



Date: January 18, 2024

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Location: Trumps Catering

Minutes

Members Present:

Ronnie Boggs
Michael Coile
John Daniell
David Dyer
Dodd Ferrelle
Daniel Graves
Serra Hall
Doug Haynie
Bruce Henry
Todd Higdon
Janet Jones
Deborah Krause
Terry Lawler
Blake McCormack
Wendell McNeal
Bill Palmer
Jay Paul
Fred Perriman
Jim Shaw
Shane Short
William Trimier
Brad Tucker

Members Absent:

Louise Adams
Marcello Banes
Phil Brock
Tom Crow
Cary Fordyce
Kelly Girtz
Pat Graham
John Howard
Tommie Jennings
Jesse Johnson
Dee Lindsey
Byron Lombard
Billy Pittard
Flemie Pitts
Roy Roberts
Craig Snow
David Thompson
Lee Vaughn

Guests Present:

Kay Argroves, AARP
Wendy Bond, Winterville
Katrina Cochran, Senator Warnock
Beth Eavenson, DCA
Mike Fisher, WGI
Kevin Mason, Congressman Collins
Salik Sohani, Senator Warnock
Carol Williams, WDB

Staff Present:

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

Call to Order

Chairperson John Daniell called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. He welcomed attendees to the Council meeting and requested that everyone rise and join him in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairperson Daniell informed the Council of the passing of Mr. Joel Seymour from Elbert County, who was the longest-serving member as an Associate Member and a former Chairperson of our Council. Following this announcement, he invited the Council to observe a moment of silence in honor of Mr. Seymour. Subsequently, Chairperson Daniell urged everyone to keep Joel's wife, Nancy, and the Seymour family in their thoughts and prayers. He then invited any guests or visitors to introduce themselves.



Chairperson Daniell informed the attendees that the November 16, 2023 minutes were distributed before today's meeting. He called for a motion to approve the minutes unless there were corrections or changes. A motion was made by Bill Palmer and seconded by Mayor Dodd Ferrelle to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Items of Local Interest

Chairperson Daniell announced that today, 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 – Jim Shaw

- Due to redistricting, Jackson County will move out of the U.S. 10th Congressional District and return to the 9th District.
- Hoschton has approved a development containing a total of almost 21,000 new residences. They have finalized a water purchase agreement with Barrow County and plan to develop a new Kroger on Highway 53.
- Pendergrass recently approved a couple of rezonings that will eventually result in additional retail space, some apartments, and a new city hall.
- Commerce has purchased 42 acres for a new wastewater treatment facility that is expected to operate in 2026. Commerce has also begun \$13 million in upgrades to its civic center. When this work is completed City Hall will relocate there.
- Jefferson has broken ground on its new \$13 million aquatic center.
- Toyota Industries Electric Systems North America will invest \$69 million in a new manufacturing facility in Jackson County. The facility has broken ground and expects to begin production in 2025 with 80 employees. There are plans for additional phases.
- The county commission has approved higher property tax exemptions for seniors. This must be introduced and passed in this year's state legislative session and approved by local voters in November.
- Six candidates are competing to be elected Sheriff in November.

Jasper County- Bruce Henry

- A \$10 million expansion and renovation project is underway on the Sheriff's office and detention center. Funding is provided 70% by Stanton Springs, 20% by SPLOST, and 10% by impact fees. Inmate housing will increase by 56% from 64 to 100 beds. This project is scheduled to be completed in 2024.
- A new primary care center will open in the Northeast part of the county.
- The recreation park is being improved with new dugouts for the athletic fields. Work should be completed in February 2024.
- Barr Bridge Road is getting a new bridge using the GDOT Low Impact Bridge Program funding.



- Kimberly Lecroy was named as the new 911 Center Director. She has 18 years of experience. Training is underway so staff will be able to provide emergency medical dispatch.
- The Jasper County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2023 Update was adopted at the January 8, 2024 BOC meeting.
- Southern Crescent Technical College is reopening the Monticello campus. Fifty-eight residents are enrolled, and it will have a Welding Technology Mobile Training lab.
- A new planning and zoning director was recently hired. Moratoriums on receiving preliminary plats and rezoning were extended through May 9, 2024.

Madison County – Todd Higdon

- The Rose Golf Course project was approved and will cost nearly \$200 million. This course will be the second largest in the state, behind Augusta National.
- A new fire training facility will be constructed for the county's volunteer firefighters and will be available for the surrounding areas to use.
- The historic courthouse will be renovated and the firm selection process is underway.
- CPL is performing a complete zoning rewrite for the county.

Morgan County – Blake McCormack

- Finalized negotiations with Charter to finish installing fiber cable so every resident in Morgan County will have access.
- Phase 2 of the recreation center project is underway.
- Thirteen miles of road will be paved using TSPLOST funds.
- SPLOST 8 is back on the ballot for March, which would be used for a new fire station and agricultural facility.

Committee Reports

Audit & Finance – Mayor Fred Perriman

Mayor Perriman said the Audit & Finance Committee members met earlier today and reviewed two items that require Council action today.

First, the Committee reviewed the October 2023 financial statements for the 4th month of the fiscal year that reported revenues in excess of expenditures by \$433,248.04. Second, the Committee reviewed the November 2023 financial statements for the 5th month of the fiscal year that reported revenues exceeding expenditures by \$111,456.23.

Mayor Perriman made motions to accept the two financial reports dated October 31, 2023 and November 30, 2023. The motions passed unanimously.



Program-of-Work – Mayor Dodd Ferrelle

Mayor Dodd Ferrelle highlighted the significant absence of Joel Seymour during the morning meeting of the Program-of-Work Committee, expressing that his presence will be greatly missed.

