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Date: February 16, 2023

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Location: Trumps Catering

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## Minutes

### **Members Present:**

Marcello Banes  
Linda Blechinger  
Michael Coile  
John Daniell  
David Dyer  
Dodd Ferrelle  
Cary Fordyce  
Kelly Girtz  
Pat Graham  
Daniel Graves  
Doug Haynie  
Todd Higdon  
John Howard  
Don Jernigan  
Byron Lombard  
Blake McCormack  
Wendell McNeal  
Bill Palmer  
Jay Paul  
Fred Perriman  
Billy Pittard  
Joel Seymour  
Shane Short  
Amy Stone  
Brad Tucker

### **Members Absent:**

Louise Adams  
Ronnie Boggs  
Phil Brock  
Tom Crow  
Steve Horton  
Janet Jones  
Terry Lawler  
Jill Parham  
Flemie Pitts  
Bill Ritter  
Roy Roberts  
Jim Shaw  
Craig Snow  
David Thompson  
Frank Turner  
Lee Vaughn

### **Guests Present:**

Marty Clark, Jackson County  
Beth Eavenson, DCA  
Kevin Mason, Collins GA-10  
Kevin Poe, Jackson County  
Carol Williams, Workforce Dev. Bd.

### **Staff Present:**

Amber Bailey  
Julie Ball  
Mark Beatty  
Carol Cofer  
Phillip Jones  
Sophia Primer  
Megan Vogt  
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 January 19, 2023 minutes were distributed prior to today's meeting. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes. A motion was made by Cary Fordyce and seconded by Mayor Linda Blechinger. The motion carried unanimously.



## **Items of Local Interest**

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

### **Newton County – Chairman Marcello Banes**

- Archer Aviation has announced that it will invest \$118 Million and create 750 jobs in the area.
- Publix, Whataburger, and Panda Express have recently opened in the new Covington Town Center.
- A \$212 Million ARPA Grant was awarded for water infrastructure improvements.
- Georgia Piedmont Technical College’s enrollments have increased by 13%.
- The median household income is now above \$70,000.
- Three Ring Studios is now in Phase II of construction, a 120+ acre site.
- Absolics, an SKC subsidiary, has a new project underway.
- Meta, in Stanton Springs, is making progress.
- Rivian, in Stanton Springs North, is making progress.

### **Oconee County – Chairman John Daniell**

- The city of Bogart partnered with the Oconee County Sherriff’s Office to complete a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) Office.
- A construction contract was just awarded for the Watkinsville branch of the Oconee County Library, which will be relocating to Wire Park.
- Charter’s broadband project is under construction.
- The parks and recreation trails Master Plan will soon go out to the public for comment.

### **Oglethorpe County – Chairman Jay Paul**

- The issue of sludge dumping continues to be a major concern in the area. Chairman Paul, Todd Higdon, Lee Vaughn, and Sam Moore met with several Senators, lobbyists, and legislators at the state Capital on February 1, 2023 to discuss this issue.

### **Walton County – Shane Short**

- The South Walton Community Center has opened in Social Circle.
- A new Fire Station has also been completed in the South Walton area, and another fire station will soon be underway in the Good Hope area.
- The new Hard Labor Creek Water Treatment Facility will soon begin construction in conjunction with Oconee County.
- A new \$140 Million jail will be built.
- The Rivian project is moving forward despite appeals from the State of Georgia.



## **Committee Reports**

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

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

The Committee reviewed the December 2022 financial statements for the 6th month of the fiscal year that reported revenues in excess of expenditures by \$154,477.22.

As presented, Mayor Perriman made motions to accept the December 2022 financial reports. The motions passed unanimously.

The Technical College System of Georgia's (TCSG) Office of Workforce Development recently monitored the NEGRC's WorkSource program. From this review, the Office suggested that the NEGRC update its Bank Reconciliation Policy to include: (1) the bank reconciliation preparer's signature and; (2) a separate approver's signature along with the date of completion for each function. The policy was also updated to extend the completion date of the reconciliation from 20 days to 31 days after the following month. The Committee has reviewed these recommended changes.

