



Date: February 18, 2021

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Location: Telephonic

Minutes

Members Present:

Andy Ainslie
Linda Blechinger
Ronnie Boggs
Joyce Chambers
Tom Crow
John Daniell
David Dyer
Dodd Ferrelle
Cary Fordyce
Kelly Girtz
Gail Harrell
Doug Haynie
Bruce Henry
Todd Higdon
Howard Ledford
Jay Paul
Fred Perriman
Billy Pittard
Roy Roberts
Joel Seymour
Jim Shaw
Solomon Smothers
David Thompson
Brad Tucker

Members Absent:

Louise Adams
Marcello Banes
David Bentley
Rick Berry
Jody Blackmon
Phil Brock
Pat Graham
Larry Guest
Harold Horton
Steve Horton
John Howard
Janet Jones
Terry Lawler
Tate O'Rourke
Bob Padilla
Bill Palmer
Flemie Pitts
Bill Ritter
Jeffrey Smith
Frank Turner
Lee Vaughn

Guests Present:

Beth Eavenson
Kristen Miller

Employees Present

Amber Bailey
Julie Ball
Michele Kelley
Eva Kennedy
Alicia Page
Noah Roenitz
Burke Walker

Call to Order

Chairman Pittard called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. Chairman Pittard welcomed everyone to the February 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 and Beth Eavenson from the Department of Community Affairs introduced themselves. Chairman Pittard asked everyone to rise and join him in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman Pittard said the January 21, 2021 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 Mayor Linda Blechinger and seconded by Mayor Gail Harrell. 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 could be shared at this time. Mayor Gail Harrell announced that in cooperation with Jasper County, Monticello is going to have Code Enforcement Officer which has been missing in the City since 2014. She also mentioned the Monticello Downtown Development Authority and said they were doing a great job of getting things done and growing the City of Monticello.

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:

December 2020 Financials

Committee members reviewed the financial statements for the six-month period ending December 31, 2020. Revenues exceeded expenditures by \$59,082.51. Financial activity for the six-month period should be at approximately 50% of our remaining FY2021 Budget projections overall.

Howard Ledford motioned to accept the financial report dated December 31, 2020. The motion was seconded by Ronnie Boggs. The motion passed unanimously.

Purchase Order Approvals in Excess of \$5,000

Howard Ledford also informed the Council of two purchase orders that were approved by him as the Audit and Finance Committee Chairperson prior to today’s meeting. They are as follows:

- Be Pro Be Proud™ - The purchase order is for our WIOA division in the amount of \$15,000 for Be Pro Be Proud™ for a subscription to a marketing platform that promotes awareness of careers in manufacturing in an effort to begin to change the perception of those careers.
- Oconee County Senior Center –The purchase order is for our Aging division for the Oconee County Senior Center in the amount of \$23,126.54. The Department of Human Services allows the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) to give rewards to the providers for doing a good job during the year. Rewards for exceptional performance are determined by the AAA based on the results of periodic and annual monitoring



and evaluation. The AAA has worked with our provider network to establish reward initiatives that are both meaningful and tangible by allowing them to select the items they need for their individual centers. The AAA also rewards its providers by paying for conferences, training events/leadership workshops and by the purchasing of equipment--including upgrades to computer hardware and software.

Program-of-Work – Mayor Dodd Ferrelle

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

- The City of Winterville submitted two requests: The first is a request for assistance in preparing a "Complete Streets" and Trail Plan." Part of the plan will involve identification and prioritization of needed infrastructure improvements. There is no fee for the plan's development as it is provided through the NEGRC's GDOT planning contract. This project may result in the need for a Recreational Trails Program grant application. If so, a fee of \$1,000 is required to support the grant application's development. The second request is for facilitating the annual Planning & Zoning Retreat for 2021. There is no fee for this assistance.
- The City of Oxford also requested assistance for a "Complete Streets and Trail Plan." There is no fee for the plan's development. If a potential Outdoor Stewardship Program grant application is needed, it would require a \$1,000 fee.
- Walton County requested assistance in updating their comprehensive plan that includes the municipalities as a joint-comprehensive plan. The project will begin once all cities acknowledge and accept this arrangement. A fee of not-to exceed \$30,000 is required.

Based on a recommendation by the Executive Director followed by the Committee's review, the Committee recommended approving these four (4) requests for inclusion in the FY2021 program-of-work effective today, February 18, 2021. A motion was made by Mayor Dodd Ferrelle and seconded by Chairman Tom Crow. The motion passed unanimously.

