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Date: June 17, 2021

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Location: Trumps Catering

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## Minutes

### Members Present:

Andy Ainslie  
Linda Blechinger  
Ronnie Boggs  
Tom Crow  
John Daniell  
David Dyer  
Dodd Ferrelle  
Cary Fordyce  
Kelly Girtz  
Gail Harrell  
Doug Haynie  
Bruce Henry  
Todd Higdon  
Harold Horton  
Janet Jones  
Terry Lawler  
Howard Ledford  
Bill Palmer  
Jay Paul  
Fred Perriman  
Billy Pittard  
Joel Seymour  
Jim Shaw  
Solomon Smothers  
Brad Tucker  
Frank Turner  
Lee Vaughn

### Members Absent:

Louise Adams  
Marcello Banes  
David Bentley  
Rick Berry  
Jody Blackmon  
Phil Brock  
Joyce Chambers  
Pat Graham  
Larry Guest  
Steve Horton  
John Howard  
Bob Padilla  
Flemie Pitts  
Bill Ritter  
Roy Roberts  
Shane Short  
Jeffrey Smith  
David Thompson

### Guests Present:

Wendy Bond- Winterville  
Beth Eavenson- GA DCA  
Mark Elliott- Jody Hice, GA-10  
Jim Hix- Jackson County BOC  
Bob Hughes- Morgan County  
Don Jernigan- Jasper County Commission  
Carol Williams- Workforce Dev

### Staff Present:

Amber Bailey  
Julie Ball  
Carol Cofer  
Peggy Jenkins  
Eva Kennedy  
Sophia Primer  
Burke Walker

### Call to Order

Chairman Pittard called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. He welcomed attendees to the June Council meeting and asked everyone to rise and join him in the Pledge of Allegiance. He then asked any guests or visitors to introduce themselves. Chairman Pittard said the May 20, 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 Chairman Tom Crow and seconded by Mayor Linda Blechinger. The motion carried unanimously.

## **Items of Local Interest**

### **Jackson County – Chairman Tom Crow**

- The lawsuit between SK battery and LG was resolved. SK began the second phase of the plant which added about \$900 million to their construction costs and 600 jobs to the \$1.7 Billion and 2000 jobs from the first phase. SK began producing batteries on a small scale.
- Unemployment is about 2%. Wages up to \$26/ hr. with a \$1K signing bonus have been advertised in the area. There were currently over 40 job openings for Jackson County staff.
- The new Jackson County High School was completed and will open for the 2021-2022 school year. The former high school will be converted to the Empower College & Career Academy, with around 1,400 students from both East and West Jackson's high schools. The Chamber of Commerce will also be housed in this facility.
- The widening of I-85 up to six lanes through Braselton to Commerce is underway, expect delays.
- Property assessments climbed dramatically. The estimated tax listed on most notices had increased by 20-100%. Senator Ginn was contacted regarding legislation to remove this (state) requirement from tax notices.

### **Jasper County – Chairman Bruce Henry**

- In 2020, legislation was passed to approve a Public Facilities Authority.
- A CDBG was secured to purchase and renovate a building to house the Jasper County Health Department. Work was completed in May of 2021.
- A new County Public Works Shop building was completed in May of 2021.
- A 2021 CDBG application was submitted to DCA for a new Food Bank.
- On July 7, 2021 nine historical documents were installed in the Jasper County Court House. These documents included: the Ten Commandments, the Mayflower Compact of 1620, the Declaration of Independence, the Magna Carta, the Star Spangled Banner, the National Motto, the Preamble to the Georgia Constitution, the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution and the Description on the Image of Lady Justice. For more information visit the website [tenccommandmentsga.org](http://tenccommandmentsga.org).



### **Madison County – Chairman Todd Higdon**

- The increased price of lumber caused the cost of homes to skyrocket which led to increased tax assessments.
- Discussions were being held to install broadband internet in the area.
- Madison County High School's fishing team came in second at the National Tournament.
- Building permits were up 2/3 from last year.
- Twelve-million dollars in water infrastructure will be installed.
- Senate Bill 260 (House Bill 1057) allowed the poultry industry to spread facility waste on property without a permit. Chairman Higdon will visit the Capitol Monday to discuss this further and invited other counties to participate.

