



Date: April 21, 2022

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Location: Trumps Catering

Minutes

Members Present:

Andy Ainslie
Marcello Banas
Ronnie Boggs
Tom Crow
John Daniell
Dodd Ferrelle
Cary Fordyce
Kelly Girtz
Pat Graham
Daniel Graves
Doug Haynie
Bruce Henry
Todd Higdon
Terry Lawler
Byron Lombard
Ralph Maxwell
Bill Palmer
Fred Perriman
Bill Ritter
Joel Seymour
Brad Tucker
Lee Vaughn

Members Absent:

Louise Adams
Linda Blechinger
Phil Brock
David Dyer
Gail Harrell
Harold Horton
Steve Horton
John Howard
Janet Jones
Jill Parham
Jay Paul
Billy Pittard
Flemie Pitts
Roy Roberts
Jim Shaw
Shane Short
Solomon Smothers
Craig Snow
Jennifer Stewart
David Thompson
Frank Turner
Paul Walton

Guests Present:

Marty Clark, Jackson County
Mark Elliott, Jody Hice, GA-10
Don Jernigan, Jasper County
Kristen Miller, GDEcD
Chris Myers, GA DCA
Cynthia Patterson, GA DCA
Andy Pippin, GMC
Carol Williams, WDB

Staff Present:

Amber Bailey
Julie Ball
Carol Cofer
Eva Kennedy
Peggy Jenkins
Sophia Primer
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 March 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 Brad Tucker and seconded by Chairman Marcello Banas. The motions carried unanimously.



Items of Local Interest

Chairperson Bill Palmer announced that, today, four counties would report on “items of local interest.” These include Jackson, Jasper, Madison and Morgan Counties. He invited the county representatives to provide their reports.

Jackson County – Chairman Tom Crow

- Negotiations have begun with 9 cities on a new SPLOST, as the current SPLOST expires in June 2023.
- Service Delivery Strategy is being discussed.
- Local Option Sales Tax Distribution is being addressed.
- An additional Commission District will be added, for a total of 6 Commissioners.
- A total update of the emergency radio system is underway. The project will take approximately 2 years and cost \$18 million dollars.
- Changes are being made to the development code.
- Zoning requirements are being updated.
- Implementing an Impact Fee is being discussed.

Jasper County – Chairman Bruce Henry

- Judy Johnson was hired as the new Planning & Zoning Director.
- Meetings have been held with Department Heads for several weeks to discuss budgets and the first work session will be held May 25.
- A new Jack’s restaurant was successfully opened in Monticello.
- The old vacant Hardees building on Hwy 83 has been torn down to clear space for a 3,900 square foot store, 2,100 square feet of additional retail space and 8 fueling stations.
- Jasper County Chamber of Commerce, local businesses and Jasper County Schools are scheduling a job fair before school is out.
- Interviews are being held for an ANR Agent (County Extension Agent).
- Election Qualifying was in March and there are some contested races for School Board. Two Commissioners qualified (including Mr. Henry) with no opposition.
- On June 2, 2022 (not confirmed) there will be a celebration of service for State Representative Susan Holmes. She has been a public servant for over 20 years and chose not to run for reelection.

Madison County – Chairman Todd Higdon

- The Comprehensive Plan is being updated.
- Several businesses have expansions planned such as SMI Composites and SK battery,
- Business growth has greatly improved after being stagnant for a long period of time.
- Residential growth has increased due to the new industries in Madison and the surrounding counties.
- 3 of the 5 elementary schools are at capacity.



- The 2020 Census listed Madison County at over 30,000 residents, which they would like to dispute but cannot.

Morgan County – Commissioner Andy Ainslie

- Facebook has given out several grants in the area: \$30,000 to the Board of Education for STEM programs, \$25,000 to Camp Twin Lakes for STEM programs, and \$25,000 to Northeast Georgia Boys and Girls Club.
- Sales tax is 28% higher for the last 8 months.
- Employment is still low in the community. County employee retention has been good.
- A Senior Planner position is open.
- Preliminary millage rate will be around 9% digest growth due to new construction.
- \$1.4 million in ARPA funds will be invested in internet services.
- 4 Committees have been established for Rivian advisement.

Committee Reports

Audit & Finance – Mayor Fred Perriman

Mayor Perriman said members of the Audit & Finance Committee met earlier today and reviewed two items that require Council action.

