those in attendance.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting will be held on March 19th.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha J. Beck
Executive Assistant