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Date: November 17, 2022

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Location: Trumps Catering

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## Minutes

### Members Present:

Andy Ainslie  
Linda Blechinger  
Ronnie Boggs  
John Daniell  
David Dyer  
Dodd Ferrelle  
Cary Fordyce  
Pat Graham  
Daniel Graves  
Doug Haynie  
Bruce Henry  
Todd Higdon  
John Howard  
Terry Lawler  
Wendell McNeal  
Bill Palmer  
Jay Paul  
Fred Perriman  
Billy Pittard  
Bill Ritter  
Joel Seymour  
Shane Short  
Craig Snow  
Amy Stone  
Brad Tucker  
Paul Walton

### Members Absent:

Louise Adams  
Marcello Banes  
Phil Brock  
Tom Crow  
Kelly Girtz  
Gail Harrell  
Steve Horton  
Janet Jones  
Byron Lombard  
Jill Parham  
Billy Pittard  
Flemie Pitts  
Roy Roberts  
Jim Shaw  
David Thompson  
Frank Turner  
Lee Vaughn

### Guests Present:

Marty Clark, Jackson County  
Beth Eavenson, DCA  
Bob Hughes, Morgan Co Chamber of Comm.  
Rachel McGirr, Enterprise Fleet Mgmt.  
Ben Riden, Morgan Co BOC  
Gina Roy, Jackson County  
Eddy Simon, Enterprise Fleet Mgmt.  
John Ward, Walton County  
Carol Williams, Workforce Dev. Bd.  
Polo Vargas, Senator Ossoff

### Staff Present:

Amber Bailey  
Julie Ball  
Mark Beatty  
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 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 September 15, 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 Commissioner Andy Ainslie. The motions carried unanimously.



## **Items of Local Interest**

Chairperson Bill Palmer announced that four counties would report on “items of local interest.” These included Barrow, Elbert, and Greene Counties.

### **Barrow County – Chairman Pat Graham**

- County development activity is still very strong with numerous rezoning requests and a record number of building permits being issued each month.
- The West Winder Bypass opened this year and the first industrial rezone on this four-lane divided highway was approved. A developer will construct approximately 30,000 square feet of industrial building space.
- Local Options Sales Tax (LOST) negotiations with the city of Winder have stalled after the recent mediation failed to resolve any issues. The Board of Commissioners has adopted a resolution seeking local legislation to place a HOST referendum on the ballot in the event LOST lapses out on December 21, 2022.
- A citizen’s stakeholder committee is working on updating the Comprehensive Transportation Plan.
- Work has begun on the five-year update to the Comprehensive Plan.
- The County has hired a consultant to guide them through evaluating the implementation of Development Impact Fees.
- The City of Auburn’s new City Hall is approximately 8% complete and the adjacent residential neighborhood is underway.
- Two new Commissioners, Deborah Lynn and Tim Walker, join the Board in January 2023. Commissioners Billy Parks and Ben Hendrix did not seek re-election.

### **Elbert County – Bill Palmer**

- A new SPLOST was approved and will be used to complete several projects, including \$4 million in paving and a \$2 million 4-H complex.
- The Board of Education will use American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to provide bonuses to school system staff in the amount of \$1,200 for full-time employees and \$600 for part-time employees. Two school buildings are currently being renovated.

### **Greene County – Terry Lawler**

- Greene County’s 1% Transportation Local Option Sales Tax (TSPLOST) became effective on October 1, 2022. The 5-year TSPLOST is estimated to raise \$35 million.
- The County is in the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan with the help of an outside consultant.
- The County Commission approved two separate requests seeking Preliminary Plat approval to create 72 townhome tracts, 72 single-family homes, one commercial out lot with a potential grocery store, and a 9-hole par 3 golf course on 85 acres at the intersection of Linger Longer Road and State Route 44.



