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Date: January 20, 2022

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Location: Trumps Catering

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## Minutes

### Members Present:

Andy Ainslie  
Linda Blechinger  
John Daniell  
David Dyer  
Dodd Ferrelle  
Cary Fordyce  
Kelly Girtz  
Pat Graham  
Doug Haynie  
Bruce Henry  
Todd Higdon  
John Howard  
Byron Lombard  
Bill Palmer  
Fred Perriman  
Billy Pittard  
Bill Ritter  
Joel Seymour  
Jim Shaw  
Shane Short  
Brad Tucker  
Paul Walton

### Members Absent:

Louise Adams  
Marcello Banes  
Phil Brock  
Tom Crow  
Daniel Graves  
Gail Harrell  
Harold Horton  
Steve Horton  
Janet Jones  
Terry Lawler  
Ralph Maxwell  
Jill Parham  
Jay Paul  
Flemie Pitts  
Roy Roberts  
Solomon Smothers  
Craig Snow  
Jennifer Stewart  
David Thompson  
Frank Turner  
Lee Vaughn

### Guests Present:

Wendy Bond, City of Winterville  
Mark Elliott, Jody Hice, GA-10  
Bob Hughes, Morgan Co COC  
Kevin Little, Barrow County  
Kellie Littlefield, Auburn Comm Development  
Adam Mestres, Morgan Co BOC  
Zack Middleton, Middleton Eng. & Brewing  
Kristen Miller, GDEcD  
Martha Revelo, Senator Warnock

### Staff Present:

Amber Bailey  
Julie Ball  
Carol Cofer  
Eva Kennedy  
Sophia Primer  
Megan Vogt  
Burke Walker

### Call to Order

Chairperson Bill Palmer called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. He welcomed attendees to the January 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. Chairperson Palmer said the November 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 Commissioner Andy Ainslie. The motion carried unanimously.



## **Items of Local Interest**

Chairperson Bill Palmer announced that, today, five counties will report on “Items of Local Interest.” These include Clarke, Jackson, Jasper, Madison and Morgan Counties. He invited the county representatives to provide their reports.

### **Athens-Clarke County – Mayor Kelly Girtz**

- Mayor Girtz thanked the city’s public works employees, police department, and the solid waste department for their service during the National Championship celebration in Athens.
- Redevelopment has been a big focus in Athens. Several tax allocation districts and a new code section for inclusionary zoning have been established. Mayor Girtz would like to share this material and information with the surrounding areas.
- The unsheltered homeless population has more than doubled in the Athens area. Mayor Girtz asked for assistance in finding a region-wide solution to deal with and assist individuals with substance abuse and mental health issues.

### **Jackson County – Jim Shaw**

- According to the 2020 U.S. Census, Jackson County is the third fastest growing county in Georgia, which is one of the faster growing states in the country.
- The SK Battery factory is now open and fully operational, with about 1,200 employees.
- Empower College and Career Center opened on the former Jackson County High School campus for the 2021/2022 school year. Around 1,500 students were enrolled for the first year and an effort will be made to develop a workforce to address industry needs and get more engagement and support for education from local industries.
- The new Jackson County High School opened in Braselton and a new middle school will be constructed on the same campus. Estimated building costs for the middle school have increased by about 10 million.
- The Cities of Braselton (Kurt Ward) and Hoschton (Lauren O’Leary) have new Mayors and a 5<sup>th</sup> County Commission District will be established due to population growth in the area.
- The Braselton Civic Center is nearing completion and will soon be open and hosting events.

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

- The City of Monticello elected Gail Harrell as its new Mayor.
- A new Jack’s restaurant will open in Monticello in the Spring.
- Profile Products invested \$26 million in a new hydro-mulch plant and will bring in 80 new jobs.
- Wayside Solutions, a new roll-off dumpster company, will open in the Minnetta Crossing Industrial Park.
- Construction began on a truck route connecting Hwy 16 East to Hwy 83 North and should be completed in spring of 2023.



