

**NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING
ATHENS HOLIDAY INN
MARCH 15, 2012
NOON**

MINUTES

The regular meeting of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Council was held on Thursday, March 15th at Noon at the Athens Holiday Inn. Chairman Jim Joiner called the meeting to order at 12:30 a.m.

Members Present:

Yearwood, Danny
Bridges, Robert
Denson, Nancy
Eisenman, Emily
Lyon, Tommy
Palmer, Bill
Sanders, Bud
Finch, Charles
Bicknell, Hunter
Joiner, Jim
Cox, Alan
Gandy, Roy
Ainslie, Andy
Brooks, Stenette
Morgan, Kathy
Roseberry, Jerry
Turner, Frank
Davis, Melvin
Ivie, Charles
Harden, Amrey
Pittard, Billy
Boggs, Ronnie
Little, Kevin
Knight, Harry

Members Absent:

Graham, Ernie
Houston, Lamar
Guest, Larry
Wright, Glenn
Short, Shane
Thurman, Larry
Nalls, Billy
Dove, Anthony
Blackmon, Jody
Perriman, Fred
Yeany, Russ
Thompson, Greg
Lee, Kay
Roberts, Roy
Lewis, Vince

Associates Present:

Horton, Harold
Adams, Louise
Pitts, Flemmie

Guests Present:

Larry Callahan
Jennie Deese
Marsay Simpson
Mark Fordham
Kelly Myers
Anna Grant Jones
Bob Hughes
Bob Thomas
Kevin Poe

Media Present:

Blake Giles, **Oconee Enterprise**

Staff Present:

Jim Dove, Executive Director
Mott Beck, Executive Assistant
Evans Brinson, Comptroller
Burke Walker, Planning & Gov't. Services Director

CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY MEETING MINUTES

Chairman Jim Joiner welcomed members, guests, media, and staff. He recognized two new Council members; Alan Cox, County Representative from Jasper County; and Charles Finch, Private Sector Representative from Greene County.

Chairman Joiner asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the February meeting. Such a motion was made by Dr. Stenette Brooks and seconded by Commissioner Kevin Little. The motion carried unanimously.

ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

Newton County: Commissioner Kathy Morgan advised that three new Mayors were elected to municipalities in Newton County: Arline Chapman, Porterdale; Bobby Johnson, Covington; and Estona Middlebrooks, Mansfield. For the past three years, job creation has been the priority in Newton County, and three new industries located in the area. Also, a second Wal-Mart recently opened in the western part of the County, and 90% of their 314 employees are Newton County residents. The County, along with Georgia Piedmont Tech and other organizations, have worked together to organize a "Workforce Boot Camp" in order to enhance social and work skills so that individuals can receive a Workforce Development Certificate, which is required for most industries. The Board of Commissioners, all five municipalities, and the Water and Sewerage Authority cooperatively applied for and received designation as a "Waterfirst Community".

Oconee County: Commissioner Melvin Davis reported that the City of Watkinsville and Oconee County continue to enjoy a very good relationship. GDOT is transferring six acres to the City of Watkinsville to be used for enhancements to Harris Shoals Park. The City is also beginning work on sidewalks from a community close to downtown so that residents can walk to shop or eat. Watkinsville will soon begin Phase II of its streetscape program. The County has been involved in the budget process, and public meetings will begin soon. Commissioner Davis advised that there have been no layoffs or furloughs. Jason Branch has been hired as the new School Superintendent. The Landuse and Transportation Committee is working to recommend projects to be funded from the 25% discretionary monies from a successful TIA referendum. The Oconee Connector has opened and will make a significant impact on economic development in that area, and groundbreaking will be held in April for a 485,000 sq. ft. shopping center in this area. Commissioner Davis and Mayor Denson advised that the Caterpillar development will have a huge impact on the entire region and will create 1,400 jobs. The project will have a \$4.3 billion impact on the region.

Oglethorpe County: Commissioner Billy Pittard congratulated Commissioner Davis and Mayor Denson for the Caterpillar project and what it will mean to the entire region. Oglethorpe County is involved in building relocation and renovation in order to make government operations more efficient.

Commissioner Pittard has given two presentations on the Transportation Investment Act; and he advised that they went very well, and residents seem to have an increased understanding of this initiative. The large sewerage project between Crawford and Lexington is almost complete, and it is hoped that this will help to boost economic development in the area.

Walton County: Commissioner Kevin Little also expressed his excitement over the Caterpillar project and indicated that the County would welcome suppliers and other development due to this initiative. The County recently broke ground for a new DFACS facility that is completely funded by the state and is adjacent to the Walton County Government Center. The facility is slated to be open in November. The new hospital is nearing completion and will open in April. The County is in the middle of its budget process, and revenues are expected to be down by 6%. A roundabout will be constructed at S.R. 81 and Bold Springs Road. This will be the third one in the County, and all of them have helped alleviate traffic congestion at their location.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit & Finance: The Committee met prior to the Council to review the financial statements for the month ending February 29, 2012. A review of the account balances reflect the strong financial condition of the Regional Commission, with cash and near cash assets exceeding total liabilities, excluding the capital lease debt, by \$696,000. Revenues exceed expenses by \$1,374. Financial activity for the eighth-month period was approximately 7/12ths of the annual 2012 Budget. A motion to approve the financial report as presented was made by Mr. Frank Turner and seconded by Commissioner Bud Sanders. 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. **JACKSON COUNTY** – Development of a Hazard Mitigation Plan. The fee for developing the plan is \$21,000, and these funds are provided through a Georgia Emergency Management (GEMA) grant.