Planning and Government Services – Andy Ainslie

Commissioner Andy Ainslie stated that the PGS Committee met on February 17, 2021 and discussed economic development and other news from around the region.

A few items of note included a planning variance, made available by DCA Commissioner Nunn, to extend June 30th, 2021 planning deadlines to October 31st, 2021. Local governments should submit requests for this variance to DCA by June 1st. In addition, DCA anticipates offering funding to support broadband projects through their OneGeorgia program and a new CDBG-CV set-aside. The State is awaiting HUD approval of the proposed CDBG program and hopes to make these programs available in the near



future. DCA has stated that additional points will be given to applications from “Broadband Ready Communities.”

He informed the Council they may contact Eva Kennedy, NEGRC Director of Planning & Government Services, for more information or assistance.

Executive Director’s Report – Burke Walker

ARC/DDAA Strategic Plan Development

Executive Director Walker discussed his involvement with the Board of the Development Districts of Appalachia Association (DDAA) in developing a new strategic plan to cover the next five years. Executive Director Walker informed the Council that a final draft was completed and would be reviewed for approval at the next DDAA board meeting on March 23, 2021. Executive Director Walker said that the two highest priority items were Leadership and Professional Development and Advocacy that would benefit the thirteen ARC states and four ARC counties in northeast Georgia.

Staff Performance Appraisals

Executive Director Walker said that performance appraisals for staff, Division Directors and the Executive Director would be conducted and completed by the end of March. The Personnel Committee (now chaired by Mayor Haynie) will convene in April to conduct the Executive Director’s annual-performance review, as required by NEGRC bylaws and state law (OCGA 50-8-31.4). Any salary adjustments for FY22 would be considered at that time.

Legislative Actions related to NEGRC’s Workforce Division

Executive Director Walker said there were two legislative items, one state and one federal that could potentially affect the Workforce Division.

HB 107

This bill is specific to local Workforce Boards and would allow them to hold teleconference meetings (to amend O.C.G.A. 50-14-1). This legislation is separate from HB98 which addresses teleconference meetings for local governments.

Relaunching Americans Workforce Act (RAWA) is new federal legislation introduced to provide additional funding to core elements of WIOA and 7.5 billion nationally. If passed the current allocation to the state’s workforce areas would be doubled (similar to 2009 in the Great Recession stimulus bill).



AAA Program Resolution

Executive Director Walker discussed the resolution pertaining to the NEGRC's Aging Division. The resolution would authorize the continuation of the aging services (most commonly supporting county Senior Centers) to the twelve counties in the Northeast Georgia region for the next fiscal year. The NEGRC is the designated Area Agency on Aging (also called AAA, since 1974) by the Georgia Department of Human Services and as authorized by state law (OCGA-50-8-34). This resolution would also authorize an update to the Area Plan's Activities for FY22. The Aging Advisory Council met previously to consider and approve the FY22 plan update. Executive Director Walker introduced Michele Kelley (AAA Assistant Director) and asked the council if there were any questions regarding the resolution. There were no questions and Executive Director Walker said the next step would be for the Council to consider the resolution's adoption by a motions and vote. A motion was made by Cary Fordyce and seconded by Mayor Gail Harrell. The motion passed unanimously.

Congratulations

Executive Director Walker informed the Council that Elbert County recently achieved "Broadband Ready" designation by the Georgia Dept. of Community Affairs (DCA). Elbert County joins Oglethorpe County as the first two counties in Northeast Georgia to receive this designation. Executive Director Walker congratulated Lee Vaughn and asked Beth Eavenson (DCA) if she had any comments. Beth Eavenson spoke briefly about the grant application process and said that she or Eva Kennedy (NEGRC PGS Director) would be able to provide further assistance.

Executive Director Walker congratulated the City of Auburn and Mayor Linda Blechinger on their new city center and being honored with a "2021 Visionary City Award", presented by GMA and Georgia Trend magazine.

Executive Director Walker introduced NEGRC Economic Resilience Coordinator Noah Roenitz and asked him to provide the Council with a brief overview of his work. Executive Director Walker informed the Council that Mr. Roenitz was assisting in the NEGRC's efforts with economic resiliency and recovery from Covid-19 in partnership with the Economic Development Administration (EDA). Executive Director Walker said his report would conclude following Mr. Roenitz's presentation.

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 11:30 a.m. He reminded the Council that the next meeting would be March 18, 2021 at 11:00 a.m.

Julie Ball, Executive Assistant
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

03.18.21

Date Approved