



Date: September 15, 2022

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Location: Trumps Catering

Minutes

Members Present:

Andy Ainslie
Marcello Banes
Linda Blechinger
Ronnie Boggs
Tom Crow
John Daniell
David Dyer
Dodd Ferrelle
Kelly Girtz
Pat Graham
Daniel Graves
Doug Haynie
Bruce Henry
Todd Higdon
John Howard
Terry Lawler
Byron Lombard
Wendell McNeal
Bill Palmer
Jay Paul
Fred Perriman
Billy Pittard
Joel Seymour
Jim Shaw
Amy Stone
Brad Tucker
Paul Walton

Members Absent:

Louise Adams
Phil Brock
Cary Fordyce
Gail Harrell
Steve Horton
Janet Jones
Jill Parham
Flemie Pitts
Bill Ritter
Roy Roberts
Shane Short
Craig Snow
David Thompson
Lee Vaughn

Guests Present:

Kevin Little, Barrow County
Beth Eavenson, DCA
Carol Williams, WDB
Greg Ziesenhene, Jody Hice GA-10

Staff Present:

Amber Bailey
Julie Ball
Mark Beatty
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 September 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 June 16, 2022 minutes were distributed prior to today's meeting. He asked for a motion to approve



the minutes. A motion was made by Mayor Linda Blechinger and seconded by Mayor Dodd Ferrelle. The motions carried unanimously.

Items of Local Interest

Chairperson Bill Palmer announced that four counties would report on “items of local interest.” These included Jackson, Jasper, Madison, and Morgan Counties.

Jackson County – Chairman Tom Crow

- Jackson County’s airport is temporarily closed for 70 days while undergoing a \$5 million renovation.
- Work is underway on the 2023 FY budget and the millage rate will be rolled back.
- New facilities will be built for EMS station crew #8
- A new middle school is in the construction phase and a new elementary school is in the design stage.
- There is still a shortage of homes for sale and rent. There is also a shortage of workers.
- The Empower Career & College Center is doing well and continues to grow
- The IDA continues receiving inquiries on existing facilities and potential new construction.

Jasper County – Chairman Bruce Henry

- In 2023, a \$10 million renovation of the Sherriff’s department and jail will begin.
- A new SPLOST will be on the ballot in March 2023.
- New equipment has been ordered including two new fire trucks, a public works tractor, and a track hoe for the landfill.
- The subdivision development ordinances intend to restrict and control growth in the area.
- Derrick Jones is the new extension agent for the County.
- Jordana Pope is the new Executive Director for the Chamber of Commerce.
- Work will begin soon on the Comprehensive Plan update.
- The food bank was awarded a \$750,000 CDBG grant and has purchased land for construction of a new facility.
- New agricultural enterprises are moving to the area (e.g., organic poultry company, chestnut, and honey production facilities).
- The Governor announced that Profile Products had invested \$35 million to build its campus in the old Ga Pacific plant’s location.

Madison County – Chairman Todd Higdon

- The County successfully applied for a \$5 million ARPA fresh drinking-water grant.
- The SDS plan was completed, and work is underway on Lost negotiations.
- The millage rate was rolled back, and County employees were given a raise (\$1.5 million total).



- A new EMS station will open soon in Comer.
- The food bank was expanded to add a third of its current capacity.
- Planning and Zoning are under a moratorium and ordinances are being revamped.

Morgan County – Commissioner Andy Ainslie

- Work continues on the TSPLOST.
- A \$19 million recreational facility plan is in the works.
- Groundbreaking on Rivian’s facilities should begin soon. Plateau will begin grading a 500-acre pad.
- There continues to be an employee shortage. The salary schedule will be assessed to attract County employees.
- Lost negotiations are complete.

Committee Reports

Audit & Finance – Mayor Fred Perriman

Mayor Perriman said three items from the Audit & Finance Committee required Council action.

- The Committee reviewed the July 2022 financial statements for the first month of the new fiscal year that reported revenues in excess of expenditures by \$21,125.85. Mayor Perriman made motions to accept the July 2022 financial reports. The motions passed unanimously.
- Last month, at the August 18th Council meeting, the Committee reviewed the June 2022 financial statements that reported revenues in excess of expenditures by \$363,260.22. These statements are unaudited and subject to change pending the final FY22 NEGRC audit. Mayor Perriman made motions to accept the June 2022 financial reports. The motions passed unanimously.
- The 2022 NEGRC 401(k) Retirement Savings Plan for the Commission’s employees will convert the current retirement plan from Lincoln Director/Lincoln American Legacy Retirement contract to the Lincoln Alliance program. There are no significant financial changes resulting in this plan conversion. Mayor Perriman made motions to adopt the Lincoln Alliance program conversion. The motions passed unanimously.

