
Date: September 19, 2019

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Location: Athens Holiday Inn

Minutes

Members Present:

Adams, Louise
Ainslie, Andy
Banes, Marcello
Bentley, David
Berry, Rick
Blechinger, Linda
Chambers, Joyce
Dally, Hal
Daniell, John
Ferrelle, Dodd
Fordyce, Cary
Girtz, Kelly
Graham, Pat
Houston, Lamar
Harden, Amrey
Horton, Harold
Ledford, Howard
Lawler, Terry
Little, Kevin
Padilla, Bob
Palmer, Bill
Pennamon, Carl
Perriman, Fred
Pittard, Billy
Ritter, Bill
Shaw, Jim
Turner, Frank
Vaughn, Lee

Members Absent:

Blackmon, Jody
Boggs, Ronnie
Brock, Phil
Crawford, Charlie
Crow, Tom
Dyer, David
Guest, Larry
Haynie, Doug
Pitts, Flemie
Roberts, Roy
Roseberry, Jerry
Scarborough, John
Seymour, Joel
Shearon, Dave
Smith, Jeffrey

Guests Present:

Chambers, Paul
Cook, Sarah
Eavenson, Beth
Jernigan, Don
Kokaly, Bill
Lombard, Byron
Pittman, Brittany
Price, Timothy
Ross, Wesley
Seaver, Andrew
Young, Jim

Staff Present:

Ball, Julie, Executive Assistant
Cofer, Carol, Director, WIOA
Kennedy, Eva, Director, PGS
Page, Alicia, Comptroller
Walker, Burke, Executive Director



Call to Order and Approval of August Meeting Minutes

Chairman Pittard called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. He asked the Council to rise and join him in the Pledge of Allegiance. He then welcomed members, guests, and staff and asked visitors to introduce themselves.

Chairman Pittard said the August 15, 2019 minutes were distributed prior to today's meeting. Unless there were corrections or changes, he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. A motion was made by Chairman Kevin Little and seconded by Chairman Marcello Banes. The motion carried unanimously.

Items of Local Interest

Barrow County – Chairperson Pat Graham

2018 SPLOST included \$7.3M for a level 2 project for new recreation facilities.

- Major components are:
 - Five synthetic turf athletic fields and;
 - A new tennis center with eight courts.
 - Splash pad, walking trails, and a dog park are pending.
- Two of the athletic fields involved a partnership with our Board of Education to convert two High School fields.
 - Significant cost savings utilizing existing field space
 - Two High School fields were completed and went into use two weeks ago.
- The three additional athletic fields at Victor Lord Park should be completed in April/ May 2020.

One Waste Water Treatment Plant, design-build project is underway

- Construction scheduled to start in December, completion in April 2021.

Emergency Medical Services

- The Barrow Emergency Medical Response and EMS Zone, in place for more than 40 years, became a service delivery issue last year.
- 18-month uncertainty over the status of our EMS Service area zone put the County's staffing and expansion plans on hold.
- At the end of February, the final ruling of Department of Public Health affirmed their County-wide EMS Zone.
- The County immediately entered into a partnership contract with the Northeast Georgia Hospital System to add a supplemental EMS Unit in the highest call volume area of the County.
- Med #7 went into service in mid-July.

Chairman Graham appreciates the Chairmen in the Region who took the time to discuss the issue with her while the Department of Public Health Region 10 EMS Council was working "EMS Zone Process." They achieved the best possible outcome for their citizens.



Their lengthy Service Delivery Strategy negotiation, ongoing for over two years, will be entering the next phase.

- Three full days of voluntary mediation resolved all but two issues. Court ordered mediation on two issues: Road Maintenance and Water Utility Service is scheduled for November 5, 2019.
- They hope for a positive outcome to resolve these two remaining issues with the county seat.

Athens-Clarke County – Mayor Kelly Girtz

Athens-Clarke is focusing on economic development in the county. They have a Wayfair backend digital tech and phone center opening the 2nd quarter of 2020 that will create 500 jobs. Eastern downtown is going to be unrecognizable five years from now. Through SPLOST, they will be funding a 5,500 seat arena. They are partnering with the Classic Center Authority along with a number of private entities that are going to be bringing a new hotel to the east end, and a senior living facility as well. The Classic Center expansion sits right on their greenway network. On UGA's South Campus there is a new bridge that crosses the North Oconee--the 1st one in over 40 years. Athens serves as a service hub for the state. People come to Athens for education, services, entertainment, dining, and people-in-need. They have hired an Outreach Coordinator for people-in-need services.

