

**NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING
ATHENS HOLIDAY INN
OCTOBER 15, 2015
NOON**

MINUTES

Members Present:

Blechinger, Linda
Denson, Nancy
Eisenman, Emily
Houston, Lamar
Lyon, Tommy
Duvall, Valerie
Crow, Tom
Plott, Roy
Fenn, Josh
Dove, Anthony
Blackmon, Jody
Bentley, David
Ellis, Keith
Roseberry, Jerry
Turner, Frank
Davis, Melvin
Ivie, Charles
Boggs, Ronnie
Little, Kevin
Chambers, Joyce
Fordyce, Cary
Roberts, Roy

Members Absent:

Graham, Pat
Bartlett, Wayne
Guest, Larry
Palmer, Bill
Bullard, Ed
Brock, Phil
Trammell, Gene
Dyer, Dave
Gandy, Roy
Ainslie, Andy
Perriman, Fred
Harden, Amrey
Pittard, Billy
Johnson, Jesse
Thompson, Greg

Associate Members Present:

Ouzts, Buddy

Guests Present:

David Zellner
Michael Wald
Ray McEwen
Michael Lamar
Andrew Seaver
Bob Thomas
Peggy Hackett
Barrie Dunlap
Kevin Poe
Cheryl Smith
Dan Brubaker
Carol Williams
Daniela Belton
Dave Belton

Media Present:

Blake Giles, Oconee Enterprise

Staff Present:

Jim Dove, Executive Director
Mott Beck, Executive Assistant
Evans Brinson, Comptroller
Burke Walker, Planning & Government Services Director

CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

Chairman Frank Turner called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. He welcomed members, media, guests, and staff. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the September meeting. Such a motion was made by Mayor Linda Blechinger and seconded by Mr. David Bentley. The motion carried unanimously.

ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

Jackson County: Over the last several months, additional industrial investments have been announced. An existing industry will be adding 175,000 sq. ft. which will create 10 additional jobs. Groundbreaking for two new spec buildings will be held soon (800,000 sq. ft. and 200,000 sq. ft.). Portillo has announced the construction of a 450,000 sq. ft. spec building and is working with the City of Jefferson to extend the Thomas Parkway in the McClure Industrial Park. Also, a one million sq. ft. spec building will be locating in Braselton. The Taste of Jackson will be held on October 20th at the Commerce Civic Center.

Jasper County: No report.

Madison County: The City of Comer received a GEFA loan for installation of automatic meter readers and installation of new water lines downtown. Comer's Fire Department is a Class 3, and only 4.4% of all fire departments in the State of Georgia are Class 3. Chairman Dove praised the Volunteer Firemen for the fine service they give to Madison County and for their efforts recently when trees were down. A \$1 million energy plant will be locating in Madison County, and a new hatchery is slated to locate near Comer. Chairman Dove commended the counties of Elbert, Madison and Oglethorpe for the regional cooperation exhibited by the three counties as it relates to ongoing road paving projects. He thanked the Regional Commission and staff for all they do to help local governments work together.

Morgan County: Parallel Housing, Inc., a 44-unit affordable senior housing project, broke ground in September. The third and final phase of the Public Safety Building is complete, and houses the City Council Chambers and the Volunteer Fire Department. Construction is ongoing for Captain D's, Main Street Veterinary Clinic, and Hallie Jane's Catering; and Marco's Pizza, Wild Card Café, Holiday Inn Express, and Pizza Hut are all open. The Farmview Markets located at Hwy. 441 and I-20 should be completed in November. This project will create 40 to 50 new private sector jobs. Mannington Mills Plant for luxury vinyl tile will be completed in the next two months. Combined with the expansion last year, Morgan County will have 400 new manufacturing jobs. The County is working with a third party investor on a Power Purchase Agreement to place solar panels on a number of County-owned properties. The third party investor will guarantee the County a favorable rate/kilowatt; and after the project runs its time (35 years), the County will own the panels. County Manager Michael Lamar advised that Executive Director Dove and Executive Assistant Mott Beck did an excellent job facilitating the Strategic Planning Session for Morgan County, and a lot of good ideas were discussed by the BOC.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit & Finance: Members of the Audit & Finance Committee met prior to the Council meeting to review the financial statements for the three-month period ending September 30, 2015. Revenues exceeded expenses by \$2,852. Financial activity for the three-month period was approximately 1/4th of the annual FY2016 Budget projections. A motion to approve the financial report as presented was made by Mr. Lamar Houston and seconded by Mr. Bentley. The motion carried unanimously.

Program of Work: The Program of Work Committee met prior to the Council meeting to review the following technical assistance requests for the month.

1. **CITY OF OXFORD** – Assistance in preparing a GDOT grant for landscaping improvements. The fee for this assistance will not exceed \$500.
2. **CITY OF PORTERDALE** – Assistance in Administering a 2015 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for waste-water improvements. The fee for this assistance is \$2,500 that is included in the grant award and will be used through project completion.

