



Date: January 16, 2020

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Location: Athens Holiday Inn

Minutes

Members Present:

Louise Adams
Andy Ainslie
David Bentley
Rick Berry
Linda Blechinger
Ronnie Boggs
John Daniell
Dodd Ferrelle
Cary Fordyce
Kelly Girtz
Amrey Harden
Doug Haynie
Harold Horton
John Howard
Terry Lawler
Howard Ledford
Kevin Little
Bob Padilla
Bill Palmer
Fred Perriman
Billy Pittard
Bill Ritter
John Scarborough
Joel Seymour
Jeffrey Smith
Frank Turner

Members Absent:

Marcello Banes
Jody Blackmon
Phil Brock
Joyce Chambers
Charlie Crawford
Tom Crow
David Dyer
Pat Graham
Larry Guest
Gail Harrell
Steve Horton
Bruce Henry
Janet Jones
Tate O'Rourke
Flemie Pitts
Roy Roberts
Jim Shaw
Lee Vaughn

Guests Present:

Kay Argroves
Paul Chambers
Daniel Dobbins
Beth Eavenson
Bob Hughes
Kristen Miller
Mike Renshaw
Andrew Seaver
Kay Sibetta
Bob Thomas
Carol Williams

Staff Present:

Julie Ball
Eva Kennedy
Alicia Page
Burke Walker
Olivia Wintz

Call to Order and Approval of November Meeting Minutes

Chairman Pittard called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. He wished everyone a Happy New Year and 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 November 21, 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 David Bentley and seconded by Mayor Doug Haynie. The motion carried unanimously.

Items of Local Interest

Barrow – Mike Renshaw

Chairperson Pat Graham could not attend today's meeting. Mike Renshaw provided Barrow County's report in her absence.

Barrow County is constructing a 37-acre park expansion at Victor Lord Park which will feature three additional multi-purpose athletic fields (one synthetic surface, two Bermuda turf), a six-court tennis complex, grandstands, concessions, expanded parking, walking trail, and dog park amenity. This was all made possible through a partnership with the Chamber of Commerce; focus is being placed on sports recreational tourism to bring more visitors/shoppers to the area. The project is being funded by using \$7.4 million in SPLOST (Level 2 projects on 2017 referendum); an additional \$1.3 million in funding was transferred to Barrow County Schools for construction of 2 more synthetic surface fields and one at each high school. They are hoping to open the new park in late May 2020.

The world-class Chateau Elan Winery & Resort recently completed a \$25 million expansion/renovation project. It's the first major renovation since its inception in the '80s. This transformation includes a complete overhaul of 251 guestrooms and 24 suites, four new food and beverage outlets, the winery, as well as the resort lobby, with a facelift to the existing pool terrace and immersion spa. The biggest addition to the lobby space was adding Le Petit Café, which is their coffee and wine bar complete with a curated gift shop.

Barrow County is completing the design and engineering of a new 1.5 million gallon per day mechanical plant/wastewater treatment facility to replace its aging 500,000 gallon per day land application system and facility. The plant will enable the County to meet residential, commercial, and industrial growth demands within the western half of the County and along West Winder Bypass corridor. It's going to include a septic disposal and treatment facility (currently only 2 in this region). The new Tanners Bridge WWTF is scheduled to go online in February 2021.

In July of last year, the County was selected by PBS to participate in a documentary entitled "Great Places to Live and Start a Family." It's going to air sometime in the next four months to 84 million households nationwide.



Clarke County – Mayor Kelly Girtz

Mayor Girtz welcomed and congratulated Mayor Ferrelle as Winterville’s Mayor whom was sworn into a second term.

The county is currently working on the Winterville segment of the Firefly Trail.

Athens-Clarke County is initiating a Community Police Advisory Board next month through a small task force supported by the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement. It’s kicking off in mid-February.

Following their successful SPLOST referendum in November 2019, they are initiating redevelopment of the approximately 20 acres bounded by College Avenue and Dougherty Street. This will entail \$39M of SPLOST funds, and with private-partnership dollars and other tax credit investment, likely total over \$200M of development.

In conjunction with Georgia Power, they are hosting a Housing Conference on February 25. Time and location to be announced.

Elbert County – Bob Thomas

Chairman Lee Vaughn could not attend today’s meeting. Bob Thomas provided Elbert County’s report in his absence.

Bob Thomas reintroduced Daniel Dobbins as their new Economic Developer. They passed a TSPLOST last year and have close to a million dollars in funding for road projects. Moller Tech, an injection molding company, continues to do well. They have a large contract with BMW out of Greenville, SC. Pilgrim’s Pride is getting ready to do an expansion, which is a processing poultry operation. The Hartwell Railroad is adding another rail. Elbert County is losing its State Representative Tom McCall, who is the Chairman of Agriculture & Consumer Affairs. He will be sorely missed. Elberton and Elbert County just went through a rebranding program.

