

**NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING
ATHENS HOLIDAY INN
FEBRUARY 18, 2016
NOON**

MINUTES

Members Present:

Graham, Pat
Blechinger, Linda
Denson, Nancy
Ferrelle, Dodd
Houston, Lamar
Lyon, Tommy
Palmer, Bill
Duvall, Valerie
Plott, Roy
Shaw, Jim
Trammell, Gene
Workman, Stone
Dyer, Dave
Gandy, Roy
Ainslie, Andy
Perriman, Fred
Bentley, David
Ellis, Keith
Roseberry, Jerry
Turner, Frank
Davis, Melvin
Ivie, Charles
Harden, Amrey
Pittard, Billy
Berry, Rick
Chambers, Joyce
Fordyce, Cary

Members Absent:

Bartlett, Wayne
Guest, Larry
Bullard, Ed
Brock, Phil
Crow, Tom
Dove, Anthony
Blackmon, Jody
Johnson, Jesse
Little, Kevin
Thompson, Greg
Roberts, Roy

Associate Members Present:

Ouzts, Buddy
Horton, Harold
Adams, Louise

Media Present:

Blake Giles, **Oconee Enterprise**

Guests Present:

Gary Nelson
Becky Taylor
J.R. Charles
Josh Findley
Cheryl Smith
Barrie Dunlap
Nancy Bobbitt
Daniella Belton
T.K. Adams

Staff Present:

Jim Dove, Executive Director
Mott Beck, Executive Assistant
Evans Brinson, Comptroller
Burke Walker, Planning & Government Services Director
Peggy Jenkins, AAA 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 January meeting. **Such a motion was made by Mayor Linda Blechinger and seconded by Mr. David Bentley. The motion carried unanimously.**

RECOGNITION OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Last month, Executive Director Dove introduced two new members of the Council, Rick Berry and Dodd Ferrelle; however, two other new members could not be in attendance. At this time, Jim Shaw and Stone Workman were introduced. Mr. Shaw is a former banker, and recently accepted the position of President and CEO of the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce and Director of Economic Development. He will serve as the Private Sector Representative from Jackson County. Mr. Workman will serve as Municipal Representative from Jasper County, and is on the Council of the City of Monticello. He has been a City Councilmember previously and also served as the Director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Members of the Council and Regional Commission staff welcome all new members and look forward to working with them in the future.

ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

Jackson County: The County has five million sq. ft. of warehouse space available for potential occupants. There will be two sales tax referendums on the ballot on March 1st; SPLOST and ELOST. ELOST is projected to generate \$44.55 million over the five-year collection period and will be shared by Jackson, Jefferson, and Commerce School Systems. SPLOST is projected to generate \$55 million over the six-year collection period. Along with debt reduction and major water/sewer and road projects, Jackson has laid out future plans for parks & recreation facilities, upgrades to public safety structures, improvements to fire and emergency services, and plans to enable each town within the county to finance needed projects for their citizens. Due to the rebounding economy, the housing market is bouncing back very well in the county.

Jasper County: The economy in the county is improving, and Norton Packaging has announced it will be doubling the size of its facility, which will also double the number of jobs. A company from Portugal is looking at the county, and the wood plank flooring factory is in full production. The City of Monticello has three new Councilmembers, and the City and County governments are striving to work together for the benefit of its citizens.

Madison County: The budget process is complete, and the County Commission was able to do this without raising taxes. All in all, everything is good in Madison County.

Morgan County: The City and the County are well into their Comprehensive Planning process. Mannington Mills has finished Phase I, and Phase II will be completed by 2017. When the project is finished, there will be a total of 450 jobs. Several renovation projects and rehabilitation to area hotels are ongoing in the area, and a Captain D's has located in the City of Madison. The Farm Place Market's Grand Opening will be held on April 2nd. The City and County are working together jointly in constructing a fuel depot and maintenance shop. The County is closing on a piece of property that is being sold to the City for airport expansion. The 4-County Industrial Development Authority recently held a retreat. The group has a 1,000 acre tract left, and they are exploring the best way to use the property. Baxalta is now hiring 40 persons a month.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit & Finance: The Committee met prior to the Council meeting to review the financial statements for the seven-month period ending January 31, 2016. Revenues exceeded expenses by \$4,057. Financial activity for the period was approximately 7/12ths of the annual 2016 Budget projections. **A motion to accept the report as given was made by Mr. Harden 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 received since last month:

1. **CITIES OF WOODVILLE AND ILA** - Comprehensive Plan updates. The plans will be prepared with no fee. Any additional required elements will be included for a quoted fee.
2. **CITY OF COLBERT** - Assistance in developing a 2016 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application for water-system improvements. The fee for this assistance is \$2,000.
3. **CITY OF JEFFERSON** - The City previously received a Regional Economic Business Assistance (REBA) grant and requested PGS assistance in its administration. The fee for this grant administration assistance will not exceed \$5,000.
4. **CITY OF WINTERVILLE** - Assistance in developing design guidelines for its business district to ensure compatible development near its historic district. Any applicable fees will be quoted at a later date and after developing a scope-of-work in coordination with City officials.

