



Date: January 19, 2023

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Location: Trumps Catering

Minutes

Members Present:

Marcello Banes
Linda Blechinger
Ronnie Boggs
Tom Crow
John Daniell
David Dyer
Dodd Ferrelle
Cary Fordyce
Kelly Girtz
Pat Graham
Daniel Graves
Doug Haynie
Todd Higdon
John Howard
Don Jernigan
Terry Lawler
Byron Lombard
Blake McCormack
Wendell McNeal
Bill Palmer
Jay Paul
Fred Perriman
Billy Pittard
Bill Ritter
Joel Seymour
Jim Shaw
Brad Tucker

Members Absent:

Louise Adams
Phil Brock
Steve Horton
Janet Jones
Jill Parham
Flemie Pitts
Roy Roberts
Shane Short
Craig Snow
Amy Stone
David Thompson
Lee Vaughn

Guests Present:

Beth Eavenson, DCA
Ben McDaniel, Barrow County
Michael Parks, Auburn
Andy Pippin, GMC
Cheryl Smith, Ga Dept of Agriculture
Carol Williams, Workforce Dev. Bd.

Staff Present:

Amber Bailey
Julie Ball
Mark Beatty
Carol Cofer
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 November 17, 2022 minutes were distributed prior to today's meeting. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes. A motion was made by Mayor John Howard and seconded by Cary Fordyce. The motions carried unanimously.



Items of Local Interest

Chairperson Palmer announced that 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

- The new 1.3 million square foot Ace Hardware showroom and distribution center is now operational in Jefferson.
- SK Battery America reached and exceeded the 2,600-employee goal announced in 2019.
- Steve’s and Sons, a high-volume family-owned millwork manufacturer, will invest \$100 million and create 170 jobs over the next three years. They will build a state-of-the-art facility at the former Louisiana Pacific Plant on Hwy 441 near Athens.
- Economic development project activity remains high but is somewhat constrained by the tight labor market. The unemployment rate was under 2% as of November, and some projects have been very heavy water users.
- The new Publix in Jefferson is expected to open in February. There will also be a groundbreaking for the new Jefferson Chic-fil-a in February.
- Daytime lane closures are in effect on I-85, so plan accordingly if you are traveling through the area. The widening project through Jackson and Banks counties is scheduled to be completed toward the end of 2023 or the beginning of 2024.
- The newly implemented “impact fees” have collected over \$2 million for EMS and recreation improvements.

Jasper County- Chairman Don Jernigan

- Governor Kemp declared a State of Emergency on 1/12/23 due to seven counties’ recent tornado and storm damage, and GEMA assistance is available.
- President Biden declared it a major disaster on 1/16/23 and made FEMA assistance available.
- GDOT is assisting with tree limb removal and, so far, 698 dump trucks full of debris have been delivered to the county landfill.
- A New Rock Creek Baptist Church established a warming center with assistance from Jasper County EMA to provide hot showers, food, and water.

Madison County – Chairman Todd Higdon

- Madison County and Spectrum recently received a broadband award for \$18.4 million.
- For the second consecutive year, Madison County School System has placed in the top ten statewide.
- On January 24, 2023, Madison County will host a funding summit with the USDA, Appalachian Regional Commission, Northeast Georgia Regional Commission, Senators Warnock and Ossoff.



- The Industrial Development Building Authority is being restructured to include the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development. Hopefully, the water department will be brought back under the county government instead of remaining a separate entity.
- The Chamber of Commerce now consists of over 300 members.
- Coroners' standard-operating procedures have been an important topic lately and should be addressed to prevent any issues.
- Be aware that pot ash has become another issue associated with sludge dumping in the area.

Morgan County – Commissioner Blake McCormack

- The fire department started a certification program with the high school and just had its first graduate.
- The County Commissioners approved building a new recreation center and fields.
- The Sheriff's Department installed flock cameras, and they have been very beneficial in solving crimes.

Committee Reports

Audit & Finance – Mayor Fred Perriman

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

First, the Committee reviewed the October 2022 financial statements for the 4th month of the fiscal year that reported revenues in excess of expenditures by \$132,142.06. Second, the Committee reviewed the November 2022 financial statements for the 5th month of the fiscal year, which reported revenues exceeding expenditures by \$90,816.95.

Mayor Perriman made motions to accept both the October 2022 and November 2022 financial reports, 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 five technical-assistance requests for the month and one project closeout since their last meeting. These all require Council action.

