

**NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING
ATHENS HOLIDAY INN
SEPTEMBER 17, 2015
NOON**

MINUTES

Members Present:

Blechinger, Linda
Denson, Nancy
Houston, Lamar
Bullard, Ed
Plott, Roy
Fenn, Josh
Trammell, Gene
Dove, Anthony
Gandy, Roy
Perriman, Fred
Bentley, James D.
Ellis, Keith
Roseberry, Jerry
Turner, Frank
Davis, Melvin
Harden, Amrey
Boggs, Ronnie
Johnson, Jesse
Little, Kevin
Chambers, Joyce

Members Absent:

Graham, Pat
Bartlett, Wayne
Eisenman, Emily
Lyon, Tommy
Guest, Larry
Palmer, Bill
Brock, Phil
Duvall, Valerie
Crow, Tom
Dyer, David
Ainslie, Andrew
Ivie, Charles
Pittard, Billy
Thompson, Greg
Fordyce, Cary
Roberts, Roy

Associate Members Present:

Seymour, Joel
Crawford, Charlie
Adams, Louise

Guests Present:

Bill Kilmer
Andrew McConnell
Michael Wald
Josh Finley
Amy Turner
Nancy Bobbitt
Tate O'Rourke
Daniela Belton
Mike Benton
Meredith Lipson
T.K. Adams
Dan Brubaker

Media Present:

Blake Giles, **Oconee Enterprise**

Staff Present:

Jim Dove, Executive Director
Mott Beck, Executive Assistant
Evans Brinson, Comptroller
Burke Walker, Director of Planning & Government Services
Jordan Shoemaker, Project Specialist
Peggy Jenkins, Area Agency on Aging Director

CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF AUGUST MEETING MINUTES

Chairman Frank Turner called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. He welcomed members, media, guests, and staff. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the August meeting. Such a motion was made by Commissioner Gene Trammell and seconded by Mayor Fred Perriman. The motion carried unanimously.

ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

Barrow County: The City of Auburn was awarded a Community Development Block Grant for renovation of an historic building, and a trailhead will be completed this year. Auburn, in partnership with the City of Winder, is in the process of building a reservoir. Auburn is working with Winder and Statham to construct a bicycle path to serve portions of Barrow and Gwinnett Counties. Barrow County is in the Budget process, and Auburn's Budget has been completed. Business is coming into the County and houses and apartments are being built; all of these are signs that the economy is beginning to rebound.

Clarke County: Approximately 3,000 new student beds have been added to the downtown area over the past year. Green Charging Stations have been installed throughout Athens-Clarke County (ACC). The Lyndon House is celebrating its 40th Anniversary. ACC has three new Commissioners, plus a new Warden, Auditor, and Police Chief. ACC has been designated by the Department of Community Affairs as a PlanFirst Community. This Program is designed to recognize and reward communities that successfully implemented their Comprehensive Plan. The South Brewing Company broke ground in August, and is located on Collins Industrial Boulevard. A runway at Ben Epps Airport has been expanded to accommodate larger jets. A bridge on Highway 78 was recently named "The Buddy Christian Memorial Bridge". The reconfiguration of an intersection and grading of a hill on Whitehall Road has been completed. Lawton Stephens was named "Judge of the Year".

Elbert County: Elbert County has the number one football player in the country, and he is being recruited by a number of schools. The Elberton Mayor and Council approved a \$5 million rehabilitation of the Samuel Elbert Hotel. The BOC feels like this is a significant investment that will protect the integrity of the downtown square. The County voted to increase the tax rate by one mil to help support Indigent Care at the local hospital.

Greene County: The Lake Oconee Academy is the number one school in Georgia and has an enrollment of 700 students. A group of volunteers and doctors are canvassing the County to educate the female population on breast health to help decrease the number of cancer cases. Existing businesses in the County are expanding, and Commissioner Bullard gave appreciation to the NEGRC staff and Athens Tech for the part they played in the Workplace Fundamentals Program.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit & Finance: The Committee met prior to the Council meeting and reviewed the financial statements for the two-month period ending August 31, 2015. Revenues exceeded expenses by \$4,660. Financial activity for the two-month period was approximately 2/12ths of the annual 2016 Budget projections. A

motion to accept the financial report as presented was made by Mr. Amrey Harden and seconded by Commissioner Anthony Dove. The motion carried unanimously. In other business the Committee heard a report from Meredith Lipson of the auditing firm of Mauldin & Jenkins regarding the audit report for FY15. The Audit was presented to the Council later in the meeting.

