



Date: January 21, 2021

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Location: Telephonic

Minutes

Members Present:

Andy Ainslie
Marcello Banes
Linda Blechinger
Ronnie Boggs
Joyce Chambers
David Dyer
Dodd Ferrelle
Cary Fordyce
Kelly Girtz
Doug Haynie
Bruce Henry
Todd Higdon
John Howard
Janet Jones
Terry Lawler
Howard Ledford
Bob Padilla
Bill Palmer
Jay Paul
Billy Pittard
Bill Ritter
Roy Roberts
Joel Seymour
Jim Shaw
David Thompson
Brad Tucker
Frank Turner

Members Absent:

Louise Adams
David Bentley
Rick Berry
Jody Blackmon
Phil Brock
Tom Crow
John Daniell
Pat Graham
Larry Guest
Gail Harrell
Harold Horton
Steve Horton
Tate O'Rourke
Fred Perriman
Flemie Pitts
Jeffrey Smith
Solomon Smothers
Lee Vaughn

Guests Present:

Kristen Miller Dept of E.D.

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 January meeting of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission. He then asked Julie Ball to take a roll call for those not already identified on the call. Chairman Pittard asked that any guests present announce themselves. Kristen Miller from the Department of Economic Development introduced herself. Chairman Pittard asked everyone to rise and join him in reciting



the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman Pittard said the November 19, 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 David Dyer and seconded by Frank Turner. The motion passed unanimously.

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 offered 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:

October 2020 Financials

Committee members reviewed the financial statements for the four-month period ending October 31, 2020. Revenues exceeded expenditures by \$70,183.17. Financial activity for the four-month period should be at approximately 66% of our remaining FY2020 Budget projections overall.

November 2020 Financials

Committee members reviewed the financial statements for the five-month period ending November 30, 2020. Revenues exceeded expenditures by \$43,708.89. Financial activity for the five-month period should be at approximately 58% of our remaining FY2020 Budget projections overall.

Howard Ledford motioned to accept the two financial reports dated October 31, 2020 and November 30, 2020. The motion was seconded by Joel Seymour. The motion passed unanimously.

Program-of-Work – Chairman Billy Pittard presenting for Mayor Dodd Ferrelle

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

- The City of Winder submitted two (2) requests: The first for assistance in facilitation of a strategic-planning retreat for the Winder Housing Authority. There is no fee for this assistance as it's provided through programmatic funds. The second is for



- preparation of a Community Home Investment Program (CHIP) application for the Winder Housing Authority and, if awarded, grant-administration assistance. The fee for this assistance and the grant application is \$2,000.
- The City of Social Circle submitted two (2) requests: The first for assistance in updating the City's Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP). The fee for this assistance is \$2,000. The second is assistance in preparing a Historic Preservation Fund grant application and, if awarded, for updating the Historic Preservation Commission's design guidelines and historic surveys. The fee for this assistance is \$1,000.
 - The City of Watkinsville requested assistance in facilitation of a strategic-planning retreat. There is no fee for this assistance as it's provided through programmatic funds.
 - Madison County requested assistance in preparation of a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application for water-infrastructure improvements and, if awarded, grant-administration assistance. The fee for this assistance and the grant application is \$2,000.

Based on a recommendation by the Executive Director followed by the Committee's review, the Committee recommends approving these six (6) requests for inclusion in the FY2021 program-of-work effective today, January 21, 2021. A motion was made by Chairman Pittard for Mayor Dodd Ferrelle and seconded by Mayor Linda Blechinger. The motion carried unanimously.

Planning and Government Services – Andy Ainslie

Commissioner Andy Ainslie stated that the PGS Committee met on January 20, 2021 and discussed economic development and other news from around the region.

One item of note is the recent completion of the Northeast Georgia Economic Impact Assessment. The assessment was prepared in partnership with the Georgia Tech Center for Economic Development Research. It is a first step toward development of a regional economic recovery & resilience plan, which is currently underway. The assessment found that the region has fared quite well economically so far. However, consistent access to broadband, the hard-hit retail trade and arts & entertainment industries, and the struggle to fill open manufacturing positions remain key issues.

To help with regional economic recovery and resilience-building, the NEGRC has hired a new Economic Resilience Coordinator, Noah Roenitz . All of these activities are supported by US Economic Development Administration CARES Act funding.

The impact assessment is available on the NEGRC website. You may contact Noah or Eva Kennedy with the PGS Division for more information.



Executive Director's Report – Burke Walker

New Council Members

Executive Director Walker welcomed several new Council members that were recently appointed or sworn into office. Three new County Chairpersons joined the NEGRC Council: David Thompson (Walton County), Chairman Todd Higdon (Madison County), and Chairman Jay Paul (Oglethorpe County). Brad Tucker also joined the Council as a private-sector appointee from Oconee County. Executive Director Walker said that he had spoken with each new Council member and looked forward to their involvement with the NEGRC Council. Executive Director Walker also informed the Council that Billy Pittard was appointed by Speaker Ralston for a two-year term and would fulfill his unexpired term as Council Chairman. Executive Director Walker thanked these members for their new and continued service.

GARC

Executive Director Walker mentioned that the Georgia Association of Regional Commission (GARC) and the twelve Regional Commissions' Executive Directors convened its first meeting of the year. With the help of Matthews & Maxwell, GARC Public Relations Consultant, the Governor's office approved eligibility for AAA staff and case workers to receive the Covid-19 vaccine in the 1A+ phase. Executive Director Walker also informed the Council that due to Covid-19 the annual, group Capitol visits would not be allowed this year and also unofficial visits were discouraged--unless it was essential business. Executive Director Walker announced that Senator Frank Ginn was named Chairman of the Senate's Transportation Committee and that House Chair appointments were made with several legislators from Northeast Georgia (Terry England-Appropriations & Dave Belton-Special Rules). The GARC agreed to cancel the May 2021 GARC Economic Development Conference but would proceed with planning and programming for the November 3-5, 2021 annual conference at St. Simon's. Executive Director Walker sits on the GARC Conference Committee and will assist in the planning of the November conference.

Update on Office Operations During Pandemic

Executive Director Walker said the NEGRC office was operating with staff working from the headquarters building. The three programmatic divisions continued to provide their respective services across the region with some adjustments, such as meeting arrangements. Executive Director Walker said that the office faced daily decisions necessitating adjustments due to Covid-19 and despite the challenges he was pleased to maintain operational services balanced with safety.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Applications

Executive Director Walker shared that the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) had recently released new information regarding 2021 Community Development Block Grant applications. For the first time applications will be submitted online via a new grant-portal system. An



applicants' workshop will be held on February 11-12, 2021, for local government officials and others interested in applying. NEGRC staff will participate for their grant writing/administration capability and available to assist local governments. The deadline, June 4, 2021, has been extended by three months.

Mayor Kelly Girtz (Athens-Clarke County)

Executive Director Walker congratulated ACC Mayor Kelly Girtz on being named one of the “100 Most Influential Georgians for 2021” by Georgia Trend Magazine. Executive Director Walker said unless there were questions or comments this would conclude his report.

Other Business

Chairman Pittard mentioned in the interest of time, again, there would not be a speaker. We will continue having speakers and county reports when we have our next, in-person meeting. There was no other business to report.

Adjournment

With there being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned by Chairman Pittard at 11:24 a.m.

Julie Ball, Executive Assistant
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

February 18, 2021

Date Approved