

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

As the NEGRC closed one fiscal year on June 30, 2023 and begins a new one on July 1, 2023, it brings several new changes to our organization. Most importantly, the NEGRC's Council begins the year with new leadership. As required in the NEGRC bylaws, elections are held in odd numbered years for new Council Officers. A nominating committee was appointed by NEGRC Chairperson Palmer in May to facilitate these elections.

At the NEGRC's June 15, 2023 Council meeting, a Nominating Committee report, given by **Mayor Doug Haynie**, Vice-Chairperson of the NEGRC Nominating Committee, presented a new slate of officers that included the following: **Linda Blechinger**, Mayor of City of Auburn, as Chairperson; **John Daniell**, Oconee County Chairman, as Vice-Chairperson; and **Shane Short**, Walton County's non-public member, as Secretary. These new officers were duly elected by the Council in June and will each serve a two-year term.

At this meeting too, **Bill Palmer** (Elbert County), NEGRC Chairperson, presided over his final meeting. Mr. Palmer has served the NEGRC as an officer for six years. During his time, he has also served on numerous Committees including the Planning & Government Services Committee, Nominating Committee, and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee. Palmer is also the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions' (GARC) Policy Board member, attending its bi-monthly meetings. Our organization owes a great deal of gratitude to Mr. Palmer for his service over the past six years. At our final meeting of the year, Bill Palmer received the NEGRC Chairman's award, given on behalf of the Council and presented by **Mayor Doug Haynie**.

As we enter the new year too, the NEGRC looks forward to continuing our partnerships with many state and federal agencies that financially support our organization across its three, programmatic divisions including: Planning & Government Services, Aging, and Workforce Development Divisions. The Administrative Division provides staff- and fiscal-support services, maintains building functions, and providing administrative and fiscal duties to the Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority.

The June Council meeting also included the review and adoption of the NEGRC's annual-work program, presented by **Mayor Dodd Ferrelle**, Chairman of the Program-of-Work Committee. Two new additions this year are a Dementia Care Specialist under our Aging Division and "Rapid Response" support through the Workforce Division. The adopted Program-of-Work is updated monthly with technical-assistance requests that come from our sixty-six (66) member local governments. The new fiscal year is additionally supported by our local governments' annual dues that match our state and federal grants and provide operational support. Our SFY24 proposed budget that includes the dues revenues, was also adopted at our June Council meeting as presented by **Mayor Fred Perriman**, Chairman of the NEGRC's Audit & Finance Committee.

Earlier this year, NEGRC **Chairperson Palmer** appointed a NEGRC "Building Committee" to look at options for our original, headquarter's building, constructed in 1972. The original building needs major repairs and improvements for its continued service. The Committee includes **Mayor Kelly Girtz** (Chairman), **Mayor Daniel Graves**, **Mr. Brad Tucker**, **Mr. Shane Short**, **Mr. Byron Lombard**, and **Mr. Billy Pittard**. The Committee met in March to review a "Building Report" developed by **Mark Beatty**, NEGRC Director of Planning & Government Services, that provided preliminary information on the building's size, current conditions, and preliminary options/alternatives. The Committee met again in May to review and issue a RFQ for architectural, professional services for a qualified consultant to evaluate building-improvement options. The RFQ solicitation ended last month and submissions are currently under review with the Building Committee expected to meet again in August.

On a final note, our June Council meeting also included two student guests, invited by **Mayor Perriman** and **Martha Revelo** from Senator Warnock's office. **Hudson Osborne** is an intern with Senator's Warnock's office and **John Solis-Barcenas** is a WIOA Summer Youth Intern with the City of Madison. It was great to have these two young people attend our meeting and for them to see and learn about the Regional Commission's programs and activities, meet local-government leaders, and, hopefully, find interest in serving communities in the future.



Chairperson Palmer (left) receiving his Charman's Award with wife, Rita



(Right to Left) Mayor Doug Haynie, Bill Palmer, John Daniell, and Burke Walker



Burke Walker (left) and Senator Warnock's intern, Hudson Osborne

2023 B.J. SMITH COMMUNITY SERVANT AWARD RECIPIENTS

The 18th B.J. Smith Community Servant Award Ceremony, hosted by the Northeast Georgia Workforce Development Board (WDB), was held on Thursday, June 8th, in Ila, Georgia. B.J. Smith served in many roles as a community servant. Prior to his active board involvement in Madison County, he served as a meteorologist with the National Weather Service beginning in 1972. He was stationed at Athens Ben-Epps Airport. While with the Weather Service, he had his first experience with the local area's summer youth work experience program serving as a worksite supervisor of JTPA summer youth participants. After retiring from the weather service in 1990, he joined the Northeast Georgia Private Industry Council (the predecessor to the Northeast Georgia Workforce Investment Board) as the Madison County private-sector representative. He was actively involved as a director of the Madison County Chamber of Commerce board and worked on the economic-development committee.

