
Date: November 19, 2020

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Location: Telephonic

Minutes

Members Present:

Andy Ainslie
Rick Berry
Linda Blechinger
Joyce Chambers
John Daniell
David Dyer
Dodd Ferrelle
Cary Fordyce
Doug Haynie
Bruce Henry
John Howard
Howard Ledford
Kevin Little
Bill Palmer
Billy Pittard
Bill Ritter
Roy Roberts
John Scarborough
Joel Seymour
Jim Shaw
Frank Turner

Members Absent:

Louise Adams
Marcello Banes
David Bentley
Jody Blackmon
Ronnie Boggs
Phil Brock
Tom Crow
Kelly Girtz
Pat Graham
Larry Guest
Gail Harrell
Harold Horton
Steve Horton
Janet Jones
Terry Lawler
Tate O'Rourke
Bob Padilla
Fred Perriman
Flemie Pitts
Jeffrey Smith
Solomon Smothers
Lee Vaughn

Guests Present:

Beth Eavenson, GA DCA
Amrey Harden
Kristen Miller, GA DED
Clay Pilgrim, Rushton & Co.

Staff Present

Amber Bailey
Julie Ball
Alicia Page
Burke Walker

Call to Order

Chairman Pittard called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. Chairman Pittard welcomed everyone to the November meeting of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission. He then asked Julie Ball to delay the roll call to give members more time to join the meeting in order to establish a quorum. Chairman Pittard asked that any guests present announce themselves. Three guests were in attendance: Clay Pilgrim (Rushton & Co), Kristen Miller (GA DED) and Beth Eavenson (GA DCA). Chairman Pittard asked everyone to rise and join him in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman Pittard stated that a quorum was necessary to approve meeting minutes from



September 17, September 30 and October 15. Voting to approve the minutes was delayed until later in the meeting (a quorum was later established with late-arriving members). Chairman Pittard noted that in the interest of time no “Area Reports” would be presented by county chairpersons. He asked that any news or important information be shared at this time. There was no news or information volunteered by Council members. Chairman Pittard stated that three of the Council’s Committees met prior to the Council meeting and asked the committee chairpersons to present their reports.

Committee Reports

Audit & Finance – Howard Ledford

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

Committee members reviewed the financial statements for the 3-month period ending September 30, 2020. Revenue exceeded expenditures by \$48,505. Financial activity for the 3-month period was at approximately 75% of remaining FY 2020 projections overall. Mr. Ledford introduced Clay Pilgrim of Rushton and Company and asked him to present the Final FY20 Financial Audit for the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission. Mr. Pilgrim gave the report of the Annual Audit for the Fiscal Year 2020 to the Council and asked Council members if there were any questions.

Howard Ledford motioned to accept the audit report and the final FY20 Financial Audit Report of the NEGRC. Mayor Linda Blechinger seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Ledford thanked Clay Pilgrim, Rushton & CO and NEGRC Comptroller Alicia Page for their work on the Financial Audit Report. Howard Ledford concluded his report as there were no further questions.

Program-of-Work – Mayor Dodd Ferrelle

Mayor Dodd Ferrelle stated that the Program-of-Work Committee met prior to the Council meeting and reviewed three technical assistance requests for the Regional Commission’s Planning and Government staff. These requests included: Athens-Clarke County request for assistance with preparing a Sprint Challenge Grant for the Economic Development Administration; the City of Oxford requested assistance in re-applying for a 2021 Community Development Block Grant for water-system improvements; and the City of Union Point requested assistance in preparing a Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program grant application to develop sections of the Firefly Trail. Six technical requests were presented at the October meeting for Greene County, Woodville, Maxeys, Nicholson, Elbert County and Jasper County but no action was taken at that time, due to a lack of quorum. Upon recommendation from the Executive Director Walker and after the



Committee's review, Mayor Ferrelle recommended that these nine requests be approved for inclusion in the FY2021 Program of Work. Mayor Ferrelle motioned for these nine (9) requests to be approved for inclusion in the FY2021 Program-of-Work that was seconded by Cary Fordyce. The motion passed unanimously.

