

Date: June 18, 2020

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Location: Teleconference

Minutes

Members Present

Louise Adams
Marcello Banas
Linda Blechinger
Ronnie Boggs
Tom Crow
John Daniell
Dodd Ferrelle
Cary Fordyce
Kelly Girtz
Amrey Harden
Doug Haynie
Bruce Henry
John Howard
Janet Jones
Terry Lawler
Howard Ledford
Kevin Little
Fred Perriman
Billy Pittard
John Scarborough
Joel Seymour
Jim Shaw

Members Absent

Andy Ainslie
David Bentley
Rick Berry
Jody Blackmon
Phil Brock
Joyce Chambers
Charlie Crawford
David Dyer
Pat Graham
Larry Guest
Gail Harrell
Harold Horton
Steve Horton
Tate O'Rourke
Bob Padilla
Bill Palmer
Flemie Pitts
Bill Ritter
Roy Roberts
Jeffrey Smith
Frank Turner

Guests Present

Beth Eavenson
Kristen Miller
Davis Warnell
Blaine Williams

Employees Present

Amber Bailey
Julie Ball
Kim Meadows
Alicia Page
Burke Walker

Call to Order and Approval of February Meeting Minutes

Chairman Pittard called the meeting to order at 11:02 a.m. He introduced Kim Meadows with the NEGRC as the telephonic meeting administrator and Kim gave brief meeting instructions to the Council. He asked the Council to rise and join him in the Pledge of Allegiance. He then asked Julie Ball to take roll call. Chairman Pittard then welcomed members, guests, and staff and asked visitors to introduce themselves. Chairman Pittard pointed out the Council did not meet in March, April or May due to the COVID-19 pandemic and that the February 20, 2020 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 Cary Fordyce and seconded by Chairman Tom Crow. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Pittard mentioned that typically at our meetings, we hear items of local interest from several counties. Because today's agenda was full with necessary business to conduct from prior meetings, these reports will be postponed until August and resume the regular rotation then.

Committee Reports

Audit & Finance – Amrey Harden

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

April 2020 Financials

Committee members reviewed the financial statements for the ten-month period ending April 30, 2020. Revenues exceeded expenditures by \$98,128.22. Financial activity for the ten-month period should be at approximately 16% of our remaining FY2020 Budget projections overall.

Amrey Hardin made a motion that the Council accept the financial report dated April 30, 2020. The motion was seconded by Chairman Tom Crow. The motion carried unanimously.

FY20 Revised Budget

Mrs. Page presented the FY20 Revised budget. Highlights are as follows:

- There was overall increase from the originally adopted FY20 budget of 15.24%.
 - Division of Aging saw an overall increase of \$1,615,453
 - Division of Planning and Government Services saw a decrease of \$23,099
 - Division of Workforce Development saw and overall increase of \$363,124

There was an overall increase in revenues for the revised FY20 budget of \$1,979,325 from the originally adopted FY20 budget.

FY21 Budget Highlights

Mrs. Page presented the proposed Fiscal Year 2021. Highlights are as follows:

- This budget is being presented as a balanced budget and therefore the revenues equal the expenditures.
- The overall Revenues and Expenditures for the proposed FY21 budget are projected to come in at \$13,199,949.
- There is an overall decrease of about 11.79% from the revised fiscal year 2020 budget due to a reduction in funding in our Aging and Workforce Development Divisions.



- This budget includes:
 - Increased funding for needed repairs and maintenance of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission building including replacement of the NEGRC Roof
 - Replacement of the Regional Commission's Phone System
 - Increased Funding from the Families First Coronavirus Response Act in the amount of \$414,285 for the Aging Division
 - The division of Aging was awarded a sum of at least \$50,000 from the Coronavirus Aid and Economic Security Act (CARES)
 - The Workforce Division received additional funding in the amount of \$550,000 from the Coronavirus Aid and Economic Security Act (CARES) for displaced workers.
- The amount necessary to match the different grants that the Regional Commission receives is projected to be \$375,341.
- Considering the amount of federal and state dollars to be received, the leveraging effect of local funds is significant. For every \$1 dollar paid in dues the region will receive \$20.01 in federal and state funding.
- To comply with the Department of Audit recommendations, dues are calculated using the most recent region population figures. This results in an increase of \$9,549 in dues for the fiscal year 2021.

Amrey Harden made a motion that the Council accept the proposed revised FY20 budget and the proposed FY21 budget as presented. The motion was seconded by Howard Ledford. The motion carried unanimously.