Program of Work Committee – Mayor Dodd Ferrelle

Mayor Ferrelle stated that the Program-of-Work Committee met prior to today’s Council meeting and reviewed two technical-assistance requests for the month. They also reviewed five closed projects since their last meeting in August. Both require Council action.



The technical-assistance requests include the following:

- Oconee County requested assistance in developing a Master Plan for Trail Networks. Any fees for this assistance will be determined based on further planning discussions with the County.
- Oglethorpe County requested assistance in developing an update to its comprehensive plan. The plan is expected to be a joint plan with participation from the municipalities. The fee for this assistance will be determined once additional information is received from the municipalities.

The Committee also reviewed five previously-approved requests completed by the NEGRC staff and officially closed with written notifications. These include the following:

- Morgan County for an update to their comprehensive plan.
- Town of Bostwick for an update to their comprehensive plan.
- Town of Buckhead for an update to their comprehensive plan.
- Town of Rutledge for an update to their comprehensive plan.
- City of Winder assistance in developing a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application for stormwater improvements.

Based on a recommendation by the Executive Director followed by the Committee's review, the Committee recommended approving the August requests and project closeouts for the month for inclusion in the FY2023 Program-of-work effective September 15, 2022 in the form of motions. The motions passed unanimously.

The Program-of-Work Committee report presented at the August 18, 2022 meeting and included in the circulated unofficial minutes included six technical-assistance requests and two closed projects. The Committee recommended accepting both of these items as presented and for inclusion in the FY2023 program-of-work effective today, September 15, 2022 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 regional plan update was kicked-off Friday, September 9th, with a public hearing at the Regional Commission. An online survey for the regional plan update has been sent to all local government chief-elected officials and select staff. The survey will be available until October 9th. The survey hopes to gather valuable input to identify regional needs and opportunities.



The CEDS final draft is complete and is recommended for adoption by the Council in the form of motions. The motions passed unanimously.

The CEDS and adoption resolution will be submitted to the U.S. Economic Development Administration by September 30th.

Executive Director's Report – Burke Walker

Executive Director Burke Walker greeted the Council and thanked everyone for their attendance. He stated there were no action items in his report.

Rushton and Company

Executive Director Walker informed the Council that Rushton and Company had recently conducted field work at the NEGRC for the FY22 audit. Rushton's audit report is expected to be presented before the Council in November.

Oconee County Senior Center

Executive Director Walker stated that he had attended the ribbon cutting for the expansion of the Oconee County Senior Center. Commissioner Hardin provided remarks. The expansion was funded through a CDBG grant prepared by the NEGRC's Planning and Government Services Division.

GARC

Executive Director Walker shared the resignation of Kirk Fjelstul, Executive Director of Three Rivers Regional Commission. Mr. Fjelstul was the Executive Director for five years and named Jeannie Brantley as the interim director until a replacement is chosen. The Southeast Regional Directors Institute is assisting in recruitment and searching for a replacement.

Statewide Compliance and Reporting Requirements Workshop

Executive Director Walker announced that a workshop would be held for local governments interested in learning more about statewide compliance and reporting requirements. The workshop is presented in partnership with the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Participants will learn about Qualified Local Government Status, Service Delivery Strategies, and Local Government and Authority Reporting Requirements. The workshop will be held in Cartersville on Thursday (9/22) from 10:30am-noon. Registration is required. Managers, Finance Directors, Clerks, and Development Authority Executive Directors are the intended audience.



Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority

Executive Director Walker stated that the NEGRC administrative staff supports the efforts of the UOBWA in financial and contract-administration assistance. Recently, staff worked closely with Authority members in submitting an ARPA application for funding to expand Bear Creek Reservoir's water-treatment capacity.

GARC

Executive Director Walker will attend the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions' annual conference at St. Simon's Island from November 2-4. He sits on the Planning Committee and, this year, representatives from the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), Georgia Municipal Association (GMA), Department of Transportation (DOT), Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA), and Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) will be in attendance. Council Chairman Palmer, Chairman Daniell, Commissioner Ainslie, Mayor Ferrelle, and Mr. Lawler will attend as well as several NEGRC staff.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

Chairperson Palmer thanked everyone for their attendance, and with no further business to come before the Council, he adjourned the meeting at 1:02 p.m.

Julie Ball, Executive Assistant
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

November 17, 2022

Date Approved