Based upon recommendation from the Executive Director, a motion to accept the technical assistance requests for the month to be added to the FY2016 Program of Work, effective October 15, 2015, was made by Mr. Ronnie Boggs and seconded by Commissioner Tommy Lyon. The motion carried unanimously.

Planning and Government Services: The Committee met prior to the Council meeting and discussed several items of interest. One item of particular interest was the Regional Plan. This Plan includes a list of Regionally Important Resources (RIR), and the Committee recommends an update to the list and the Plan itself. There is no need for Council action at this time; however, over the next several months staff will identify draft revisions for the Committee's review and Council approval in February 2016.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Executive Director Dove and Executive Assistant Mott Beck facilitated a retreat for the Newton County Board of Commissioners on October 7th. A number of topics were covered including finances, water resources, SPLOST, form of government, and solid waste. Dove and Beck will be facilitating the annual retreat for the City of Oxford on November 13th, and a follow-up session for the Village of Porterdale will be held on November 10th.

Several months ago, Executive Director Dove advised that staff was undertaking a Salary Survey and Compensation Study for Oconee County employees. The PGS Division is carrying out this project; specifically Planner Justin Crighton and Austin

Arrowwood, an MPA student from UGA. The process is progressing very well, and it is anticipated that a draft will be presented to the Oconee County BOC at a Work Session in late November.

The Department of Economic Development Workforce Investment Division conducted its annual monitoring visit to the Regional Commission the week of October 5th. The three-person team conducted an extensive review of files, finances, etc., and came away with only one finding and one recommendation. Again, the Workforce staff was noted for a stellar performance.

Executive Director Dove gave members an update on Council Member Charlie Crawford who fell and broke his hip recently. He had surgery to install a plate and will be undergoing extensive physical therapy.

Mr. Michael Roberts of GEFA will be the featured speaker at the meeting in November. Executive Director Dove advised that he had heard Mr. Roberts speak on two occasions recently, and he should bring an informative and interesting presentation.

At this time, Mr. Michael Wald, GeorgiaCares Volunteer, gave a report on services offered through that program and tips on how to prevent healthcare fraud. GeorgiaCares is a trusted source of information about Medicare and other related insurance. It provides personalized counseling, education, and outreach to assist Medicare beneficiaries with their Medicare questions. The Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) empowers seniors to prevent healthcare fraud to preserve Medicare and Medicaid for future generations. Mr. Wald provided brochures detailing the different programs and services offered through GeorgiaCares.

CITY OF COMMERCE PLANNING EFFORTS

The next item on the agenda was a report on the City of Commerce by David Zellner, Community Improvement Manager. In planning for the update to the Comprehensive Plan, the major portion of questions and needs coming out of the stakeholders meetings were targeted toward the downtown area. Staff met with Regional Commission staff to determine if a "specialized plan" could be developed that would coincide with the Comprehensive Plan update. Thus, the Blueprint Strategy was "born". The goal for the Blueprint Strategy is to develop a blueprint for downtown Commerce that builds upon existing assets, meets the needs of the community and fosters a vibrant economic town center. Development of the Strategy relied heavily on stakeholder discourse, with stakeholder meetings held monthly between August and April. Public input was also critical in development of the Blueprint Strategy. A robust strategy for gaining public attendance and participation at two public meetings was utilized and included reaching out to property owners, schools, churches, veterans, garden clubs, civic clubs and minority neighborhoods for their involvement. With the input gathered from the stakeholders and the public, the needs, opportunities and goals for downtown Commerce were identified. The Blueprint Strategy document will be of use to elected officials, City staff, boards and other entities to help in making decisions

that are in the best interest of the community, for grant procurement, in building partnerships, and as a tool for working towards the community's goals.

UPDATE ON COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION

At this time, Comptroller Evans Brinson gave an update on the Coordinated Transportation Program. Subcontractors for FY2016 include senior centers, Elbert County Transit, Jackson County Transit, Morgan County Transit, and Thorne Transportation. During FY15, approximately 146,000 trips were provided, and 158,000 are projected for FY2016; an increase of 8.2%. The average cost per trip in FY2015 was \$11.52, and the projection for FY16 is \$12.18. For FY2015, the Regional Commission received \$1,747,521 from the Georgia Department of Human Services and had associated expenses and disbursements of \$1,686,954. Mr. Brinson expressed how fortunate the Regional Commission is to have such an efficient and conscientious group of subcontractors. On another note, Mr. Brinson asked Ms. Peggy Hackett, Regional Transportation Coordinator, to come forward and say a few words. Ms. Hackett has been promoted to District Transportation Manager and will be leaving this district. Everyone wished her continued success in future endeavors.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting will be held on November 19th.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha J. Beck
Executive Assistant