Mayor Perriman made motions to accept the two policy addendums 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 two technical-assistance requests for the month. These require Council actions.

The City of Auburn and the City of Greensboro each requested assistance developing an update to their comprehensive plans. Any applicable fees will be quoted later, based on further discussion with the Cities.

Based on a recommendation by the Executive Director followed by the Committee's review, the Committee recommends approving these technical-assistance requests for inclusion in the FY2023 program-of-work effective February 16, 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.

The Regional Plan draft is nearly complete and is expected to be shared with the Council for review before the March meeting. A second and final public hearing will be held at the NEGRC main office in March before transmittal to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and will be shared on the NEGRC website.



The Planning & Government Services Division hopes to fill a vacancy for the Grants and Planning Specialist position this week. This position will enable the PGS Division to better meet the needs of local governments concerning grant writing, administration, and regional economic development initiatives.

There were no actions that required Council's vote.

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

Executive Director Burke Walker greeted the Council and thanked everyone for their attendance. He stated that he would report on several internal and external matters.

#### **Legislative Update**

Executive Director Walker stated that letters had been sent to members of the General Assembly requesting the restoration of the Regional Commission's Planning grant (through DCA) to its 2010 level.

At the February Georgia Association of Regional Commissions (GARC) meeting, Terry Matthews reported that he had met with Rep. Penny Houston and provided the letter/request from GARC. In addition, Terry reported there are many budget requests and indicated this might be a multi-year effort.

SB-26 recently passed and will allow Development Authorities and Local Workforce Development Boards to meet telephonically. This proposed change in state law is familiar and something various groups have worked towards for years. However, it is now pending approval by the Rules Committee.

#### **Building Conditions**

Executive Director Walker stated that the NEGRC headquarters continues to have maintenance issues disrupting office operations. Multiple HVAC units need repairs or total replacement. Executive Director Walker met with Mayors Haynie and Perriman, Chairs of the Personnel and Finance Committees, respectively, to discuss the issues. A building Committee is also needed to explore options and consider possible solutions for NEGRC's headquarters. Chairman Palmer will name this Committee under "Other Business." Sophia Primer (NEGRC Chief Financial Officer) and Mark Beatty (NEGRC Planning & Government Services Director) will support the Committee and present information based on their research to those members.

#### **AAA Resolution**

Executive Director Walker stated that each year the Department of Human Resources (DHS) requires the adoption of a resolution that commits the NEGRC'S Aging Division to provide aging services to the region. Two documents were circulated prior to the meeting: Standard Assurance for Services and a resolution that the NEGRC enters into a contract with DHS.



**Action:** Executive Director Walker asked the Council to consider adopting the DHS resolution. Chairperson Palmer motioned to adopt the resolution that was seconded by Mayor Linda Blechinger. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Staff**

Executive Director Walker congratulated NEGRC Human Resources Manager Amber Bailey on passing the exam to become a Society for Human Resource Management “Certified Professional” (SHRM-CP).

### **Workforce Report – Carol Rayburn-Cofer**

Executive Director Walker asked Carol Cofer (Workforce Division Director) to give her yearly report on the Workforce Program’s activities, support, and training.

There were no questions or comments, so Executive Director Walker concluded his report following the Workforce Report.

### **Other Business**

Chairperson Palmer said he would like to appoint a Building Committee to review information, consider options, and oversee potential solutions for the NEGRC Headquarters as previously mentioned. He asked that Mayor Kelly Girtz serve as the Committee’s Chairperson. The Building Committee will also include these members: Mayor Daniel Graves, Shane Short, Brad Tucker, Billy Pittard, and Byron Lombard. If any other Councilmembers are interested in serving, he asked that they speak to or contact him directly. He then thanked these Committee members for their willingness to serve.

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

### **Adjournment**

Chairperson Palmer thanked everyone for their attendance, and with no further business to come before the Council, he adjourned the meeting at 1:00 p.m.

  
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Julie Ball, Executive Assistant  
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

March 16, 2023  
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Date Approved