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Date: November 21, 2019

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Location: Athens Holiday Inn

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## Minutes

### **Members Present:**

Andy Ainslie  
Marcello Banes  
David Bentley  
Rick Berry  
Ronnie Boggs  
Joyce Chambers  
Tom Crow  
Hal Dally  
John Daniell  
David Dyer  
Cary Fordyce  
Kelly Girtz  
Pat Graham  
Amrey Harden  
Doug Haynie  
Lamar Houston  
Kevin Little  
Bob Padilla  
Bill Palmer  
Fred Perriman  
Bill Ritter  
Roy Roberts  
Jerry Roseberry  
John Scarborough  
Joel Seymour  
Jeffrey Smith  
Frank Turner

### **Members Absent:**

Louise Adams  
Jody Blackmon  
Linda Blechinger  
Phil Brock  
Charlie Crawford  
Dodd Ferrelle  
Larry Guest  
Harold Horton  
Terry Lawler  
Howard Ledford  
Tate O'Rouke  
Carl Pennamon  
Billy Pittard  
Flemie Pitts  
Jim Shaw  
Dave Shearon  
Lee Vaughn

### **Guests Present:**

Paul Chambers  
Charlotte Davis  
Beth Eavenson  
Steve Horton

### **Staff Present:**

Julie Ball  
Mark Beatty  
Sophia Primer  
Carol Rayburn-Cofer  
Burke Walker

### **Call to Order and Approval of October Meeting Minutes**

Vice-Chairman Palmer 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.



Vice-Chairman Palmer said the October 17, 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 Mayor Jerry Roseberry and seconded by Ronnie Boggs. The motion carried unanimously.

## **Items of Local Interest**

### **Newton County – Chairman Marcello Banes**

Facebook is building at a rapid pace. Building 1 and 2 should be finished up early next year. The JDA is finishing up the new parkway extension at Stanton Springs, a 3.5 million dollar extension. Nisshinbo Automotive is continuing its \$100 million expansion in Covington. General Mills will begin its \$60 million expansion next year. FiberVisions will begin a \$71 million expansion in December. Three Ring Studios is underway. Covington Town Center will be finishing up all infrastructure work, and two hotels have been permitted in this phase.

### **Oconee County – Chairman John Daniell**

Oconee County received a DCA Plan First Designation. Their Clerk of Courts, Angie Elder-Johnson, won the F. Barry Wilkes ECLAT Award for exceptional commitment Leadership Accomplishment teamwork. Their County Coroner, Ed Carson, received \$41,806 to certify his office to national accreditation through Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grant. They appreciate Representative Jody Hice for sending a letter of recommendation. They recognized 14 medical and fire responders. They have two new Mayors: Bob Smith in Watkinsville and Janet Jones in Bogart.

### **Oglethorpe County – Mayor Rick Berry**

Chairman Billy Pittard could not attend today's meeting. Mayor Rick Berry provided Oglethorpe County's report in his absence.

Congratulations to the Oglethorpe County High School Cross Country teams:

- Oglethorpe County High School Boys Cross Country won the 2019 State Cross Country Championship. It's the first time since 1990. They were ranked 3rd in the state going into the competition.
- The Oglethorpe County High School Lady Patriots Cross Country finished as the 2019 AA 2nd runner ups.

Other Community interest items:

- Oglethorpe County Chamber of Commerce will hold its annual Christmas Market Place from November 22-24 at the Historic Crawford Depot. There will be vendor booths, Santa Claus, and a Silent auction. The proceeds are intended for general Chamber expenses.



- The City of Lexington is going to receive a Historic Marker from the Georgia Historical Society for the structure the City calls “The Manse.” The marker is to commemorate The Manse as the birthplace of the Columbia Theological Seminary, which is now in Decatur Georgia, and was started in Lexington in 1828. A date has not been set for the celebration for the installation of the marker.

New business and construction for a County with over 423 square miles and only one traffic light is a big deal especially when any new businesses come in.

