



Date: October 19, 2023

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Location: Trumps Catering

Minutes

Members Present:

Marcello Banes
Micheal Coile
John Daniell
Dodd Ferrelle
Cary Fordyce
Kelly Girtz
Pat Graham
Doug Haynie
Todd Higdon
John Howard
Tommie Jennings
Janet Jones
Dee Lindsey
Blake McCormack
Wendell McNeal
Bill Palmer
Jay Paul
Fred Perriman
Joel Seymour
Shane Short
William Trimier
Brad Tucker

Members Absent:

Louise Adams
Linda Blechinger
Ronnie Boggs
Phil Brock
Tom Crow
David Dyer
Daniel Graves
Serra Hall
Steve Horton
Don Jernigan
Jesse Johnson
Terry Lawler
Byron Lombard
Billy Pittard
Flemmie Pitts
Roy Roberts
Jim Shaw
Craig Snow
Amy Stone
David Thompson
Lee Vaughn

Guests Present:

Crystal Brock, Bogart
Katrina Cochran, Senator Warnock
Kevin Mason, Collins GA-10

Staff Present:

Amber Bailey
Julie Ball
Mark Beatty
Carol Cofer
Peggy Jenkins
Sophia Primer
Burke Walker

Call to Order

Vice Chairperson John Daniell called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. He mentioned that Chairperson Linda Blechinger could not be with us today and he will be chairing the meeting on her behalf. He requested that everyone rise and join him in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. He then invited any guests or visitors to introduce themselves.

Vice Chairperson Daniell informed the attendees that the minutes from September 21, 2023, were distributed before today's meeting. He called for a motion to approve the minutes unless there were any corrections or changes. A motion was made by Mayor John Howard and seconded by Commissioner Blake Howard. The motion passed unanimously.



Items of Local Interest

Vice Chairperson John Daniell announced that today, 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

- The new Covington Town Center area recently welcomed a Whataburger™, Jim N Nick’s Barbecue, and Chic-Fil-A™. A new Home 2 Suites™ also recently opened in Covington.
- Three Ring Studios expanded their facilities.
- Arbor Aviation has chosen Evans as their General Contractor, and this project is being financed by Synovus Bank.
- The Senior Center recently had a ribbon cutting for their expanded facility.
- A new strategic plan for water will be completed that should cover growth in the area through 2075.

Oconee County – Chairman John Daniell

- The new Oconee County library should be opening to the public in January 2024.
- The Oconee Fall Festival will be held on the weekend of October 21. Rocket Field has been updated with new lights and turf.
- The volunteer fire department received an ISO rating of 4.8 for the second time.

Oglethorpe County – Chairman Jay Paul

- Large solar farms have been an issue in the county so a moratorium has been issued on applications for six months until the Planning and Zoning Department can create a set of zoning ordinances and add an amendment to the Unified Development Code.

Walton County – John Ward for Chairman David Thompson

- Three big projects are underway. Rivian continues construction on a \$5 Billion, 2,000-acre project that will create 7,500 jobs. The first phase of the project will consist of 5 million square feet. A new access road and interchange on I-20 will be constructed.
- A second Quick Start facility will be added to primarily serve Rivian. The first was primarily for Takeda Pharmaceuticals. North Georgia Technical College will be providing additional training opportunities at their location in Monroe through cooperation with the Workforce Development Program.
- Construction has begun on a new \$152 million jail. The previous facility from 1987 had 367 beds. The new facility will have 850 beds and will be located near the County Courthouse for ease of transportation.
- The third major project, the Hard Labor Creek Water Treatment Plant, is still in the design phase.



- The County is working on next year's budget. \$47 million in grants was brought in last year with the largest grant being \$42 million for the water system. \$12 million will be placed back in the reserves.

Committee Reports

Audit & Finance – Mayor Fred Perriman

Mayor Perriman said the Audit & Finance Committee members met earlier today and reviewed one item that requires Council action today.

The Committee reviewed the August 2023 financial statements for the second month of the fiscal year that reported revenues in excess of expenditures by \$91,094.88. The expenditures for this period align with the FY24 budgeted projections with 83% of the budget remaining. Cary Fordyce made a motion to accept the report as presented. The motion was seconded by Tommy Jennings. The motion passed unanimously.

Program-of-Work – Mayor Dodd Ferrelle

Mayor Ferrelle said the Program-of-Work Committee met prior to today's Council meeting to review two project requests for the month that require Council action today. There were no project closeouts for the month.

The two technical-assistance requests for the month include the following:

- The City of Arcade requested assistance in developing an update to their local, comprehensive plan. The fee for this assistance is \$3,000.
- The City of Carl requested assistance in developing a grant application to the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) for sewer-system improvements. There is no fee for this assistance as costs are provided by the Commission's ARC planning grant and local dues.

Based on a recommendation by the Executive Director followed by the Committee's review, the Committee recommended approving these technical-assistance requests for inclusion in the FY2024 program-of-work. A motion was made by Brad Tucker and seconded by Mayor John Howard. The motion 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.

He also noted that an online survey for the Northeast Georgia Transit Development Plan is live as of October 11th. That survey will allow all stakeholders and members of the public to weigh in on what transit should look like in our region in the future. All are encouraged to access the survey by using a QR code at the sign-in desk before you leave.



Executive Director's Report – Burke Walker

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

Embrace Program

Executive Director Walker discussed the presentation by GMA's Freddie Broome at the previous month's Council meeting regarding the Embrace Program and the corresponding Resolution being presented to the Council. The Resolution states the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission's staff and Council will adopt a civility pledge in conducting their duties and responsibilities. Two Georgia Regional Commissions and eight cities in this region have adopted the Resolution. The Resolution must be adopted every two years for the pledge to remain active and there is no cost associated with doing so. Executive Director Walker stated that if there were no questions it would be appropriate for a motion to adopt the resolution. A motion to adopt the Embrace Program's pledge of civility was made by John Howard and seconded by Dodd Ferrelle. The motion passed unanimously.

GARC Annual Training Conference

Executive Director Walker informed the Council that the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions would convene its annual training conference from November 8-10. Both NEGRC staff and several Council members will attend. On Wednesday, November 8, Executive Director Walker and Mr. Bill Palmer (GARC Policy Member) will attend the GARC Board meeting.

NEGRC Annual Report

Executive Director Walker discussed the development of an agency-wide annual report. In November, the first annual report for Fiscal year 23 should be ready. Please contact Executive Director Walker or Planning and Government Services Director, Mark Beatty, with any questions or suggestions for distribution.

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

Other Business

Vice Chairman Daniell reminded attendees that the next NEGRC Council meeting is scheduled for November 16, 2023.



Adjournment

With no further business before the Council, Vice Chairperson Daniell adjourned the meeting at 12:52 p.m.



Julie Ball, Executive Assistant
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

November 16, 2023
Date Approved