

**NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING / ANNUAL MEETING
ATHENS HOLIDAY INN
MAY 19, 2016
NOON**

MINUTES

Members Present:

Blechinger, Linda
Ferrelle, Dodd
Lyon, Tommy
Palmer, Bill
Bullard, Ed
Crow, Tom
Plott, Roy
Trammel, Gene
Dyer, Dave
Dove, Anthony
Gandy, Roy
Roberts, Roy
Bentley, David
Ellis, Keith
Roseberry, Jerry
Turner, Frank
Davis, Melvin
Ivie, Charles
Harden, Amrey
Pittard, Billy
Berry, Rick
Johnson, Jesse
Little, Kevin
Chambers, Joyce
Fordyce, Cary
Roberts, Roy
Warren, Ellen

Members Absent:

Graham, Pat
Bartlett, Wayne
Denson, Nancy
Guest, Larry
Brock, Phil
Houston, Lamar
Duvall, Valerie
Workman, Stone
Blackmon, Jody
Thompson, Greg
Shaw, Jim

Associate Members Present:

Ouzts, Buddy
Seymour, Joel
Horton, Harold

Guests Present:

Kevin Poe
Leta Talbird
Rhonda Hawk
Daniela Belton
Chuck Williams
Chris Atkinson
Kirby Atkinson
Chip Ferguson
Melissa Hargrove
Jon Herschel

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, guests, and staff. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the February meeting. **Such a motion was made by Commissioner Billy Pittard and seconded by Commissioner Keith Ellis. The motion carried unanimously.**

ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

Jackson County: Williams-Sonoma has opened a one million sq. ft. distribution center on Highway 124 in Braselton. In Jackson County, two spec buildings have been completed, and two others are under construction. These buildings range from 650,000 to one million sq. ft. Property for a new Walmart is being considered for rezoning in Jefferson. Property along Highway 124 across from Traditions has been rezoned for construction of a 55+ retirement community. Housing starts in Jackson County were up 70% in 2015 and 37% for the first quarter of 2016. Preliminary engineering for widening of I-85 from S.R. 211 to U.S. 129 has been pushed up to 2017. The County is working with Lanier Tech to establish CDL classes at its Commerce location.

Jasper County: The County has eight funded DOT projects and eight economic development projects in the works. A new industrial park will be constructed, and three existing industries will be expanding operations, meaning additional jobs. The Port of Savannah is talking with two industries regarding the possibility of exporting through that site. A permanent foster home for boys, Never Too Late, is opening in the County for boys between the ages of 9 and 18 who are not eligible for adoption.

Madison County: Citizens in the County are gearing up for the upcoming election. The Chairman's seat, as well as District 2 and District 1 Commission seats, are on the ballot. Due to the efforts of Senator Frank Ginn, an intersection in Danielsville has been named for Dewey Seagraves, a long time Sheriff of Madison County. Efforts related to the 4-laning of Highway 72 between Madison and Elbert Counties are ongoing. The hardware store that burned in Colbert has been rebuilt. Housing has doubled in the County, and property is being rezoned for subdivision development. Madison County will be entering into an agreement with Oglethorpe County for road paving.

Morgan County: Over the last few weeks, there have been two ribbon cuttings that are very important to the County. First, the Farmers' Market has opened, and will be selling fresh vegetables and fruits throughout the summer. Second, Mannington Mills has expanded and added 450 additional jobs. The budget process is ongoing, and the County is in the process of updating its comprehensive plan. Building permits are also up in Morgan County.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit & Finance: The Committee met prior to the Council meeting and reviewed the financial statements for the ten-month period ending April 30, 2016. Revenues exceeded expenses by \$17,886. **A motion to accept the report as given was made by Mr. Harden and seconded by Commissioner Ed Bullard. The motion carried unanimously.** Members also reviewed the proposed Revised Budget for FY2016 and the

proposed Budget for FY17. At the recommendation of the Personnel Committee, the FY2017 Budget includes a salary increase for staff. This will result in an average increase of approximately 4% over the Revised FY2016 budgeted salaries. Both budgets will be sent to Council members prior to the June meeting.