- In the City of Moxey, there is a new Bed and Breakfast called The Gillen House Bed and Breakfast, which opened recently and is owned and operated by Cynzia Sanchez, as well as a new commercial Greek Kitchen and bakery called Koyzina Staz, which is owned and operated by Anastasia Davis.
- Groundbreaking for the construction of a new Ace Hardware store began early this month in Crawford. No word on an expected completion date.
- New ENT Dr.’s office is near completion in Downtown Lexington. The expected opening for this new office will be shortly after the first of the New Year. This new facility is being built by Dr. Robert Pitts and is expected to accommodate 4-5 Doctors and employ 20 or more employees.
- The new Burger King opened on the 19th of this month and The Oglethorpe County Chamber of Commerce will hold a ribbon-cutting tomorrow, Friday, November 22, beginning at 9:00 a.m. They held a job fair on Tuesday the 12th and hired approximately 40 employees. The Lexington Burger King is the latest restaurant opening for Carolina Franchise Holdings out of the Greenwood, S.C.

### **Walton County – Chairman Kevin Little**

Chairman Little held and presented a copy of Walton County’s Annual Report, which is a snapshot of what’s been happening in Walton County. They also have it online. He offered to hand some out if anyone wanted to look at it. They are building a splash water park and expect to approve it at their December meeting. It should be ready by summer. They are building another fire station at Hard Labor Creek Reservoir. This project is funded by SPLOST. They will also start construction of a Community Center/ Gym in Social Circle, also funded by SPLOST.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Audit & Finance – Amrey Harden**

Members of the Audit & Finance Committee met this morning. Committee members reviewed the financial statements for the three-month period ending September 30, 2019. Revenues exceeded expenditures by \$13,905.25. Financial activity for the two-month period should be at approximately 75% of our remaining FY2020 Budget projections overall.



A motion was made by Amrey Harden that the NEGRC Council accept the report. The motion was seconded by Mayor Jerry Roseberry. The motion carried unanimously.

### **Program of Work – Mayor Rick Berry**

The Program-of-Work Committee met earlier today and reviewed two (2) technical-assistance requests for the month. These requests for the Regional Commission’s staff assistance include the following:

- The City of Social Circle requested assistance in developing a Community HOME Investment Program (CHIP) grant application through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The fee for this assistance is \$2,000.
- The City of Mansfield requested assistance in updating its comprehensive plan. The update will include two additional plan elements for a land use and broadband element. The fee for this assistance is \$2,000.

Based on a recommendation by the Executive Director and the Committee’s review, the Committee recommends approving these requests for inclusion in the FY2020 program-of-work effective November 21, 2019. A motion was made by Mayor Rick Berry and seconded by David Bentley. The motion carried unanimously.

### **Planning & Government Services – Commissioner Andy Ainslie**

The Planning & Government Services Committee discussed planning and economic development activities from around the Region this morning including the following:

The PGS Division has drafted an amendment to the Northeast Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan or “RHST Plan Phase 2.” The PGS Committee reviewed the draft amendment and recommends Council adoption of the RHST Plan Phase 2 today. A motion was made by Commissioner Andy Ainslie that the NEGRC Council adopt the plan. The motion was seconded by Mayor Hal Dally. The motion carried unanimously.

This Plan, as adopted, will continue to guide the Commission’s rural transit planning efforts.

The PGS Committee also reviewed the Commission’s FY21 Rural Transit grant application to the Georgia Department of Transportation. This grant application requires authorization and a filing resolution of this Council prior to its submittal. I have a copy of the full resolution and will read it if requested. The PGS Committee recommends the Council authorize the Commission’s submittal of the FY21 GDOT 5304 Grant Application to continue program support of the Commission’s transit-planning activities. A motion was made by Commissioner Andy Ainslie that the NEGRC Council submit the application and seconded by Chairman Marcello Baner. The motion carried unanimously.



