

NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING
ATHENS HOLIDAY INN
JUNE 19, 2014
NOON

MINUTES

The June meeting of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Council was held on Thursday, June 19, 2014 at the Athens Holiday Inn. Chairman Kevin Little called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m.

Members Present:

Graham, Pat
Graham, Ernie
Eisenman, Emily
Houston, Lamar
Finch, Charles
Trammell, Gene
Nalls, Billy
Ainslie, Andy
Brooks, Stenette
Ellis, Keith
Roseberry, Jerry
Ivie, Charles
Harden, Amrey
Pittard, Billy
Boggs, Ronnie
Johnson, Jesse
Little, Kevin
Fordyce, Cary
Roberts, Roy

Members Absent:

Blechinger, Linda
Denson, Nancy
Lyon, Tommy
Guest, Larry
Palmer, Bill
Bullard, Ed
Brock, Phil
Crow, Tom
Plott, Roy
Fenn, Josh
Dove, Anthony
Blackmon, Jody
Gandy, Roy
Perriman, Fred
Turner, Frank
Davis, Melvin
Thompson, Greg
Knight, Harry

Associate Members Present:

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

Guests Present:

Chuck Williams
Craig Intro
Andrew Thorne
Barton Lowrey
David Dyer
Dave Bentley

Media Present:

Blake Giles, Oconee Enterprise
Bonny Harper, Barrow County News

Staff Present:

Jim Dove, Executive Director
Mott Beck, Executive Assistant
Evans Brinson, Comptroller
Carol R. Cofer, Director of Workforce Development

WELCOME AND APPROVAL OF MAY MEETING MINUTES

Chairman Kevin Little called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. He welcomed members, guests, and staff. He asked for a motion to approve the May meeting minutes. Such a motion was made by Dr. Stenette Brooks and seconded by Mr. Ronnie Boggs. The motion carried unanimously.

ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

Barrow County: Chairman Pat Graham advised that Standards and Poors have upgraded Barrow County's bond rating to an A+. The BOC is exploring alternatives to effectively and efficiently provide county government services. Specifically, the Board approved a further evaluation of the public private partnership model of providing certain services and providing quality services and reducing current and future costs. A Pre-Bid Conference was held recently, and 37 individuals, representing 24 companies, were in attendance. Proposals will be accepted until July 24th. A new website for Barrow County was recently introduced. A group of dedicated citizens have organized to help Barrow County celebrate its centennial year. Several different events have been planned to commemorate this special time. The first event will take place on July 7th.

Clarke County: Renovations to the Winterville Historic High School are about nine months behind. When completed, a satellite facility for the Athens Community Council on Aging will be located on the ground floor. The center will be funded through a \$750,000 low-interest loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development; a \$500,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; and \$244,745 in SPLOST funds. And, of course, the City provided the property and building. As part of improvements to Pittard Park, the City is sponsoring a Community Garden. For a very small fee, participants can rent a raised garden plot with fertile compost that is ready for planting. Persons are partnering with other individuals to tend a larger section that will supply enough to contribute to the food bank. This has been a very successful community event, and all sections of the garden have been sold.

Elbert County: The City of Elberton recently approved a \$32 million budget. The City has utilized SPLOST funds to install automatic readers for utility meters, and the water system and sewer plant are undergoing renovations. The City has eliminated seventeen staff positions and will not replace those employees that are retiring. From the County perspective, a 1 mill increase was included on the last ballot and earmarked for construction of a spec building; however, it did not pass. Even though the County has two existing spec buildings, they do not meet industry specifications. The high school is undergoing a complete rehabilitation, and the County continues to remain in the black.

Greene County: No report.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit & Finance: The Committee met prior to the Council meeting and reviewed the financial statements for the eleven-month period ending May 31, 2014. A review of the account balances reflected the sound financial condition of the Regional Commission, with cash and near cash assets exceeding total liabilities, excluding the capital lease obligation, by \$821,000. Revenues exceeded expenses by \$26,892. Financial activity for the eleven-month period was approximately 11/12ths of the FY 2014 Budget. A motion to approve the financial report as presented was made by Mr. Amrey Harden and seconded by Commissioner Gene Trammell. The motion carried unanimously.