Elbert County – Chairman Lee Vaughn

- Construction of a new road into Porter Drive neighborhood, which was awarded a \$300,000 grant for Housing Rehab under the CDBG Program
- Started collecting TSPLOST funds in July
- One of our larger manufacturers, Moller Tech, has expanded into an additional building with a few additional jobs
- Potential of a 400 acre Solar Farm in the County
- They will set the millage rate next week with no increase in additional taxes
- Proposing to submit Trails Grant to Department of Natural Resources for additional walking / interpretive history trails at Bobby Brown Park. The Yurts stay busy at the park
- Possible expansion of the city's internet service into the lower 1/3 of county next year which will include Bobby Brown Park and 1,000 local residents

Greene County – Byron Lombard

Commissioner Jeffrey Smith could not attend today's meeting. Byron Lombard provided Greene County's report in his absence.

Greene County is getting its first Solar Farm. Solamerica Energy Solar Farm held a groundbreaking event for a 17-acre, 3-megawatt solar farm. Enough power for 600 houses. They have a very important SPLOST election in November that sets the stage for the County evolving into paid fire service. They did include in their next budget a new



Public Safety Director's position that is intended to facilitate improved preparedness and support for their emergency services, especially as they grow into having paid firefighters. The County is also absorbing the Recreation Authority and Airport Authority to be under the County as County departments rather than separate authorities. And even with all of that, they just adopted their FY2020 Budget that lowers the millage rate, marking the 20th year in a row that Greene County has adopted a revenue-neutral millage rate or lower.

Committee Reports

Audit & Finance – Amrey Harden

Members of the Audit & Finance Committee met before the Council meeting and members reviewed the following:

July 2019 Financials

Committee members reviewed the financial statements for the one-month period ending July 31, 2019. Revenues exceeded expenditures by \$28,285. Financial activity for the one month period should be at approximately 92% of our remaining FY2020 budget projections overall.

Budget Adjustments FY19

Alicia Page spoke to committee members regarding the approval of line-item budget adjustments. During the audit process for FY2019, it was determined that a few line-item budget adjustments would need to be completed. The adjustments are as follows:

- General Fund
 - Increase Charges for Service Revenue \$10,000
 - Increase Salaries Expenditures \$10,000
- Aging Fund
 - Decrease Purchase and Contracted Services \$250,000
 - Increase Supplies and Materials \$250,000
- WIOA
 - Increase Federal Revenues \$76,000
 - Increase Salaries \$18,000
 - Increase Purchased and Contracted Services \$34,000
 - Increase Supplies and Materials \$9,000
 - Increase Indirect Expenditures \$15,000

A motion was made to accept the July 2019 Financial Report by Amrey Harden and seconded by Mayor Linda Blechinger. The motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made to approve the adjustments to the FY19 Revised Budget by Amrey Harden and seconded by Dr. Howard Ledford. The motion carried unanimously.

Planning & Government Services – Commissioner Andy Ainslie



The Planning & Government Services Committee discussed news from around the Region this morning, including the following items of note:

The beginning of the 2020 Community Development Block Grant application period is quickly approaching. Requests for NEGRC assistance with preparing a 2020 CDBG application are due October 1st.

The Regional Commission will host a Georgia Department of Community Affairs presentation on Complete Count Committees on Friday, October 11, 2019 at 10:30 a.m. Communities are encouraged to establish a Complete Count Committee to educate residents on the importance of and process for completing the 2020 Census. Elected officials, educators, economic development professionals, and other community leaders are encouraged to attend. More information is available on the PGS Division's online calendar.

No action by the Council is required today.

Executive Director's Report – Burke Walker

Executive Director Walker welcomed new private-sector appointees Bill Ritter and Terry Lawler. We appreciate their time and value their participation, particularly for their input and guidance to this body with matters from the private sector and perspective from our business communities. He also welcomed Bill Kokaly from Congressman Collins' office and appreciated him being here and, most importantly, Congressman Collins' representation of Northeast Georgia.

While not a recent news item, Executive Director Walker mentioned Governor Kemp's call for budget reductions to the state's departmental budgets for FY21 and FY22 and a 4% and 6% reduction, respectively. More specifically, he reported on the information he had received regarding its impact on our specific program budgets (this only applies to the AAA (Aging) and PGS programs as state programs):

- GDOT: Bike & Ped; Rural Transit, Map-21. Exempt from the reductions
- DCA: Planning: Reduce contract requirement and scope for the Regional Plan and its annual update and work program amendment. DCA will also absorb reductions internally
- Aging: DHS reductions will go into effect October 1, 2019 that total \$1.6 million. Northeast Georgia's portion of the reductions will total \$56,000. Our staff intends to absorb this amount within administrative budget adjustments and make adjustments in programs so our 12 counties senior centers will not experience a reduction in their allocation.