- Review of the February 2022 financial statements that reported revenues in excess of expenditures by \$40,049.56. Mayor Perriman made motions to accept the February 2022 financial report. The motions passed unanimously.
- The Committee reviewed financial information for implementing a cost-of-living adjustment and minimum-salary adjustments for qualifying staff. These adjustments will go into effect May 1, 2022 for inclusion in the FY22 budget. Mayor Perriman made motions to accept budget adjustments for FY22. The motions passed unanimously.

Program of Work Committee – Mayor Dodd Ferrelle

Mayor Ferrelle stated that prior to today's Council meeting, the Program-of-Work Committee reviewed three technical-assistance request for the month. These requests include the following:

- The City of Oxford requested assistance in preparing an update to the City's comprehensive plan that includes Public Hearings, input sessions and additional plan elements. The fee for this assistance is \$3,000.
- The City of Covington requested assistance in developing a 2023 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application for homebuyer assistance. If awarded, this request will include grant administration. The fee for the application's preparation is \$2,000.
- Oglethorpe County requested assistance in creating a digital atlas of historic Oglethorpe County that includes GIS data collection and map creation. The project will also involve Historic Oglethorpe as a project partner. The fee for this assistance is



\$390 for the Beta portion and \$2,438 for Phase I. The fee for Phase I may be reduced pending the county's Qualified Local Government status.

Based on recommendations by the Executive Director followed by the Committee's review, Mayor Ferrelle recommended approving the 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 economic and community development activities occurring around the region.

The second Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee (CEDS) Meeting was held on March 30th. Participants discussed vision and goals for the region. A CEDS online questionnaire is currently open and all local leaders are encouraged to respond by May 1, 2022. You can access the link at NEGRC.org or by reaching out to Eva Kennedy.

Executive Director's Report – Burke Walker

Executive Director Burke Walker greeted the Council and thanked everyone for their attendance.

Staff Update

Executive Director Walker informed the Council that there were currently five vacancies on staff. Two are in the Aging Division, two are in PGS and one is in WIOA. One of those vacancies is that of PGS Director Eva Kennedy, who will be leaving in May.

GARC House Bills

Executive Director Walker updated the Council on several House Bills that affect the Commission:

- HB1180 did not get a hearing so the NEGRC's Council membership and reporting requirements will not change.
- HB1331 transferred some Workforce administrative responsibilities from the Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) to the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSP), since they are the primary administrator for Workforce statewide. Also, the bill would have allowed the WIOA Board to meet telephonically, but it did not pass. Telephonic meetings are no longer permissible after 4/19/22.
- HB1385 passed and allows Regional Commissions to assist in reapportionment maps if requested through the Planning staff (GIS).
- Several other bills related to Aging services were passed that provide for dementia specialists through Area Agency on Aging (AAA).



CVIOG

Executive Director Walker informed the Council that a draft report of the salary study was received. Ultimately, this study will assign new job titles, establish pay bands, and rewrite job descriptions. The other objective is to adjust current salaries to meet pay-band minimums and consider “compression” adjustments. The study will be presented by CVIOG and reviewed by the Personnel Committee in May. Overall, the investment in the study should result in increased competitiveness in the job marketplace and help address staff-retention issues.

Building Conditions

Executive Director Walker stated that the NEGRC building has required regular repairs over the last two years. One of the most pressing issues is the sewer line under the main building that has failed in three areas. We’re investigating options and consulting with engineers/architects.

DCA NOFO Downtown Revitalization-presented by Rusty Haygood

Executive Director Walker informed the Council that \$17 million in “Downtown Revitalization Grants” was authorized by the legislature this session. This money is intended for use in large projects in rural downtowns that are “shovel ready”. It requires a 1 million dollar minimum with a 5 million dollar project maximum. The deadline to submit an application is June 3 and the money must be spent by fiscal year 2024.

GARC Economic Development Conference

Executive Director Walker informed the Council that he, Chairman Palmer, Commissioner Ainslie, and Mark Beatty (PGS) will be attending the GARC conference at Lanier Islands from May 1-3. There will be several informative sessions related to workforce, housing, and a rollout of a GARC StoryMap project.

As there were no questions or comments, Executive Director Walker concluded his report.

Georgia Rental Assistance Program

Chris Myers, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs’ Outreach Coordinator for Rental Housing Assistance Program, spoke about the assistance to individuals, families, and landlords financially affected by Covid-19 pandemic.

Other Business

Chairperson Palmer reminded everyone of the next meeting on May 19, 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 1:28 p.m.

Julie Ball, Executive Assistant
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

May 19, 2022

Date Approved