

**NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING
ATHENS HOLIDAY INN
AUGUST 21, 2014
NOON**

MINUTES

The August meeting of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Council was held on Thursday, August 21, 2014 at the Athens Holiday Inn. Chairman Kevin Little called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m.

Members Present:

Blechinger, Linda
Graham, Ernie
Houston, Lamar
Lyon, Tommy
Palmer, Bill
Bullard, Ed
Duvall, Valerie
Crow, Tom
Plott, Roy
Fenn, Josh
Trammell, Gene
Dyer, David
Dove, Anthony
Gandy, Roy
Ainslie, Andy
Perriman, Fred
Bentley, David
Ellis, Keith
Roseberry, Jerry
Pittard, Billy
Boggs, Ronnie
Johnson, Jesse
Little, Kevin
Fordyce, Cary

Members Absent:

Graham, Pat
Denson, Nancy
Eisenman, Emily
Guest, Larry
Brock, Phil
Blackmon, Jody
Turner, Frank
Davis, Melvin
Harden, Amrey
Ivie, Charles
Thompson, Greg
Knight, Harry
Roberts, Roy

Staff Present:

Jim Dove, Executive Director
Mott Beck, Executive Assistant
Evans Brinson, Comptroller
Burke Walker, Director of Planning & Government Services
Nina Kelly, Project Manager

Associate Members Present:

Ouzts, Buddy
Horton, Harold
Pitts, Flemmie
Crawford, Charlie

Media Present:

Leanne Akin, The Paper

Guests Present:

Rusty Haygood
Kathy Papa
Nancy Bobbitt
Andrew Thorne
Tim Blades
Craig Intro

WELCOME AND APPROVAL OF JUNE 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 June meeting minutes. Such a motion was made by Commissioner Gene Trammell and seconded by Commissioner Tommy Lyon. The motion carried unanimously.

ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

Jackson County: The County is beginning the budget process for next year, and the Tax Digest has increased by 2%. The County has three dirt roads that will be surfaced using the tar and gravel technique which is much cheaper to use. Luke Bryan will be giving a concert in the County in October.

Jasper County: Monticello has new sidewalks in place, and passing lanes have been installed on S.R. 83. The unemployment rate has dropped considerably, and four new industrial prospects are looking at Jasper County as a possible location. The Norton Plant, makers of food grade containers, currently has 30 employees and anticipates hiring an additional 60 in the next 12 months.

Madison County: The County has a new three-story high school, and the recently completed Jackson EMC facility is operational. The Lt. Governor will be on hand for the opening of the Broad River Academy in September. Three new small businesses have located in the area. On September 6th, the City of Comer will be holding a city wide yard sale, and a fall festival will be held in Danielsville on that same day.

Morgan County: The City of Madison received a \$500,000 CDBG award for a Stormwater Treatment Facility that is nearing completion, and is currently awaiting news on a \$195,000 CDBG Housing Stabilization application. A senior housing development has been approved and zoning completed, and the City is awaiting an announcement soon regarding this issue. The County and City have been working together on street paving, and Phase III of the City's Public Safety facility is ongoing. In County news, Georgia-Pacific is planning a huge renovation project, and the completion is expected by the third quarter of 2015. A \$50,000 DOT Grant will assist in widening of a road leading to the planned Farmer's Market at I-20. The Madison-Morgan Conservancy Greenprint Ramble Tour will be held on Saturday, October 18th, and will visit sites throughout the County. Commissioner Ainslie advised that the BOC Retreat, facilitated by Director Dove and Executive Assistant Mott Beck was a huge success, and that the Morgan County Recreation Commission was already "putting in place" some of the goals identified in a retreat facilitated by Mr. Dove and Ms. Beck earlier in the month.

APPOINTMENT OF PRIVATE MEMBERS

The Regional Commission Bylaws provide for private sector representation from each of the region's twelve counties. Nominees are chosen by the leadership of each of those counties and submitted to this Council for approval for a one-year term. Nominees are as follows:

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Ernie Graham | - | Barrow County |
| Lamar Houston | - | Clarke County |
| Bill Palmer | - | Elbert County |
| Valerie Duvall | - | Greene County |
| Josh Fenn | - | Jackson County |
| David Dyer | - | Jasper County |
| Roy Gandy | - | Madison County |
| David Bentley | - | Morgan County |
| Frank Turner | - | Newton County |
| Amrey Harden | - | Oconee County |
| Jesse Johnson | - | Oglethorpe County |
| Harry Knight | - | Walton County |

A motion to approve the Private Sector nominations for the twelve counties was made by Commissioner Billy Pittard and seconded by Commissioner Lyon. The motion carried unanimously.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Audit & Finance: The Committee met prior to the Council meeting and reviewed the financial statement for the first month of the Fiscal Year. Revenues exceeded expenses by \$1,674. Financial activity for the month was approximately 1/12th of the annual 2015 Budget projections. A motion to approve the report as presented was made by Mr. Lamar Houston and seconded by Commissioner Anthony Dove. The motion carried unanimously. Comptroller Brinson advised that the auditing firm of McNair, McLemore and Middlebrooks was at NEGRC the week of August 11th conducting the annual audit for Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2014. Their report will be presented to the Council in September.

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 NICHOLSON** – Assistance with an Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Grant Pre-Application for sewer system improvements along U.S. 441. No fee is required.
2. **CITY OF MADISON** – Assistance in developing a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. A fee of \$1,000 is required that will be cost-shared with the NEGRC's GDOT Planning Contract.

