

**NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING
ATHENS HOLIDAY INN
SEPTEMBER 15, 2016
NOON**

MINUTES

Members Present:

Graham, Pat
Blechinger, Linda
Jennings, Tommy
Denson, Nancy
Ferrelle, Dodd
Lyon, Tommy
Palmer, Bill
Plott, Roy
Shaw, Jim
Trammell, Gene
Workman, Stone
Dyer, Dave
Dove, Anthony
Warren, Ellen
Perriman, Fred
Bentley, David
Ellis, Keith
Turner, Frank
Davis, Melvin
Harden, Amrey
Pittard, Billy
Berry, Rick
Ledford, Howard

Members Absent:

Houston, Lamar
Guest, Larry
Bullard, Ed
Brock, Phil
Duvall, Valerie
Crow, Tom
Blackmon, Jody
Gandy, Roy
Roseberry, Jerry
Ivie, Charles
Johnson, Jesse
Little, Kevin
Thompson, Greg
Chambers, Joyce
Fordyce, Cary
O'Rourke, Tate
Roberts, Roy

Associate Members Present:

Ouzts, Buddy
Horton, Harold
Adams, Louise

Guests Present:

John Thomason
Kevin Poe
Jon Herschell
John Daniell
Andrew Seivers
Ilka McConnell
Josh Finley
T.K. Adams
Caroline Davis
Robert Taylor
Cheryl Smith

Staff Present:

Jim Dove, Executive Director
Mott Beck, Executive Assistant
Burke Walker, PGS Director
Evans Brinson, Comptroller

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, guests, and staff. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the August meeting. **Such a motion was made by Mr. David Bentley and seconded by Commissioner Gene Trammell. The motion carried unanimously.**

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNOR'S APPOINTMENTS TO COUNCIL

At this time, Executive Director Dove introduced a Governor's Appointee to the Council. Dr. Howard Ledford is Dean of the Lanier Technical College and has been involved with the Workforce Development Division and its Board for a number of years. Another new appointee, Tate O'Rouke, could not be at the meeting due to a previous engagement. Most Council members will remember her as Tate Isler and her tenure with Senator Johnny Isakson's office. Ms. O'Rouke currently serves as the Economic Development Director for the University of North Georgia. The Speaker of the House has not made his appointment to the Council as of this date.

ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

Jackson County: Construction has begun on the four-laning of U.S. 129 from Talmo to the Hall County line. The Highway 15 DOT project in downtown Jefferson is nearing completion. The County had a very good year thus far with economic development. Amazon and Hubble have recently announced that they would be locating in distribution centers in the County. This year, the County has announced 1,000 new jobs, with \$100 million in new investments. There are 2.5 million sq. ft. of spec industrial space under construction in the County, and Art in the Park will be held at Hurricane Shoals Park on September 16th – 18th.

Jasper County: The DOT is going to construct a roundabout in downtown Monticello. New sidewalks have been installed around Rose Bowl Field, and Highway 83 now has passing lanes. Three new prospects have been looking at the new 57 acre industrial park. The Norton Industry has doubled in size and will be producing one million five-gallon food grade containers. The Wide Plank flooring company is shipping nationwide and has doubled in size since locating in Jasper County. The Monticello Mayor Pro Tem and the Commission Chairman are working together to strengthen the relationship between City and County leaders.

Madison County: In 2017, a roundabout will be located at the first light on Highway 29 north of Danielsville. A solar farm is looking at a site in the County, and Med Link is wanting to expand into Colbert. The County and the City of Colbert is working with the Industrial Development Authority to provide sewer for this expansion. The completion of Highway 72 four-laning 29 through Madison County to Elberton is underway. Commissioner Dove expressed his appreciation to the Regional Commission for services to him and the County throughout his tenure as Commission Chairman.

Morgan County: The Morgan County Manager, Michael Lamar, will be leaving to take a position in Prescott, Arizona. The county will utilize the Carl Vinson Institute in its search for a new Manager. The County refinanced the public safety complex, and excess funds from the project were used for recreation. The County is purchasing body cameras and two new patrol cars and building two

new fire stations. The City of Madison rolled back millage rates this year. The City of Madison has constructed affordable senior housing, and has built a corner grocery store in an area that has been without this convenience in the past. They are seeking a \$95,000 USDA grant to construct a parking lot for this development. Funds from a \$356,000 housing grant will be used for housing rehabilitation.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit & Finance: The Committee met prior to the Council meeting to review the financial statements for the two-month period ending August 31, 2016. Revenues exceeded expenses by \$1,861. Financial activity for the two-month period was approximately 2/12th of the FY2017 Budget projections. **A motion to accept the report as given was made by Mr. Amrey Harden and seconded by Mr. Bentley. The motion carried unanimously.** The Committee heard a report from Meredith Lipson of the auditing firm of Mauldin & Jenkins regarding the audit report for FY16, which will be given to the Council later in the meeting.

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. **CITY OF WINDER** – Assistance in developing an update to the City's Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP). The project will also include seeking a Revitalization Area Strategy (RAS) designation through the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The fee for this assistance will be determined after discussions with the City on the project's scope.

Based upon recommendation from the Executive Director, **a motion to approve the Program of Work item for inclusion in the FY2017 Program of Work, effective September 15, 2016, was made by Commissioner Keith Ellis and seconded by Mr. Bentley. The motion carried unanimously.**

Planning & Government Services: The Committee met prior to the Council meeting to discuss several items of interest. None of these required Council action. Members did review information from a recently submitted Development of Regional Impact (DRI) in the City of Covington for a proposed 700,000 sq. ft. film production studio. The Committee will advise the Regional Commission of any advisory comments before the comment period ends on September 23rd.