First, the five technical requests for the month included the following:

- Madison County requested assistance developing a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application for water-system improvements. The fee for this assistance is \$3,000. If awarded, Madison County also requests assistance with grant administration.
- The City of Elberton requested assistance updating the Historic Preservation Commission's Design Guidelines. The fee for this assistance is \$4,000.



- The Cities of White Plains, Siloam, and Union Point each requested assistance updating their comprehensive plans. These updates are a joint-planning effort, including three jurisdictions. There is no fee for this assistance.

Second, one project closeout for the month was completed and officially closed for the following:

- The City of Oxford for an “Improving Neighborhood Outcomes in Disproportionally Impacted Communities” grant application.

Based on a recommendation by the Executive Director followed by the Committee’s review, the Committee recommends approving these technical-assistance requests and project closeout for inclusion in the FY2023 program-of-work effective today, January 19, 2023, in the form of motions. The motions passed unanimously.

Planning and Government Services – Mayor John Howard

Mayor Howard said the Planning & Government Services Committee met this morning and discussed activities occurring around the region.

An Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Local Development District planning grant was submitted on January 17th by the NEGRC Planning & Government Services Division for a one-year funding cycle of 2023. The grant is expected to provide \$73,300 in federal funding to assist with planning and community development planning activities in the four ARC counties. A 50% NEGRC match will be required for this grant and provided by local dues.

The Committee also discussed and reviewed interest by Georgia’s Regional Commissions (GARC) to request restorative funding to the 2010 level of the Commissions’ planning contract through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The 2010 level would increase the current contract amount by \$75,190 for Northeast Georgia as well as the other 11 Regional Commissions.

A letter to each Northeast Georgia General Assembly member is recommended to formally support and request restoring this funding. Based on their review, the Committee supports this effort and preparation of written requests. Therefore, the Committee requests approval for the NEGRC to prepare and send written letters to our General Assembly members asking they restore planning-grant funds to the 2010 level in the form of motions. The motions passed unanimously.



Executive Director's Report – Burke Walker

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

Council

Executive Director Walker welcomed several new Council members. Chairman Jernigan (Jasper County) and Commissioner Blake McCormack (Morgan County). He also thanked Mayor Howard (Monroe) for accepting the Chairmanship of the Planning and Government Services (PGS) Committee.

Monitoring

Executive Director Walker stated that the NEGRC was six months into its fiscal year, and several Divisions are completing required monitoring and reviews. Executive Director Walker and six of the Aging staff participated in the SF23 Mid-year review with the Division of Aging Services (DAS) staff. Assistant Deputy Commissioner Marylea Boatwright Quinn convened the meeting with members of her DAS staff.

Rushton and Company, with the assistance of NEGRC's CFO, Sophia Primer, have compiled information for the Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority's annual audit.

Carol Cofer, Director of NEGRC's Workforce Division, usually reports on Workforce program totals and the numbers of adults, youth, and dislocated workers served for the year, but that data will be presented at the Council meeting in February.

GARC

Executive Director Walker shared that Laura Mathis convened her first Georgia Association of Regional Commissions (GARC) meeting as President. Laura is the Executive Director of the Middle Georgia Regional Commission and will preside as GARC President over the next two years.

As discussed by the Planning and Government Services Committee, the NEGRC will prepare a letter to send to our legislative delegation in support of restoring funding for our DCA Planning contract. The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) provided an update on their meeting on behalf of the GARC with Commissioner Nunn of DCA, who was supportive of this request. In addition, Terry Matthews and Scott Maxwell, who serves as the GARC's legislative consultants, will provide separate GARC letters personally to members of the General Assembly.

EDA

Executive Director Walker announced that a request was received from the Economic Development Administration within the Department of Commerce. EDA is interested in the recent storm damage affecting businesses, supply chains, etc., in the area. EDA asked for specific information from the regions to submit to Congress for disaster relief funding. In past natural disasters, EDA has been used successfully in Northeast Georgia. Executive Director Walker or PGS Division Director Mark Beatty should be contacted to provide any disaster-related information that will, in turn, be submitted to EDA.



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

Other Business

Chairman Palmer reminded the Council of the next meeting on February 16, 2023. He also said that, due to a scheduling conflict at Trumps, our April meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 19th, at noon.

Adjournment

Chairman 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

February 16, 2023

Date Approved