

Date: March 17, 2022

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Location: Trumps Catering

Minutes

Members Present:

Andy Ainslie
Linda Blechinger
Ronnie Boggs
John Daniell
Dodd Ferrelle
Cary Fordyce
Kelly Girtz
Daniel Graves
Gail Harrell
Bruce Henry
Todd Higdon
Harold Horton
John Howard
Terry Lawler
Byron Lombard
Bill Palmer
Fred Perriman
Billy Pittard
Roy Roberts
Joel Seymour
Jim Shaw
Shane Short
Solomon Smothers
Craig Snow
Brad Tucker
Lee Vaughn
Paul Walton

Members Absent:

Louise Adams
Marcello Banes
Phil Brock
Tom Crow
David Dyer
Pat Graham
Doug Haynie
Steve Horton
Janet Jones
Ralph Maxwell
Jill Parham
Jay Paul
Flemie Pitts
Bill Ritter
Jennifer Stewart
David Thompson
Frank Turner

Guests Present:

Wendy Bond, City of Winterville
Marty Clarke, Jackson County
Beth Eavenson, DCA
Randy Griffin, CSRA
Don Jernigan, Jasper County
Sheila Jones, Jasper County
Kevin Little, Barrow County
Tracy Massey, Arnoldsville
Martha Revelo, Senator Warnock
Alana Sanders, Newton County
Carol Williams, Workforce Development Board

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 March 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 February 17, 2022 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 Cary Fordyce and seconded by Mayor John Howard. The motion carried unanimously.

Items of Local Interest

Chairperson Bill Palmer announced that, today, four counties would report on "items of local interest." These include Barrow, Clarke, Elbert and Greene Counties. He invited the county representatives to provide their reports.

Barrow County – Kevin Little for Chairman Pat Graham

- According to the 2020 Census, Barrow is one of the fastest growing counties in the state. The population grew from 69,300 in 2010 to 83,505 in 2020.
- A \$120 million SPLOST was passed in November of 2021. \$40 million of the funds will be used for jail and courthouse expansion, \$15 million for road work and \$20 million will go towards public safety and technology projects.
- Highway 316 will have some closures due to construction on the overpasses and bridges.
- Several roundabouts will be added in Barrow County at State Route 53 and Jackson Trail, State route 211 and Old Hog Mountain, State Route 11 and 53 in Winder State Route 81 and Tom Miller Rd.
- Park 53 industrial complex is almost full. Springer Mountain is under construction. Pantone is building a \$30 million project. Park 53 North will soon be full and Governor Kemp will be making an announcement in the following months on its progress.

Clarke County – Mayor Kelly Girtz

- Boehringer Ingelheim has added 75 jobs in the last year and will add another 50 in the next year. Many of their positions require only an associates' degree and pay six figures.
- A new Publix is under construction at Hwy 129 and Lavender Rd.
- REI will open in Beechwood shopping center.
- Georgia Square Mall will be redeveloped into a mixed use property and the project will cost an estimated \$420 million.
- A ground breaking ceremony for the Classic Centre Arena will be held in April.
- A new ordinance has passed the planning commission and will be considered by the county commission.. This inclusionary, zoning-redevelopment incentive policy gives a density bonus to developers if they keep part of the housing affordably priced.

Elbert County- Chairman Lee Vaughn

- Elbert County High School's Lady Devils won the state championship in basketball.
- Former CFO, Phil Pitts, has assumed the role vacated by long-time County Manager Bob Thomas, who retired.
- A new 4H building is in the design phase.
- An Elections Board is being created.

Greene County – Byron Lombard

- The Southern segment of the Firefly Trail will begin construction in early summer 2022. It will consist of about 8 miles of trail and is funded through a \$2.1 million DNR grant. Construction should take about a year.
- The former Mayor of Greensboro was defeated in the last election after serving on the City Council and as Mayor for several decades. Corey Williams is the new Mayor of Greensboro.
- A single county TSPLOST will be on the ballot in the next election.
- The Fire department has been paying the firefighters for almost a year now and really appreciates their hard work and dedication to serving the community.
- The Lake Oconee Academy girls' basketball team won the Class A public school division state championship.

Committee Reports

Audit & Finance – Mayor Fred Perriman

Mayor Perriman said members of the Audit & Finance Committee met prior to today's Council meeting and reviewed the following:

January 2022 Financials

- Sophia Primer, the NEGRC's Comptroller, reviewed the financial statements for the seventh-month period ending January 31, 2022 with the Committee. Revenues exceeded expenditures by \$108,619.36. Mayor Perriman made motions to accept the financial report dated December 31, 2021. The motions passed unanimously.
- Ms. Primer also presented the 2016 NEGRC Retirement Saving Plan Document attached in the meeting documentation provided via email. The 2016 Saving Plan document is needed to bring the account current with IRS standards. Mayor Perriman made motions to accept the Retirement Savings Plan Document, as presented. The motions passed unanimously.



Program of Work Committee – Joel Seymour for Mayor Dodd Ferrelle

Joel Seymour stated that prior to today's Council meeting, the Program-of-Work Committee reviewed one technical-assistance request for the month. This request includes the following:

- The Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority (UOBWA) requested NEGRC assistance in developing two Congressionally Direct Spending (CDDS) applications to expand the water-treatment capacity at Bear Creek Reservoir. The fee for this assistance is provided through the Commission's administrative contract with the UOBWA.

