

**NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION  
COUNCIL MEETING  
ATHENS HOLIDAY INN  
FEBRUARY 21, 2019  
NOON**

**MINUTES**

**Members Present:**

Graham, Pat  
Blechinger, Linda  
Girtz, Kelly  
Ferrelle, Dodd  
Houston, Lamar  
Vaughn, Lee  
Palmer, Bill  
Haynie, Doug  
Pennamon, Carl  
Dyer, Dave  
Padilla, Bob  
Ainslie, Andy  
Perriman, Fred  
Bentley, David  
Roseberry, Jerry  
Turner, Frank  
Harden, Amrey  
Pittard, Billy  
Berry, Rick  
Boggs, Ronnie  
Little, Kevin  
Dally, Hal  
Chambers, Joyce  
Ledford, Howard  
Roberts, Roy

**Members Absent:**

Jennings, Tommy  
Guest, Larry  
Smith, Jeffery  
Brock, Phil  
Crow, Tom  
Shaw, Jim  
Scarborough, John  
Blackmon, Jody  
Banes, Marcello  
Daniell, John  
Shearon, Dave  
Fordyce, Cary  
O'Rourke, Tate

**Staff Present:**

Jim Dove, Executive Director  
Mott Beck, Executive Assistant  
Burke Walker, Planning & Government Services Director  
Carol Cofer, Workforce Development Director  
Alicia Page, Comptroller  
Eva Kennedy, Planner

**Associate Members Present:**

Horton, Harold  
Seymour, Joel  
Adams, Louise

**Guests Present:**

Paul Chambers  
Terry Smith  
Harvey Ferrelle  
T.K. Adams  
Andy Pippin  
Don Jernigan  
Tyrone Evans  
Andrew Seaver

**CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF JANUARY MEETING MINUTES**

Chairman Jerry Roseberry 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 January meeting. **Such a motion was made by Mr. Frank Turner and**

**seconded by Oglethorpe County Chairman Billy Pittard. The motion carried unanimously.**

### **ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST**

**Jackson County:** The SK Battery America facility is under construction. This \$1.7 billion manufacturing facility will bring 2000 new jobs by 2026. There will be a \$50 million bond referendum in March for the purpose of building a new high school in West Jackson. The 38,000 sq. ft. \$4 million multi-purpose Ag Center broke ground on February 15<sup>th</sup> and is scheduled to open in Fall of 2019. Southeast Toyota is building a \$65 million new facility just outside of Commerce. Braselton Brewing Company has opened in Braselton and is doing very well. Hoschton has broken ground on a 1,400 acre, 2,300 home subdivision, and Pendergrass has four new active subdivisions, adding 600 homes over the next 18 months. Nicholson is renovating the old Benton Elementary School into their City Hall and possible new business venues. Arcade is in the beginning stages of a new development. The developer has made a zoning application for 809 acres to a 55+ development consisting of 2000 homes and lots of green space and amenities.

**Jasper County:** The Jasper County Board of Commissioners continues to focus on public safety, healthcare, education, housing, and jobs. The County is grateful that the Legislature and Congress are emphasizing efforts to bring fast internet to rural Georgia. As a result, they are working regionally with other counties in East and Northeast Georgia on a business model that will bring affordable fiber based high speed internet to all of their counties. The Jasper County Senior Center is undergoing a major renovation, and two of the core industries in the County are also planning expansions. Monticello has been chosen to exhibit the Smithsonian Exhibit on Rural America later in the year. Eight employers in the County will be participating in the Great Promise Partnership Internship Program, and the County has improved facilities and increased capacity for public physical and mental healthcare.

**Madison County:** Madison County Chairman John Scarborough will give a report at a later date. However, Mr. Bob Padilla reported that his Mother was celebrating her 102<sup>nd</sup> Birthday....congratulations to her!

**Morgan County:** Regarding senior and affordable housing, an assisted living facility will be opening downtown with 35+ units, a continuum of care development will be constructed on the Bypass with 250 units, and a low to moderate housing development with 50+ units is in the beginning stages of planning. Plans for new downtown business and residential properties for multiple properties in/adjacent to Downtown Madison are in the works via private

investment. Fundraising is complete for development of Lambert Park on College Drive, with Spring and Summer physical improvements expected. Design and development of the “model mile” for the future trail system connecting neighborhoods and community facilities are ongoing. Cultural tourism efforts include development of a temporary art installation program and development of a history walk for downtown buildings. A long-term study of redevelopment opportunities for the Middle School site is being undertaken.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Audit & Finance:** Members of the Audit & Finance Committee met this morning, and members reviewed the financial statements for the six-month period ending December 31, 2018. Revenues exceeded expenditures by \$21,525.15. Financial activity for the six-month period is at approximately 50% of the remaining FY2019 Budget projections overall. **A motion to accept the report as presented was made by Mr. Amrey Harden and seconded by Mr. Lamar Houston. The motion carried unanimously.**

**Program of Work:** The Program of Work Committee did not meet this month.

**Planning and Government Services:** The Planning & Government Services Committee met prior to the Council meeting and discussed several items of interest. One item discussed was the NEGRC’s approved Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The Committee reviewed five action items and found economic progress is being made within the region. Printed and bound copies of the CEDS document will be printed and distributed to each County Manager in upcoming weeks. Electronic copies are also available on the Commission’s website for region-wide use. No items discussed required Council action.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REMARKS**

It has been an extremely busy month for retreats. Director Dove and Ms. Beck facilitated a session for the City of Winterville on February 12<sup>th</sup> at its Community Center. After revisiting their 2018 goals and accomplishments, it was estimated that approximately 75 to 80% of their 2018 goals were met. A number of potential goals were identified at last week’s session, and these were discussed and utilized when finalizing the 2019 strategic goals.

