

STATE FUNDS NOW AVAILABLE FOR SOLID WASTE REMOVAL

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) recently announced the availability of funding from the state Solid Waste Trust Fund (SWTF) to remove and recycle scrap tires dumped along city and county rights-of-way and to pay for scrap tire amnesty events. Local governments and solid waste authorities can apply for funding, in the form of a reimbursement, to cover the cost of transporting and processing these tires. With this announcement, EPD adds two new eligibility categories for state-funded cleanup under a program that began last summer.

In July 2015, EPD began accepting applications from local governments and solid waste authorities for funding to cover the cost of transporting and processing scrap tires from areas where the property owner is either unknown, financially unable to clean up the tires, or a victim of illegal dumping. Applications for all three types of cleanups will be accepted on a rolling basis and awarded first come, first served, contingent on funding availability and demand.

Funding for the program comes from the state SWTF, which was established in 1990 as part of the Georgia Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Act. In 1992, an amendment to the Act established a primary source of funding for SWTF in the form of a \$1.00 fee on every new tire sold in the state. Each year, fees collected the previous year may be appropriated by the General Assembly to EPD.

For further information on this funding opportunity, including how to apply, please visit <http://epd.georgia.gov/scrap-and-used-tires> or contact **Burke Walker** at (706) 369-5650 or bwalker@negrc.org.

DOVE AND BECK VISIT UNG

NEGRC Council member **Tate O'Rourke**, Director of Economic Development of the University of North Georgia (UNG), invited **Jim Dove** and **Mott Beck** to a meeting and tour of the Dahlonega Campus on January 24th. While there, they also had an opportunity to meet with Associate Vice President **Dr. Edward Mienie** and Undergraduate Admissions Assistant Director **Ethan Penland**.

UNG enrollment at its five campuses exceeds 18,000. It is the second oldest public institution of higher education in the state, and it is designated as a state leadership institution and the Military College of Georgia. Interacting with students on the campus, and visiting various buildings and classrooms were quite impressive. UNG officials will make a presentation to the NEGRC Council later this year.



◀ L-R: Beck, Dove, O'Rourke



Cadet's Motto ▶

RETREATS FACILITATED

During the past several weeks, Mr. Dove and Ms. Beck have facilitated planning retreats for the City of Bowman and City of Jefferson. They were to facilitate the annual retreat for the Elbert County Board of Commissioners, but due to illness were unable to do so. The Bowman and Elbert County sessions were both held at Bobby Brown Park, and the Jefferson session was held at the City's Civic Center.

Bowman's retreat focused on Robert's Rules of Order, protocols for municipal meetings, an identification of strengths and challenges, setting short term priorities, and potential amendments to the City Charter.

The Jefferson session provided an opportunity for department heads to discuss 2016 accomplishments and goals for 2017. The Mayor and Council, after reviewing the reports, prioritized departmental projects and discussed additional needs. Officials also discussed the status of capital projects, potential grants, short term projects, long term projects, and pros and cons regarding annexation.

The planning retreat for Elbert County included discussion of matters related to the Volunteer Fire Department, the Sheriff's Department, road/bridge maintenance, the Bobby Brown Park Master Plan, economic development initiatives, the budget, and SPLOST. BOC Chairman **Tommy Lyon** indicated the retreat went according to plan and was very beneficial to the participants.



Bowman Retreat Participants



Jefferson Retreat Participants

GEORGIA'S OLDER ADULTS CABINET

Gov. **Nathan Deal** recently announced the creation of Georgia's Older Adults Cabinet, a committee working to enhance the state's capacity to serve older adults. The Older Adults Cabinet seeks to identify ways for Georgia to improve the well-being of its older residents by bringing together state agency heads whose work supports older Georgians, as well as stakeholders in the business, philanthropic and education communities.

Co-chaired by First Lady **Sandra Deal** and Department of Human Services (DHS) Commissioner **Robyn A. Crittenden**, the Older Adults Cabinet will focus on issues that affect older Georgians, including health care, nutrition, transportation, housing and abuse, neglect and exploitation.

The cabinet comprises an executive committee made up of leaders representing DHS, Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, Community Affairs, Community Health, Public Health, Transportation, Early Care and Learning, the Technical College System of Georgia, Family and Children Services and Bureau of Investigation agencies and a larger committee that includes partners from the University System of Georgia, providers of health care and community-based nutrition programs, advocacy organizations and members of the Georgia General Assembly. The cabinet will hold six meetings per year, three meetings for Executive Committee members and three meetings of the full cabinet. **Wanda Taft**, AAA Director with Southern Georgia Regional Commission, will represent the Georgia Area Agencies on Aging (G4A) on this cabinet.

For additional information, please contact **Michele Kelley** at **(706) 369-5650** or **mkelley@negrc.org**.

NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS



The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Council welcomed six new county representatives at its January 19th meeting. Shown above, they are (L-R) **Marcello Banes** – Newton County, **John Scarborough** – Madison County, **John Daniell** – Oconee County, **Andy Ainslie** – Morgan County, **Carl Pennamon** – Jasper County, and **Jeffery Smith** – Greene County. We look forward to working with each of these talented public servants in making a positive impact in their local communities and the region.