Planning and Government Services – Andy Ainslie

Commissioner Andy Ainslie stated that the PGS Committee met on November 18, 2020 and there were two items requiring action:

Commissioner Ainslie discussed the FY22 Rural Transit Grant Application. Commissioner Ainslie motioned for the Council to approve submission of the FY22 Rural Transit grant application to the Georgia Department of Transportation. Roy Roberts seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Ainslie discussed the 2020 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Annual Update and stated that the PGS Committee recommended approval of the CEDS Annual Update. Commissioner Ainslie motioned for approval of the CEDS Annual Update and Bill Palmer seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of September 17, September 30 and October 15 Minutes-Chairman Pittard

Chairman Pittard asked the Council members for any questions or corrections regarding the previous meeting's minutes. Howard Ledford made a motion and Mayor Linda Blechinger seconded to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Director's Report – Burke Walker

Executive Director Burke Walker stated that he did not have any items requiring action before he began his Director's Report.

Staff and Office Update

Executive Director Walker informed the Council that NEGRC office operations have continued without any significant changes or interruptions. All staff members have maintained regular, in-office hours except those considered "medically fragile". Four staff members have self-quarantined due to third-party exposure but there have not been any positive Covid-19 tests to date among the staff. Executive Director Walker assured the Council that the situation was being handled on a day-to-day basis and that adjustment would be made as needed.

ARC Information

Executive Director Walker informed the Council that due to Covid-19, ARC is reducing the local grant match requirement as follows: Elbert 20%, Barrow, Jackson, and Madison 30%. These grants can be used for various projects that address one or more of ARC programmatic goals.



Executive Director Walker mentioned that Beth Eavenson from Georgia's Department of Community Affairs (DCA) was attending the meeting today and asked if she had any information to add.

Executive Director Walker announced that Brandon McBride was recently named Executive Director of ARC. Mr. McBride previously served as Vice President of the Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation and would follow Charlie Howard, ARC General Counsel and Interim ED. This position oversees the ARC-Washington staff and office operations in coordination with the other federal co-chair, Governor Mike DeWine of Ohio.

GARC Meeting

Executive Director Walker said the GARC annual meeting was convened virtually earlier in November with Commissioner Andy Ainslie participating as the GARC Policy member. The current President, Vice President, and Secretary were re-elected to another 2-year term. Executive Director Walker noted he was optimistic that the GARC meeting in 2021 could be held in the traditional way at St. Simons to include several Council members and NEGRC staff.

ACCG District 5 Meeting

Executive Director Walker mentioned that the meeting was held virtually on November 6, 2020 and that Dave Wills reported 140 new county commissioners were elected across Georgia in November. ACCG will be providing their commissioner training in Athens. Executive Director Walker stated the NEGRC was in the process of planning an orientation for its new Council members and other interested elected officials in our region. This orientation will provide an opportunity for elected officials to learn about the Commission, its services, and interface with staff (Division Directors). The two (2) hour meeting may be held in February and Executive Director Walker informed the Council that an announcement would be included in the January Update and asked members to share the opportunity with any appropriate parties.

Council Membership/Recognize Councilmembers

Executive Director Walker congratulated Steve Horton (Mayor of Covington) on his many accomplishments in his 36 years of service and on his recent appointment by Governor Kemp to serve on the GA Emergency Communications Authority.

Executive Director Walker mentioned that this meeting was the last meeting for several outgoing Council members that he wished acknowledged: Chairman John Scarborough, Mr. Amrey Harden, Mr. Charlie Crawford, and Chairman Kevin Little (Walton County Chairman). Executive Director Walker thanked them for their time and service to the Council and their involvement on Committees.



Executive Director Walker expressed special appreciation to Chairman Kevin Little and (now Commissioner) Amrey Harden for their long-term service and participation. These two members served the Council far beyond anyone's expectations and their contributions will have a lasting impact on the NEGRC Council and staff for years to come. Executive Director Walker said unless there were questions, he would conclude and defer to Chairman Pittard to formally recognize these individuals.

Other Business

Chairman Pittard first thanked Chairman John Scarborough for his friendship and service to the Council. Chairman Pittard then presented Commissioner Amrey Harden with a plaque and expressed his appreciation for Mr. Harden's many years of service to the Council in various capacities. Chairman Kevin Little was also recognized for the twenty years of service by Chairman Pittard and presented him with a plaque. Both recipients were given an opportunity to address the Council

Adjournment

With there being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned by Chairman Pittard at 11:49 a.m.

Julie Ball, Executive Assistant
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

January 21, 2021

Date Approved