

**NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION  
COUNCIL MEETING  
ATHENS HOLIDAY INN  
JANUARY 16, 2014  
NOON**

**MINUTES**

The January meeting of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Council was held on Thursday, January 16, 2014 at Noon at the Athens Holiday Inn. Chairman Kevin Little called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m.

**Members Present:**

Graham, Pat  
Blechinger, Linda  
Houston, Lamar  
Lyon, Tommy  
Palmer, Bill  
Bullard, Ed  
Finch, Charles  
Crow, Tom  
Plott, Roy  
Fenn, Josh  
Trammell, Gene  
Nalls, Billy  
Dove, Anthony  
Gandy, Roy  
Ainslie, Andy  
Perriman, Fred  
Brooks, Stenette  
Ellis, Keith  
Roseberry, Jerry  
Turner, Frank  
Davis, Melvin  
Ivie, Charles  
Harden, Amrey  
Pittard, Billy  
Boggs, Ronnie  
Johnson, Jesse  
Little, Kevin  
Creel, Wanda  
Fordyce, Cary

**Members Absent:**

Graham, Ernie  
Denson, Nancy  
Eisenman, Emily  
Guest, Larry  
Wright, Glenn  
Thurman, Larry  
Blackmon, Jody  
Thompson, Greg  
Knight, Harry  
Roberts, Roy  
Lewis, Vince

**Associate Members Present:**

Ouzts, Buddy  
Seymour, Joel  
Adams, Louise  
Crawford, Charlie

**Guests Present:**

Mike Beatty  
Ellen Warren  
Michael Lamar  
Dave Dyer  
Nancy Bobbitt  
Levi Maddox

**Staff Present:**

Jim Dove, Executive Director  
Mott Beck, Executive Assistant  
Evans Brinson, Comptroller  
Carol R. Cofer, Workforce Development Director  
Burke Walker, Planning & Government Services Director  
Dave Van De Weghe, Principal Planner  
Nine Kelley, Project Manager

## CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER MEETING MINUTES

Chairman Kevin Little called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. He welcomed members, guests, and staff. Prior to approval of the minutes, he asked Executive Director Dove to introduce several new members to the Council. Madison Mayor **Fred Perriman** was reappointed to represent the municipalities in Morgan County, and Chairman **Gene Trammell** will represent Jasper County. **Roy Plott**, the new Mayor of Jefferson, will represent the municipalities in Jackson County, and **Cary Fordyce** and **Wanda Creel** were recently appointed to the Council by Governor Deal. Chairman Little then asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the November meeting. Such a motion was made by Commissioner Tommy Lyon and seconded by Mayor Linda Blechinger. The motion passed unanimously.

## ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

**Jackson County:** A review and assessment of County roads are underway to determine upgrade needs. The County has completed its budgeting process.

**Jasper County:** Karen Degges has been hired as the new County Manager. Eight new cell towers have been located in the County, and five additional applications for towers have been submitted. Norton Packaging, Inc., a \$12 million manufacturing operation, will be locating in Jasper County, creating 90 new jobs in the region. The company specializes in containers that hold a wide variety of products, and will manufacture plastic injection molded shipping containers at the Monticello facility.

**Madison County:** The recent SPLOST referendum passed with 80% of the vote. Funds will be used for capital improvements including volunteer fire departments, Sheriff's cars, and ambulances. The majority of SPLOST funds (60%) will be used for road improvements. The first meeting of the Executive Board of the Broad River College/Career Academy was held recently. The budget process is complete; and Commissioner Anthony Dove reported that revenues were up slightly.

**Morgan County:** Mannington Mills, a manufacturer of luxury vinyl tile, will expand its Morgan County production facility, creating 219 jobs over the next few years. The County transitioned in the fall from a defined benefit plan for employees to a defined contribution plan. For a number of years, the County has been doing its own paving in-house and will utilize LMIG funds to expand and upgrade this resource. Morgan County will have a 911 change-over that will improve the communication system and expand coverage. The County purchased an old 200,000 sq. ft. manufacturing plant to use as the public safety facility. It will now be used to house 911 and EMS, and there will still be 70,000 sq. ft. in the back of the facility that can be used for rental space. The City of Madison has a \$700,000 CDBG underway for storm water improvements and an \$8 million forty unit senior housing facility is under construction.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Audit & Finance:** The Committee met prior to the Council meeting, and members reviewed the financial statements for the six-month period ending December 31, 2013. A review of the account balances indicates the sound financial condition of the Regional Commission, with cash and near-cash assets exceeding total liabilities, excluding the capital lease obligation, by \$809,000. Revenues exceeded expenses by \$3,010. Financial activity for the six-month period was approximately ½ of the annual 2014 budget. A motion to approve the financial statement as presented was made by Mr. Frank Turner and seconded by Commissioner Dove. The motion passed unanimously. In other business, two policy updates for Regional Commission Fiscal Policies were reviewed by Council members. These updates will formalize the practice already being done by staff regarding bank reconciliations and “stale” checks. A motion to adopt these two fiscal policy items was made by Mr. Turner and seconded by Mr. Josh Fenn. The motion passed unanimously.