At this point, Executive Director Walker does not see any immediate effects on existing staff (i.e., reductions in force), but a reduced level of services and division budgets will occur. He has learned the House and Senate budget committees will meet next week, so he'll continue to monitor any further changes.



Executive Director Walker was invited to attend and help open our annual AAA's "Senior Celebration" held at the Jefferson Civic Center a couple of weeks ago with Mayor Quinn and Kevin Poe (filling in for Chairman Crow). There were five of our staff in attendance that worked tremendously hard in planning and staging the event. Jackson County's Senior Center Director, Kathy Branyon, was the "Mistress of Ceremonies," and it was great to see all the participation of our twelve counties and their senior centers. There were, he thinks, over 500 attendees and all reports say everyone had a great time. The program was a great opportunity for our older citizens. Plans are already in the works for next year's event.

Executive Director Walker reported last month that the NEGRC was awaiting the Department of Community Affairs' (DCA) review and Governor Kemp's approval of 2019 Community Development Block Grant Awards (CDBGs) for three communities. He was pleased to report two of those projects were awarded to Jasper County and City of Hoschton as announced by the Governor on August 29, 2019. Eva's staff will now begin assisting those communities in the administration of those community facility and infrastructure improvement projects, as well as assisting communities with 2020 applications. Staff will also attend DCA's fall conference in LaGrange Oct 15-17, 2019, that required of grant recipients and grant administrators.

For staff news, Executive Director Walker introduced one Carol Cofer who directs our Workforce Division. Carol can be available after the meeting to answer any of your questions and how Workforce can assist your communities.

Last week, the House Rural Development Council met in Moultrie that included various speakers on several topics. On the second day, DCA Commissioner Christopher Nunn presented information to the Rural Council about "Regional Commission structure." The reason for him speaking on our behalf is that Regional Commissions are, by state statute, under the purview of DCA. The meeting was live-streamed, and the Commissioner's presentation was also attended by several southern Georgia RC Executive Directors. Commissioner Nunn, prior to this presentation, also attended the Executive Directors' monthly meeting the week before and reviewed information about Regional Commissions, the Rural Development Council, and possible questions and concerns from state legislators. At this point, three more meetings are planned; Executive Director Walker will continue to monitor to see the content of the agenda and the topics relevant to the Regional Commission and rural development.

Last Friday, the Georgia Department of Audits & Accounts (DOAA) circulated to the Regional Commissions' Executive Directors their draft annual performance audit and scorecard for the agencies for FY18. It, as in past years, evaluates the Commissions' performance related to customer satisfaction, planning, aging services, and transportation. DOAA asked for a preliminary review by Executive Directors and acknowledgement and receipt with any comments. He will be finalizing a letter for submission to DOAA by Monday. Once the draft is finalized, it will be available for circulation, and he will share its content at the appropriate time.



Lastly, a Council roster was circulated with today's meeting announcement. It includes the private-sector appointees approved at last month's as well as Committee assignments for members. These assignments are largely unchanged from last year—and based on Chairman Pittard's review. The Committee assignments for the Council's gubernatorial members were not listed on the emailed roster, but let me take this opportunity to present those. They are also unchanged and remain as follows:

- Cary Fordyce - PGS
- Dr. Ledford - PGS
- Roy Roberts - Audit & Finance

Executive Director Walker told Chairman Pittard he thought it would be appropriate for the Council to consider certifying this roster as the Council's membership and Committee assignments, effective today, September 19, 2019.

Presentation

Chairman Pittard provided an introduction of Sarah Cook, Director of Georgia Department of Agriculture's Domestic Trade Division. Following the introduction, Ms. Cook provided a presentation and presented visual slides of Georgia's agribusiness and agricultural production in Northeast Georgia.

Other Business

Chairman Pittard reminded members that the next Council meeting would be held on October 17, 2019, and encouraged all members to attend.

David Bentley made a motion commending U.S. Senator Johnny Isakson on his outstanding career in representing the people of the State of Georgia, and we wish him a very happy and long retirement. Chairman Pittard seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. Chairman Pittard mentioned it would be appropriate to draft a letter to be signed by all the Council.

Adjournment

With there being no further business to come before the Council, Chairman Pittard adjourned the meeting at 1:20 p.m.

Julie Ball, Executive Assistant
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

10.17.19

Date Approved