- GDOT resurfaced Hwy 83 South from the Monticello City limits to the Monroe County line.
- Jasper County called for a 6-month moratorium on new subdivisions, while Planning & Zoning ordinances are updated.
- Jasper County was awarded a \$750,000 Community Development Block Grant for a new food bank facility. The food bank serves about 17% of Jasper County citizens.
- There is an opening for a new Planning & Zoning Director.
- Netflix filmed a children's horror movie named "Boo" in Monticello this past November. The Chamber of Commerce will hold a viewing once it is released.
- After canceling last year, a very successful Deer Festival was held this year.
- On July 7, 2021 the 9 Historical Documents were installed in the Jasper County Courthouse. On July 8, 2021, the Shady Dale City Council passed a motion to install them in City Hall and installation was completed on July 26, 2021. On November 9, 2021, the City of Monticello had the 9 Historical Documents installed in the City Council Chambers.
- On August 28, 2021, the Board of Commissioners dedicated Georgia Pacific Road as "Carl Pennamon Memorial Highway" in memory of the long serving and much beloved Commissioner.

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

- Chairman Higdon stressed the importance of communication and cooperation between the Commissioners and Mayors.
- A meeting will be held in Washington, GA on February 18, 2022 regarding industrial waste and sludge dumping.

#### **Morgan County – Commissioner Andy Ainslie**

- The State's Sheriffs Association is moving their headquarters from Henry County to Morgan County.
- An expansion of Highway 441 is under construction.
- Schools have been in continuous operation with minimal issues and one extra day of virtual learning.
- City Hall's renovation is underway and will continue into 2022.
- According to the 2020 Census Morgan County's population grew from 18,000 to just over 20,000.
- Four counties (Jasper, Morgan, Walton and Newton) have worked together on the Stanton Springs project.
- Almost 2,000 additional acres have been purchased for industrial use and companies such as Facebook and Baymire will be located there.
- Shane Short spoke to the Council about the Rivian project. At least \$5 billion will be invested and a minimum of 7,500 new jobs will be created. Rivian was contracted to produce all the new fully-electric Amazon delivery vans as well as an electric pick-up



truck and an SUV. The total investment in Stanton Springs totals \$91 billion in the four-county industrial park.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Audit & Finance – Mayor Fred Perriman**

Mayor Perriman said members of the Audit & Finance Committee met prior to today's Council meeting and they had 2 actions requiring Council approval.

#### October 2021 Financials

Sophia Primer, the NEGRC's Comptroller, reviewed the financial statements for the four-month period ending October 31, 2021 with the Committee. Revenues exceeded expenditures by \$46,072.67.

#### November 2021 Financials

Ms. Primer also reviewed the financial statements for the five-month period ending November 30, 2021 with the Committee. Revenues exceeded expenditures by \$96,172.67.

Mayor Perriman made motions to accept the two financial reports dated October 31, 2021 and November 30, 2021.. The motions passed unanimously.

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

Prior to today's Council meeting, the Program-of-Work Committee reviewed five (5) technical-assistance requests for the month. These include the following:

- The City of Winterville requested assistance in facilitating a strategic planning and code compliance retreat. There is no fee for this assistance.
- The City of Walnut Grove, requested assistance in preparation of a conceptual master plan for the downtown area. The fee for this assistance is \$1,000.
- The City of Winder requested assistance in development of a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application seeking financial support for stormwater-infrastructure improvements. If awarded, the request will include grant administration. The fee for this assistance is \$2,000.
- The City of Watkinsville requested assistance in facilitating a strategic planning retreat to include review of 2021 activities and proposed 2022 projects, programs and policies. There is no fee for this assistance.
- The City of Arnoldsville requested assistance with the Firefly Trail related to planning, design, and property research. There is no fee for this assistance as it is supported by a planning contract with the Georgia Department of Transportation and local dues. If this project results in an application for grant funding, a local fee would be required.



