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Date: August 20, 2020

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Location: Teleconference

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## Minutes

### Members Present:

Andy Ainslie  
Marcello Banes  
Ronnie Boggs  
Joyce Chambers  
John Daniell  
Dodd Ferrelle  
Cary Fordyce  
Gail Harrell  
Amrey Harden  
Doug Haynie  
Bruce Henry  
Steve Horton  
Janet Jones  
Howard Ledford  
Bob Padilla  
Bill Palmer  
Fred Perriman  
Billy Pittard  
Bill Ritter  
John Scarborough  
Joel Seymour  
Frank Turner

### Members Absent:

Louise Adams  
David Bentley  
Rick Berry  
Jody Blackmon  
Linda Blechinger  
Phil Brock  
Charlie Crawford  
Tom Crow  
David Dyer  
Kelly Girtz  
Pat Graham  
Larry Guest  
Harold Horton  
John Howard  
Terry Lawler  
Kevin Little  
Tate O'Rourke  
Flemie Pitts  
Roy Roberts  
Jim Shaw  
Jeffrey Smith  
Lee Vaughn

### Guests Present:

No guests were present

### Staff Present

Amber Bailey  
Julie Ball  
Eva Kennedy  
Alicia Page  
Burke Walker

### Call to Order and Approval of June Meeting Minutes

Chairman Pittard called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. He welcomed everyone to the August Council meeting of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission and said as with our June meeting, we continue to meet telephonically due to the emergency conditions posed by COVID-19. He then asked everyone to please rise and join him in the Pledge of Allegiance.

As today's meeting is held again as a video conference and also a public meeting, Chairman Pittard ask everyone to identify themselves before speaking or for any motions and by a show of hand. He then asked Julie Ball to take roll call. Chairman Pittard then welcomed members, guests, and staff and asked visitors to introduce themselves. There were no visitors present.



Chairman Pittard said the June 18, 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 Joyce Chambers and seconded by Ronnie Boggs. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Pittard said at our meetings we hear items of local interest from several counties. Because today's meeting was telephonic and in the interest of time, area reports will not be presented. He did ask if any members had any special items of interest or news they wished to share. No items were reported by members.

## **Committee Reports**

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

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

#### **June 2020 Financials**

Committee members reviewed the financial statements for the twelve-month period ending June 30, 2020. Revenues exceeded expenditures by \$158,986. These statements are unaudited and are subject to change pending the final NEGRC audit. Auditors will be at the NEGRC the first week of September

Mr. Harden stated that Alicia Page, NEGRC Comptroller, discussed with the committee the additional funds that were awarded to Northeast Georgia Regional commission through the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES). We've had almost 2.2 million in funds sent to our region.

Amrey Harden made a motion that the Council accept the report as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Andy Ainslie. The motion carried unanimously.

### **Program-of-Work – Mayor Dodd Ferrelle**

Mayor Ferrelle said the Program-of-Work Committee met prior to the Council meeting and reviewed four (4) technical-assistance requests received since our last meeting. These requests, for the Regional Commission's Planning & Government Services staff, include the following:

- The Northeast Georgia Regional Solid Waste Management Authority (that includes Barrow, Clarke, Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Madison, Morgan, Oconee, Oglethorpe, & Walton Counties) requested assistance in updating the Regional Solid Waste Management Plan. The fee for this assistance is \$30,000.
- Jackson County requested assistance in developing a Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program pre-application. The pre-application seeks funding for acquisition and development of a 65-acre park in unincorporated Jackson County. The fee for this assistance is \$1,000.



- The City of Covington requested assistance in updating the City's Comprehensive Plan. This request will include assistance with public hearings, input sessions, and Transportation and Land Use elements. The fee for this assistance is \$7,500.
- The City of Winterville requested assistance in the finalization and adoption of Historic Preservation Design Guidelines for locally designated historic districts. There is no fee for this assistance.

Based on a recommendation by the Executive Director followed by the Committee's review, the Committee recommends approving these requests for inclusion in the FY2021 program-of-work effective August 20, 2020. A motion was made by Mayor Dodd Ferrelle and seconded by Commissioner Andy Ainslie. The motion carried unanimously.