### **Morgan County - Bob Hughes**

(Bob Hughes provided Morgan County's report for Commissioner Andy Ainslie, at his request).

- Commercial development was going well with the addition of more than a dozen new businesses.
- The Georgia Sheriff's Association will build a new headquarters in Morgan County.
- Morgan County BOC received just over 1 million by the Joint Development Authority for its share in the sale of 612 acres in Stanton Springs Industrial Park to Baymare LLC.
- The JDA also purchased 665 acres on the North side of I-20 for industrial use.
- Four teachers from the area would be involved in the NEGRC's WIOA's extern program and learn firsthand experience in the Industrial field.
- A career fair would soon be held at Morgan County High School.
- New Subdivision regulations were adopted to address issues in residential development.
- Workforce housing was constructed in the City of Madison with sixty units to provide affordable housing for first responders and teachers.
- A retirement community of 230 units will be added with independent living, dependent living and dementia care facilities.
- The Board of Commissioners revamped the Elections Board to improve functionality.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Audit & Finance – Dr. Howard Ledford**

Dr. Ledford said members of the Audit & Finance Committee met prior to today's Council meeting and he reported on the following:

#### **April 2021 Financials**

Committee members reviewed the financial statements for the ten-month period ending April 30, 2021. Revenues exceeded expenditures by \$5,133.10. Financial activity for the



ten-month period should be at approximately 16% of our remaining FY2021 Budget projections overall.

Dr. Howard Ledford made a motion that the Council accepts the two financial reports dated April 30, 2021. The motion was seconded by Mayor Doug Haynie. The motion carried unanimously.

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

The Program-of-Work Committee met prior to today's Council meeting and reviewed seven (7) technical-assistance requests for the month. They also reviewed the FY22 proposed, annual program-of-work for staff activities.

- Madison County, the City of Danielsville, and the City of Colbert, individually requested assistance in updating their Comprehensive Plans (including Public Hearings, input sessions, and additional elements, as required and requested). This update is planned to be a joint-planning process with Madison County and all municipalities that choose to participate. The fee for this assistance is as follows: Madison County for \$7,500 and Cities of Danielsville and Colbert for \$2,000 each. The plan update is due on June 30, 2022.
- The City of Hull requested assistance in preparation of a “Complete Streets & Trails Plan” to include facilitation of input sessions, assessment of current infrastructure, and prioritization of improvement projects. The fee for this assistance is \$1,000 that is also supported by the NEGRC's Bike/Ped planning contract in partnership with the Georgia Department of Transportation.
- Elbert County requested assistance in the development of a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant/loan application to create a 4-H facility for community space. There is no fee for this assistance as it is supported through the NEGRC's Appalachian Regional Commission administrative-planning grant.
- The City of White Plains requested assistance in preparing a zoning code that includes map preparation and facilitation of required public hearings. The fee for this assistance is estimated between \$2,500 and \$8,500.
- The City of Bowman requested assistance in updating their Comprehensive Plan (including Public Hearings, input sessions, and additional elements, as required and requested). This update is planned to be a joint process with Elbert County and the City of Elberton. The fee for this assistance is \$2,000.

Based on a recommendation from the Executive Director and the Committee's review, the Committee recommends approving these requests for inclusion in the FY2021 and FY2022 program-of-work effective today, June 17, 2021. A motion was made by Mayor Dodd Ferrelle and seconded by Joel Seymour. The motion carried unanimously.



Second, the Committee also reviewed the FY22 Proposed Program-of-Work for staff activities for the upcoming year. This annual work program covers the Commission's three programmatic divisions as well as the administrative division. Based on the Committee's review, they recommended adoption of the proposed FY22 Program-of-Work. A motion was made by Mayor Dodd Ferrelle and seconded by Mayor Janet Jones. The motion carried unanimously.