PRESENTATION OF FY16 AUDIT

At this time, Meredith Lipson with Mauldin & Jenkins gave a report on the FY16 Audit. She advised that the Audit received an Unmodified Opinion, which is the highest ranking given. There were no findings, and everything was in compliance with grantor agencies. She reported that staff was very well prepared and extremely helpful.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Executive Director Dove expressed his appreciation to MPA Students Caroline Davis and Robert Taylor for attending the Council meeting. Ms. Davis and Mr. Taylor were attendees at the recent meeting where Executive Director Dove spoke to a group of MPA students.

Executive Assistant Mott Beck and Executive Director Dove will be facilitating a retreat for the Winterville Mayor and Council on September 30th. They met with Mayor Dodd Ferrelle earlier to determine items for an agenda. There are a lot of opportunities to build upon in Winterville, and it should prove to be a very beneficial session. The City has a beautiful old auditorium, which they are in the process of renovating, along with a community center and senior center. They are very proud of the historic depot and other interesting historic buildings and homes.

As Executive Director Dove continues to tour the state's Regional Commission Council meetings, he has finalized dates and locations for the final two. He will attend the Southwest Georgia Council meeting on Thursday evening, September 29th in Camilla, and the Coastal Georgia Council meeting on October 12th in Richmond Hill. There are similarities among each Council meeting across the state, but also a lot of differences. In any event, they are always very interesting.

Executive Director Dove was pleased that the Council had the opportunity to hear the results of the annual Audit that was given by Ms. Lipson. A performance audit of the organization was undertaken by the Department of Audits and Accounts in early April, which is done in three Regional Commissions a year. The NEGRC served as the pilot for performance auditing purposes in 2010; therefore this year's audit was the second audit done. The report of the three audits done this year should have been distributed by now, but findings of one of the Regional Commissions (not NEGRC) have delayed the process.

The MaxGov workshops held at the Regional Commission on August 29th and presented by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government was attended by approximately 30 persons. The presentation was designed to improve the quality of services, development information and promotional community campaigns, increase citizen involvement, and promote more efficient operation. From all indications, the course content was very insightful.

At last month's meeting, State Representative Susan Holmes made an impromptu presentation regarding initial efforts of the Joint Legislative Committee on Broadband. To follow up, and due to the interest of Broadband in this region, Paul Chambers of AT&T has been invited to be the keynote speaker at next month's meeting on this subject.

Ms. Beck and Executive Director Dove were invited to attend an economic development meeting at the University of North Georgia (UNG) campus in Oconee County a couple of weeks ago. There was a good turnout of local officials, economic developers, and interested parties to hear UNG President Bonita Jacobs' presentation. UNG is a great asset to the region, and now includes five campuses. In addition to the Oconee County facility, it has campuses at Dahlonega, Gainesville, Cumming, and Blue Ridge. There are over 17,000 students at UNG; and this past spring, approximately 1,150 graduated.

PLANNING AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES STAFF ACTIVITIES

The next item on the agenda was a report by Planning & Government Services Director Burke Walker on ongoing activities of that division. It has been a busy summer with staff working on funding and grant competition issues. ARC applications were due August 15th, and staff prepared a new application for the City of Winder and the Winder Housing Authority to benefit the Wimberly Center. Last year's applications for Barrow County and the City of Bowman were recently approved. Regarding CDBG's, the City of Covington's application to benefit the Covington Housing Authority was approved. The 2017 CDBG Applicants' Workshop will be held in December. The application package for the DNR Recreational Trail Grants will be available September 30th. The DNR Historic Preservation Division's Georgia Heritage Grant for the Jackson County Historic Courthouse was approved. Project Specialist Jordan Shoemaker prepared the application and is excited about completing the final phase of the courthouse restoration. Every fiscal year, six counties are required by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to hold plan implementation meetings. Next month, staff will be meeting with Jackson County and its municipalities, and Madison County's meeting was held in September. The CEDS Committee will be finalized by November. This plan strategy is both required of the Economic Development Administration and is important in guiding Northeast Georgia's economic development. It outlines the region's economic assets and identifies key sectors and opportunities.

OPPORTUNITIES TO UTILIZE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

At this time, John Thomason, Director of State Card Programs, gave a report on services offered to local governments by the Georgia Department of Administrative Services (DOAS). His two main topics for discussion were the Fuel Card Program and the P-Card. The Fuel Card Program, provided through WexBank, is a solution for managing fleet fuel needs. The card allows drivers of local government vehicles to purchase fuel, auto repair services, and other needed items for those vehicles, while streamlining and automating program management and transaction reporting. By increasing the amount of information received from card purchases, government entities can improve efficiencies in overall management of fuel spending and greater accountability of fleet costs. Another service highlighted by Mr. Thomason was the P-Card Program. Purchasing with the P-Card is faster, less expensive, and safer than using traditional forms of payment. It provides local government entities access to all

state contracts and updates, allows access to multiple vendors in one location, provides a secure purchase documentation exchange, and gives an online comparison of similar items. In addition, this program offers liability protection against fraud and misuse, and local participants earn a rebate on annual purchase volume. DOAS provides many other benefits to local governments, and interested persons can review all DOAS services by visiting their website at www.doas.ga.gov.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, October 20th.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha J. Beck
Executive Assistant