

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

MINUTES

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

Members Present:

Blechinger, Linda
Denson, Nancy
Lyon, Tommy
Palmer, Bill
Plott, Roy
Fenn, Josh
Trammell, Gene
Dove, Anthony
Gandy, Roy
Ainslie, Andy
Perriman, Fred
Bentley, Dave
Ellis, Keith
Roseberry, Jerry
Turner, Frank
Davis, Melvin
Ivie, Charles
Harden, Amrey
Pittard, Billy
Boggs, Ronnie
Johnson, Jesse
Little, Kevin
Fordyce, Cary
Roberts, Roy

Members Absent:

Graham, Pat
Graham, Ernie
Eisenman, Emily
Houston, Lamar
Guest, Larry
Bullard, Ed
Brock, Phil
Duvall, Valerie
Crow, Tom
Dyer, Dave
Blackmon, Jody
Thompson, Greg

Staff Present:

Jim Dove, Executive Director
Mott Beck, Executive Assistant
Evans Brinson, Comptroller
Burke Walker, Director of Planning & Government Services
Theresa Owens, Planner

Associate Members Present:

Ouzts, Buddy
Horton, Harold
Seymour, Joel
Crawford, Charlie

Guests Present:

Rusty Haygood
Kevin Poe
Jason Tinsley
Kathy Papa
Josh Findley
Andrew Simpson
Danielle Belton
Henry Taylor

Media Present:

Blake Giles, **Oconee Enterprise**

CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY MEETING MINUTES

Chairman Kevin Little called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. He welcomed members, guests, media, and staff. He asked for a motion to approve the February meeting minutes. Such a motion was made by Commissioner Tommy Lyon and seconded by Mayor Linda Blechinger. The motion carried unanimously.

ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

Jackson County: The Highway 53 widening project in Braselton is progressing very well and should be completed in approximately two months. An Open House ceremony was recently held for The Arena, a 2,200 seat sports facility located on the Jefferson City School campus. The annual Foliage Fest will be held in downtown Jefferson on Saturday, March 21st. There is currently 3.5 million square feet of industrial space under construction, and several existing businesses are expanding and adding jobs. Three new spec buildings are under construction at present, totaling 2.5 million sq. ft. In 2014, 460 new jobs were created in Jackson County.

Jasper County: Norton Plastics is getting ready to double in size, adding 40 new jobs. The factory makes 265,000 plastic five gallon buckets a month. A new hardwood flooring company will break ground next month which will bring 23 jobs to the County, and another industry has been looking at locating there. A Solid Waste Authority has been organized and will be negotiating to bring garbage into the County to generate revenue that will offset the expense of running the C&D Landfill.

Madison County: Construction on Highway 72 is underway; and since then, several companies have shown an interest in the railroad line along that corridor. Madison County is partnering with Elbert and Oglethorpe Counties on paving projects. Oglethorpe County will use their paving equipment to pave five miles in both Elbert County and Madison County. A lot of small businesses are located in the industrial park at Gholston Stand. Entourage Clothing Internet Sales is moving into the old Graham Office facility.

Morgan County: The Braswell Park project is underway in Bostwick. Funds from a state grant are being used to construct greenspace and trails in the park. The BioScience Training facility in Stanton Springs near Baxter is nearing completion. The County has entered into a four-year lease plan for grading equipment. They have 18-20 pieces of old equipment for sale, and will be accepting sealed bids until April 6th. Grading on the Farm Marketplace is underway, and it is anticipated that the facility will open in September or October. The Farmer's Market aspect of the Marketplace will be available in the spring. A number of small businesses have opened in the area.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit & Finance: The Committee met prior to the Council meeting and reviewed the financial statements for the eight-month period ending February 28, 2015. Revenues exceed expenses by \$11,031. Financial activity for the period was approximately 2/3rds of our annual 2015 Budget projections. A motion to approve the report as presented was made by Mr. Frank Turner and seconded by Mr. David Bentley. 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. **CITY OF MAXEYS** – Assistance in completing an update to the Comprehensive Plan. This assistance involves addressing DCA review comments provided on a previous draft submittal. No fees are anticipated at this time. If applicable, fees will be quoted at a later date.