Human Services: The Committee heard a report by Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Director Peggy Jenkins regarding some of the services and changes occurring in the Aging Division. She advised that five senior centers in the Northeast Georgia region cook meals on-site – Oconee, Newton, Elbert, Jackson and Walton. These meals can be traditional, buffet or family style. Senior Centers are required to obtain a public performance license to show movies at senior centers and adult day service centers. Each violation in an instance of showing a licensed film can be a fine of \$500 or more plus legal costs. In March of 2013, the AAA was awarded a grant to provide CCTP to four local hospitals (Athens Regional Medical Center, Clearview Regional Medical Center, Barrow Regional Medical Center, and Newton Medical Center). The CCTP Agreement between CMS and Northeast Georgia will end October 31st. The Managed Care Organizations (MCO) Requests for Proposal (RFP) was issued in 2014, and the State of Georgia is in the process of reviewing submitted RFPs for MCOs to serve the Georgia Families and Georgia Families 360* (foster care, adoption assistance, and juvenile justice members) populations under the Georgia Medicaid program. The Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) intends to award up to four contracts to CMOs for the Georgia Families population and one contract to a CMO for the Georgia Families 360* population. DCH states that it will award contracts this month for approximately 1.3 million individuals.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Executive Director Dove and Executive Assistant Mott Beck facilitated a retreat for the Morgan County Board of Commissioners on Friday, August 21st, and the City of Porterdale Mayor and Council on Tuesday Evening, September 8th. Other retreats scheduled are the Newton County Board of Commissioners in October and the City of Oxford Mayor and Council in November.

Staff has been working very hard with the Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority (UOBWA) Finance Committee over the past several weeks in developing a budget for Fiscal Year 2016. The Budget will be presented to the Authority at its September meeting and approved for dissemination to the participating counties and the Resource Management Commission. It will then be considered for adoption by the Authority at the November meeting.

Staff of the Planning & Government Services Division assisted several cities and counties in preparing and submitting Community Development Block Grants. Several in

our region were awarded including the Cities of Auburn, Madison, and Porterdale and Elbert County.

Staff prepared six Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant pre-applications and submitted them to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) on August 31st. These applications were prepared at the request of their respective local governments and include the Counties of Barrow and Elberton; the Cities of Bowman, Colbert and Jefferson; and Lanier Technical College in Barrow County. The results of the review of these ARC pre-applications are anticipated in December 2015.

At this time, Executive Director Dove called on Planning & Government Services Director Burke Walker to present a resolution to the Council. The Regional Work Program Update for Northeast Georgia, dated 2015-2019 was prepared and submitted to the Department of Community Affairs and approved. The Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures required that it be adopted by the Council upon approval by DCA. A motion to approve the Resolution and adopt the 2015-2019 Regional Work Program Update was made by Mayor Jerry Roseberry and seconded by Mayor Roy Plott. The motion carried unanimously.

FY2015 AUDIT REPORT

The next item on the agenda was presentation of the FY2015 Audit by Meredith Lipson of Mauldin & Jenkins. Ms. Lipson advised that the Auditors did not have any findings or adjustments, and that the Audit received an Unmodified Opinion; the highest ranking given. She reported that the Regional Commission staff was very helpful, well prepared, and efficient. A motion to accept the Audit as presented was made by Mr. Josh Fenn and seconded by Mayor Plott. The motion carried unanimously.

UPDATE ON THE GEORGIA ZOO & SAFARI PARK

At this time, Bill Kilmer and Andrew O'Connell gave an update on the Georgia Zoo & Safari Park, a new agritourism project under development in Morgan County. The 405 acre attraction will include themed animal habitats and botanical garden, as well as nearly 300 acres of safari park. Safari Adventure Guides will take guests on interpretive tours throughout the park savannahs and forests aboard specially outfitted safari vehicles. There, guests will experience close encounters and even feed some of the animals, including 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 where the animals come from. The Zoo will provide a unique learning experience for students of all ages as they engage in the many facets of animal care and conservation. Programs will be established in conjunction with the Morgan County School system for grades K-12 and collaborations with regional universities. The first phase is slated to open spring 2016. The Zoo will have a tremendous impact on both the quality of life and the economy of the area providing an attraction unlike anything else in Georgia.

HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING/ELBERT COUNTY EFFORTS

Jordan Shoemaker, Project Specialist with the Planning & Government Services Division, gave a report on Hazard Mitigation Planning and efforts in Elbert County. Pre-Disaster Mitigation Planning is a FEMA/GEMA required planning element for each county in the State of Georgia. Currently, Elbert County is in the process of developing its update, which is due in 2017. This is the third update cycle for the plan, and Elbert County is usually first on the update cycle schedule. A Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan seeks to plan the response and mitigation of natural and man-made disasters on a county level. It features an audit of critical facilities, an examination of potential hazards, related mitigations, and an implementation strategy. The Plan is developed by a group of stakeholders chosen by the county. In Elbert County, the stakeholders group was identified and formed by the Emergency Management Director and staff. City and County law enforcement, fire and rescue, local government, public works, school system, forestry commission, code enforcement, health department, and concerned citizens are also involved. Funding to pay for the Plan comes from FEMA and GEMA, and NEGRC staff can provide assistance in the development of a budget for the grant. A year should be allowed for the entire process. On another note, Ms. Shoemaker advised that Georgia Trust Award nominations are currently being accepted, and the deadline this year is November 16th. Last year, Northeast Georgia received five awards – Cities of Bogart, Braselton, and Porterdale; McLeroy House; and the Jackson Street Building at UGA.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting will be held on October 15th.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha J. Beck
Executive Assistant