



Date: June 16, 2022

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Location: Trumps Catering

Minutes

Members Present:

Andy Ainslie
Linda Blechinger
Ronnie Boggs
Tom Crow
John Daniell
David Dyer
Dodd Ferrelle
Kelly Girtz
Gail Harrell
Doug Haynie
Bruce Henry
Todd Higdon
John Howard
Janet Jones
Terry Lawler
Byron Lombard
Bill Palmer
Jay Paul
Fred Perriman
Roy Roberts
Joel Seymour
Paul Walton

Members Absent:

Louise Adams
Marcello Banes
Phil Brock
Cary Fordyce
Pat Graham
Daniel Graves
Steve Horton
Ralph Maxwell
Jill Parham
Billy Pittard
Flemie Pitts
Bill Ritter
Jim Shaw
Shane Short
Solomon Smothers
Craig Snow
David Thompson
Brad Tucker
Frank Turner
Lee Vaughn

Guests Present:

Wendy Bond, Winterville
Beth Eavenson, DCA
Kevin Little, Barrow County
Carol Williams, WDB
Beverly Young, Bogart
Greg Ziesenhene, Jody Hice, GA-10

Staff Present:

Amber Bailey
Julie Ball
Mark Beatty
Carol Cofer
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 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. Chairperson Palmer said the May 19, 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 Mayor Linda Blechinger and seconded by Commissioner Andy Ainslie. The motions carried unanimously.



Items of Local Interest

Chairperson Palmer announced that today, three counties would report on “items of local interest.” These include Oconee, Oglethorpe, and Walton Counties. He invited the County Representatives to provide their reports.

Oconee County – Chairman John Daniell

- Construction has begun on the new administration building and will hopefully be completed in twelve months.
- A significant pay increase for county employees was recently passed and the budget was approved.
- Charter Communications has completed the initial assessment of Oconee County. The County will pay Charter \$1,000 for every household connected and Federal funding is also being used.
- The ordinance regarding “No thru truck routes” was updated and has gone into effect.

Oglethorpe County – Chairman Jay Paul

- Chairman Paul thanked Clarke and Madison Counties for sending resources to contain and put out a farm fire.
- 15 Miles of county roads have been resurfaced.
- Sludge dumping is still an issue in Oglethorpe County and Chairman Paul urged the other counties to be proactive in addressing this issue.

Walton County- Mayor John Howard for Chairman David Thompson

- The county recently held an economic development summit.
- Monroe announced a \$36 Million greenhouse project with Gotham Greens.
- Downtown Monroe had \$18 Million in private investment and over 100,000 visitors to various event.

Committee Reports

Audit & Finance –Mayor Fred Perriman

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

The first item was the review of the April 2022 financial statements that reported revenues in excess of expenditures by \$259,279.03. Based on the Committee’s review, Mayor Perriman made motions to accept the April 2022 financial report. The motions passed unanimously.

Second, the Committee reviewed the Regional Commission’s revised 401(k) Lincoln Plan Document. The new Plan Documents are amended and restated to meet the current IRS retirement savings-plan standards and regulations. These changes, however, make no



mentionable changes affecting the Regional Commission's current retirement-savings plan or related benefits. Based on the Committee's review, Mayor Perriman made motions to accept the revised 401(k) Lincoln Plan Document. 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 one (1) technical-assistance request for the month. They also reviewed the FY23 proposed, annual program-of-work for staff activities.

First, the following technical-assistance request was received for the month:

The City of Hoschton requested assistance in preparing an Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant pre-application. The application seeks financial support for a second water tower to support water-system services in the southern part of the City. There is no fee for this assistance as it is provided through an ARC Administrative contract and local dues. Based on recommendations by the Executive Director followed by the Committee's review, Mayor Ferrelle 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.

Second, the Committee also reviewed the FY23 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, Mayor Ferrelle recommend adoption of the proposed FY23 Program-of-Work activities for the Regional Commission's staff 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 CEDS update is currently underway and will be completed by September. Developments of Regional Impact (DRI) review requests have seen a significant increase across the region in the past six months. The PGS Division appreciates all the local government staff work that goes into submitting and working through the review process as they continue to come in. The PGS Committee had no items that required Council action.



Personnel – Mayor Doug Haynie

Mayor Haynie said there were two (2) items that required Council action.

First, as is required each year, the Personnel Committee conducted the annual performance review of Director Walker. The Committee met in April for this purpose that included their review of Director Walker’s activities and accomplishments during the year. The Committee, in its evaluation, believed Executive Director Walker exceeded expectations for the year. Based the committee’s review, the Committee recommended approval of Executive Director Walker’s performance for this year in the form of motions. The motions passed unanimously.

As an additional note, performance of activities based on specific standards-for-measurement for the year’s work activities were approved at last month’s meeting as reviewed and presented by Mayor Ferrelle, Chairman of the Program-of Work Committee.

Second, last month the Personnel Committee met to consider the draft “Job Classification and Compensation Plan” prepared and presented by UGA’s Carl Vinson Institute of Government for the Regional Commission. Based on the committee’s review, they recommended accepting the draft Plan as completed and for its use as a guide for the Regional Commission in the form of motions. The motions passed unanimously.

Executive Director’s Report – Burke Walker

Executive Director Walker greeted the Council and stated that there were no Council action items this month.