He continued to say the Program-of-Work Committee met before today's Council meeting to review six project requests for the month. These require Council action today.

The project requests include the following:

- The City of Commerce requested assistance in updating their comprehensive plan. The fee for this assistance is \$6,000.
- The City of Oxford requested assistance in developing a RAISE (Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity) grant application for a pedestrian bridge on state route 81 and over Interstate 20. This is a joint application with the City of Covington. The fee for this assistance is \$500.
- The City of Oxford requested assistance developing an application for a Bicycle Friendly Community designation from the League of American Bicyclists. There is no fee for this assistance as costs are provided through the Commission's GDOT planning contract.
- The City of Talmo requested assistance in updating their comprehensive plan. The fee for this assistance is \$1,500.
- Athens-Clarke County requested assistance in preparing a 1772 Foundation grant application from the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation on behalf of the Historic Cobbham Foundation. The fee for this assistance is \$500.
- The City of Winterville requested assistance developing a grant application from the Skatepark Project Program to construct a skatepark. There is no fee for this assistance as costs are provided through the Commission's GDOT planning contract.

Based on recommendations by the Executive Director followed by the Committee's review, Mayor Ferrelle recommended approving the six technical assistance requests for inclusion in the NEGRC's FY2024 Program-of-Work in the form of motions. The motions passed unanimously.

Planning and Government Services – Bill Palmer for Mayor John Howard

Mr. Palmer said the Planning & Government Services Committee has one item that requires Council action today. The Committee 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 and the other 11 Regional Commissions. A letter to each Northeast Georgia General Assembly member is recommended to support and formally request the restoration of this funding. Based on their review, the Committee supports this effort and the preparation of written requests by NEGRC staff. Mr. Palmer made motions for approval of this action. The motions passed unanimously.



Mr. Palmer said the Planning & Government Services (PGS) Division has an upcoming initiative in which all local governments are encouraged to participate. On January 22nd, at 4:00 p.m. PGS staff will host a regional public hearing to begin the update of the Regionally Important Resources Management Plan. All chief elected officials should have received notice for a resource nomination process to occur over the next two months. You may direct any questions to Mark Beatty.

Building Committee – Brad Tucker for Mayor Kelly Girtz

Earlier this month, on January 8, 2024, the Building Committee met to review preliminary design concepts prepared by Goodwin Mills Cawood (GMC), the Commission's selected architectural firm for designing building improvements. There is no action required today by the Council.

Amy Bell and Cody Kucharski, GMC's architects, presented two design concepts. The first concept provided an overall building renovation whereas the second involved more new construction. The Committee also discussed each concept's feasibility, potential costs and funding, and benefits.

Since our meeting, the Committee received and reviewed the schematic designs and provided suggestions to GMC for revisions. The Committee expects to present again at the February Council meeting on the progress of the two design concepts.

Executive Director's Report – Burke Walker

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

Council Changes

Executive Director Walker discussed recent changes and vacancies on the Council. Chairman John Daniell begins the year as the new Chairperson. Mayors Blechinger (Barrow) and Horton (Newton) left office in December, leaving vacancies for municipal representatives. Statham's new mayor, Debbie Krause, was selected to serve on the Council for Barrow County. We are awaiting a mayoral appointment from the cities in Newton County. Executive Director Walker will meet with each of the new appointees to orient them to the Regional Commission. Chairman Bruce Henry (Jasper) and Vice Chairman McCormack (Morgan) will continue to serve on the Council.

Executive Director Walker expressed his appreciation for the many years the late associate Council member Joel Seymour (Elbert County) served. He was the longest-serving Councilmember and served as the Council's Chairman from 1991 to 1993.



Georgia Tax Credits Released

Executive Director Walker discussed the new job tax credits recently released by DCA and Commissioner Nunn for Georgia's 159 counties. Job tax credits provide state tax credits to employers based on certain criteria. Elbert is the only tier 1 county in this region. Clarke, Madison, and Newton are tier 2 counties. Oglethorpe, Greene, Walton, and Jasper are tier 3 counties. Barrow, Jackson, Morgan, and Oconee are tier 4 counties.

Legislative Session

Executive Director Walker informed the Council that in the senate subcommittee's final report, Regional Commissions were included as a resource for communities and to improve mapping services. NEGRC's Planning and Government Services Division Director, Mark Beatty, presented on this topic at a hearing in Braselton. Chairman Pat Graham also provided testimony at this hearing.

Efforts continue to seek restoration of DCA Planning contracts to their 2010 levels for planning assistance.

At a recent Workforce Development Board meeting, Carol Cofer (NEGRC's Workforce Division Director) discussed the efforts to petition the Georgia legislature to allow meetings to be conducted telephonically. At this meeting, contact information for the local legislators was discussed, and a list has been created for those in Northeast Georgia. Julie Ball, NEGRC's Executive Assistant, may be contacted for more information.

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

AARP "Age-Friendly Community" Designation

Kay Argroves, who serves on AARP Georgia's Executive Council, spoke about the "Age-Friendly Community" designation and how our region can achieve this status.

Chairperson Daniell called for a motion to move forward with applying for an "Age-Friendly" community designation for the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission. A motion was made by Mayor Fred Perriman and seconded by Mayor Dodd Ferrelle. The motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

There was no other business.



Adjournment

With no further business before the Council, Chairperson Daniell adjourned the meeting at 1:16 p.m.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie Ball". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Julie Ball, Executive Assistant
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

February 15, 2024

Date Approved