

**NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING
ATHENS HOLIDAY INN
NOVEMBER 21, 2013
NOON**

MINUTES

The November meeting of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Council was held on Thursday, November 21, 2013 at Noon 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
Lyon, Tommy
Palmer, Bill
Bullard, Ed
Crow, Tom
Joiner, Jim
Nalls, Billy
Dove, Anthony
Gandy, Roy
Ainslie, Andy
Brooks, Stenette
Ellis, Keith
Roseberry, Jerry
Turner, Frank
Davis, Melvin
Boggs, Ronnie
Johnson, Jesse
Little, Kevin

Members Absent:

Blechinger, Linda
Denson, Nancy
Guest, Larry
Wright, Glenn
Finch, Charles
Fenn, Josh
Pennamon, Carl
Thurman, Larry
Blackmon, Jody
Ivie, Charles
Harden, Amrey
Pittard, Billy
Thompson, Greg
Knight, Harry
Lee, Kay
Roberts, Roy
Lewis, Vince

Associate Members Present:

Ouzts, Buddy
Horton, Harold
Seymour, Joel
Nunn, David

Guests Present:

Nancy Cobb
Fred Perriman
Kathy Papa
Phil Pitts
Perry Dunlap
Bob Thomas
Leta Talbird
Rhonda Hawk
Chuck Williams

Staff Present:

Jim Dove, Executive Director
Mott Beck, Executive Assistant
Evans Brinson, Comptroller
Burke Walker, Planning & Government Services Director
Rima Sullivan, Youth Program Specialist

CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 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 October meeting minutes. Such a motion was made by Mr. Frank Turner and seconded by Mr. Roy Gandy. The motion passed unanimously.

ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

Barrow County: Courthouse renovations are nearing completion, and a ribbon cutting ceremony will be held in January. The Board of Commissioners has chosen two finalists for the County Manager position, and a decision will be made following further interviews. Road surfacing through the City of Winder is complete, and a streetscape project is scheduled to begin in March.

Clarke County: The Selig group that has been looking at the Armstrong Dobbs property will not continue with plans to develop the site. The Athens Downtown Master Plan has been completed. The bottom floor of the Historic High School in Winterville is being renovated to house a new senior center. This project was funded by a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), SPLOST, and a USDA Rural Development Loan. Additional amenities will be located in the Winterville City Park, and a Community Garden will be a part of this project. LMIG funds will be utilized for road improvements and additional sidewalks.

Elbert County: The final property has been acquired for extension of the airport's runway. The County recently received its audit, and Commissioner Tommy Lyon was happy to report that it is the seventh year the County has finished in the "black". Elbert County serves a portion of Hart County with fire protection, and Hart County, in turn, will be assisting Elbert County with road paving projects next spring. DOT has acquired 195 parcels in preparation for the four-laning of Highway 72 to the Broad River. Hopefully, bids will be let in mid-2014.

Greene County: BOC Chairman Ed Bullard gave a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the new St. Joseph's Good Samaritan Hospital. The new \$40 million facility, located on Lake Oconee Parkway, will be opening on November 25th. The 25-bed critical care hospital serves Greene County and the Lake Oconee area. The facility includes surgical suites, rehabilitation gyms, a chapel, and other amenities designed to promote healing. St. Mary's Good Samaritan Hospital will have three surgical suites compared to one in the old hospital. The interior design puts complementary services near each other, and the emergency room will be open for around-the-clock care. Most of Greene County's citizens now go outside the county to receive medical treatment, and this facility will allow people to stay close to home. The opening comes months ahead of schedule, and Chairman Bullard advised that the facility was built completely with private funding.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Audit & Finance: Members of the Committee met prior to the Council meeting and reviewed the financial statements for the four-month period ending October 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 \$808,000. Revenues exceeded expenses by \$2,528. Financial activity for the four-month period was approximately 1/3rd of the annual 2014 Budget. A motion to approve the financial statement as presented was made by Mr. Lamar Houston and seconded by Commissioner Lyon. The motion carried unanimously.

Human Services: The Committee met prior to the Council meeting to hear an update on WIA youth services. Participants in WIA services must meet income eligibility guidelines and have at least one barrier to employment (parenting, basic skills deficiency, no work experience, etc.). The Paxen Learning Corp. is a GED program for high school drop-outs between the ages of 17-21. It includes three to four weeks of classroom instruction, one week of job readiness training, and job placement/post-secondary school assistance. There are 50 youth currently enrolled in Paxen. Twenty-eight have received GEDs and are applying for employment or enrolling in colleges. All performance measures for PY2012 were met. Individual training funding assistance is available to out-of-school youth, ages 18-21, to help offset college or proprietary school expenses for a maximum of two years. Financial assistance is available for tuition, books, program expenses (uniforms, testing, tools, etc.) in addition to support payments for transportation and childcare. There are 32 youth currently enrolled. All performance measures for PY2012 were met.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The 15th Annual Training Conference of the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions (GARC) was held on November 6–8, 2013 at St. Simons Island. Council members attending included Chairman Kevin Little, Melvin Davis, Lamar Houston, Jim Joiner, Tommy Lyon, and Billy Pittard. Staff members in attendance were Executive Director Jim Dove, Executive Assistant Mott Beck, Workforce Development Director Carol Cofer, Comptroller Evans Brinson, Planning & Government Services Director Burke Walker, Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Director Peggy Jenkins, and AAA Assistant Director Michelle Kelley. There were excellent presentations, including those by DCA Commissioner Gretchen Corbin, Division of Aging Director Jay Bulot, Mercer University Economics Professor Roger Tutterow, Governor's Office of Workforce Development Director Blake Ashbee, GDOT Chairman Jay Shaw and Deputy Commissioner Todd Long, and Jamie McCurry of the Georgia Ports Authority. In addition, there were several breakout sessions, and the GARC Board of Directors held its quarterly meeting.