Staff Update

Executive Director Walker informed the Council that two Community Planner vacancies had been filled in the Planning & Government Services Division, directed by Mark Beatty. Several other positions will be filled using the Carl Vinson Institute of Government (CVIOG) plan as a guide for job titles and pay compensation.

Council News

Executive Director Walker stated that private-sector requests had been mailed out. These appointments according to Council’s bylaws, renew each year. To simplify the process, each Chairperson received an email from Julie for a reappointment or new appointment. This can be done by responding to the email or completing the attached from.



Mr. Harold Horton, a long-time “Associate” Council member from Clarke County informed Executive Director Walker of his need to retire from the Council. Ms. Jennifer Stewart, a private-sector representative from Morgan County, submitted her resignation from the Council. Executive Director Walker thanked Mr. Horton and Ms. Stewart for their service to the Council and the NEGRC.

FHWA Funding Opportunity

Executive Director Walker informed the Council that Dan Hinton (Federal Highway) recently provided the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions (GARC) with information regarding the Bridge Investment Program (BIP). BIP is a funding opportunity for bridge and structure improvements that was authorized through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). Grant applications will be accepted for Planning projects, Large Bridge Project (over \$100 million in total eligible costs) and Bridge Projects (up to \$100 million in total eligible costs). Application due dates are:

- Planning Grant Application: July 25, 2022
- Large Bridge Project Grant Application: August 9, 2022
- Bridge Project Grant Application: September 8, 2022

Applications may include MPOs, units of local governments or a group of local governments. For further information or to receive the dedicated email address for applicant questions please contact Mark Beatty, PGS Director.

Southern Crescent Regional Commission

Executive Director Walker stated that information was distributed prior to the meeting regarding the newly appointed Southern Crescent Regional Commission. This Commission was authorized by Congress in the 2008 Farm Bill but remained inactive due to funding. That changed last year when the 7-state region (AL, GA, MS, NC, SC and VA) was funded with \$14 million to target new resources to support basic infrastructure, business development, natural resources and workforce development. Federal Co-Chairs, Dr. Jennifer Clyburn Reed and Gov. Henry McMaster (SC) were also appointed during this activation. The Commission is modeled after the Appalachian Regional Commission that covers four of our Counties. The new SCRC brings eligibility to our non-ARC counties. Like ARC, each county in the SCRC region has a designation for its eligibility and priority for funding. In June, Dr. Reed and DCA Commissioner Nunn provided specific information about Georgia:

- 408 counties (122 in Georgia). 178 counties in “persistent poverty”.
- \$2.5 million in funds anticipated for Georgia.
- Spring 2023 grants program launched.
- Commissioner Nunn asked for Regional Commission assistance with a strategic plan that is under development and expected to be ready in January.
- Eliminating persistent poverty is a priority.



- At this point, it's unclear if the Regional Commissions will serve in a partnership-planning role, like ARC. However, DCA Regional Reps will serve as resources (Beth Eavenson).

According to the map that was distributed, Clarke County has the highest priority with a designation of "Distressed" followed by Walton, Jasper, Greene, and Oglethorpe (Transitional). Oconee and Morgan were categorized as economically strong-the highest 25% of the nation's counties. For years, many of our non-ARC counties had projects well suited for the program that were not eligible. The SCRC changes that situation. There is a brief survey that SCRC has asked Georgia Counties to complete. Visit SCRC.gov to complete the survey. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

There were no questions or comments so Executive Director Walker concluded his report.

Recommendation of the Revised FY22 and Proposed FY23 NEGRC Budgets – Mayor Fred Perriman

The Audit and Finance Committee reviewed the FY22 Revised and FY23 Proposed budgets and their recommended funding. These budgets were also reviewed and reported at our May 19, 2022 Council meeting.

Reviewing the FY22 Revised Budget:

- There was an overall increase from the original adopted FY22 budget of 12.77% amounting to \$1,711,407.
- The Division of Aging had an overall increase of \$1,778,757.
- The Division of Planning & Government Services had no changes.
- The Division of Workforce Development had an overall decrease of \$67,350.

Reviewing the FY23 Proposed Budget:

- The FY23 budget is a balanced budget, therefore, the revenues equal the expenditure.
- The overall revenues and expenditures are projected to come in at \$13,282,795.
- There is an overall decrease of about 12.14% from the Revised FY22 budget due to a reduction in COVID funding in our Aging and Planning & Government Services Divisions.
- The amount required to match the Regional Commission's programmatic grants is projected at \$517,952.
- To comply with the Department of Audit's recommendations, annual dues are calculated using the most recent U.S. Census population figures. This results in an increase of \$93,979 in dues for Fiscal Year 2023 based on the most recent 2020 Decennial Census numbers.

Based on the Committee's review, Mayor Perriman made motions to adopt the FY22 Revised Budget and the FY23 Proposed Budget. The motions passed unanimously.



Other Business

Chairperson Palmer said it is customary each year, and in accordance with our bylaws, that he reviews Committee assignments for next year. If members have Committee preferences, please submit those to him (or Burke) before this time next week for consideration.

He also reminded everyone the next meeting would be August 18, 2022.

Adjournment

Chairperson Palmer thanked everyone for their attendance and with no further business to come before the Council, he adjourned the meeting at 1:03 p.m.

Julie Ball, Executive Assistant
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

September 15, 2022

Date Approved