Mr. Smith felt that providing people with the tools necessary to ensure their success was much more fruitful than providing temporary handouts. After his passing in March 2005, the Workforce Development Board wanted to honor his commitment to community service and his memory. "The B.J. Smith Community Servant Award" was established in February 2006, with the first awards presented in June 2006. Including this year's winners, a total of 49 deserving youth have been awarded this scholarship in the Northeast Georgia region over the past 18 years.

The 2023 B.J. Smith Community Servant Award winners receive a \$750 college scholarship. This year's winners are listed below:

JAIDEN GRANT - Jaiden lives in Madison County and is a 2023 Madison County High School graduate. Jaiden will be attending Savannah State University and plans on pursuing a career in Electrical Engineering. Jaiden has been an active volunteer with the Boys and Girls Club of Athens, mentoring young children. Jaiden also volunteered to help a family friend with her autistic son, encouraging him to try different activities. Jaiden played football for two years at Madison County High School.

JACERE COOPER - Jacere is a resident of Morgan County and a 2023 graduate of Morgan County High School. He will be attending Southern Wesleyan University, majoring in Biomedical Engineering. Jacere has volunteered with Habitat for Humanity, the Madison Food Pantry, and Feed the Need. Jacere was a Running Back on the Varsity Football team, where he won the Most Valuable Player. Jacere was a member of the National Honor Society.

ALANA DANIELS - Alana is a resident of Barrow County and a 2023 graduate of Winder Barrow High School. Alana plans to attend Athens Technical College and transfer to Georgia Southern University. Her goal is to obtain a Bachelor's Degree in Radiologic Technology. While in High School, Alana played basketball for four years and also played recreational softball. She is active in her church, hosted a family for Christmas, and was a 2023 Special Olympics Volunteer.

These scholarships are presented to WIOA students currently enrolled in the WIOA In-School Youth program within the 12-county region. The scholarships will assist with books, fees, tuition, and related expenses during the recipient's freshman year of college. These scholarships will be coordinated with other financial assistance the student may qualify for (i.e., Hope Grant/Scholarship).

For further information on the WIOA In-school Youth Program, please contact **Rima Sullivan**, NEGRC/WIOA Youth Program Coordinator, at **706-369-5703**.

Pictured with Mrs. Gladys Smith are Jaiden Grant and Jacere Cooper. Alana Daniels was not able to attend.



SOLSMART SOLAR PROGRAM

Across the U.S., there has been dramatic growth in solar over the past decade. According to the **Solar Market Insight Report**, there are now more than 140 gigawatts of installed solar capacity, enough to power 25 million American homes. Over the next ten years, the industry is expected to grow by more than five times, reaching an installed capacity of more than 700 gigawatts by 2033. Local governments can play an important role in helping to support solar and reduce costs for residents. Local governments can also help drive down solar costs by reducing permitting and inspection time, streamlining inspections, educating local residents, improving financing options, and supporting group purchase programs. SolSmart is a national program funded by the U.S. Department of Energy to recognize and support local governments that want to support solar in their communities. Local governments receive free technical assistance and can earn recognition (Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum levels) when they take action in their communities. All cities, towns, counties, and regional organizations are eligible to join SolSmart. If you are interested in SolSmart, visit www.SolSmart.org to learn more, and click "Join SolSmart" to get started.

NEGRC COMPLETES REGIONAL PLAN UPDATE

The Planning & Government Services Division has completed the five-year update of the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan. This document serves as a guide for the region that identifies short- and long-term strategies to enhance the region's prosperity and competitiveness, improve the quality-of-life for all residents, and establish a framework for regional coordination and cooperation. It includes a work program for Regional Commission staff and stakeholders to accomplish over the five-year period. It is also used as a reference in daily operations for grant writing, plan reviews, and Developments of Regional Impact (DRI).

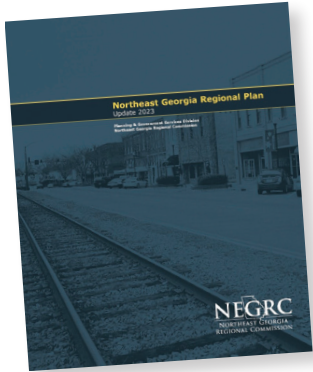
DCA determined as of May 18th that the 2023 update of the NEGRC's Regional Plan adequately addressed the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning. The NEGRC Council voted unanimously to adopt the plan at the June 15th meeting.