Program-of-Work – Mayor Dodd Ferrelle

The Program-of-Work Committee met prior to the Council meeting via telephonic meeting and reviewed six (6) technical-assistance requests received since our last meeting. These requests, for the Regional Commission's Planning & Government Services staff, include the following:

- The City of Hull requested assistance in developing a Regional Economic Business Grant (REBA) for roadside beautification and improvements within the city limits. The fee for this assistance is \$500.
- The City of Covington requested assistance in administering an awarded Community Home Investment Program (CHIP) grant. The sub-recipient of the grant is the Covington Housing Authority. The fee for this assistance is 5% of the grant award.
- The City of Winterville requested assistance in reducing posted speeds on Mainstreet near the Firefly Trail. This assistance will include coordinating the effort with the City and Georgia Dept. of Transportation. There is no fee for this assistance.



- The City of Woodville requested assistance in developing an update to their comprehensive plan. This request includes the addition of a land-use element. The fee for this required element is \$1,500.
- The City of Winder requested assistance in developing an application for supplemental CARES Act funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) for water-system improvements. As this assistance is provided by the NEGRC's EDA Planning Partnership Administrative Grant, no fee is required.
- The City of Hoschton requested assistance in developing an Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant pre-application to support water-system improvements. The request will include development of a full application and grant administration, if approved. There is no fee for the pre- and full-application as it is covered by the NEGRC's ARC administrative grant and local dues.

Based on a recommendation by the Executive Director followed by the Committee's review, the Committee recommended approving these requests for inclusion in the FY2020 and FY2021 programs-of-work effective June 18, 2020. A motion was made by Mayor Dodd Ferrelle and seconded by Chairman Tom Crow. The motion carried unanimously.

Also at the Program-of-Work Committee meeting, Executive Director Walker reviewed the FY21 Program-of-Work for all the NEGRC's programmatic divisions. The full Program-of-Work was distributed to Committee members prior to our meeting for review. Based on the Committee's review, the Committee recommends the Council's approval of the FY21 Program-of-Work as presented. A motion was made by Mayor Dodd Ferrelle and seconded by Amrey Harden. The motion carried unanimously.

The FY21 Program-of-Work will go into effect starting July 1, 2020 and will be updated throughout the year with monthly, technical-assistance requests.

Personnel – Chairman Billy Pittard (for Kevin Little)

As the last meeting of the fiscal year, the Personnel Committee had two items of interest to come before the Council for action. As the Personnel Committee's Chairman, Kevin Little, is traveling (driving) today during the meeting, he asked Pittard to present his report.

The Personnel Committee met previously in April to discuss several personnel items including the annual review of Executive Director Walker. During this review, Executive Director Walker reviewed accomplishments from his first year, agency goals, and upcoming tasks for the next fiscal year. The Committee, in its evaluation, believed Executive Director Walker exceeded expectations for the year. A summary of this review was circulated to Committee members. Based on the Committee's review, they recommended approval of Executive Director Walker's performance for this year.



Chairman Kevin Little made a motion to approve Executive Director Walker's performance review and it was seconded by Mayor Linda Blechinger. The motion carried unanimously.

A second item considered by the Personnel Committee was the review of the revised NEGRC Personnel Policies. Changes to the existing policies were needed to bring them up to industry standards and to conform to new office operations. These draft policies were circulated to Committee members prior to the meeting. Based on the Committee's review, Chairman Kevin Little recommend their adoption of the draft policies and made that in the form of a motion. The motion was seconded by Cary Fordyce. The motion carried unanimously.

Executive Director's Report – Burke Walker

Executive Director Walker thanked Chairman Pittard and stated that in the next month he would reach his first year as Executive Director.

Executive Director Walker mentioned the passing of Jim Luken, a former NEGRC Council member and City of Watkinsville Mayor who passed away the last month and the unexpected passing of Commissioner Jerry Nesmith of Athens Clarke County on June 7, 2020.

Executive Director Walker welcomed Kim Meadows as a staff guest and thanked her for helping behind the scenes with the telephonic meeting.

NEGRC Operations during C-19

Executive Director Walker stated that the NEGRC began remote working back on March 15 with minimal staff presence daily and that he communicated with the Division Directors daily on conference calls that continued over the previous three months. All staff returned on a staggered, split-shift basis except Executive Director Walker who came in daily since March. Executive Director Walker thanked Eva Kennedy and Carol Cofer who helped draft both a work-from-home procedure and a phased Covid-19 office procedure manual. Director Walker mentioned that since the outbreak, no NEGRC staff have tested positive for COVID-19. Director Walker stated that today's meeting combines three (canceled) meetings worth of needed business to complete before the fiscal year ended. He thanked members for their attendance.

CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act Funding

Executive Director Walker mentioned that all of the programmatic Divisions had received and/or applied to receive additional funding through the CARES Act and other sources. The Aging Division received additional funding to provide delivered meals through the senior centers and Workforce received funding from a Department of Labor National Emergency Grant for Dislocated Workers. Planning & Government Services had applied



to EDA for additional funding to support economic development in response to the pandemic that would, if funded, cover a two-year recovery period. These EDA additional funds and the services will be provided to the local governments over the next years for economic recovery. These additional funds would also use the dues contributions for matching funds.

ARC News

Executive Director Walker stated that the Development Districts of Appalachia (DDAA) held its annual business meeting that was rescheduled from the cancelled March meeting in Washington, DC. At the 'virtual' business meeting, Jim Dove was presented [by his former friend and colleague Jim Baldwin of Virginia] the annual John D. Whisman Vision Award. Director Walker further mentioned that at the DDAA business meeting each year, officers are elected and 13 of the state board members are appointed. Heather Feldman, Executive Director of the GMRC was elected as secretary [and officer] and Walker was named the Georgia board member.

Personnel Policies

Executive Director Walker mentioned that the development of new and updated Personnel Policies had been one of his priorities for the year as the former policies needed to be brought up to current standards. Director Walker thanked Chairman Little and the entire Personnel Committee for contributing their time in this effort that was a significant undertaking.

Annual Performance Standards

Executive Director Walker stated that the Council is required by state legislation (OCGA 50-8-31.4) to conduct an annual review of performance for activities based on specific standards for measurements. These standards were adopted by the Council on November 19, 2009 and are as follows:

- The Northeast Georgia RC meets all contract obligations.
- The Northeast Georgia RC responds in a timely manner to technical assistance requests submitted by local governments.
- The Northeast Georgia RC maintains a competent staff to meet RC objectives.
- The Northeast Georgia RC adopts an annual budget and program of work and operates within that budget.
- The Northeast Georgia RC contracts with a firm to undertake an annual audit of finances.
- The Northeast Georgia RC Council meets as prescribed by state law and provides effective leadership to staff on policy matters.



This information and statements on performance were mailed with the meeting notice for the Council's review. This review covered the state fiscal year from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020. Executive Director Walker said to Chairman Pittard that at this time, it would be appropriate for the Council to consider approving this year's review. And unless there were any questions, this would conclude Director Walker's report.

A motion to approve the annual performance review was made by Mayor Linda Blechinger and seconded by Cary Fordyce. The motion carried unanimously.

NEGRC Annual Awards Presentation

NEGRC Administrator of the Year

Executive Director Walker stated that each year, the NEGRC's Council and its Awards Committee selects a recipient for its "Local Government Administrator of the Year" award. He detailed this year's awardee's prior accomplishments and went on to announce the recipient as Blaine Williams, the fourth County Manager of the Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County. Director Walker presented the award on the behalf of the Awards Committee and the Council and asked Mayor Girtz to present the "2020 Local Government Administrator of the Year" award to Blaine Williams at City Hall 'virtually'. Blaine Williams was given the opportunity to address the Council on his award.

Robert and Betty Williford Distinguished Northeast Georgian

The award was presented by Amrey Harden who recognized Chairman Kevin Little, Dr. Howard Ledford, and Frank Turner also as former recipients of this award and members of the current Council. Amrey Harden stated the many accomplishments of this year's candidate who also served as ACCG's President last year. He continued and announced that NEGRC Council Chairman, Billy Pittard, was this year's recipient. Billy Pittard was given the opportunity to address the Council on his award and presented the award at the NEGRC Headquarters.

Other Business

Chairman Pittard mentioned that our Council would not meet in July and that the next meeting would be on August 20, 2020 with a location and form to-be-determined.

He also reminded our County Chairpersons that a request for appointment of your Commission private-sector representatives were sent last month and to please make these appointments so they can participate in the first meeting of new fiscal year. He would also look at Committee assignments and make any necessary or requested adjustments prior to that meeting.



Adjournment

With there being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 11:57 a.m.

Julie Ball, Executive Assistant
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

August 20, 2020

Date Approved