



Date: November 18, 2021

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Location: Trumps Catering

Minutes

Members Present:

Andy Ainslie
Linda Blechinger
John Daniell
David Dyer
Dodd Ferrelle
Cary Fordyce
Doug Haynie
Todd Higdon
John Howard
Janet Jones
Terry Lawler
Byron Lombard
Ralph Maxwell
Bill Palmer
Jill Parham (Fortson)
Fred Perriman
Billy Pittard
Roy Roberts
Joel Seymour
Shane Short
Solomon Smothers
Brad Tucker
Paul Walton

Members Absent:

Louise Adams
Marcello Banes
Phil Brock
Tom Crow
Kelly Girtz
Pat Graham
Bruce Henry
Harold Horton
Steve Horton
Jay Paul
Flemie Pitts
Bill Ritter
Jim Shaw
Jennifer Stewart
David Thompson
Frank Turner
Lee Vaughn

Guests Present:

Ronnie Boggs, WDB
Paul Chambers, AT&T
Beth Eavenson, DCA
Kevin Little, Barrow County
Martha Revelo, Senator Warnock
Paul Tanner, GDOT
Carol Williams, WDB

Staff Present:

Amber Bailey
Julie Ball
Eva Kennedy
Sophia Primer
Burke Walker

Call to Order

Chairman Bill Palmer called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. He welcomed attendees to the November Council meeting and asked everyone to rise and join him in the Pledge of Allegiance. He then welcomed two, newly-appointment members to the Council: Mayor Paul Walton as Madison County's municipal representative; and Ralph Maxwell as Oglethorpe County's private-sector appointee. He then asked any guests or visitors to introduce themselves. Chairman Palmer said the October 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 Billy Pittard. The motion carried unanimously.



Items of Local Interest

Barrow County – Kevin Little for County Chairman Pat Graham

- A \$120 Million SPLOST project initiative was recently approved. \$38.6 million will be used to build additions to the jail and court house. \$51 Million will fund improvements to parks and recreation, public safety and roadways in the area.
- Phase 1 and 2 of the West Winder bypass have been completed. Phase 3 is underway.
- Several round-a-bouts are under construction in the county as well as several overpasses on 316.
- The final stages of the Tanner’s Bridge Sewage Treatment Facility are near completion.
- Spring Mountain will open a facility which will provide over 200 jobs.
- Division 5 will also be opening a facility in Barrow County.

Elbert County – Chairman Bill Palmer for County Chairman Lee Vaughn

- The City of Elberton and Elbert County have combined their CARES ACT funds to increase broadband in the county to 92% coverage.
- A new 4H building is in the planning phase. The Board of Education is moving to a former school site and a new 4H building will be constructed.
- Planning is underway for an expansion to Elbert County Hospital.
- Phil Pitts was hired as the new Elbert County Administrator.

Greene County – Terry Lawler for County Manager Byron Lombard

- The 2020 Census showed Greene County’s population grew by over 18% in the last decade, only eclipsed by neighboring Oconee County.
- The median value of an owner occupied house was \$210,300, which was \$34,000 higher than the median value of owner-occupied homes statewide.
- Greene County’s per capita income was \$37,818, which was 22% above the statewide average.
- Many businesses in Greene County continue to struggle with hiring new employees. The unemployment rate in September was 2.4%, which was the lowest rate ever recorded.
- America’s Remanufacturing Company (ARC), from Augusta, opened a facility in Union Point. They are a reverse logistics and remanufacturing company under contract with Amazon. They have hired 60 employees and plan to hire 100 more by the end of 2021.
- Residential building permits have more than doubled for the first half of the year when compared to 2020 with almost \$169 million in new residential permits. Overall building permit values more than doubled for the same six month period as well.
- For the first three quarters of 2021, the median single-family home sales price increased 2% to \$580,000.
- The median sales price for lake front homes with a private dock increased 66% to \$1.3 million. The highest home sale value in the third quarter of 2021 was an \$8.7 million



home in Reynolds Plantation on Lake Oconee. A \$6.4 million home in Greene County was listed and sold within 24 hours.

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.

September 2021 Financials

Sophia Primer, the NEGRC's Comptroller, reviewed the financial statements for the three-month period ending September 30, 2021 with the committee. Revenues exceeded expenditures by \$40,980.92. Mayor Perriman recommended the Council accept the September 2021 financial report in the form of motions. The motions passed unanimously.

June 2021 Financial Audit

Clay Pilgrim our Rushton and Company Auditor reviewed the final FY21 Financial Audit for the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission with the committee. Mr. Pilgrim then gave the report of the Annual Audit for Fiscal Year 2021 to the Council. Mayor Perriman recommended the Council accept the final FY21 Financial Audit Report of the NEGRC in the form of motions. The motions passed unanimously.

Program of Work Committee – Mayor Dodd Ferrelle

Prior to today's Council meeting, the Program-of-Work Committee reviewed four (4) technical-assistance requests for the month. These included the following (all of which are from Morgan County):

- Morgan County, the Town of Bostwick, the Town of Buckhead, and the City of Rutledge requested assistance in updating their comprehensive plans. This assistance will include public hearings, input sessions, land use, and additional elements as required or requested. The plan update is structured as a joint process between the county and these named municipalities. The fee for this assistance is \$7,500 for Morgan County and \$1,500 for each of the municipalities. This assistance is also supported by the NEGRC's annual planning contract with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and local dues.