- A prefab metal building manufacturer specializing in constructing fast-food restaurant buildings will be built in Greensboro and will hire 25-50 employees.
- The agreement to continue services with the volunteer fire departments in Greshamville, Walker Church, and Liberty will remain the same as in previous years. Five full-time fire departments will continue to operate at five stations strategically located throughout the county.
- Greene County and other local communities were notified that the City of Union Point will fulfill their portion of the match to ensure the Firefly Trail Project meets completion.
- Greensboro has annexed over 150 acres for future development.
- A new Taco Bell and Racetrac gas station will be added at the I-20 intersection.

## Committee Reports

### **Audit & Finance – Mayor Fred Perriman**

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

- The Committee reviewed the September 2022 financial statements for the 3rd month of the fiscal year that reported revenues in excess of expenditures by \$83,961.79.
- The Committee reviewed and reported the August 2022 financial statements at last month's Council meeting with reported revenues exceeding expenditures by \$63,938.96. Due to a lack of quorum, no action was taken on the August 2022 report. Mayor Perriman made motions to accept the September 2022 and August 2022 financial reports. The motions passed unanimously.

- Sophia Primer confirmed that during the audit process for FY2022, it was determined that three line-item budget adjustments were needed.
  - General Fund: Decrease Charges for Services Revenue by \$20,000. Increase Other Revenue by \$20,000 (Includes: Miscellaneous Revenue and Gain on Sale of Capital Assets Revenue)
  - Aging Fund: Decrease Fringe Benefit Expenditures by \$3,000. Increase Salary Expenditures by \$3,000.
  - Workforce Development Fund: Decrease Purchase and Contractual Services by \$10,000. Increase Fringe Benefit Expenditures by \$10,000.

Mayor Perriman made motions to accept the Fiscal Year 2022 budget adjustments. The motions passed unanimously.

- The NEGRC's FY22 Financial Audit was performed by Rushton and Company again this year. Mr. Clay Pilgrim of Rushton reviewed the final FY22 Financial Audit with the Committee this morning. Mayor Perriman asked Mr. Pilgrim to come forward to present the Annual Audit Report for Fiscal Year 2022 to the Council.



After Mr. Pilgrim's presentation, Mayor Perriman told the audience present, to be thankful for the job their City Clerk, County Clerk, Administrative Assistant, etc., do for their cities and counties. He then thanked Julie Ball for the job she does for the Regional Commission. Mayor Perriman then made motions to accept the Commission's Fiscal Year 2022 Financial Audit report, as presented. The motions passed unanimously.

### **Program of Work Committee – Mayor Dodd Ferrelle**

The Program-of-Work Committee met prior to today's Council meeting to review six technical-assistance requests for the month and two project closeouts.

The six technical requests for the month include the following:

- The City of Oxford requested assistance in developing a grant application for "Improving Neighborhood Outcomes in Disproportionally Impacted Communities" through the Georgia Office of Planning & Budget. The fee for this assistance is \$500.
- The Cities of Arnoldsville, Maxeys, Lexington, and Crawford requested assistance in developing a joint comprehensive plan. The fee for this assistance is \$5,000 for each city.
- As presented at last month's meeting but with no action taken, the City of Winterville requested assistance in developing a Community Development Block Grant-Redevelopment Fund (CDBG-RDF) application for the rehabilitation of the historic blacksmith shop. The fee for this assistance is \$2,000. Grant-administration assistance will be requested pending the application's review.

Two project closeouts for the month included the following for projects successfully completed and officially closed:

- The City of Monroe for redistricting technical assistance.
- The City of Pendergrass for completion of their comprehensive-plan update.

Based on a recommendation by the Executive Director followed by the Committee's review, the Committee recommended approving these technical-assistance requests and project closeouts for inclusion in the FY2023 Program-of-work effective November 17, 2022 in the form of motions. The motions passed unanimously.

### **Planning and Government Services – Commissioner Andy Ainslie**

Commissioner Ainslie thanked Director Burke Walker and Julie Ball for helping plan the trip to St. Simons for the GARC conference. He said the Planning & Government Services Committee met this morning and discussed the region's economic and community development activities.