### **Planning and Government Services – Commissioner Andy Ainslie**

Commissioner Ainslie said the Planning & Government Services Committee met this morning and discussed several items of interest.

During the meeting, the Committee reviewed the final draft of the regional Economic Resilience and Recovery Plan, created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan's development represents an 11-month effort with input from economic development stakeholders and leaders throughout the region.

The PGS Committee recommended adoption of the Resilience and Recovery Plan by resolution of the Council. A motion was made by Commissioner Ainslie and seconded by Mayor Gail Harrell. The motion carried unanimously.

### **Personnel – Mayor Doug Haynie**

As this is the last meeting of the fiscal year, the Personnel Committee had one item for Council action. The Personnel Committee met previously in April to discuss several personnel items that included the annual performance review of Executive Director Burke Walker. During this meeting, Director Walker reviewed activities and achievements from the year. A memo from Director Walker was also circulated to the Committee that detailed this information. The Committee, in its evaluation, believed Executive Director Walker exceeded expectations for the year. Based on the committee's review, they recommended approval of Executive Director Walker's performance appraisal for this year. A motion was made by Mayor Doug Haynie and seconded by Chairman Bruce Henry. The motion carried unanimously.

As an additional note, the performance measures for the Commission's activities for the year were reviewed and approved at last month's meeting as reviewed and presented by the Program-of Work Committee.

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

Executive Director Walker greeted everyone and stated the meetings would continue to be held at Trumps Catering through next year. He also recognized attending NEGRC Division Directors: Carol Cofer (WIOA), Eva Kennedy (PGS) and Peggy Jenkins (AAA).



### **Comptroller Vacancy/Sophia Primer**

After a thorough search and conducting interviews Sophia Primer (Accounting Manager) was offered and accepted the Comptroller position.

### **AAA Resolution**

A draft resolution was circulated in the meeting packet that requires the Council's action. The resolution was required as part of the Aging program and the 2022 Elder Support contract with the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS). This contract would provide Medicare counseling and outreach services to eligible Medicare beneficiaries for benefits available under the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) Program and the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP). The contract would also include assistance to clients completing Medicare Savings Program and Low-Income Subsidy (LIS) applications, along with enrollments into health and drug plans. Services under this contract would be provided by AAA staff and through a secondary contract with the Athens Community Council on Aging for the upcoming year. Executive Director Walker stated that if there were no questions he recommended the Council consider approval of the resolution. There were no questions.

A motion was made by Mayor Kelly Girtz to adopt the AAA resolution and seconded by Mayor Dodd Ferrelle. The motion carried unanimously.

### **Private – Sector Appointments**

Notices were sent to each Chairman for each county's private sector appointments or reappointments. Executive Director Walker expressed his appreciation to those that had already responded. He stated that the appointments, as required in the bylaws, run from July 1 to June 30<sup>th</sup> of each fiscal year.

### **John Waggoner Dedication**

Executive Director Walker informed the council that he attended the dedication of a monument for former Mayor John Waggoner of Colbert who passed away in 2020. Mayor John Waggoner had a long service as Mayor and remained on after he left office to support current Mayor Chris Peck. The rock monument is beside depot and made possible by donations from local businesses and citizens that wanted to memorialize his legacy and contributions to Colbert.

### **Vernon Martin**

Executive Director Walker shared the news of the passing of Vernon Martin, the retired former Executive Director of the Coastal Georgia (then) Regional Development Center in Brunswick. When he was hired, Mr. Martin was the youngest Executive Director of a Regional Planning Organization (RPO) in the country. He served coastal for thirty-nine years.



## **Census 2020**

Executive Director Walker mentioned that the NEGRC had received inquiries regarding when the new Census numbers would be released. In the monthly meeting with the other Executive Directors, DCA (Kyle Hood) reported that the numbers should be expected by July to mid-August.

Executive Director Walker asked if the Council had any questions. There were none and he concluded his report.

## **Recommendation on the Revised FY21 and Proposed FY22 Budgets**

Dr. Howard Ledford presented the Regional Commission's FY21 Revised and FY22 Proposed Budgets.