Greene County – Commissioner Jeffrey Smith

In Greene County, there were recently two new openings of a Chick-fil-a and 80-room Tru Hotel by Hilton.

Old Eatonton Road Bridge over the CSX railroad re-opened. Re-alignment and reclamation of Stagecoach Road where it ties into Old Eatonton Road and will be completed in the coming months.

The County is taking a big leap and having full-time firemen in three different locations in the County. They’ve bought three firetrucks at their last meeting that take one year to get.



Novelis, one of the largest aluminum recyclers in the U.S., is undergoing a \$30 million expansion.

Committee Reports

Audit & Finance – Amrey Harden

Harden said members of the Audit & Finance Committee met this morning and he reported on the following:

October 2019 Financials

Committee members reviewed the financial statements for the four-month period ending October 31, 2019. Revenues exceeded expenditures by \$6,728.17. Financial activity for the four-month period should be at approximately 66% of our remaining FY2020 Budget projections overall.

November 2019 Financials

Committee members reviewed the financial statements for the five-month period ending November 30, 2019. Revenues exceeded expenditures by \$47,306.21. Financial activity for the five-month period should be at approximately 58% of our remaining FY2020 Budget projections overall.

Amrey Hardin made a motion that the Council accepts the two financial reports dated October 31, 2019, and November 30, 2019. The motion was seconded by Ronnie Boggs. The motion carried unanimously.

A resolution was presented to the Committee to update the Trustees of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Retirement Savings Plan. The Commission had previously designated James Dove and Evans Brinson as the trustees of the plan. The resolution as presented will remove Mr. Dove and Mr. Brinson as the plan Trustees and instate the holder of the positions of Executive Director and Comptroller as the trustees to the plan. These positions are currently held by Robert Burke Walker, Jr. (Executive Director), and Alicia Page (Comptroller). It is the recommendation to adopt the resolution as presented.

Amrey Hardin made a motion that the Council adopt the resolution to update the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Retirement Savings Plan trustees as presented. The motion was seconded by Mayor Linda Blechinger. The motion carried unanimously.

Program of Work – Mayor Dodd Ferrelle

The Program-of-Work Committee met earlier today and reviewed seven (7) technical-assistance requests for the month. These requests, for the Regional Commission's Planning & Government Services staff, include the following:



- The City of Woodville requested assistance in developing a USDA loan and/or grant application for improvements to their City Hall that includes a new museum and community space. The fee for this assistance is \$1,500.
- Three local governments, independently, requested technical assistance on similar projects within their jurisdictions for the City of Woodville, Oglethorpe County, and Greene County. These include assistance with the Firefly Trail's planning, design, property research, and other related tasks. There is no fee for this assistance as it is provided through the annual GDOT bike and pedestrian contract and local dues. Any additional services or assistance, not covered by the GDOT contract, will be quoted at a later date.
- The City of Social Circle requested assistance with strategic planning and related facilitation as part of its annual retreat. There is no fee for this assistance.
- Jackson County requested assistance in developing a county-wide Urban Redevelopment Plan. The fee for this assistance will-not-exceed \$10,000.
- The City of Winder requested staff assistance in facilitating the annual strategic-planning retreat with the Mayor and Council. There is no fee for this assistance as it is provided by PGS administrative contracts and local dues.

Based on a recommendation from the Executive Director and the Committee's review, the Committee recommends approving these requests for inclusion in the FY2020 program-of-work effective January 16, 2020. A motion was made by Mayor Dodd Ferrelle and seconded by David Benton. The motion carried unanimously.

Planning & Government Services – Commissioner Andy Ainslie

This morning, the Planning & Government Services Committee discussed several items of interest.

One of these was the review of the PGS Division's requested projects during 2019 and their status. There were 30 total projects undertaken in 2019 with eight completed and 22 still in-progress. These projects covered both program areas of community & economic development and planning. They also provided direct assistance to 21 communities in Northeast Georgia.

Also of note is that the Census Bureau's annual Boundary and Annexation Survey is currently open. This is an opportunity for local jurisdictions to update their boundaries in the Census Bureau's registry. Because it is a Census year, it is especially important for local governments to verify that their boundaries are correctly delineated in the Census Bureau's data. March 1st is the deadline to respond. For assistance with this process, contact the NEGRRC's PGS Division.

No items required action from the Council.



Personnel – Chairman Kevin Little

The Personnel Committee met earlier this morning to review Executive Director Walker’s performance over the last 6-month period. This review is performed for all NEGRC staff by their supervisors at the conclusion of a 6-month “Probationary Period.” During our meeting, the Committee also reviewed a memo provided by Director Walker to Committee members detailing activities and achievements during the period.