A planning retreat for the Walton County Board of Commissioners was held on February 14<sup>th</sup> at the Historic Courthouse. This session focused on a number of items including SPLOST III, SPLOST IV, Property Acquisition, Various Ordinances, Economic Development, Financial Status, Tax Assessment, Roads and System Improvements, and Commissioners’ Insurance. Consensus was reached on future direction of a number of items.

On Monday, February 18th, Director Dove and Ms. Beck facilitated the annual Planning Retreat for the City of Madison for the tenth consecutive year. It was held at the Public Safety Building Meeting Hall. The group focused on a lengthy list of topics including City Charter Review, Annexations, Council Salaries, Storm water Concerns, Beautification Projects, and Sidewalk Projects and Street Names. They will be facilitating a retreat on Friday, February 22nd for the Elbert County Board of Commissioners at Bobby Brown Park, and next week for the City of Jefferson at its Civic Center.

Last month, Planning and Government Services Director Burke Walker reported on the Local Plan Implementation meetings which are required by State Legislation adopted in 1989. Our staff is required to meet with local governments on a biennial basis to discuss local and state plan implementation. The six meetings this year will focus on Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Jasper, Madison, and Oglethorpe Counties, as well as the municipalities within those counties. Our Planning & Government Services staff will be in touch with the affected governments to arrange meetings this Spring.

We are beginning the process of staff evaluations, which will be completed by the end of March and utilized in the budget process. The Executive Director is responsible for the evaluation of the Department Heads, and in turn, they evaluate members of the various Departments and bring those to me for consideration.

Each year the Council must approve the continuance of the Commission's Aging Program, known as the Area Agency on Aging. NEGRC has been engaged in providing services to seniors in Northeast Georgia since the inception of the Federal Office of Aging in 1974. The program provides pass-through funding to the Senior Centers in each of the 12 counties in the NEGRC region to provide multiple efforts including Meals on Wheels, Congregate Meals at the Centers, Transportation, and many others. Director Dove presented a resolution for consideration by the Council to continue this program which serves the fastest growing segment of the population. **A motion to approve the resolution was made by Mr. Turner and seconded by Mr. Ronnie Boggs. The motion carried unanimously.** The executed resolution will be forwarded to the State Division of Aging Services.

## **CENSUS UPDATE**

PGS GIS Planner Eva Kennedy provided an update on current and upcoming programs related to the 2020 Census. 100% of Northeast Georgia's counties participated in the recent Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) program, with a number of municipalities performing their own reviews as well. The annual Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS) is currently underway, as is the Participant Statistical Areas Program (PSAP): a county-based review of proposed changes to Census statistical boundaries (including tracts and block groups). NEGRC will be assisting seven Counties with PSAP reviews; five Counties elected to perform their own reviews. Importance was stressed on all Counties to involve municipal, economic development,

transportation, and other stakeholders in the PSAP review process to ensure tax incentive and other programs are not negatively affected by the proposed changes. The New Construction Program will begin in April, 2019 and is the final opportunity for local governments to add new residential addresses (that have come online since LUCA and will be completed by the 2020 Census) to the Census Bureau's address list. Local governments have the option to create a Complete Count Committee to educate and increase awareness of the upcoming Census in order to optimize the number of respondents in their communities. Eva thanked local leaders and staff for their time and hard work thus far and emphasized the importance of complete counts because Census data affects state and federal funding allocations, representation in Congress, and will help characterize communities and attract business and investment to the Region over the next ten years.

### **SMALL CELL INFRASTRUCTURE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

Paul Chambers, Northeast Georgia Regional Director of AT&T, was present to report on this topic. Mr. Chambers discussed changes in the manner that our state communicates, specifically wireless data growth. Data traffic on AT&T's mobile network has grown more than 470,000 per cent since 2007. The use of small cells was discussed, along with macro cells and future small cells. The need for small cell technology is to continue providing the best possible experience for consumers including Georgia's local governments. Mr. Chambers discussed pending legislation in the General Assembly, and GMA and ACCG efforts to support an agreement. He also discussed the future of broadband services. Following his presentation, Mr. Chambers entertained questions and comments from attendees.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

The next meeting will be held on March 21<sup>st</sup>.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

A motion to enter Executive Session for the purpose of discussing Personnel matters was made by Mr. Turner and seconded by Commissioner Pittard. The motion carried unanimously.

A motion to re-enter Open Session was made by Mr. Turner and seconded by Commissioner Pittard. The motion passed unanimously.

### **OPEN SESSION**

Based on discussion in Executive Session, it is the recommendation of the Search Committee – Chairman Jerry Roseberry, Vice Chairman Billy Pittard, Secretary Bill Palmer, Personnel Committee Chair Kevin Little, and Audit & Finance Committee Chair Amrey Harden – to promote Planning & Government Services Director Burke

Walker to the position of Executive Director, effective July 1, 2019. **A motion to accept the recommendation of the Search Committee was made by Mayor Linda Blechinger and seconded by Jasper County Commission Chairman Carl Pennamon. The motion carried unanimously.**

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha J. Beck  
Executive Assistant