

**NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING
ATHENS HOLIDAY INN
MARCH 17, 2011
NOON**

MINUTES

The March meeting of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Council was held on Thursday, March 17, 2011 at noon at the Athens Holiday Inn. Vice Chairman Jim Joiner called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m.

Members Present:

Yearwood, Danny
Denson, Nancy
Mercer, Jim
Houston, Lamar
Lyon, Tommy
Guest, Larry
Brown, Terry
Bicknell, Hunter
Joiner, Jim
Short, Shane
Hill, Charles
Newsome, Glenn
Nalls, Billy
Dove, Anthony
Faust, Ron
Gandy, Roy
Ainslie, Andrew
Morgan, Kathy
Roseberry, Jerry
Turner, Frank
Davis, Melvin
Walter, Joe
Harden, Amrey
Pittard, Billy
Crawford, Charlie
Little, Kevin
Thompson, Greg

Members Absent:

Thompson, Chip
Graham, Ernie
Sanders, Bud
Wright, Glenn
Mayers, Tom
Perriman, Fred
Brooks, Stenette
Yeany, Russell
Knight, Harry
Lee, Kay
Roberts, Roy
Lewis, Vince

Associate Members Present:

Horton, Harold
Seymour, Joel
Adams, Louise
Pitts, Flemmie
Jackson, Julian

Guests Present:

Frank Ginn
Nancy Kinsey
Vince Passariello
Kevin Walters
Marsay Simpson
Gina Mitsdarffer
David Conners
Elliott Robertson

Staff Present:

Jim Dove, Executive Director
Mott Beck, Executive Assistant
Evans Brinson, Comptroller
Burke Walker, Director of Planning & Local Gov't. Services
Nina Kelly, Planner
Hasco Craver, Project Manager

CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY MEETING MINUTES

Vice Chairman Jim Joiner welcomed members, guests, and staff. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the February meeting. Such a motion was made by Commissioner Kevin Little and seconded by Commissioner Tommy Lyon. The motion carried unanimously.

ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

Newton County: The SPLOST referendum in Newton County passed by 53% of the votes. The County will be participating in the Agriculture Preservation Program. A new \$100 million industry is locating in the County and will provide 120 new jobs. The City of Covington, through the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP), is renovating a desecrated neighborhood. This will help Housing Authority clients to transition into being self sufficient home owners. There will also be commercial space in this area. The County will use NSP funds to construct a Passive Park in this community, as well.

Oconee County: As a result of their streetscape project, the City of Watkinsville was named a "Cities in Bloom" by the Northeast Georgia Nursery Association. The City is also utilizing SPLOST funds for a stream bank mitigation project at Harris Shoals Park. The Heart and Soul Tour will pass through Oconee County and the City on April 14th. The County has adopted a revised Animal Control Ordinance. The City is also adopting the ordinance in order to have consistency countywide. The Jennings Mill Parkway is 65% complete, and groundbreaking will take place soon for a 485,000 sq. ft. commercial facility in that area. Acquisition of 110 parcels on Mars Hill has begun. As part of HB 277, the County is working on its unconstrained list of projects.

Oglethorpe County: Courthouse renovations are underway, and the Board of Commissioners, Board of Education, and the Cities of Crawford and Lexington received a \$4 million grant for a sewer project. The County is in the process of employing a new EMS Director. The Joint Development Authority (Oglethorpe, Jackson, Clarke, Madison, and Elbert Counties) held a meeting last week to discuss HB 277 and future water resources. The County is undertaking a major comprehensive plan update which they plan to use as a working document.

Walton County: The Walton County Development Authority was activated in 1994; and according to Chairman Little, has done a great job helping to bring industry and jobs to the County. Development Authority Executive Director Nancy Kinsey was named Professional of the Year in 2010 by the Statewide Developers Association. Over the last six years, Walton County has attracted several large industries; Minerva Beauty Supply, General Mills, Solo Cup, Tucker Door, Wal Mart Distribution, and Hitachi; and together, they have brought 1,635 new jobs to the area. The County has been designated a Work Ready Certified Community; and with the support of the City of Monroe, they will also be given the status of a Camera Ready community to aide in attracting the film industry. The County is being considered as the possible location for two new industries that would create 800 additional jobs

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit & Finance: The Committee met prior to the Council and reviewed the financial statements for the eight-month period ending February 28, 2011. A review of the account balances indicated that the Regional Commission is in good financial condition, with cash and near cash assets exceeding total liabilities, excluding the capital lease debt, by \$700,000. Revenues exceed expenses by \$784. Financial activity for the eight month period generally approximates 2/3 of the annual budget. A motion to approve the financial statement as presented was made by Mr. Frank Turner and seconded by Mayor Jim Mercer. The motion carried unanimously. Members also reviewed some changes for several of the benefit plans for employees. The purpose of the changes is to allow more flexibility and to reduce future costs. It was also noted that staff has enjoyed two significant financial benefits by good stewardship of the benefit plan. A resolution was presented to approve these changes, and a motion to adopt said resolution was made by Mr. Turner and seconded by Commissioner Little. The motion carried unanimously.