Based on a review of Mr. Walker’s performance, the Committee believes Executive Director Walker satisfactorily completed the “Probationary Period.” We recommend his status move to “Regular Employee” as described in the NEGRC Personnel Policies. A motion was made by Chairman Kevin Little and seconded by Bill Palmer. The motion carried unanimously.

Executive Director’s Report – Burke Walker

New Council Members

Director Walker welcomed new Council Members: Steve Horton, Janet Jones, Gail Harrell, John Howard, and Bruce Henry.

One of the benefits of our Council meetings is to offer an opportunity to confer and exchange information with each other. For those new members, your Committee Assignments will remain the same as previously held by the respective jurisdictions. Chairman Pittard will review Committee assignments in June for consideration for FY2021. If any members have any Committee preferences, before that time, please communicate those to us.

Director Walker introduced staff member Olivia Wintz, Career Advisor Program Specialist, in the Workforce Division.

House Rural Council Recommendations

The Georgia House of Representatives Rural Development Council (RDC) met ten times in five communities in 2019 to consider and hear testimonials on topic areas affecting rural Georgia. These subject areas included: Agriculture, Broadband, Economic Development, Education, and Health Care. The year’s final meeting was held last month in Americus on December 17-18, 2019, that was followed by the Council’s final recommendations in the form of a written report. Three recommendations are included in the report that pertain to Regional Commissions. Based on the report, one of the primary recommendations is a reduction in the size of the Regional Commission’s “Board of Directors.” Earlier this month, Director Walker provided a copy of the report to our Council’s officers. At that December meeting in Americus, Commissioner Nunn of DCA testified as did two of my peer Executive Directors whom serve as President and Vice President of the GARC. The report and a video of their testimony are available on the House website. Director Walker met in Atlanta at GMA with the other Executive Directors and a large part of their meeting involved discussion about this primary recommendation. At this point, no



action is needed by the Council, but he wanted to make everyone aware as enter the 2020 legislative session and something the GARC will continue to work with Representative Walton.

Our Council has functioned well with its current structure in the past, and we are one of the most active as we meet ten months out of the year and inclusive with our “Associate Members” we greatly value.

Somewhat related to the Rural Council and discussions between the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions and various legislators, the Executive Directors in early December considered adopting a resolution affirming regional cooperation. The GARC was also guided in this resolution by Terry Matthews and Scott Maxwell whom work for the GARC as our public-relations consultant. While there is no contractual or financial obligation tied to this resolution, on our conference call, it was generally agreed that the resolution affirms something we are, in many instances, already doing. Director Walker brought this resolution before the Council, which was also distributed in the Council’s meeting notice. Director Walker offered to read the resolution and, otherwise, he deferred to the Chairman asking for the Council’s consideration to adopt the resolution as drafted and presented. A motion was made by Mayor Linda Blechinger to adopt the resolution as presented and seconded by David Bentley. The motion carried unanimously.

GDOT State Rail Transit Plan

The Georgia Department of Transportation is in the process of updating its State Rail Transit Plan. This plan is intended to identify how rail lines and systems that connect industries, ports, and people can continue to reinforce the Georgia economy through 2050 with needed investments. Three Regional Stakeholder Workshops are scheduled in three locations. The two closest to Northeast Georgia are on January 28 from 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm in Macon at the Macon Terminal Station and on January 29 from 9:30 am - 11:30 am in Gainesville at GDOT District Office Headquarters. Director Walker plans to attend the Gainesville session. Rail use and future needs are important. Director Walker hopes everyone’s staff, or appropriate constituents, will consider attending. Additional information is available on our website at www.negrc.org. If there are any specific issues or needs Councilmembers would like him to communicate, he will be glad to do so.

Holiday Inn Contract

Director Walker said he’s pleased to report that we’ve negotiated and signed a new contract with the Holiday Inn. Thanks to Julie Ball and Angela of the Holiday Inn in this process, Director Walker said he’s signed the contract and the Council will remain at the Holiday Inn through 2020.



Presentation

Chairman Pittard provided an introduction to Kay Sibetta, the Associate State Director for AARP (American Association of Real Possibilities). Kay gave a presentation about Livable Communities and how it can benefit Northeast Georgia. Information was distributed by Ms. Sibetta and questions asked and answered following her presentation.

Other Business

Chairman Pittard recognized Mayor Linda Blechinger for working with the Georgia Municipal Association on the Service Delivery Strategy and doing a tremendous amount of work. He thanked Mayor Linda Blechinger for her effort.

Adjournment

With there being no further business to come before the Council, Chairman Pittard asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by David Bentley and seconded by Chairman John Daniell. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 1:33 p.m.

Julie Ball, Executive Assistant
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

Date Approved