At this time, Executive Director Dove gave an update regarding the Coordinated Transportation Program, which is four months into the contract year. The Human Services Committee worked hard during the past year to ensure that the best possible subcontractors were engaged for this program. Those subcontractors have been providing a very satisfactory level of service, and this opinion is shared by the human service providers. Communication between subcontractors and human service providers has been excellent and has fostered a real sense of team work. It is the Regional Commission's intention to serve as contractor for the DHS Coordinated Transportation Program in FY15. Staff will approach existing subcontractors to determine their willingness to again provide transportation services at an acceptable level of costs.

Director Dove gave a report on monies no longer available to the Northeast Georgia Area Agency on Aging due to sequestration cuts. The dollar amount and percentage of cuts for the region equates to \$363,450 or 6.7%. Georgia had the 2nd highest percentage loss in the nation (2nd only to Colorado). The cuts will continue to come until the state reaches the 2006 hold harmless clause. He indicated NEGRC will work diligently to ensure that the cuts do not have a negative impact on senior programs in our region.

Director Dove advised that this was the final meeting for one of the Council's loyal members. Mayor Jim Joiner has served Jackson County as its Municipal Representative with distinction for the majority of his time as Mayor of Jefferson. Mayor Joiner served on several committees and was an excellent Chair of the Personnel Committee. He served the organization as Chairman from 2011-2013 and traveled many miles on behalf of this organization. He was a regular attendee at the annual Georgia Association of Regional Commissions Conference along with his wife, Ruth. He also mentioned that Mayor Elect Fred Perriman of Madison would return to the Council in January after leaving his seat as a Madison Councilmember to run for Mayor of Madison during the last election.

This is the last meeting that will be held in the New College Room. A new meeting room has been under construction and is nearing completion, and the Holiday Inn has graciously offered that to the Council as its "new home". It is located across from the Grand Ballroom. The first meeting in that facility will be held in January.

GDOT INTERMODAL DIVISION PROGRAMS

At this time, Chairman Little introduced Nancy Cobb, Administrator of the GDOT Intermodal Division Programs, who gave a PowerPoint presentation describing that division. The Intermodal Division is responsible for setting policies and formulating, organizing and administering all major statewide non-highway programs for the development of a comprehensive transportation system. These include ports/waterways, railways, aviation, and transit. Included are 540 miles of GDOT owned railroad, 104 publicly owned airports, two coastal shipping ports, 15 urban transit systems, and 107 rural transit systems. Intermodal Division funding is derived from

federal grants, general fund appropriations, and state bonds. The FY13 Budget for the Intermodal Division totaled \$144 million. Ms. Cobb answered questions and addressed comments after her presentation.

PLANNING & GOVERNMENT SERVICES UPDATE

The next item on the agenda was an update by Planning & Government Services (PGS) Director Burke Walker regarding ongoing projects. Most recently, PGS staff has participated in a project that seeks to promote economic development through local food networks in North Georgia. This is a collaborative effort with the four Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) counties (Jackson, Barrow, Elbert, and Madison) and three other Regional Commissions. In the 34 county North Georgia area, there are 115,000 farms, and these farms contribute 40% of agriculture receipts with only 31% of state farms. A Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Workshop will be held in Macon on December 11th-13th, and several PGA staff will be attending. This is the time of year for development and concept planning for the regular round CDBGs, which benefit low-to-moderate income persons. PGS staff is available to extend information and assistance to local governments in identifying possible projects for CDBG funding and assistance with application preparation. The Joint Development Authority of Northeast Georgia recently welcomed two new member counties (Oconee and Barrow), and a strategic planning session is planned for December 18th to define objectives and opportunities for regional economic development. Mr. Walker advised that the new DCA planning rules will be effective January 1, 2014. Two noteworthy changes are the requirement of a simple cover letter instead of a transmittal resolution, and adoption does not require a 60 day waiting period. The Northeast Georgia region is currently performing well with Qualified Local Government statutes at 90%, and staff will continue to customize the planning process. Finally, the PGS Division will have an educational seminar entitled "*Parking Reform Made Easy*" on Friday, December 13th from 10:30 a.m.–Noon. The session is free, and participants will receive 1.5 CM credits.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting will be held on January 16th.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha J. Beck
Executive Assistant