"MORGAN WORKS" CLASS BEGINS

Georgia Piedmont Technical College, in partnership with Northeast Georgia Workforce Development, Morgan County Board of Commissioners, Morgan County Family Connections, and Madison-Morgan Chamber of Commerce, recently started the 3rd class of the Morgan Works Program. Morgan Works is a Workplace Fundamentals course that trains unemployed individuals to begin work in the Manufacturing sector. The five-week course gives students certifications in Forklift, OSHA, and Work Ready, in addition to soft skills training.

Classes are taught by GPTC Instructors, and funding is provided by the Northeast Georgia Workforce Development Board. An economic impact study was done with the first two classes of the Morgan Works program, and the nine students that participated went from earning \$200 total in the six-months prior to them starting the program, to approximately \$45,000 collectively in the

six months after graduating the class. This class not only makes a positive impact on the individuals, but also a substantial economic impact on the region as a whole. We celebrated their successes at the February 28th graduation.

For information on this program or other Workforce Development activities in the region, please contact the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission's Workforce Development Division at **(706) 369-5703**.

MAP-21 PROGRAM UNDERWAY

Over the next several years, NEGRC is partnering with the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions (GARC), UGA's Carl Vinson Institute of Government and the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) in an effort to address problems with incorrect and out-of-date road data. This federally mandated and funded program will involve coordinating with our twelve member counties to collect and verify various bits of information about local roads throughout the region. Information like surface, ownership, lanes, name, and so forth will be collected, verified, and ultimately compiled into a publically available statewide dataset of local roads. This program is intended to address challenges across the nation related to increased safety, improved infrastructure condition, decreased traffic congestion, efficiencies in freight movement, protecting the environment and changing delays in product delivery.

Each Regional Commission is required to collect this data for three of its counties per year. Realizing the importance of local knowledge, in the coming weeks and months the NEGRC will be reaching out to our member communities to gauge those interested in beginning this effort. There is no cost to our member governments to participate. For additional information regarding this program, contact GIS Planner **Kenny Gilbert** at **(706) 369-5650** or e-mail **kgilbert@negrc.org**.

REMINDER

The next meeting of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Council will be held on **Thursday, March 16th at Noon at the Athens Holiday Inn**. Information on the meeting will be forthcoming.

A NEW 911 SYSTEM IS COMING: NG-911

As communication technology continues to advance at exponential rates, the current 911 system, which has served the country well for nearly fifty years, is becoming increasingly outdated. **Next Generation 911** (or NG911 for short) is an upgrade to the current 911 infrastructure that all Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) across the country will be responsible for implementing. The goal is to create a 911 service which will incorporate digital technologies for faster and more reliable communication between the public, 911 call centers, and emergency first responders.

As all telecom providers (AT&T, Verizon, etc.) will be phasing out of providing 911 routing by 2020, all 911 systems across the country will be required to implement this in order to continue providing services. It will require implementing a Geographic information System (or GIS) if it doesn't already exist, and coordinating across jurisdictional boundaries for data validation. This is not an unfunded mandate, but evolution of a technology that will require local GIS to provide the mission critical data. Hands-on workshops are available to train those who will be working on this conversion.

Ms. Natalie Lee, GISP with Michael Baker International's Norcross Office, is spearheading this effort and has been to several meetings at the Regional Commissions to provide information to city officials, 911 providers, and GIS professionals alike. More information about this program can be found at **<http://www.ng911now.org/>** or by reaching out to Ms. Lee directly (**nlee@mbakerintl.com | 678-456-1022**). For further information about this program and how it will impact our member communities, please contact Mr. Gilbert.

AUBURN SHOPS

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) would like to highlight the recent success of the "Whistlestop Shops" in the City of Auburn. The "Whistlestop Shops" is a "micro retailing" project located in the park next to City Hall. The small shops are 8' x 12' detached, craftsman-styled buildings that provide retail storefronts offering specialty products to targeted customers. The small shops benefit from a central location, landscaping, signage, benches, and other amenities. The City has invested \$340,000 in the project, and due to the early success of the shops, an expansion is expected. The "Whistlestop Shops" have a variety of small businesses, including arts and crafts, jewelry, infant clothing, cakes and coffee, and hand crafted chocolates. Auburn's efforts created a unique economic development project that brings retailers and the community together in an idyllic setting.

A grand opening for the shops is planned for April 8th at 5:00 p.m. This event coincides with the Auburn "Ever After" event, a community celebration for children and adults with Cinderella carriage rides through downtown.

ARC GRANTS ANNOUNCED

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) recently announced an upcoming round of Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant pre-applications for eligible communities. Four counties (and their municipalities) in the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) are eligible for funding and include Barrow, Elbert, Jackson and Madison. Applications must be submitted by April 1st for consideration. Full applications will be due by April 14th. If you have any questions regarding the spring or fall cycle of ARC grants, please contact **Burke Walker**, Director of Planning and Government Services at **(706) 369-5650** or **bwalker@negrc.org**.



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Update

REGIONAL MEETINGS MARCH

8	12:30 p.m.	NEGA Solid Waste Management Authority	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
14	8:30 a.m.	Workforce Development Board	Atrium
16	Noon	NEGRC Council	Athens Holiday Inn
16	3:30 p.m.	Firefly Trails Advocacy Group	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
21	2:00 p.m.	NEGA Emergency Medical Services	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
22	9:30 a.m.	Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
29	10:00 a.m.	NEGA Joint Development Authority	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room



Sincerely & Respectfully,