Based upon recommendation from the Executive Director and a recommendation of the Committee, **a motion to approve the Program of Work items for inclusion in the FY2016 Program of Work, effective February 18, 2016, was made by Commissioner Pittard and seconded by Mr. Bentley. The motion carried unanimously.**

Planning & Government Services – Members met prior to the Council meeting and reviewed the Division's fee schedule for project assistance requests. The last update to the schedule was done in 2014 and was adopted by the Council. Several revisions are recommended by staff and the Committee to make the schedule more current. These include additions and deletions of programs as well as adjustments to individual fees. **A motion to accept the recommendation of the Committee and approve the revised fee schedule was made by Commissioner Lyon and seconded by Mayor Blechinger. The motion carried unanimously. These changes will become effective February 18, 2016 (date of approval).**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Since last month, Executive Director Dove and Executive Assistant Mott Beck have facilitated retreats for the Cities of Madison and Jefferson and will facilitate the annual Elbert County Session on Friday, February 19th. Also scheduled are retreats for the Cities of Elberton and Braselton.

Mr. Dove hosted the Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA) Winter Board Meeting on January 24th – 26th at the UGA Georgia Center for Continuing Education. Despite the blizzard in the Eastern U.S., there was a great turnout.

Annual staff evaluations will begin in the next few weeks. Department Heads will be asked to have them completed and to Mr. Dove by March 18th.

The Georgia Association of Regional Commissions (GARC) is working with the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and the Carl Vinson Institute of Government (CVIOG) in developing a concept for training members of Regional Commissions throughout the state. This will probably get geared up with a pilot effort over the next several months. Mr. Dove has been involved in this effort from the very beginning, and Mr. Lamar Houston attended the policy meeting of the GARC at DCA early in the month and heard a presentation regarding this initiative.

As you heard last month, Mr. Dove is making rounds meeting with the Councils of various RCs around the state. He will attend the meeting at Southern Georgia on March 24th, and the meeting of the Georgia Mountains RC on the night of March 31st.

UPDATE FROM PLANNING & GOVERNMENT SERVICES DIVISION

At this time, Planning & Government Services (PGS) Director Burke Walker gave an update on the Division's latest planning efforts and briefly reminded everyone of the new state comprehensive planning rules. The planning changes that took place in 2014 reduced the comprehensive plan's content and related costs, and placed the responsibility for preparation of a basic plan on the Regional Commission at no fee. There are three parts to the basic plan – Community Goals, Needs & Objectives, and Community Work Program. The Basic Plan is reviewed by DCA as before, and the

plans are updated every five years instead of the prior ten years. The Regional Commission is required to notify each local government of plan deadlines that must be met to retain Qualified Local Government (QLG) status. Staff is required to meet with each chief elected official every other year to discuss their plan use. This activity also gives staff the opportunity to give advance notice on plan deadlines. It would help, in terms of budget and plan quality, if the comprehensive plans are developed as joint plans (County/Municipalities), and the Regional Commission encourages this effort if at all possible.

EFFORTS OF THE HEALTHCARE GEORGIA FOUNDATION

The next item on the agenda was a report by Dr. Gary Nelson on the efforts of the Healthcare Georgia Foundation. The Foundation's mission is to advance the health of all Georgians and to expand access to affordable, quality healthcare for underserved individuals and communities. Their goals are to protect and promote the health of individuals, families, and communities; improve the availability, quality, appropriateness and financing of healthcare services; and to integrate and coordinate efforts to improve health and health care services. The Foundation and its members promote the highest standards of ethical behavior. In the Foundation's efforts to improve health and healthcare for all Georgians, its grant making is designed to support organizations that drive positive change; promote programs and policies that improve population health; and connect people, programs, and resources across the state. The Foundation believes the road to better health for all will be paved by efforts that are grounded in science, built on partnerships, and focused on results. A copy of Dr. Nelson's PowerPoint presentation was forwarded to Council members after the meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting will be held on March 17th.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha J. Beck
Executive Assistant