Based on recommendations by the Executive Director followed by the Committee's review, Mayor Ferrelle recommended approving the five (5) technical assistance requests for inclusion in the NEGRC's FY2022 Program-of-Work in the form of motions. The motions passed 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.

The NEGRC is beginning the update of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the region. Each County Chair has been asked to appoint two representatives to serve on the CEDS Committee.

Another item of note is that the Census Bureau's annual Boundary and Annexation Survey is currently open. This is the opportunity for local jurisdictions to update their boundaries in the Census Bureau's registry. March 1st is the deadline to respond and the PGS Division is available to assist, if needed.

No items required action and Commissioner Ainslie concluded his report.

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

Executive Director Walker greeted the Council and informed the Council that no action would be required on items he presents.

#### **CVIOG Progress**

Executive Director Walker stated that the Job Classification and Salary Compensation Study was being conducted by UGA's Carl Vinson Institute of Government. Alex Damon interviewed selected staff members to review the information they provided on questionnaires. The draft report should be completed by the end of February 2022 and will be reviewed by the Council's Personnel Committee and its Chairperson, Mayor Doug Haynie.

#### **GARC Info from Meeting**

Executive Director Walker discussed the monthly meeting of the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions (GARC). The group heard a presentation from Kristen Mote of GDOT about the 2050 Rural & Human Services Transportation (RHST) plan. The plan's development is underway and GDOT would like for local governments to participate with the plan in two ways: 1. an online survey 2. participation in virtual workshops (12) held across the state to gather input. Northeast Georgia's workshop will be held on February



24, 2022 from 10am-11:30am. The plan covers three large-transit areas; 1. GDOT with rural and small urban public transportation, 2. DHS in transportation for senior, low-income families and individuals with disabilities, and 3. Department of Community Health with transportation for medically necessary services. Slides from the presentation with a link to the survey and workshop dates will be sent to local government staff involved in transit.

### **New Members**

Executive Director Walker informed the Council that several new mayors were recently sworn-in to office. Three of them will fill vacancies on the Council as municipal representatives. Mayor Daniel Graves of Elberton will serve as Elbert County's municipal representative. Mayor Craig Snow of Lexington will serve as Oglethorpe County's municipal representative. Former Mayor Pro Tem and Council member Gail Harrell was elected as Mayor of Monticello and will serve as Jasper County's municipal representative.

### **Newly-elected officials Orientation**

Executive Director Walker stated that the NEGRC planned to hold another orientation for new Council members, newly-elected officials and current local government staff. This program will be held at the NEGRC offices from 10am-noon and will include presentations from Executive Director Walker and the three Division heads. An announcement with more information will be sent out. Anyone interested in attending the orientation can email Julie Ball. There is no cost and a box lunch will be provided.

### **New Hires**

Executive Director Walker informed the Council that Kendall Burnette (AAA-Case Manager/ADRC Counselor) and Carol Flaute (PGS-Community Planner) had joined the NEGRC's staff in January. Executive Director Walker thanked Division Directors Peggy Jenkins (AAA) and Eva Kennedy (PGS) as well as Megan Vogt for their efforts to get these positions filled.

Executive Director Walker concluded his report and introduced WIOA Division Director, Carol Cofer, to share information about the Workforce Division's performance over the last year



### **End-of-Year Workforce Summary (WIOA) – Carol Cofer**

The Workforce Division Board met in January and Workforce Division Director, Carol Cofer, presented the WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) “Year in Review” information. This included performance outcomes and the number of persons served through the WIOA program and is detailed in the brochure distributed

### **Other Business**

Chairperson Palmer reminded everyone of the next meeting on February 17, 2022 at Trumps.

### **Adjournment**

Chairperson Palmer thanked everyone for their attendance and with no further business to come before the Council, he adjourned the meeting at 1:21 p.m.

Julie Ball, Executive Assistant  
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

February 17, 2022

Date Approved