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

1. **CITY OF WINDER** – Assistance in developing a KaBoom! Grant application to support installation of playground equipment for the Winder Housing Authority. There is no fee for this assistance as it is supported through the NEGRC's Appalachian Regional Commission planning contract and local dues.

Based upon recommendation from the Executive Director, a **motion to approve the Program of Work item for inclusion in the FY2016 Program of Work, effective May 19, 2016, was made by Commissioner Pittard and seconded by Mr. David Bentley. The motion carried unanimously.**

Planning & Government Services – Members reviewed nominations of Regionally Important Resources (RIRs) to include as part of an update to the Regional Resource Plan. Thirty-five nominations were received with each reviewed by the respective local government. **A motion to accept the recommendation of the Committee and approve the 35 RIRs, to be added to the previous 27 listed in 2010, was made by Commissioner Lyon and seconded by Mayor Blechinger. The motion carried unanimously.**

Personnel Committee: The evaluation of the Executive Director has been drafted, and a copy will be forwarded to Council members for review and comment. It will be presented to the Council in June for consideration and action.

ANNUAL REPORT OF STAFF ACTIVITIES

At this time, Executive Director Dove gave an in-depth report on staff activities for Fiscal Year 2016 and highlighted accomplishments of each division. He also advised that staff continues to facilitate administrative efforts relative to the Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority, and he and Executive Assistant Mott Beck continue to facilitate retreats/planning sessions for local governments and related organizations throughout the region. A copy of the Staff Activities Report is on file at Regional Commission Headquarters.

GEORGIA'S MAIN STREET PROGRAM

At this time, Leigh Burns, Education & Outreach Coordinator with the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Georgia Main Street Program. Since its inception in 1980 with a pilot of five communities, DCA's Georgia Main Street Network of cities have added 56,966 jobs for Georgians and have 11,879 net new business starts that invested nearly \$3 billion in public and private investment for downtown improvements. Projects range from streetscapes, to building rehabilitations, to new project construction. At current, there are 96 cities participating in the Georgia Main Street network. Downtowns are the symbol of community pride across the country and represent the highest concentration of small business within the nation. The National Main Street movement is an incremental approach to community revitalization and economic growth that begins with local commitment to strategic downtown planning. The Office of Downtown Development is offering tiered services to impact all Georgia communities regardless of population, socio-economic status, staffing, region, or experience level. Every community can improve its central business district. Main Street communities in the NEGRC region include Athens, Auburn, Braselton, Commerce, Covington, Elberton, Greensboro, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Porterdale, Social Circle, and Union Point.

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

The next item on the agenda was presentation of awards. Walton County Board of Commissioners Chairman **Kevin Little** was the 2016 recipient of the Robert L. and Betty Williford Distinguished Northeast Georgian Award. Our honoree is a life-long resident of Walton County. He graduated from Monroe Area High School in 1984 and received a Bachelor of Science in Public Administration and Political Science from Georgia College. After graduation, he worked for three years with the Georgia Department of Transportation prior to joining Walton County as Traffic and Safety Engineer. He assumed the role of Chairman of the Board of Commissioners in 2001, and this year was re-elected to serve a fifth four-year term. He serves on the Hard Labor Creek Regional Reservoir Management Board, the Joint Development Authority of Jasper, Morgan, Newton, and Walton Counties, and the Walton County Development Authority. In 2008, he was elected to the ACCG Board of Managers representing District 5, and served as its President in 2015. He also served a two-year term as Chairman of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Council in 2014-15. Also in 2015, he was appointed by Governor Deal to serve on the newly formed Department of Community Supervision.

Jackson County Manager **Kevin Poe** was honored as Local Government Administrator of the Year. He was appointed as Jackson County Manager in December 2011. Prior to this, he served as County Manager of Floyd County, Assistant City Manager of LaGrange, and Public Works Director for Floyd County. He is District Director for the Georgia City/County Managers Association, and Vice Chairman of the Advantage Behavioral Health Systems Community Service Board. He is a member of the International City/County Managers Association, Board of Trustees of the ACCG

Defined Benefit Pension Program, Jackson County Family Connection Board of Directors, and ACTION, Inc. Board of Directors. He earned a B.S. in Civil Engineering and a Master of Public Administration Degree from the University of West Georgia.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting will be held on June 16th.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha J. Beck
Executive Assistant