Program of Work: The Committee met prior to the council meeting to review and discuss the following technical assistance requests for the month:

1. **CITY OF ARCADE** – Update to the Comprehensive Plan. There is no fee required for preparation of the “basic plan”, and any fees for additional and requested plan elements will be provided to the City at the appropriate time.
2. **CITY OF BOWMAN** – Development of a Strategic Plan for Bowman’s historic downtown. The plan will also include a market analysis of a downtown commercial building owned by the City that needs rehabilitation. There is no required fee for this assistance.
3. **CITY OF COMMERCE** - Preparation of a Redevelopment Strategy for the City to serve as a “blueprint” for future development. This project is proposed for cost-sharing with the NEGRC’s planning contract for an estimated local fee of \$5,000.

Based upon recommendation from the Executive Director, a motion to approve the technical assistance requests for the month for inclusion in the 2014 Program of Work, effective June 19, 2014, was made by Councilman Ronnie Boggs and seconded by Mr. Harden. The motion carried unanimously.

Personnel: At the Council meeting in April, the Personnel Committee met to conduct the annual evaluation of the Executive Director. A draft of the evaluation was forwarded to each member of the Council for review and comment. As noted in the evaluation, the Executive Director had another very successful year and performed his duties in an exemplary fashion. There were no negative comments or suggested revisions, and a motion to accept the evaluation was made by Mayor Emily Eisenman and seconded by Mr. Harden. The motion carried unanimously.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Executive Director Dove advised that the Regional Commission has received more special request projects for technical assistance this year than ever before. The Council hears the Program of Work Committee report each month when these efforts are added to the annual Program of Work. There are multiple reasons for the increased

requests. Some projects are identified at the retreats facilitated throughout the year; the Regional Commission is more involved in flexible comprehensive planning; and, in many cases, staff gets so immersed in a community to the point that one project builds on another.

Executive Director Dove will be traveling to Washington, D.C. on an overnight visit on June 24th. As the incoming First Vice President of the Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA), he is responsible for the 50th Anniversary Conference celebration of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) which will be held in March 2015. He will meet with the Federal Co-Chairman and senior staff of ARC and also senior staff of the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) to begin formulating plans for this conference.

Executive Assistant Mott Beck will be leaving on June 20th to attend the Annual Conference of the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) to be held in Savannah. In addition to representing the organization, she will orchestrate details of the Georgia Association of Regional Commission's exhibit. This entails setting up and dismantling the display and arranging the schedule for persons to man the booth.

Executive Director Dove and Ms. Beck will be facilitating a retreat for the City of Arcade on July 2nd, which will be the first such session in that City. A second retreat for the Morgan County Board of Commissioners will be held in August.

At this time, Executive Director Dove presented Ms. Beck with a plaque for 25 years of service to the Regional Commission. Ms. Beck joined the staff on July 17, 1989.

RECOMMENDATION REGARDING THE REVISED FY14 AMENDED BUDGET AND PROPOSED FY15 BUDGET

Council members were e-mailed copies of the Revised FY2014 and the proposed FY2015 Budget prior to the meeting. Mr. Harden provided highlights of both budgets. In FY2014, the total expenditures are anticipated to be \$12,708,899, and total revenues are expected to be \$12,753,572. These expected expenditures and revenues will produce an expected excess of revenues over expenses of \$44,673. The amount necessary to match the different grants is \$240,433. A motion to approve the Revised FY2014 Budget was made by Mr. Harden and seconded by Mr. Lamar Houston. The motion carried unanimously. In FY15, anticipated expenditures are \$12,805,459, and total revenues are expected to be \$12,850,119. This will result in an expected excess of revenues over expenses of \$44,661, and the amount necessary to match the different grants is expected to be \$236,204. Considering the amount of federal and state dollars to be received in FY2015, the leveraging effect of local funds is considerable. To comply with Department of Audit recommendations, dues are calculated using the most recent region population figures, and results in a \$142 increase in total dues income for FY15. Two additional notes of interest, the Executive Director has exclusive use of the Regional Commission's vehicle, and the FY15 Budget