Based upon recommendation from the Executive Director, a motion to approve the technical request for the month for inclusion in the 2015 Program of Work, effective March 19, 2015, was made by Mr. Ronnie Boggs and seconded by Mr. Bentley. The motion carried unanimously.

Planning & Government Services (PGS): The Committee met prior to the Council meeting to review the update to the Regional Plan's Work Program. Members found the document complete and recommended its submission to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). In order to do this, DCA requires the adoption of a "transmitting" resolution by the Council. PGS Committee Chairman Tommy Lyon presented the resolution to the Council and made a motion for adoption. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gene Trammel and carried unanimously. After DCA's review the PGS Committee will again consider the Regional Work Program for adoption at a meeting later in the year.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Since the last meeting, Executive Director Dove and Executive Assistant Mott Beck have continued to facilitate retreats. A session for the Elbert County Board of Commissioners was held at Russell State Park on Friday, February 27th, and the Braselton Mayor and Council held their retreat on Friday, March 6th. On Saturday, March 7th, Executive Director Dove and Ms. Beck again went to Lake Russell to conduct a session with the Elberton Mayor and Council. On March 20th, a strategic planning session with the Barrow County Board of Commissioners will be held at Sims Career Academy, and on Thursday, March 26th the annual retreat for the Jefferson Mayor and Council will be held in Jefferson.

As reported at the February meeting, Nina Kelly has left the Planning and Government Services Division to return home to a job in Detroit. Nina will be missed, but staff is working diligently to find a replacement.

Executive Director Dove will be going to Washington on March 21st to attend the Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA) Annual Meeting which will overlap with the Spring Policy Conference of the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO). Both meetings will be held at the same location in Arlington, Virginia across the river from the District. Mr. Burke Walker will also be going to attend the DDAA portion of the meetings.

The Regional Commission has begun the process of the annual evaluation of each staff member. Evaluations are carried out by Department Heads and discussed with Executive Director Dove prior to discussions with the individual staff members. Evaluations are to be completed no later than April 10th.

The Southeastern Employment and Training Association (SETA) held its annual conference in Greensboro, NC on March 8th – 11th. Carol Cofer, Rima Sullivan, and Olivia Wintz from the Workforce Development Division attended. They heard reports on the latest national and regional initiatives impacting workforce development programs including the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The conference included 46 different workshops.

PLANNING & GOVERNMENT SERVICES DIVISION UPDATE

At this time, Planner Theresa Owen gave an update on the PGS division, particularly the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH). This program assists communities in meeting their housing needs. During the three year program, participating communities have the opportunity to attend two retreats each year where they gain technical assistance, hear from expert presenters, receive training, and take part in facilitated workshops. The GICH program assists housing teams with creating a community housing plan and with implementation of the plan in their community. In the Northeast Georgia region, Madison, Porterdale, and Greensboro are actively participating GICH Communities, and Auburn graduated from the program in 2014. The program is a partnership between GMA, DCA, UGA, Georgia Power, and Georgia EMC.

DCA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FIELD SERVICES – REGION 5 REPORT

The next item on the agenda was a report by Rusty Haygood, Field Representative Director – Region 5. He gave an overview of the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and some of the services offered through that organization. DCA is the State's community development arm and housing agency. They help communities create a vision for economic development and growth by funding, incentives, partnerships, and technical assistance. DCA serves the citizens, communities, and businesses in the state. There are three core operations including community and economic development, local government assistance, and safe and

affordable housing. Within these three operations are 65 programs. DCA has an annual budget of \$270 million and 425 full time employees. They have multiple public and private partnerships and regional offices in Athens, Tucker, Waycross, and Eastman. Community & Economic Development Programs include AmeriCorps, Martin Luther King, Jr. Advisory Council, Georgia Rural Development Council, Georgia Academy for Economic Development, and Main Street & Downtown Development. The Local Government Assistance Programs are Comprehensive Codes, Service Delivery Strategies, Regional Technical Assistance, and Research. So many of the housing programs offer assistance to persons with low to moderate incomes and include the Georgia Dream Homeownership Program, HomeSafe Georgia, Community Home Investment Program (CHIP), Housing Tax Credits, Rental Assistance Voucher Program, Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH), and the Homelessness Assistance Programs. Some of the grants offered through DCA include CDBG, EIP, Equity Funds, EDGE, and REBA.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting will be held on April 16th.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha J. Beck
Executive Assistant