The third and final Regional Plan input session is scheduled for December 6th in Greensboro at Festival Hall. All Council members are encouraged to attend in-person or virtually. Virtual links and meeting locations will be available on the NEGRC website or by contacting Mark Beatty. The Council is designated as the Regional Plan's steering committee, and a draft will be presented in early 2023.

An EDA Planning Partnership Initiative grant will be submitted by the NEGRC Planning & Government Services Division by November 22nd for a three-year funding cycle of 2023-2025. The grant is expected to provide \$210,000, or \$70,000 per year, in federal funding to assist with economic development planning activities and CEDS implementation. There will be a 50/50 match required for this grant.

A resolution is required and presented to Councilmembers authorizing the submission of a grant application for FY 2024 funding under Title 49 U.S.C., Section 5304 for Rural Transit Planning activities. This grant is provided by the U.S. Department of Transportation through the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). Commissioner Ainslie made motions to authorize submission of the grant application through a signed resolution. The motions passed unanimously.

### **Executive Director's Report – Burke Walker**

Executive Director Burke Walker greeted the Council and mentioned the passing of Speaker David Ralson, the longest-serving State House Speaker in the country.

### **CSRA Loan Program**

Executive Director Walker informed the Council that Randy Griffin, President of CSRA Business Lending, had recently announced the following:

- They were recently approved for an additional \$2.7 million in funds to provide loans to small businesses. This funding is only available for our Region and CSRA (based in Augusta) businesses.
- The increase was approved by the U.S. Department of Commerce/EDA, a partner agency with NEGRC serving as an Economic Development District.
- Three recent applications have been funded: two in Augusta and a restaurant in Watkinsville.
- These loans accommodate a wider variety of projects than SBA loans.
- They carry a 6.25% rate with average loans of \$141,000.

Executive Director Walker can be contacted for further information or to connect interested parties with Randy Griffin at CSRA Lending.



### **GDOT Rail Loan Program**

Executive Director Walker stated that David Cassell of the State Road & Toll Authority and its Transportation Infrastructure Bank had contacted him recently to share the following information:

- There is a call for projects now through January 20, 2023, that can be transportation for P/E ROW or construction.
- \$14.5 million is available. There are both grants and loans with strong approval rates: 44% of grants and 94% of loans have been approved. The loan terms are 5-20 years at 2.26-3.43%.
- Eligibility is generally very broad: transportation merit that improves mobility, connectivity, and congestion. A recent project was approved for bridge improvement in Athens-Clarke County.
- Government bodies must authorize applications and there is a \$250 application fee.

For more information, please contact PGS Director, Mark Beatty, at (706) 369-5650.

### **Georgia Cybersecurity Grants**

Executive Director Walker shared the following updates:

- November 2 was the deadline for project submissions. Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) compiled the applications and reported at the Committee meeting the previous week.
- Fifty-five local governments submitted projects, and only thirteen were from rural communities.
- Of the \$4.8 million available, the requests totaled \$20.9 million with \$19.8 million from local governments.
- For these requests to receive partial funding, the statewide cybersecurity plan must be submitted by GTA and approved at the Federal level.

Executive Director Walker will continue to attend these weekly meetings representing Regional Commissions and by extension, local governments. Please contact the NEGRC for more information or assistance.

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

### **Guest Speaker – Rachael McGirr, Enterprise Fleet Management**

Chairman Palmer introduced Rachael McGirr from Enterprise Fleet Management to speak about options for cities and counties in leasing vehicles. Ms. McGirr provided an overview of services, benefits, and related information to attendees.



### **Other Business**

Chairman Palmer presented Commissioner and Councilmember Andy Anslie with a plaque for his service on the Council. Andy has served for 16 consecutive years as a County Commissioner in Morgan County and most of those years as a NEGRC Councilmember. He has notably served as Chairperson for the Commission's Nominations Committee and Planning & Government Services Committee. For the past three years, he also served as the Regional Commission's Policy member on the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions.

### **Adjournment**

Chairman Palmer wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. He thanked everyone for their attendance, and with no further business to come before the Council, he adjourned the meeting at 1:20 p.m.

Julie Ball, Executive Assistant  
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

January 19, 2023

Date Approved