### FY21 Revised Budget

- There was overall increase from the originally adopted FY21 budget of 14%.
    - Division of Aging saw an overall increase of \$2,577,095
    - Division of Planning and Government Services saw an increase of \$177,719
    - Division of Workforce Development saw an overall decrease of \$882,429
- There was an overall increase in revenues for the revised FY21 budget of \$1,783,865 from the originally adopted FY21 budget.

### FY22 Proposed Budget

- This budget is being presented as a balanced budget and therefore the revenues equal the expenditures.
- The overall Revenues and Expenditures for the proposed FY22 budget are projected to come in at \$13,406,212.
- There is an overall decrease of about 10.53% from the revised fiscal year 2021 budget due to a reduction in pandemic related funding.
- The amount necessary to match the different grants that the Regional Commission has is projected to be \$370,686.
- 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 \$20.07 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 \$11,011 in dues for the fiscal year 2022.

Dr. Ledford stated a recommendation is made to adopt the proposed, revised FY21 budget and the proposed FY22 budget as presented to the full Council at the May 20, 2021 meeting to be adopted on June 17, 2021.



A motion was made by Dr. Howard Ledford and seconded by Cary Fordyce. The motion carried unanimously.

### **Nominating Committee Report – Commissioner Andy Ainslie**

There were two action items for the Council’s consideration. The Nominating Committee met prior to their meeting last week. They considered NEGRC Councilmembers to serve as Officers and a County Chairperson to fill the vacancy for a Secretary. The nominated Secretary would serve as a Council Officer with incoming Chairperson Palmer and Vice Chairperson Blechinger. The nominated Secretary would ascend to Council Chairperson after serving two, two-year officer terms.

The Committee nominated Chairman John Daniell to serve as an Officer and Secretary on the Commission’s Council. A motion was made by Commissioner Andy Ainslie and seconded by Chairman Todd Higdon. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Ainslie said the slate of officers nominated for Fiscal Year 22 and the upcoming year are: Bill Palmer, Chairperson; Linda Blechinger as Vice Chairperson; and John Daniell as Secretary. A motion was made by Commissioner Andy Ainslie to nominate these individuals as Officers and for Council approval. The motion was seconded by Mayor Dodd Ferrelle. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Ainslie said this Council owes considerable gratitude to the current Chairman, Billy Pittard. For six years, Billy has served as a Council Officer and guided the Commission’s Council in its service and function. Billy has also provided great leadership to Oglethorpe County. He reached the top of both the Regional Commission and ACCG. That shows true leadership. In recognition of his service, Commissioner Ainslie presented Chairman Pittard with the “Chairman’s Award” for his outstanding leadership to this organization and then congratulated him.

### **Transition of Officers – Chairman Billy Pittard**

Chairman Pittard thanked Commissioner Andy Ainslie for his and the Nominating Committee’s efforts. He then asked the Officers to come forward accept their oaths of office. He said it has been a privilege for him to serve as the Chairman over the past two years. The Regional Commission remains a vital resource to our local governments that supports our collective interests. I’m proud to have served this Commission that enjoys an excellent reputation statewide. He stated that he trusts these Officers will continue to provide direction and governance to the Commission during your years of service. He then asked them to raise their right hand and say the oath and asked the audience to help him congratulate the new officers. Chairman Pittard turned the gavel over to Bill Palmer, the new Council Chairperson of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission. Chairman Pittard thanked Bill Palmer and expressed his appreciation.





Chairman Bill Palmer said that it was great to have relationships with civic-minded individuals and he appreciated this opportunity to serve as the new NEGRC Council Chairman.

### **Other Business**

Chairman Bill Palmer reminded the Council they would not meet in July.

### **Adjournment**

Chairman Palmer thanked everyone for their attendance and with no further business to come before the Council, he adjourned the meeting at 1:29 p.m.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie Ball". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Julie Ball, Executive Assistant  
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

September 16, 2021

Date Approved