Based upon recommendation from the Executive Director, a motion to approve the technical assistance request for inclusion in the FY2012 Program of Work, effective March 15, 2012, was made by Commissioner Danny Yearwood and seconded by Commissioner Tommy Lyon. The motion carried unanimously.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

As reported at last month's meeting, Director Dove and Executive Assistant Mott Beck have continued to be busy facilitating planning retreats. They conducted sessions for the Town of Bogart, the City of Jefferson, and the Town of Braselton. Director Dove reported that each was very successful, and that he and Ms. Beck have conducted sessions in these municipalities on an annual basis. It is always fulfilling to review progress made on goals from the previous year's retreat and to participate in developing an agenda for the upcoming year. Similar sessions that are scheduled include the

Newton County Board of Commissioners, the City of Monticello, and a joint session involving the Madison/Morgan Chamber of Commerce Board, members of the Board of Commissioners, members of the City Council, and others.

Director Dove will be leaving Saturday on a trip to Washington, D.C. He serves on the Boards of the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) and the Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA). In order to save on expenses, those two boards meet back-to-back on an annual basis in Washington for their policy conferences. As part of the Appalachian conference, Director Dove will make a presentation on transportation planning in Georgia and lead a panel of his peers as they discuss efforts in their states. He will give the Council a full report upon returning, but it seems that federal dollars for our economic development efforts, including ARC and EDA, will remain level for the next fiscal year.

Activities seem to be on the increase regarding the Transportation Investment Act and the upcoming July referendum. Doug Callaway of the Georgia Alliance has been invited to several local meetings, and Todd Long was in touch last week to discuss the possibility of holding meetings in each of the 12 regions around the state. Director Dove advised Council members that a meeting hosted by the Regional Commission and GDOT will be held on April 9th at 2:00 p.m. at headquarters. Mr. Long will be in attendance to explain ongoing activities of GDOT regarding TIA and provide an opportunity for questions and comments. Members of the Regional Transportation Roundtable that are not members of the Council will also be invited.

The April meeting of the Council will be held at the Holiday Inn Express. When the contracts were signed for this calendar year, the New College Room was booked for a special event. Staff of the Holiday Inn will still provide the same great food and service. Ms. Beck will remind you in the packet announcing next month's meeting of the change in location.

TRENDS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

At this time, Director Dove introduced Larry Callahan, Chief Executive Officer of Pattillo Industrial Real Estate, who gave a report on trends in economic development. Since 1950, Pattillo has built over 1,000 industrial buildings totaling nearly 70 million sq. ft., and currently owns 215 buildings amounting to 20 million sq. ft. The company has designed and built 450 manufacturing facilities. Its Kubota manufacturing plant in Jefferson was named Industrial Deal of the Year by the Atlanta Business Chronicle in 2005, and its Z.F. project in Gainesville was named Manufacturer of the Year in 2011. Mr. Callahan graduated from Georgia Tech with highest honors and holds an MBA in finance from Indiana University. The economic downturn began in 2008, and it has been downhill since. However; over the past several months, this region appears to be in a "rebuilding" or "reinventing" mode. The geographic location of the region is a tremendous advantage, with a major airport and port nearby. Huge boosts for this region would be the passage of the T-SPLOST referendum in July, as well as the recent announcement by Caterpillar. Numerous suppliers are expected to locate in or near the

Caterpillar site, and this will bring more and more jobs, as well as increased revenues. Over the past several months, Jackson County has announced several large industry locations; and this, too, will cause an increase in the economy in the region.

VILLAGE TO VILLAGE PROJECT

The Northeast Georgia Area Agency on Aging (AAA) was recently awarded a one-year grant to partner with the Department of Human Services Division of Aging Services to create the first Village Model in the state of Georgia. The AAA will collaborate with the Athens Community Council on Aging (ACCA) to start the Athens Village. The Athens Village will be based on the Beacon Hill Village Model, located in Boston, which is a grassroots, membership driven organization designed by and for senior adults to help them remain in their homes and communities. The services are individualized to the needs of each member. The Athens Village will assemble diversity of age, race, and gender to enhance the sense of community and village. Membership benefits will include: discounts on home repair; in-home medical services and equipment; homemaker services; retail stores; emergency technology; home delivered meals including the Meals For You program; education and wellness activities; and will include transportation, private pay transportation, and a Center for Active Living membership.

The Athens Village has developed partnerships with over 50 existing community resources including the Northeast Georgia Senior Resource Network, which contains organizations providing services to older adults and those with disabilities. Membership will also be enhanced through the social, educational, health, and wellness classes offered through ACCA and other community resources in Athens-Clarke County including ACC Leisure Services, the University of Georgia, State Botanical Garden, Lyndon House Arts Center, and faith based organizations. Affinity groups will include biking groups, garden clubs, community garden development, bridge groups, reading groups, and lunch groups all of which will promote socialization and prevent isolation of older adults. The transportation program at ACCA will provide demand/response transportation with handicap and non-handicap accessible vans. Transportation will be supplemented by the low cost of Athens-Clarke County's The Bus Transit System and the University of Georgia's Campus Transit System which offers free transportation to any individual on its regular routes. Opportunities of intergenerational activities are robust in the Athens Community. The Village will offer a wide variety of programs and services in partnership with Athens Land Trust, ACCA's Senior Companion program, ACC Leisure Services Mentoring Program, Foster Grandparents, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, and a strategic partnership with the University of Georgia's Office of Service Learning, Campus Kitchen, Landscape Architecture Department, and Horticulture Department. Included in these programs are support groups, community gardens, wellness programs, educational opportunities, etc.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting will be held on April 19th.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha J. Beck
Executive Assistant