Based on recommendations by the Executive Director followed by the Committee's review, Mr. Seymour recommended approving the technical assistance request 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 economic and community development activities occurring around the region.

The kick-off Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee Meeting was held in Athens on March 10th. There was great participation from representatives from around the region and from state partners. The second CEDS Committee Meeting will be held on March 30th at 10:00 a.m. at the Regional Commission.

Executive Director's Report – Burke Walker

Executive Director Burke Walker greeted the Council and informed the Council that one item in his report would require action.

Covington

Executive Director Walker congratulated the City of Covington on receiving a "Visionary City Award" through Georgia Trend magazine. The city's leadership, through Mayor Steve Horton, has "Inspired civility and created a community of positive change."

HB 1180

Executive Director Walker updated the Council on HB 1180, which if passed, would affect the Commission's membership. This year's bill contains some additional provisions such as:

- HB1180 was initially introduced this session by Rep. Corbett based on a recommendation from Rural Development Council. The latest version was put forth by Rep. Sam Watson (Moultrie).
- This bill would eliminate certain appointments to the Council, namely Associate and Gubernatorial members.



- This bill would give greater responsibilities to an Executive Committee, which currently is membered by the NEGRC Council Officer and the Chairpersons of the Audit & Finance and Program of Work Committees.
- An Annual report would be required that details metrics on services provided.

This session, unlike those in the recent past, is not under any time constraints or any meeting limitations as was the case under COVID restrictions in 2020. This bill is likely to undergo full consideration by the Senate.

DDAA

Executive Director Walker informed the Council that he and PGS Director, Eva Kennedy, had recently attended the Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA) and National Organization of Development Organizations (NADO) combined conferences in Washington, DC. This was the first time in two years the conferences were held in-person. Executive Director Walker serves on the DDAA Board and had a very productive meeting with the other twelve ARC states. The DDAA awarded John Carey, Rep. Ohio (former Chancellor), the Whisman award in recognition of his congressional leadership and support for the ARC.

Executive Director Walker stated that the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) is now called the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill (BIL). It is a “generational” opportunity for funding and the NEGRC may be contacted for assistance or more information.

Budget/Health

Executive Director Walker informed the Council that the NEGRC is in the open enrollment period for medical insurance and would be changing providers to seek insurance coverage through Georgia Municipal Employee Benefits (GMEBS). In order to proceed with GMEBS, a resolution is required that, in effect, agrees to the terms of their plan and acknowledges the NEGRC’s participation. The resolution was circulated prior to the Council meeting. Executive Director Walker stated that if there were no questions and if Chairman Palmer was in agreement it would be appropriate for the Council to consider adopting the GMEBS resolution.

Based on the recommendation of Executive Director Walker, Chairman Palmer stated that he would entertain a motions to adopt the GMEBS resolution. Mayor Fred Perriman motioned to adopt the GMEBS resolution and Mayor Kelly Girtz seconded. Mayor Linda Blechinger voiced her support for GMEBS and mentioned she has sat on the GMEBS board for over 10 years.

The motion passed unanimously.

Congressionally Directed Spending

Executive Director Walker stated that as previously mentioned by the Program-of-Work Committee, the Council was asked to assist with a Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS)



application to both Senators Warnock and Ossoff's offices. Executive Director Walker has been assisting in the preparation of the CDS application that seeks funding for the expansion of the water-treatment capacity at Bear Creek Reservoir. Both applications were successfully submitted and Executive Director Walker stated that he hoped many of the local governments would take advantage of the request for applications. He mentioned that Martha Revelo, of Senator Warnock's office, was very helpful throughout the process. She was the first point of contact and has been a guide through the process. Executive Director Walker asked if Chairman Palmer would allow Ms. Revelo to provide a few remarks and update on federal programs. Executive Director Walker introduced Martha Revelo and concluded his report.

Martha Revelo of Senator Warnock's office spoke briefly on the application process for Congressional Direct Spending (CDS).

CSRA Direct Loan Program and RLF Expansion

Randy Griffin from Central Savannah River Business Lending spoke about new opportunities for area business through the partnership with the NEGRC and Economic Development Administration (EDA).

Other Business

Chairperson Palmer discussed how the Council's bylaws allow for the appointment of "Associate Members" and recommended the appointment of Ronnie Boggs to the NEGRC Council as an "Associate Member. He made this in the form of a motion that Billy Pittard seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairperson Palmer also recommended Councilmembers Chairman John Daniell (Committee Chairman), Mayor Dodd Ferrelle, and Terry Lawler to serve on the Awards' Committee and invited any Council members to reach out to Chairman Daniell or other Committee members to recommend nominees for the "Robert L. and Betty Williford Distinguished Northeast Georgian" and the "Northeast Georgia Local Government Administrator of the Year" awards. Chairperson Palmer made his recommendation in the form of a motion and Linda Blechinger seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairperson Palmer then reminded everyone of the next meeting on April 21, 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 1:31 p.m.

Julie Ball

Julie Ball, Executive Assistant
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

April 21, 2022

Date Approved

DRAFT