

**NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING
ATHENS HOLIDAY INN
MARCH 15, 2018
NOON**

MINUTES

Members Present:

Graham, Pat
Jennings, Tommy
Denson, Nancy
Houston, Lamar
Lyon, Tommy
Smith, Jeffery
Rhodes, Lee
Haynie, Doug
Shaw, Jim
Pennamon, Carl
Workman, Stone
Dyer, Dave
Ainslie, Andy
Banes, Marcello
Roseberry, Jerry
Turner, Frank
Harden, Amrey
Pittard, Billy
Berry, Rick
Boggs, Ronnie
Dally, Hal
Chambers, Joyce
Fordyce, Cary
Ledford, Howard
Roberts, Roy
Ferrelle, Dodd

Members Absent:

Blechinger, Linda
Guest, Larry
Palmer, Bill
Brock, Phil
Crow, Tom
Scarborough, John
Blackmon, Jody
Padilla, Bob
Perriman, Fred
Bentley, David
Daniell, John
Little, Kevin
O'Rourke, Tate

Associate Members Present:

Adams, Louise
Ouzts, Buddy
Seymour, Joel

Guests Present:

Rick Jeffares
Ryan Williamson
T.K. Adams
Paul Chambers
Steve Smith
Leta Talbird
Diane Baggett
Elizabeth Higgins
Carol Williams

Staff Present:

Jim Dove, Executive Director
Mott Beck, Executive Assistant
Alicia Page, Comptroller
Carol Cofer, Workforce Development Director
Burke Walker, Director of Planning & Government Services

CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY MEETING MINUTES

Chairman Jerry Roseberry called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. He welcomed members, guests, and staff and asked for a motion to approve minutes of the February meeting. **Such a motion was made by Commissioner Tommy Lyon and seconded by Mayor Rick Berry. The motion carried unanimously.**

ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

Newton County: Construction on the Three Ring Studios is progressing very well. The Georgia Film, Music & Digital Entertainment Office once again hosted the 2018 “Film Day” at the Georgia State Capitol. This was an opportunity to come together to demonstrate the positive impact of film and television production in Georgia and how it continues to generate money for the state and jobs for residents. Construction on the Covington Town Centre Project located on City Pond Road and Highway 142 is moving forward. The Project plans to have a shopping center and mixed use development. The LEAP program graduated 120 students. Gov. Nathan Deal has announced that Facebook will create at least 100 full-time jobs and invest \$750 million in a new data center in Stanton Springs over the next five years. New jobs will include positions in engineering and management, as well as opportunities for data center technician students.

Oconee County: No report

Oglethorpe County: Housing is on the increase in Oglethorpe County, and the Subdivision Ordinance is being reviewed to determine if new ordinances are needed. Due to growth in the center of the County, building inspections and standards should be revisited.

Walton County: Things in Walton County are going great, and the recent announcement of Facebook locating in Stanton Springs make it even better! The County is working with all municipalities on a Transportation Summit. Moving people in Walton County is a major goal of the summit, and the County wants to partner with GDOT and future SPLOST to make this a reality. Housing growth has increased, and most of the lots that were vacant during the down turn are now under construction. Several large subdivisions are in the planning stages. Hitachi, Walmart Distribution, and Tucker Door are all hiring. Hard Labor Creek Reservoir is open for fishing, and word is that there are some mighty big bass in the lake! Walton County is celebrating its Bi-Centennial, with celebrations being held monthly. There will be a large 4th of July event, and Good Hope will host a Friendship Festival.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit & Finance: Members reviewed the financial statements for the seven-month period ending January 31, 2018. Revenues exceeded expenditures by \$34,413.17. Financial activity for the seven-month period should be at approximately 42% of the FY2018 budget projections overall. **A motion to accept the report as presented was made by Amrey Harden and seconded by Commissioner Billy Pittard. The motion carried unanimously.**

Program of Work: There were no technical assistance requests this month; therefore, no report was given.

Planning & Government Services (PGS): The PGS Committee met prior to the Council meeting to discuss several items of interest. Members reviewed the 2017 list of PGS project assistance requests. There were a total of 21 projects. Of these, eight were completed, seven are in progress, four are ongoing and two were cancelled. The Committee approved this annual report and believes it shows good progress for the region. No action by the Council was needed.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Executive Director Dove and Executive Assistant Mott Beck facilitated two retreats since the last Council meeting. Jefferson's was held on February 22nd at the Jefferson Civic Center, and the Elberton was held on March 10th at Richard B. Russell State Park. Both of these are done on an annual basis, and the Mayor and Council in each municipality develops goals and priorities to work on over the next 12 to 18 months.

Planning & Government Services Director Burke Walker and Executive Director Dove will be attending the Joint Meeting of the Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA) and the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) in Washington. Four counties in the Northeast Georgia region are a part of Appalachia, and NADO represents 400 districts like NEGRC nationwide. A full report on the conference will be forthcoming.

Last month, Executive Director Dove reported that he was invited to attend the Georgia Transit Conference in Macon, which is an invitation only event. The meeting had to be rescheduled, and it will now be held on April 10th. As mentioned previously, a full report of activities of this meeting will be given at the next Council meeting.

Executive Director Dove had a meeting on March 12th with Joyce White, recently appointed State Director of USDA-Rural Development. They discussed matters in which the state's Regional Commissions can partner with her organization, and gave her an overview of the History of Regionalism in the state. Ms. White was formerly Department of Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black's top assistant. She is going to attend a future Council meeting when her schedule allows, and make a presentation.

Executive Director Dove and Ms. Beck will be facilitating the Town of Braselton's Annual Planning Retreat on April 13th at the Public Utilities Building. This will be the 13th session they have facilitated for the Mayor and Council.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Workforce Development Director Carol Cofer briefed the Council on the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Program Year 2016 and gave an overview of services provided, numbers served and funds expended. She also provided the Council with information on the Summer Youth Work Experience Program for summer 2018. Worksite Packets will be mailed out by the first of April. Ms. Cofer provided an update on Senate Bill 377 which would transfer the state level WIOA Administrative functions from the Georgia Department of Economic Development to the Technical College System of Georgia.

PRESENTATION BY RICK JEFFARES

At this time, Rick Jeffares came forward to give a presentation. He started his report with a history of his background and how he got involved in politics as a City Manager and County Commissioner, before becoming a State Senator. He stated the biggest reason why he decided to involve himself in politics was because of rules and regulations. He then spoke to how a construction project could be slowed down due to the Soil and Water Commission. They have 45 days to review plans and specs, and if they mark-up the plans, then they have another 45 days to review the updated plans. Essentially a project can be immensely slowed down going through this process. Mr. Jeffares also spoke to the importance of developing a skilled and technical workforce. Half the kids in high school are not going to college, so he believes we need to train them in a technical field at the high school level. He spoke about College & Career Academies and having high schools dedicated solely to technical education. He then talked about the rising costs of tuition and his plan to lock-in tuition where a student entering college as a freshman will have the same tuition cost for the next four years.

OTHER BUSINESS

In other business, Chairman Roseberry appointed the following persons to a Committee to select recipients for awards given at the May meeting: Amrey Harden, Kevin Little, and Lamar Houston. The next Council meeting will be held on April 19th.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 1:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha J. Beck
Executive Assistant