### **Personnel – Chairman Kevin Little**

Chairman Little announced he would like to brag about Chairman Marcello Banes since he was selected for Leadership Georgia's 2020 class.

Prior to today's meeting, the Personnel Committee reviewed recommended updates to the Regional Commission's existing travel policies. These updates revise the existing policy [previously adopted by this Council on July 1, 2011] and would bring the NEGRC's travel policies up-to-date with the state's current travel policy. The revisions, specifically, cover the following areas: travel approval, air and ground transportation, payment methods, and policy exceptions.

Based on a review of the updated travel policy by the Personnel Committee, they recommended these updates be added to the Regional Commission's Travel Policy, effective today, November 21, 2019. A motion was made by Chairman Kevin Little and seconded by Ronnie Boggs. The motion carried unanimously.

### **Executive Director's Report – Burke Walker**

Executive Director Walker introduced today's guest staff member, Mark Beatty, whom is a Planner within the Planning & Government Services Division. Mark assists our communities in comprehensive planning, grant writing, administration of the Regional Solid Waste Management Authority, and many other areas. He's doing a great job for us. You and your staff will enjoy working with him. He also filled in for Eva today with the PGS Committee. Mark lives here in Athens with his wife, Chelsea, and baby son, Arthur.

### **ACCG District 5 Meeting**

Chairman Billy Pittard leads ACCG as its current president. Last week, I attended the District 5 ACCG meeting in Bishop at Hedgerow Farms, hosted by Chairman John Daniell in Oconee County, and enjoyed not only the venue but the opportunity to learn more about ACCG's services and their 2020 legislative toolkit. It was great to see all our counties represented and so many attending, along with their respective county-government staff. ACCG noted that Northeast Georgia, over the years, has provided numerous ACCG Presidents, including our own Kevin Little, whom is with us today. This is something we can all be proud of current and past ACCG Presidents.

### **DOAA Audit results**

At September's Council meeting, I reported on the Georgia Department of Audits & Accounts (DOAA) draft of the annual Regional Commissions' Performance Audit. This audit went into effect about nine years ago when the RDCs were reconstitution to RCs. At that time, NEGRC was the first RC to receive an onsite audit. On Monday, Executive Director Walker received the finalized report distributed to the Governor, Members of the General Assembly, Commissioners of DCA and DHS, and Executive Directors of Regional Commissions. He, in turn, shared the report with Chairman Billy Pittard.



The report covers activities for Fiscal Year 18. DOAA reviews performance in four areas: Customer Satisfaction, Planning, Aging, and Transportation--using 15 performance measures that apply to 2 of our 3 Program Divisions. Some of the performance measures are contractual responsibilities of the Commissions, but performance is, for many of these, also dependent on local government performance. For example, a measure is for QLG status, achieved by updating a comprehensive plan, which we play a direct role but also SDS, which is a local government requirement. Our scorecard placed us in about the middle with the other 11 RCs--some RCs below, some above. In "Customer Satisfaction," we exceeded the DOAA target and notably in the staff measure. I am proud of the NEGRC staff that has always excelled in that area.

This final report will be shared with the Division Directors to look at ways for improvement in the current year and upcoming years and working together with our local governments towards the shared measures.

### **GDOT Meeting**

Last month, I attended a meeting arranged by Jamie Boswell, whom most of you know is our GDOT Board member for District 10. They met in Athens, and Jamie included Russell McMurry, GDOT Commissioner. Mayor Girtz and ACC staff attended, and they talked about transportation topics in and around the Athens area. One of the more unconventional topics mentioned was the proposed high-speed rail line that's being studied by the Department and included three prospective routes, one that travels through Athens enroute to Charlotte and named the "Greenfield" line. Earlier this month, GDOT completed a survey for public input on that project and the three routes. It would, theoretically, connect Hartsfield Jackson with a station near Charlotte Douglas International airport with five stops in Georgia, including Athens. In any event, it was an informative meeting and a good opportunity. They also discussed bridge replacements and various transportation needs in northeast Georgia. For those of you that have met Commissioner McMurry, I think you'll agree there isn't a transportation-related question he couldn't answer. His time as a District Engineer clearly shows and familiarity with our local transportation needs.

