

**NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL
ATHENS HOLIDAY INN
SEPTEMBER 21, 2017
NOON**

MINUTES

Members Present:

Graham, Pat
Denson, Nancy
Houston, Lamar
Lyon, Tommy
Palmer, Bill
Smith, Jeffery
Rhodes, Lee
Workman, Stone
Scarborough, John
Padilla, Bob
Ainslie, Andy
Bentley, David
Roseberry, Jerry
Turner, Frank
Daniell, John
Harden, Amrey
Pittard, Billy
Berry, Rick
Boggs, Ronnie
Chambers, Joyce
Fordyce, Cary
Ledford, Howard

Members Absent:

Blechinger, Linda
Jennings, Tommy
Ferrelle, Dodd
Guest, Larry
Brock, Phil
Crow, Tom
Plott, Roy
Shaw, Jim
Pennamon, Carl
Dyer, Dave
Blackmon, Jody
Perriman, Fred
Banes, Marcello
Little, Kevin
Thompson, Greg
Roberts, Roy
O'Rourke, Tate

Staff Present:

Jim Dove, Executive Director
Mott Beck, Executive Assistant
Alicia Page, Comptroller
Burke Walker, Planning & Government Services Director
John Devine, Principal Planner
Toshia Lewis, Quality Assurance Specialist
Peggy Jenkins, Area Agency on Aging Director

Associate Members Present:

Ouzts, Buddy
Adams, Louise

Guests Present:

Daniella Perry
Jeff Christie
Andrew Seaver
Adam Mestras
T.K. Adams
Paul Chambers

CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF AUGUST 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 the minutes of the August meeting. **Such a motion was made by Commissioner Tommy Lyon and seconded by Mr. David Bentley. The motion carried unanimously.**

ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

Barrow County: GDOT has let the contract for the grade separated interchange on S.R. 316 and Highway 81. This is going to be an “orange barrel zone” for almost two years. Several additional interchanges along this route are in the planning stage, and will be taking place over the next six to eight years. New home starts in Barrow County continue to be strong, and there has been a steady increase in local sales tax revenues. The Tax Digest grew approximately 10% in 2017, and the millage rate was rolled back to 10.336 to avoid a property tax increase. A five-year SPLOST referendum will be on the ballot in November, and the County’s share will be \$31.4 million. Seventy percent of the County’s funding will be used for infrastructure - \$12 million will be used for wastewater treatment facilities and water system improvements; \$10 million will be earmarked for road projects. The County has budgeted to invest in emergency service, fire department equipment, and public safety vehicles and equipment. An update to the Comprehensive Plan is underway, and the County will be working with their six municipalities over the next eight to ten months to complete the Plan. Also being undertaken to coincide with the Comprehensive Plan are the Unified Development Code and the Service Delivery Strategy.

Clarke County: No report.

Elbert County: The Board of Commissioners has passed the millage rate, with 1.2 mills earmarked for the hospital. A new grain milling company is locating on eight acres on the Bowman Highway. The newly constructed 10,000 square foot grain mill will have the ability to manufacture up to 600 tons of animal nutrition per day. Initially, the facility will employ 10 people, and its vision is to continue to create jobs and investment. Also, a new technology business which manufactures new, patented, data center servers and related hardware will be locating in an existing building on Thirteen Forks Road. The facility will be renovated to meet the company’s need for offices and production. The company will employ 25 employees within six months, finishing in three years with 50-75 employees. The County did not suffer extensive damage as the result of Hurricane Irma.

Greene County: The County has adopted a budget that calls for \$14,899,525 in the General Fund expenditures and a millage rate of 5.42. There was no increase in taxes, and this marks the 18th year in a row that the BOC has adopted a revenue neutral rate or lower. Greene County is using unincorporated-only revenues such as hotel/motel taxes, alcoholic beverage taxes, and licensing fees to pay for these unincorporated-only expenses. Greene county manufacturers have increased by 34% to almost 1,000 employees. NIBCO, one of Greene County’s top 10 employers, has broken ground on a 122,000 square foot expansion facility in Greensboro. Net-migration from 2014 – 2015 ranks Greene County 9th in the State of Georgia in increased household income due to this migration. Publix at Lake Oconee is in the process of a \$3

million expansion to their existing 40,000 square foot store by adding an additional 15,000 square feet. This location consistently ranks in the top three in sales of all Publix stores in the region, which consist of 80+ stores.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit & Finance: Members of the Committee met prior to the Council meeting and reviewed the financial statements for the two-month period ending August 30, 2017. Revenues exceeded expenditures by \$24,532.81. Financial activity for the two-month period was at approximately 17% of the FY2018 Budget projections overall. **A motion to approve the financial report as presented was made by Mr. Amrey Harden and seconded by Mr. Cary Fordyce. The motion carried unanimously.**