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

1. **CITY OF AUBURN** – Assistance in developing a Community Development Block Grant-Redevelopment Fund (CDBG-RDF) application for rehabilitating the historic R&R building into the Auburn Center. The fee for this assistance is \$2,000.
2. **CITY OF COMER** – Assistance in developing a regular round Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application for water facility improvements. PGS staff will first assist the City in determining project eligibility and competitiveness before proceeding. The fee for developing a potential application is \$2,000.

Based upon recommendation from the Executive Director, a motion to approve the program assistance requests for inclusion in the FY14 Program of Work, effective January 16, 2014, was made by Commissioner Billy Pittard and seconded by Dr. Stenette Brooks. The motion passed unanimously.

**Planning & Government Services:** The Committee met prior to the Council meeting and discussed several items of interest. The Joint Development Authority of Northeast Georgia recently increased its membership to include seven Northeast Georgia counties. The Authority met in December for a facilitated strategic planning session conducted by PGS staff. A second, follow-up meeting was held the week of January 6<sup>th</sup>. These meetings have been very productive, and the Authority’s Directors are working towards scheduling a May meeting with the member Chairs to present an annual update and a draft work plan. The Authority continues to make good progress in efforts that use regional partnerships to promote economic development. No action was taken by Council.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Director Dove and Ms. Beck facilitated a retreat with Newton County Manager John Middleton and County Department Managers January 9<sup>th</sup>, and the City of Jefferson will hold its annual retreat on January 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. Dave Van De Weghe of our staff will facilitate the City of Social Circle retreat on January 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> and the City of Commerce Retreat on January 26<sup>th</sup>. The Elbert County retreat is scheduled for February 21<sup>st</sup>, and the annual retreats for Elberton and Braselton are on March 1<sup>st</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> respectively.

Director Dove was in Birmingham January 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> attending the Development District Association of Appalachia Winter Board Meeting. While there, he learned that the Federal Budget will show an increase for Appalachian Regional Commission Programs, as well as those of the Economic Development Administration. This should provide additional monies for infrastructure related projects and planning grants to districts such as ours.

Director Dove attended a day-long meeting in Macon with the Department of Aging Services, Area Agency on Aging Directors, and Regional Commission Directors on January 7<sup>th</sup>. Division of Aging Services staff addressed changes that will be occurring on the national level regarding senior programs over the next five years. In addition, legislation was introduced on January 15<sup>th</sup> in the General Assembly to create a separate Department of Aging Services. The Council will receive additional information on that matter should it have movement.

For several years, the Regional Commission has held an annual orientation for newly elected and appointed officials. This year, the format of the session will be a little bit different than in past years. Rather than a mass mailing to officials throughout the region, those recently elected, appointed to the Council, or recently employed in a local government setting will be targeted. The session will be held at NEGRC headquarters on February 13<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 p.m. until about 1:00 p.m. Lunch will be provided. Thus far, 17 persons have expressed an interest in attending, and any others that wish to attend will be welcome.

## **REPORT ON THE GREAT PROMISE PARTNERSHIP**

At this time, Mike Beatty, President and CEO of Great Promise Partnership (GPP), gave a report on the Great Promise Partnership. He explained the program and the many benefits associated with it. GPP is a public-private partnership dedicated to helping at-risk youth finish high school and then go to college, join the military, or enter the workforce. Program advocates believe that the majority of at-risk youth associated with GPP will benefit from successful career fundamentals that are taught and the experience that provides real life and career lessons. Mr. Beatty indicated that success of the GPP requires a true community effort that engages the political leadership, the school system, the business community, youth and community development organizations, and statewide partners. He hopes to establish a sustainable GPP

program in every part of the state that is a bottom-up and locally driven initiative. GPP statewide partners include ACCG, AT&T, DCA, EMCs, Georgia Power Company, GMA, Governor's Office of Workforce Development, Georgia Association of Regional Commissions, State DOE, Technical College System of Georgia, University System of Georgia, and the Georgia Sheriffs' Association.

### **UPDATE ON NEW PLANNING RULES**

The next item on the agenda was an update by Principal Planner Dave Van De Weghe regarding changes to the state's minimum planning standards, designed by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), that will simplify planning for local governments and provide greater flexibility for plan preparation. A single plan update is now due every five years rather than separate updates to the comprehensive plan and short term work program, as previously required. Also, basic plan preparation service will be provided by NEGRC staff for local governments at DCA's expense. Additional plan sections are optional and will be priced individually. The plan adoption process has been simplified to eliminate the 60 day waiting period before adoption, and local governments need only adopt one resolution rather than two as per the new rules. Also affected by the new standards is the Development of Regional Impact (DRI) review process. NEGRC will still facilitate the sharing of project details and solicit comments from local governments, but NEGRC will no longer issue a finding on whether or not developments are in the best interest of the region.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, February 20<sup>th</sup>.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha J. Beck  
Executive Assistant