

**NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING
ATHENS HOLIDAY INN
MARCH 16, 2017
NOON**

MINUTES

Members Present:

Jennings, Tommy
Denson, Nancy
Ferrelle, Dodd
Houston, Lamar
Lyon, Tommy
Palmer, Bill
Crow, Tom
Shaw, Jim
Workman, Stone
Scarborough, John
Gandy, Roy
Ainslie, Andy
Bentley, David
Banes, Marcello
Roseberry, Jerry
Turner, Frank
Ivie, Charles
Harden, Amrey
Pittard, Billy
Little, Kevin
Chambers, Joyce
Ledford, Howard
Roberts, Roy

Members Absent:

Graham, Pat
Blechinger, Linda
Guest, Larry
Smith, Jeffery
Brock, Phil
Plott, Roy
Pennamon, Carl
Dyer, Dave
Blackmon, Jody
Perriman, Fred
Daniell, John
Berry, Rick
Johnson, Jesse
Thompson, Greg
Fordyce, Cary
O'Rourke, Tate

Staff Present:

Jim Dove, Executive Director
Mott Beck, Executive Assistant
Alicia Page, Comptroller
Michelle Irizarry, Accounting Manager
Burke Walker, Director of Planning & Government Services
Eva Kennedy, Project Specialist

Associate Members Present:

Ouzts, Buddy
Horton, Harold
Seymour, Joel

Guests Present:

Josh Hawkins
Amy Stone
Doug White
Jeff Benko
Carol Williams
Daniella Perry
Andrew Siever

Media Present:

Michael Prochaska

Oconee Enterprise

CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY MEETING MINUTES

Chairman Frank Turner called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. He welcomed members, guests, media, and staff. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the February meeting. **Such a motion was made by Mr. David Bentley and seconded by Commissioner Tommy Lyon. The motion carried unanimously.**

ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

Newton County: A \$100 million film and television studio is locating in the County. The studio will be located on three separate campuses and will have more than 600,000 sq. ft. of sound stage space, 250,000 sq. ft. of office space, and 150,000 sq. ft. of support and work space. The studio is slated to provide 1,700 new jobs and will give a huge boost to the County's economy. A new Chili's restaurant is locating in Covington. The final episode of "The Vampire Diaries" was screened live on the Covington Square recently and ended the show that was shot in the County for eight years. Various events and activities were planned for the occasion, which drew large crowds of fans. Reba McIntyre will be in Covington on Friday, March 17th to film in the Courthouse.

Oconee County: The County has a new Chairman and two new Board members, and everyone is working very well together. Call's Creek Treatment Plant expansion is ongoing. Phase I and II of Epps Bridge Center is underway, and Developer Frank Bishop is pursuing businesses to locate at the site. New elementary and middle schools are locating on 52 acres near the Barrow County line. The Regional Commission is assisting the County with an update to its Comprehensive Plan. The County will be meeting to set goals and objectives for the next budget cycle.

Oglethorpe County: Chairman Pittard praised County Administrator Josh Hawkins for the fine job he is doing. He introduced Amy Stone, the Economic Development Director. A proposed solar project will be locating on 600 acres in the County. Oak Tree Plaza is doing very well, and has been a boost to the sales tax. The Ticket to Ride, in support of the Firefly Trail, will be held on March 25th.

Walton County: Chairman Little expressed concern regarding the lack of a willingness of persons wanting to work in the County. The workforce is very weak, and Hitachi, Goodyear, Wal-Mart Distribution Center, and others are all looking for persons to fill open positions. He feels that it would help if Superintendents and Principals would start at the middle school level teaching students the values and principles of working and contributing to society. Chairman Little talked about his plans for employee compensation next Fiscal Year for all employees.

COMMITTEES

Audit & Finance: The Committee met prior to the Council meeting and reviewed the financial statements for the eight-month period ending February 28th. Revenues exceeded expenditures by \$2,377.56. Financial activity for the period was approximately 59% of the FY2017 Budget projections overall. Additionally, staff discussed with the Committee the implementation of two new banking initiatives. The first item discussed was the activation of Positive Pay for the