3. **CITY OF JEFFERSON** – Assistance in developing a Regional Economic Business Assistance (REBA) Grant Application for construction of a distribution facility to create approximately 500 jobs. The application required fee is \$1,500.
4. **MORGAN COUNTY** – Assistance in developing a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. A fee of \$1,000 is required that will be cost-shared with the NEGRC's GDOT Planning Contract. The plan will also include the Cities of Bostwick, Buckhead, and Rutledge.
5. **CITY OF BOWMAN** – Assistance in developing a Downtown Strategic Plan. No fee is required. The project is paid for through the ARC Administrative Grant.
6. **CITY OF COMMERCE** – Assistance in preparing a Redevelopment Strategy. The fee is \$5,000 that will be cost-shared with NEGRC's DCA Planning Contract.
7. **ELBERT COUNTY** – Assistance in preparing an update to the County's Comprehensive Plan. A Basic Plan is provided under the NEGRC's Planning Contract, and no fee is required. However, if additional plan elements are needed or requested, certain fees will be required that will be quoted at the appropriate time.

Based upon recommendation from the Executive Director, a motion to approve the technical assistance requests for the month for inclusion in the Fiscal Year 2015 Program of Work, effective August 21, 2014, was made by Commissioner Pittard and seconded by Mr. David Bentley. The motion carried unanimously.

PLANNING & GOVERNMENT SERVICES: The Committee met prior to the Council meeting and discussed several items of interest. One of the items required Council action. As reported at the May meeting, the Regional Plan's Work Program was submitted to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for review. DCA notified the Regional Commission that the Work Program had been approved, which requires an adopting resolution by the Council. Commissioner Lyon made a motion to adopt the resolution; it was seconded by Commissioner Ainslie, and carried unanimously. Members reviewed the draft Regional Digital Economy Plan and found it acceptable to date and on schedule for completion by the end of the year. Also, the Committee reviewed an updated list of PGS projects and activities related to the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Members feel that the region continues to make progress in implementing the adopted CEDS.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Executive Director Dove recently made a presentation regarding population trends and projections, and it resulted in numerous requests for a copy of those figures. As a result, he felt that it would be informative and useful to make the same presentation to the Council. A table showing actual population figures by County from

1980 through 2010 was provided to members, as well as projections for 2020 and 2030. The actual population figures were taken from the U.S. Census of Population, and projections were developed by the Georgia Office of Planning and Budget.

Executive Director Dove and Ms. Beck facilitated two retreats earlier in August, and both sessions were requested by Morgan County. The first session, held on August 6th at the County Administration Building, was conducted for the Morgan County Recreation Commission. Several crucial items were discussed including format of Commission meetings, the potential need for additional facilities and property, programs for seniors and special need participants, and possible new offerings by the Department. The annual strategic planning session for the Board of Commissioners was held on August 15th at Camp Twin Lakes. Discussion focused on a number of topics including matters associated with public works, public safety, economic development, planning and zoning, utilities and energy, the local hospital, revenue enhancement, citizen involvement, and CUVA. The exchange of ideas led to several priorities being established.

Executive Director Dove will be attending the Annual Conference of the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) in Denver on August 23rd – 26th. He is serving his seventh term on the NADO Board. NADO provides advocacy, education, research, and training to over 540 multi-jurisdictional regional planning and development organizations across the country.

On July 27th – 29th, Executive Director Dove attended the Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA) Summer Board Meeting in Marietta, Ohio. He is serving his sixth term on the DDAA Board where he serves as 1st Vice President. DDAA is a membership organization of the 73 Local Development Districts (LDDs) serving the 420 counties of the Appalachian Region. An LDD provides administrative, professional and technical assistance to local governments throughout Appalachia.

SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAM WRAP UP

At this time, Youth Program Specialist Rima Sullivan gave a report on the recently completed Summer Youth Program. Youth that were enrolled for the In-School Youth Program participated in Job Readiness workshops in the spring to prepare for the Summer Work Experience. They were given the opportunity to interview with different worksite Supervisors in their counties, and 180 youth participated in the Program. There were a total of 114 worksites in the 12-county area, which included non-profit agencies, local government offices, and private sector businesses. The Program ran for a five-week period from June 9th to July 12th. Participants worked up to 30 hours per week and were paid \$7.25 per hour, and 98% of the participants successfully completed the program. Case Managers worked closely with staff and youth to resolve any problems that might arise during the program.

HISTORY AND CURRENT STATUS OF THE CATERPILLAR PROJECT

The next item on the agenda was a report on the Caterpillar project by Rusty Haygood, Oconee County Economic Development Director. In mid-December 2011, Athens-Clarke and Oconee Counties were approached by the Georgia Department of Economic Development requesting that the local communities collaborate with the state to bring Caterpillar to a 250 acre site near the intersection of Atlanta Highway and Ga. 316, commonly known as the Orkin site. Other sites being considered were in South and North Carolina. The local government entities and the development authorities of the two counties, in cooperation with the State, worked together to bring this project to the community by ensuring that company-required utilities, transportation access and financing were made available. In addition, the Orkin family, owners of the project site, was very supportive throughout the selection process. Both counties worked with the Georgia Department of Transportation to provide necessary roadways and signalization to the site required for plant operations at no cost to the company. Athens-Clarke and Oconee counties entered into a partnership to recruit and support this major manufacturer through local incentives and company performance standards extending over 20 years. Governor Deal announced on February 17, 2012 that Caterpillar had chosen Georgia as the site, and one month later on March 16, 2012 state and local officials along with Caterpillar executives broke ground. Production began in 2013. There are currently 750 employees, and it is anticipated that figure will rise to 1,400 by 2020. Mr. Haygood advised that the vast majority of employees live within a 50 mile radius of the plant. He also emphasized that Caterpillar has become very much a part of the community.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting will be held on September 18th.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha J. Beck
Executive Assistant