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 GREENSBORO** – Community Development Block Grant Application Re-submittal for streets, drainage, and water facility improvements.
2. **CITY OF SOCIAL CIRCLE** - Community Development Block Grant Application for water and sewer improvements within the mill area.
3. **CITY OF AUBURN** – Community Development Block Grant Application for rehabilitation of the R&R building to be used as a community facility.
4. **CITY OF SOCIAL CIRCLE** – Comprehensive Plan Update.
5. **WALTON COUNTY** - Comprehensive Plan Update.
6. **CITY OF PORTERDALE** – Urban Redevelopment Plan.

Based upon recommendation from the Executive Director, a motion to approve the technical assistance requests for the month for inclusion in the FY11 program of Work, effective March 17, 2011, was made by Mr. Charlie Crawford and seconded by Commissioner Billy Pittard. The motion carried unanimously.

Local Government Services: The Local Government Services Committee met prior to the Council meeting, and members reviewed community and economic development activities and learned of projects of local interest from its members. Members discussed the following items: the Governor's Priority List for funding by the Appalachian Regional Commission; the annual CDBG competition; and the upcoming update to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs). These items required no action by the Council.

Planning Advisory Committee: The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) regional planning process is broken down into three main components that are very similar to comprehensive plans. First, the Regional Assessment provides a snapshot of the region at present along with an analysis of projected trends. The second part of the plan, the Stakeholder Involvement Program, is a very brief account of the people and methods that will be relied on to develop a

vision for the future. Finally, the Regional Agenda presents a blueprint for the desired future along with a series of implementation measures. Last week, the Council's Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) met with NEGRC staff to review the first two parts of the Regional Plan 2035. These reviewed documents were later sent to the Council for consideration. The next step in this process is to formally submit these two documents to DCA for review by passing a transmittal resolution. At this time, Mayor Jerry Roseberry presented the resolution to the Council for consideration and made a motion for its adoption. The motion was seconded by Mayor Mercer and carried unanimously.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

At this time, Executive Director Dove advised that preliminary population figures have been released by the Census Bureau. However, these are not the final figures, and it is anticipated that those will be released within the next two weeks.

The yearly evaluations of staff are underway. They are to be completed by the end of March and will be placed in each individual's Personnel File.

Executive Director Dove and Executive Assistant Mott Beck have been busy over the past two months facilitating a number of retreats and planning sessions. Facilitation of these sessions is provided as a service to the RC member governments. Retreats have been held for the Newton County Board of Commissioners, the Jackson County Airport Authority, and the City of Elberton Mayor and Council. A retreat for the Braselton Mayor and Council will be conducted on Friday, March 18th, and a retreat is being planned for the City of Oxford in mid April.

Executive Director Dove will be attending the Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA) and the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Conferences in Washington, DC March 19th through March 23rd. Director Dove is a member of the NADO Board of Directors and the DDAA Board.

As part of HB 277, local governments in the Northeast Georgia region are working diligently to develop an unconstrained list of projects to be submitted to the Regional Commission by March 30th. Commission staff will review the list to ensure that they meet the criteria developed by GDOT. A combined list for the region will be submitted to GDOT by April 13th. Local governments will be working throughout the process to educate the public on the importance of this initiative.

PRE-DISASTER MITIGATION PLANNING REPORT

The next item on the agenda was a report by Planning & Local Government Services Planner Nina Kelly on the Hazard Mitigation Planning effort. The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA2K) requires all counties to create Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) plans. The intent of these plans is to reduce risks from natural and technological hazards and provide guidance to local governments in committing time and resources to

these efforts. Maintenance of the plans ensures eligibility for project funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Between 2005-2007, plans were prepared for the twelve Northeast Georgia counties in coordination with the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA); and many were developed with assistance from NEGRC. Current plans are scheduled to expire within the next five years. NEGRC staff is available to assist with meeting coordination and facilitation, data analysis and mapping, planning process and labor match documentation, and plan development. For assistance from NEGRC, a letter of request should be forwarded to the Executive Director.

UPDATE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND SUCCESS STORIES

At this time, Planning & Local Government Services Project Manager Hasco Craver gave an update on economic development projects. Mr. Craver advised that he recently assisted the City of Winder with a Housing Needs Assessment and Inventory Project that will address affordable housing needs. This project was a joint effort between the City of Winder, the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing Team (GICH), the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), and the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC). DCA provided \$10,695 in funding to assist with the actual project. NEGRC staff conducted a comprehensive housing assessment and inventory of all residential structures within four target neighborhoods via an external condition "windshield" survey, whereby staff observed each structure from a street view. The survey visually determined number, type, style, and condition of structures. There were a total of 890 structures identified in the target areas; 20 classified as being dilapidated, 20 substandard, and 840 as standard. Approximately 80% of all City vacancies and 74% of all City units over 50 years of age are in the target area. Per capita income in the target area is below City and County, and 41.9% of residents are considered cost-burdened. Staff of the Planning and Local Government Services Division has the capacity to complete a similar project for any interested local government.

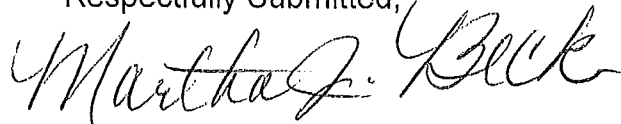
OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting will be held on April 21st.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully Submitted,



Martha J. Beck
Executive Assistant