includes a salary adjustment for staff that results in a 2.76% increase in total salaries. A motion to approve the proposed FY15 Budget was made by Mr. Harden and seconded by Commissioner Trammell. The motion carried unanimously.

RECOMMENDATION ON THE FY15 PROGRAM OF WORK

At this time, Executive Director Dove presented highlights of the FY15 Program of Work. Copies of the document were e-mailed to Council members prior to the meeting. As in past years, the NEGRC has an ambitious Program of Work and has included all items required by State and federal grantor agencies. The Regional Commission will be continuing a number of ongoing efforts and will continue to present new technical assistance requests to the Council each month for approval and inclusion in the Annual Program of Work. A motion to adopt the FY15 Program of Work was made by Commissioner Andy Ainslie and seconded by Mr. Boggs. The motion carried unanimously.

REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

As customary each year in June, the Council conducts the annual NEGRC evaluation based on performance standards adopted in September 2009. Executive Director Dove read the standards, and a motion stating that the Regional Commission has met the performance standards was made by Mr. Cary Fordyce and seconded by Commissioner Keith Ellis. The motion carried unanimously.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUCCESSES IN NORTHEAST GEORGIA: CATERPILLAR AND MORGAN COUNTY ZOO & FARMER'S MARKET

Due to a family emergency, Rusty Haygood could not be in attendance to report on the progress being made at the Caterpillar facility. Commissioner Ainslie gave a report on the proposed Morgan County Zoo and Farmer's Market. The Georgia Zoo and Safari will be located on the Monticello Highway off Interstate 20 at exit 113. It is slated to open for business in late 2015 and have a four to five year complete "build out". The facility will employ 40 persons initially and 250 when completed. The 395+ acre zoo will include animal exhibits and have a botanical garden to represent the environments and cultures of five continents, as well as nearly 300 acres of a safari park. Safari adventure guides will take guests on interpretive tours throughout the park's plains and forests aboard specially outfitted safari vehicles. Animals will include zebras, camels, giraffes, water buffalo, rhinos, and more. The botanical gardens will use native and native-friendly plants and trees to emulate the various environments native to the animal's homes. The Zoo will provide a unique learning experience for students of all ages. Programs will be established in conjunction with the Morgan County School system for grades K-12. There will also be learning opportunities and collaborations for students at the UGA Vet School.

Another exciting project in Morgan County is an agribusiness public/private partnership between Kelly Products and the County. Kelly Products is a leading

provider of essential information and automation solutions to the agribusiness industry. Keith Kelly, owner of Kelly Products, is partnering with the County on an agritourism destination site located on Highway 441 off Interstate 20 at exit 114. This destination site will have a phased approach, beginning with a specialty food retail store, a café, and a farmer's market. The market will be constructed by the County and be operated by a representative of Kelly Products. The entire site will utilize and emphasize locally grown products. As the site evolves, education will be a key component, including permanent workshops on artisan skills such as woodworking and blacksmithing. It is predicted to have a minimum of 25 new jobs during the first phase of the project, with additional and substantial employment opportunities to follow. Ongoing growth will allow further agritourism and job opportunities onsite. Development is slated to begin in the next few months.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

At this time, Mayor Eisenman presented an award to Executive Director Dove in recognition of his outstanding dedication, commitment, and leadership. He has been employed with the organization since 1975.

OTHER BUSINESS

The Council will not meet in July. The next meeting will be held on August 21st.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully Submitted

Martha J. Beck
Executive Assistant