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

The Planning & Government Services Committee met yesterday morning and discussed economic development and other news from around the region.

One item of note is that the NEGRC recently received EDA CARES Act funding for economic recovery and resilience planning efforts in response to COVID-19. Activities will include development of a regional economic impact study (including county-level assessments) and an economic recovery and resiliency plan for Northeast Georgia. Commissioner Ainslie asked to keep an eye out for a short survey that Eva Kennedy will be sending out within the next month – it will help in developing the impact study.

The PGS Committee had one item that requires Council action: DCA recently approved the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan Implementation Program Annual Report. The PGS Committee recommends adoption of the Annual Report by the Council today. Commissioner Ainslie offered to read the resolution and mentioned they could also get a copy online from Eva Kennedy. Chairman Pittard asked if anyone would like Commissioner Ainslie to read the resolution and no one replied.

Commissioner Ainslie made a motion to adopt the Annual Report. The motion was seconded by Mayor Gail Harrell. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Ainslie also mentioned the Implementation Program Annual Report, as adopted, will continue to guide the Commission's planning efforts.



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

### **Tommy Lyon**

Executive Director Walker provided an update on the health and recovery of Mr. Tommy Lyon, a former NEGRC Council Chairman, NEGRC PGS Committee Chairman, and former Chairman of Elbert County. Walker then asked Mr. Palmer to give a further update on Lyon's recovery.

### **COVID-19**

The Governor's state of emergency that allowed telephonic meetings to comply with Georgia's Open Meetings Act expires in August. NEGRC held limited public meetings at the headquarters and was able to convene the UOBWA meeting in July by using the Atrium meeting room to allow for social distancing. The NEGRC has continuously watched for updates and would address the issue as it pertains to the September Council meeting. NEGRC staff has maintained a safe work environment and no staff has been diagnosed with Coronavirus at this time. The NEGRC was successful in acquiring additional funding to address economic impacts and conditions of the pandemic through the Economic Developmental Administration, Workforce assistance from TCGA and DHS for Aging services as reviewed by the Audit & Finance Committee prior to this meeting. Each division will be forthcoming with information regarding these opportunities as it becomes available.

### **Roof Leak**

Due to a recent heavy rainfall, the NEGRC offices experienced a roof leak resulting in some water damage. The water damage did not greatly disrupt our workplace but it required clean-up and replacement of ceiling tiles. Executive Director Walker and other staff monitored the issue over the ensuing weekend. This was not the first time the older portion of the building experienced a roof leak and Ben Carter, architect of the new addition to the building, inspected the roof and began work on an estimate for repairs. Funding for roof repairs was included in the FY21 budget and this issue was given higher priority since it is a deferred-maintenance issue.

### **ARC**

Executive Director Walker mentioned his participation in his first Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA) board meeting as the state of Georgia's designee. The DDAA works collaboratively with the Appalachian Regional Commission and its Washington, DC staff. Executive Director Walker also participated in a new board members orientation/training by ARC.

### **NMTC**

Executive Director Walker shared information regarding an application for Georgia to seek an increase in New Market Tax Credits for \$100 million. The opportunity was presented to the GARC to increase the amount from the U.S. treasury to benefit eligible communities (i.e. low income). A request for potential projects to be included in the project was due by August 6, 2020. These tax credits would be used to attract private investment in various projects in low income areas (e.g., new or expanding business and industrial projects, community facilities, non-profit organization facilities, universities, technical colleges, mixed use development (residential with



retail), redevelopment of historic properties-Georgia Theatre, and others). Randy Griffin (CSRA Business Lending) was enlisted to oversee the application's development. Any follow-up information from economic development staff and submission of potential projects would be appropriate and supported by the Regional Commission. Results of the application's review will be available by the end of 2020. Executive Director Walker stated that any questions or specific information could be directed to himself, Eva Kennedy, or Randy Griffin.