The Planning & Government Services (PGS) Division receives annual funding from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for planning such activities. Services include:

- Performing various regional-planning studies.
- Assisting local governments with comprehensive plan preparation.
- Performing DRI reviews.

- Performing other state-required plan reviews.
- Providing technical assistance for local-plan implementation.

If you would like to learn more about the services offered through the Georgia DCA contract and what the updated Regional Plan includes, contact **Mark Beatty** at mbeatty@negrc.org or **(706) 369-5650**.



Regional Plan cover page. The Plan can be accessed through the Planning & Government Services tab at www.negrc.org

The Northeast Georgia Area Agency on Aging (NEGRC-AAA) will host Farmers' Markets at its 12 Senior Centers in Northeast Georgia between July 24th and 28th, 2023.

This year's farmer markets will provide access to locally grown fruit, herbs, and vegetables to 1,900+ senior-center participants. The seniors who participate in the farmer markets often report that they need access to fresh produce and often only eat fruit and vegetables offered through the Congregate and Home Delivered meals programs.

If you know any seniors that need nutrition support, please contact your local senior center for resources or call the **Aging and Disability Resource Connection** at **1-888-808-8020**.

ALZHEIMER'S AND BRAIN AWARENESS

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission - Area Agency on Aging (NEGRC-AAA) Dementia Care Specialist Katrina Ogbe recently led an Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness education session with her peers. June was also Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month. The Alzheimer's Association asks that companies wear purple to show their commitment to ending Alzheimer's disease. On June 13, 2023, NEGRC-AAA staff wore purple to show its support for Alzheimer's and to educate its staff on the Alzheimer's epidemic.

Katrina provided education and awareness to those who participated. She educated the group through a musical exercise. The group learned that music could shift mood, relieve stress, lessen agitation, stimulate positive interaction, coordinate motor movements, and help cognitive functions when used appropriately.

Alzheimer's is a type of dementia that affects memory, thinking, and behavior. Over 130,000 Georgians of all ages are estimated to have Alzheimer's Disease or related dementia. This number is expected to increase over the next decade to approximately 190,000, or 46%. Alzheimer's and brain awareness are important to ensure the community is prepared to serve those affected by the disease. The Dementia Care Specialist position will lead in educating the clients, care partners, health providers, and local communities to ensure this disease is treated throughout Northeast Georgia.

To learn more about Alzheimer's, brain awareness, or dementia, please call the AAA at **1-888-808-8020** to speak with **Katrina Ogbe** or an Options Counselor.

2023 NORTHEAST GEORGIA SENIOR NUTRITION FARMERS' MARKET PROGRAM

The Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) is designed to provide low-income seniors access to locally grown fruits, vegetables, honey, and herbs. The domestic consumption of agricultural commodities is increased through farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community-supported agriculture programs.



Samples of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables



Dupree Farms will provide fresh fruits and vegetables to 1900+ seniors in Northeast Georgia

Market Date	Market Location Name	Market Hours	Primary Contact Name & Number
7/24/2023	Athens Community Council on Aging	9:00 - 10:00 am	Allyn Rippin (706) 549-4850
7/24/2023	Walton County Senior Center	11:00 am - 12:00 pm	Vickie Gasaway (770) 267-6589
7/24/2023	Jackson County Senior Center	1:00 - 2:00 pm	Kathy Branyon (706) 367-5101
7/25/2023	Greene County Senior Center	9:00 - 10:00 am	Kia Huff (706) 453-7463
7/25/2023	Newton County Senior Center	11:30 am - 12:30 pm	Freda Reed (770) 787-0038
7/26/2023	Barrow County Senior Center	9:00 - 10:00 am	Dan Magee (770) 307-3024, ext. 5
7/26/2023	Jasper County Senior Center	11:30 am - 12:30 pm	Brenda Jacobs (706) 468-7507
7/27/2023	Oglethorpe County Senior Center	9:00 - 10:00 am	Corie Robinson (706) 743-8848
7/27/2023	Elbert County Senior Center	11:00 am - 12:00 pm	Lisa Dixon (706) 283-2033
7/28/2023	Morgan County Senior Center	9:00 - 10:00 am	Mary Nunn (706) 342-1614
7/28/2023	Oconee County Senior Center	11:00 am - 12:00 pm	Merry Howard (706) 769-3979
7/28/2023	Madison County Senior Center	11:00 am - 12:00 pm	Kelsey Tyner (706) 795-6250



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REGIONAL MEETINGS JULY

4 th	All Day	Closed for Independence Day Holiday	
19 th	1:30 p.m.	Aging Services Advisory Council	NEGRC
26 th	9:00 a.m.	UOBWA Meeting	NEGRC