Regional Commission. By using Positive Pay, the banks can identify fraudulent or invalid checks prior to clearing them. It also allows the Regional Commission to void checks when necessary. This will eliminate the need to issue stop payments on checks and avoid the \$35 fee. The second initiative is the capability to issue ACH payments to vendors. This will reduce the number of physical checks that need to be cut and thereby reduce the cost of purchasing check stock. **A motion to approve the report as presented was made by Mr. Amrey Harden and seconded by Commissioner Andy Ainslie. 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 BOWMAN** - Assistance in developing a Zoning Ordinance. The fee for this assistance is \$7,500.
2. **BARROW COUNTY** - Assistance in administration of a funded Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant. The fee for this assistance is \$7,500.
3. **CITY OF COMMERCE** - Assistance in developing an Economic Development Administration grant in coordination with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission. This multi-regional project will occur in Commerce and Banks County. There is no fee for this assistance.
4. **CITY OF PORTERDALE** - Assistance in updating their Revitalization Area Strategy (RAS). A fee for this assistance will be quoted after further discussion with City staff.
5. **MADISON COUNTY** - Assistance in developing an update to their Pre-Disaster Hazard Mitigation plan. The fee for this assistance will be based on grant funding provided to the County by the Federal Emergency Management Agency for the update.
6. **CITY OF PORTERDALE** - Assistance in developing a Multi-Modal Safety Program application. A fee for this assistance will be determined after further discussion with City staff on project eligibility and scope.
7. **CITY OF UNION POINT**- Assistance in planning and fundraising activities for the Firefly Trail. There is no fee for this assistance.

Based upon recommendation of the Executive Director and the Committee, **a motion to approve the technical assistance requests for inclusion in the FY2017 Program of Work, effective March 16, 2017, was made by Commission Pittard and seconded by Mr. David Bentley. The motion carried unanimously.**

Planning & Government Services: The Committee met prior to the Council meeting and discussed several items of mutual interest. None of these, however, required Council action. Members reviewed drafts of the Regional Plan and its Regional Assessment and Stakeholder Involvement Program. The two documents will be forwarded to the Department of Community Affairs for

review. PGS staff will begin preparing the Plan's Regional Agenda that will require a transmitting resolution at the Council meeting in May.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Executive Director Dove will be going to Washington on March 18th – 21st to attend two conferences that overlap. The first is the Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA) conference, and the other is the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Annual Legislative Conference. There are several important agenda items including how the ARC, EDA, Housing and Urban Development, and others will fare in the President's proposed budget.

Executive Director Dove and Executive Assistant Mott Beck have facilitated three retreats over the last month. The Town of Braselton held its annual planning retreat on Friday, February 24th in the Town's Public Utilities facility, the City of Madison held its annual retreat at NEGRC headquarters on Monday, February 27th, and the City of Elberton held its annual planning session on Saturday, March 4th at Richard B. Russell State Park on Lake Russell. There was much accomplished at each of these sessions, and as always, the local officials and staff were grateful for our efforts.

As reported earlier, Executive Director Dove was asked to serve on the State Aviation System Plan Stakeholders Advisory Committee. The first meeting was held on February 28th in Atlanta at Georgia Department of Transportation headquarters. This will be the first update to the Plan since 2001. The prime contractor is Javiation from Cincinnati. However, several local sub-contractors are also participating. Agenda items at the initial meeting included an overview of the Plan, anticipated outputs and products, communication and outreach, and input from the project focus group. The stakeholders Committee, in addition to reviewing and commenting on documents produced by the project team, will meet a minimum of three more times during the next 18 months. As information is disseminated, Executive Director Dove will provide the Council with updates.

Last year, Executive Director Dove was involved with several other Executive Directors and staff of DCA and the Carl Vinson Institute of Government to help plan training opportunities for members of the Councils of Regional Commissions in the state. The purpose of the training is to assist Council members in learning more of their roles and responsibilities while gaining additional information about the internal structure of our organizations. A pilot training session was held last fall in the Griffin area, and an additional abbreviated session was held at the Annual GARC Conference. DCA and the Carl Vinson Institute are now looking to host a session in South Georgia and another in North Georgia in the coming months. When the date is determined for the North session, the Council will be informed so that NEGRC can join with some sister organizations to have a nice attendance. Perhaps five or six members will be able to attend.

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) UPDATE

The Regional Commission is in the process of updating the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the region. The CEDS serves as the guide for economic development efforts throughout Northeast Georgia. The update will identify strategies for growing the region's economy while improving "economic resilience" (the ability to avoid, withstand, or quickly recover from major disruptions to the economy). The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) requires CEDS updates every five years. In addition to guiding regional economic development efforts, the CEDS can open access to EDA funding and other federal and state grant opportunities. The CEDS Committee, composed of public and private sector representatives from Northeast Georgia's 12 counties, is steering the CEDS update. Over the last two months, the Committee has met to discuss the region's economic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and to explore local demographics, area industries and business clusters, educational institutions, and current economic trends. Committee members are also considering the State's focus areas for economic development to ensure regional goals align, where possible. The CEDS Committee and NEGRC staff are in the process of drafting specific goals and objectives for economic development strategies that address topics discussed in the Committee session. A public survey will be distributed between March 27th and May 21st. Your input is valuable to the update process; it is important that the CEDS is useful to all Northeast Georgia communities. NEGRC requests that local governments share a link to the survey on their website or through social media; the survey will be available at NEGRC.org. A draft of the CEDS update will be available for public comment from July 1st - 31st at NEGRC.org.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting will be held on April 20th.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha J. Beck
Executive Assistant