### **GARC**

Executive Director Walker mentioned the annual November conference of Georgia's Regional Commissions held at the King & Prince on St. Simon's. The GARC made the decision to cancel the in-person conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We were, however, able to cancel without financial penalties. Although the full conference was canceled, there are plans to hold a virtual conference geared as a training for staff in selected program areas. This decision was made at the GARC Full Board meeting which Executive Director Walker and Commissioner Ainslie attended via teleconference. This format allows for wider staff participation without travel costs.

### **RC Reorganization HB1122**

HB 1122, introduced by Representative Sam Watson, was proposed in the last legislative session but did not make it out of committee; there will be no changes to the Council's composition this fiscal year. This legislation had proposed reducing the size Commissions by eliminating Gubernatorial and Associate member appointees. Terry Matthews, the GARC legislative contact, had a follow-up conversation with Rep. Watson and he stated that he did not think he would pursue this legislation during next year's session. He did suggest that the Councils' Executive Committee members should be increased and utilized more for organizational decisions. That change can be addressed and would not affect the composition of council membership.

### **Private Sector Appointments**

Each year, the by-laws require that the Council appoints/reappoints its Private Sector members for a one-year term during the state-fiscal year (July 1 through June 30). Appointments for this year were requested from each county and Walker read these members as follows:

Barrow:	Bill Ritter
Clarke:	TBA, awaiting final approval
Elbert:	Bill Palmer
Greene:	Terry Lawler
Jasper:	David Dyer
Jackson:	Jim Shaw
Madison:	Bob Padilla
Morgan:	Dave Bentley
Newton:	Frank Turner
Oconee:	Amrey Harden
Oglethorpe:	Ronnie Boggs
Walton:	Joyce Chambers



Executive Director Walker asked Chairman Pittard, if he was in agreement, it would be appropriate to entertain a motion to seat those individuals named to serve a one-year term effective today, August 20, 2020. A motion was made by Cary Fordyce and seconded by Chairman Marcello Banes. The motion carried unanimously.

### **2020 Census**

Executive Director Walker mentioned the 2020 Census and that counting concluded Sept 30, 2020. The NEGRC office and PGS staff have provided assistance in coordination with DCA. He stated that this region was at 63% response rate and that there was still time to improve that percentage. Misinformation was reported regarding door-to-door Census collection and Eva Kennedy was asked to summarize and clarify what would occur the last few weeks of Census counting. Executive Director Walker stated that his report would conclude after Eva Kennedy's Census update.

PGS Director Eva Kennedy stated that the NEGRC received a correction on the notification that was sent previously. The Census Bureau would be performing enumeration activities in all Georgia counties. Census takers would be going door-to-door for nonresponding households.

Ms. Kennedy described the four identifiers that all Census takers should have:

- A mask
- A tablet with Census Bureau logo
- A Census bag
- A badge

PGS Director Kennedy stated that an additional follow-up would be performed by calling and emailing non-responsive households but the ability to do so depended on the Census Bureau having phone/email information. The online portal at 2020Census.gov site was still open and due to the ongoing pandemic, the deadline to respond was moved several times, and the final deadline is September 30, 2020. PGS Director Kennedy stated that all Northeast GA counties were around a 55-69% response rate and that 30-45% of the counties had not been counted. Communities with student populations returning were encouraged to make an effort to appeal to college students to respond to the Census. Director Kennedy mentioned that Census Bureau and State Census resources were available for all local communities and that she could be contacted if assistance in reaching out to those entities was needed.

### **Other Business**

Chairman Pittard mentioned at the June meeting, the Council's Committee assignments were reviewed for appointment in the new fiscal year. The roster with these Committee assignments was circulated prior to the meeting. He made mention of three new appointments: Howard Ledford is assigned to Audit & Finance; Gail Harrell will join the Planning & Government Services Committee; and Janet Jones will serve on the Program-of-Work Committee.

He expressed his appreciation for their and all other Committee members for their service on their respective committees.



**Adjournment**

With there being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned by Chairman Pittard at 11:42 a.m.

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Julie Ball, Executive Assistant  
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

September 17, 2020

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Date Approved