Planning & Government Services: The Committee met prior to the Council meeting to discuss several items of interest. One item was a review of the Commission's FY2018 Rural Transit Grant from the Georgia Department of Transportation. This grant application requires authorization and filing by resolution by the Council, and the Committee recommends the application's submission to the Department of Transportation. **A motion to adopt said resolution, "Authorizing the filing of an application with the Department of Transportation, United States of America, and the Georgia Department of Transportation, for a grant under Title 49 U.S.C., Section 5304", was made by Commissioner Lyon and seconded Mr. Fordyce. The motion carried unanimously.**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Effective October 1st, Christopher Nunn will replace Camila Knowles as Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). Ms. Knowles will be joining the firm of Cornerstone Governmental Affairs. Mr. Nunn has been Commissioner of the Department of Administrative Services after previously serving as Deputy Commissioner of DCA. Executive Director Dove will visit with Mr. Nunn in October to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Executive Director Dove attended the second meeting of the State Aviation System Plan Update Stakeholders Committee on August 29th at DOT. He advises that this is a fascinating process, and Georgia is really in a good position as far as Tier I facilities to serve economic development needs. The consulting firm will be making recommendations pertaining to proposed improvements at existing facilities.

The new GDOT Board Chairman hails from the Northeast Georgia region. Jamie Boswell represents this Congressional District on the Transportation Board and is a long-time business-man in Athens and Clarke County, and he has family in Greene County. Executive Director Dove had lunch with Mr. Boswell recently, and he is excited that he will be serving as the Transportation Board Chair. We also benefit from the fact

that GDOT Commissioner Russell McMurry was formerly District Engineer at the Gainesville Office and is intimately familiar with the Northeast Georgia region.

Executive Director Dove and Executive Assistant Mott Beck will be facilitating the annual retreat for the City of Oxford on October 27th. On Thursday night, October 5th, Executive Director Dove will be moderating the debate in Jefferson for the Mayor and Council Candidates.

Director Dove reported that Chuck Williams, former member of the Georgia House of Representatives, will be assuming the role as Director of the Georgia Forestry Commission. He was a frequent visitor to the Council and was honored in May with this year's Distinguished Northeast Georgia Service Award. The Council, Executive Director Dove and Staff will miss him and wishes him well in his new position.

Three Northeast Georgia cities received awards of excellence at the 2017 Georgia Downtown Conference. The Excellence and Design Award honored the Braselton Town Green, and the Oconee Brewing Company in Greensboro was given the Excellence in Economic Development Award. The Excellence in Organization Award was given to the Athens-Clarke County Solid Waste Department. Congratulations to all of these deserving recipients!

COMPREHENSIVE & TRANSPORTATION PLANNING UPDATE

At this time, Principal Planner John Devine delivered a presentation on comprehensive and transportation planning. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs updated the local comprehensive planning rules in 2014, streamlining the process and centering the undertaking on the concept of a "basic" comprehensive plan. Required elements in the basic plan include Community Goals, Needs and Opportunities, and a Community Work Program. Certain local governments are required to complete additional elements, depending on whether they have zoning (a land use element is required), are in a metropolitan planning organization boundary (transportation element), are classified as a HUD CDBG entitlement community (housing element), or are included in tier one of the Georgia Job Tax Credit classification system (economic development element). The NEGRC Planning and Government Services (PGS) Division staff prepares the three basic elements for cities and counties at no cost; fees will be assessed for other required/optional elements, or for additional work. The NEGRC also offers assistance in bicycle, pedestrian, and transit planning and implementation. PGS staff is available to develop complete streets/bicycling and walking plans, present informational and safety-based training programs, draft policies, and assist with safe routes to school work. The RC also prepares applications on behalf of communities for federal funding under the Recreational Trails Program. Public transportation activities include regional and local coordinated transit planning, strategic planning, promotional materials development, and various other services.

UPDATE ON “MONEY FOLLOWS THE PERSON” PROGRAM

At this time, Assistant AAA Director Michelle Kelly gave an update on the “Money Follows the Person” Program. This program is designed to help individuals who have been in a nursing home for 90 days transition back into the community (rehabilitation and short-term days are not included when calculating this 90 days). One day has to be paid for by Medicaid. Each quarter, the nursing home Social Worker is required to ask each resident if he/she would like to leave the nursing home. If they answer yes, the patient will be referred for Options Counseling. The Options Counselor (OC) visits the nursing home to meet with the client and family members to discuss a plan to ensure that the transition back into the community is as smooth as possible. The OC will also screen and refer the participant to supportive services. The Transition Counselor (TC) will assist with rent, home modifications, moving costs, security and utility deposits, furnishings, and basic household items. This funding is available for one year.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting will be held on October 19th.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha J. Beck
Executive Assistant