### **USDA Prosperity Summit Report**

USDA's "Prosperity Summit" was held in Elberton on Monday. Mike Beatty of USDA-DC and Joyce White, USDA-RD State Director, reached out to Executive Director Walker to help coordinate the "Summit" with our local governments. He attended as well five (5) of our counties that were targeted by USDA to be there, and their four of their chief-elected officials. Chairman Vaughn hosted the meeting, and they worked together on several meeting details. Mayor Girtz presented information on affordable housing and options for housing development that, he thinks, everyone will agree is a critical topic. Olivia Wintz, of Carol Cofer's staff, presented information, as part of a panel on Workforce.



From what he understands, the continuation of the “Summit” will be the formation of “Prosperity Councils” on a local level and involve community leaders who will, in turn, identify specific community needs related to workforce, economic development, and others. Presumably, these communities, with “Prosperity Councils,” and their needs will be prioritized for USDA programs and funding. Executive Director Walker thanked Chairmen Lee Vaughn, Billy Pittard, John Scarborough, and Mayor Kelly Girtz for ‘answering the call’ and for taking part in this meeting. Mike phoned yesterday to thank everyone and said we ‘knocked it out of the park.’ As the program takes shape, we will continue to work with our counties on this new program and hopefully partner with USDA to help improve our communities.

### **GARC SSI**

Two weeks ago, the GARC’s 21st annual conference was held on St. Simons Island over a three-day period. Seven NEGRC staff and Five NEGRC Councilmembers attended and participated in conference sessions that covered wide-ranging and informative topics. Both Carol and Alicia presented during breakout sessions.

On the first day of the conference, the Association’s Board of Directors met, and myself and Lamar Houston, as Vice-Chairman, attended with the other eleven Regional Commissions and their Council policy members. Late this summer, Lamar came to see me about his service and retirement from the GARC as Vice-Chair and our Council. At that time, I asked Lamar if he would stay on through this month and attend this final Council meeting, which he agreed, as well as his final GARC meeting this month.

Executive Director Walker then asked Lamar Houston to come forward and be recognized for his many years serving as our policy representative and devoted service over his twenty-year tenure. After reading the plaque, Executive Director asked Mr. Houston to say a few words. Mr. Houston briefly described his involvement with the Council and said he greatly appreciated the opportunity to serve.

### **Outgoing Council members**

Executive Director Walker voiced appreciation to outgoing councilmembers for their participation and service to this body. He made mention of Mayor Roseberry, whom served as our previous Council Chairman and long-time member of the PGS Committee. Mayor Roseberry will be missed, and we appreciate all he’s done for our Commission and staff over the years and bringing Steve Horton, new municipal representative from Newton County to today’s meeting. Executive Director Walker said they are welcome back any time.



**Workforce Information**

Each year, our agency's WorkSource Georgia (or WIOA) program provides an update on activities and impacts within the region, particularly its results in workforce development affecting regional unemployment, underemployment, and workforce training and education. Today, as part of my report, I'll ask Carol Cofer to come forward to present a staff report on WorkSource which will conclude my report. Carol Cofer came forward to present her report.

**Presentation**

Vice-Chairman Palmer provided an introduction to Charlotte Davis with the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA). Charlotte gave a presentation about the upcoming legislative session that begins in January 2020 and items important to Georgia's local governments.


**Other Business**


Vice-Chairman Palmer reminded the Council there is not a meeting in December. The next Council meeting will be held on January 16, 2020.

David Bentley wished all the councilmembers a bountiful Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year, and a safe return back to our meeting in January.

**Adjournment**

With there being no further business to come before the Council, Vice Chairman Palmer adjourned the meeting at 1:25 p.m.

  
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Julie Ball, Executive Assistant  
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

  
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Date Approved