Based on recommendations by the Executive Director followed by the Committee's review, Mayor Ferrelle recommended approving the four (4) 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 Planning & Government Services Committee also serves as the regional entity that monitors the Northeast Georgia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Every year, EDA requires an annual update be prepared and adopted by the Council.

The PGS Committee reviewed the annual CEDS update and makes motions for Council Adoption of the CEDS Annual Update, covering a period from October 2020 to September 2021. The motions passed unanimously.

Executive Director’s Report – Burke Walker

Executive Director Burke Walker greeted the Council and informed them of the passing of Mayor Rick Berry (Lexington) who served on the NEGRRC Council and the Program-of-Work Committee.

New Members

Executive Director Walker welcomed Mr. Ronnie Maxwell (Oglethorpe County) and Mayor of Hull, Paul Walton, (Madison County) to the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Council. He also recognized Paul Chambers and congratulated Mr. Chambers on his retirement and the recent birth of his grandchild.

Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)

Executive Director Walker discussed the bipartisan infrastructure package that passed the House. This bill provides a total of \$1 billion over five years that affects the four Appalachian (ARC) designated counties (Barrow, Elbert, Jackson and Madison). \$200 million per year will be provided, starting in FY22 for ARC programs. This level is in addition to the regular appropriation for the ARC’s thirteen states. There is no congressional direction on how the money is allocated either to states or by funding category. The bill also reauthorized ARC as a state-federal program through October 1, 2026. This would lead to increased opportunities to fund projects for the four ARC counties and NEGRRC’s PGS Director, Eva Kennedy, can provide assistance if needed.

DDAA Board Meeting

Executive Director Walker informed the Council that he attended the Development District Association of Appalachia’s (DDAA) Winter Board meeting in Cookeville, Tn. The Board considered several work items including the planning of the 2022 annual conference, adoption of an updated strategic plan, and new programmatic initiatives. Gail Manchin, the federal co-



chair addressed the group and provided an update. The meeting included Executive Director Walker's counterparts from the 13-state ARC regions that cover 400 counties.

The meeting also helped provide information about opportunities that can be delivered to the various regions during this time of unprecedented expansion for ARC. The Board spent time discussing advocacy in conjunction with the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) as it relates to the new bill and recommended an \$18 million increase in funding to the 72 LDDS. The Board voted to include water and sewer infrastructure spending and asset-based development (tourism, community, development projects, etc). The infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) will be closely watched over the next 2-3 months.

State Relief Funds Application

Executive Director Walker shared information regarding the ARPA allocation review process. Many communities in the area applied for funding in both large and small amounts and the NEGRC's PGS Division assisted five communities with these applications. Executive Director Walker stated that 1,480 applications were submitted requesting \$14.8 billion. There is a total of \$875 million available for grant awards. The applications' \$14.8 billion in requests sought \$6.6 billion in Negative Economic Impacts from the pandemic, \$4.6 billion for water and sewer and \$3.4 billion in Broadband. The application ratio is 14:1, with requests far exceeding available funding. Governor Brian Kemp set-up an advisory committees in each category to help decide which grants are approved and to specify an amount. The final decision on awards will be made by Governor Kemp. In total, the state is expected to receive \$4.8 billion in federal relief aid passed by Congress. Some of that money will likely be dedicated to aid the state court systems, \$1,000 bonuses for law enforcement, and refilling the depleted unemployment insurance coffers.

IT Update

Executive Director Walker informed the Council that Surelock Technology (Lawrenceville) was selected to provide support to the NEGRC's internal servers and address overall computer and information technology needs. A meeting was held to discuss the scope-of-work that fits within the NEGRC's budget and the "onboarding" process started after Thanksgiving with a comprehensive onsite inspection and review of the server and computer operations. Following the technology inventory and audit, the NEGRC will continue with Surelock on a monthly-fee basis that will be negotiated after the inventory.



GARC

Executive Director Walker stated that during the monthly meeting of the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions (GARC), Commissioner Andy Ainslie (Morgan County) was elected to serve as GARC Vice Chairperson through 2022. Mayor Eric Wilson (Forsyth) was elected to serve a two-year term as Chairman. Executive Director Walker congratulated Commissioner Ainslie and expressed his appreciation for his service.

Executive Director Walker concluded his report and introduced the guest speaker, Paul Tanner (GDOT).

Roadway Element Mapping & Validation Program (ReVamp)


Paul Tanner with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) spoke about how his agency partners with the Regional Commission to map our roadways and their features.

Other Business

Vice Chairman Linda Blechinger (substituting for Chairman Palmer) reminded everyone of the next meeting on January 20, 2022 at Trumps. She wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving, a very Merry Christmas, and safe travels to everyone and their families.

Adjournment

Vice Chairman Blechinger thanked everyone for their attendance and with no further business to come before the Council, he adjourned the meeting at 1:06 p.m.



Julie Ball, Executive Assistant
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

January 20, 2022

Date Approved