

**NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING
ATHENS HOLIDAY INN
SEPTEMBER 20, 2018
NOON**

MINUTES

Members Present:

Graham, Pat
Blechinger, Linda
Ferrelle, Dodd
Lyon, Tommy
Palmer, Bill
Smith, Jeffery
Haynie, Doug
Pennamon, Carl
Dyer, Dave
Scarborough, John
Padilla, Bob
Ainslie, Andy
Bentley, David
Roseberry, Jerry
Daniell, John
Shearon, Dave
Berry, Rick
Boggs, Ronnie
Little, Kevin
Dally, Hal
Ledford, Howard
Roberts, Roy

Members Absent:

Jennings, Tommy
Denson, Nancy
Houston, Lamar
Guest, Larry
Brock, Phil
Rhodes, Lee
Crow, Tom
Shaw, Jim
Workman, Stone
Blackmon, Jody
Perriman, Fred
Banes, Marcello
Turner, Frank
Harden, Amrey
Pittard, Billy
Chambers, Joyce
Fordyce, Cary
O'Rourke, Tate

Staff Present:

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

Associate Members Present:

Seymour, Joel

Guests Present:

Jody Hice
Leigh Burns
Lee Vaughn
Clay Pilgrim
Sam Latimore
Dan Jernigan
Paul Chambers
Carol Williams
Ben Stout
Steve Smith
Sara Bell
Cassady Lord

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 Mayor Linda Blechinger and seconded by Mayor Hal Dally. The motion carried unanimously.**

ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

Barrow County: Barrow County's economy is thriving, and building permits, sales tax, and all other indicators are positive. There has been a large increase in economic development project requests from the State and private site selectors. Lisa Maloof recently retired as the Dean of the Lanier Technical College in Barrow County and has accepted the position of Economic Development Director. The County has completed their Comprehensive Plan Update, and it has been transmitted to the Regional Commission. SPLOST funds will be used to construct a water reclamation wastewater treatment plant facility that will process 1 MGD. The County continues to attempt a resolution to matters pertaining to the Service Delivery Strategy. A full day mediation session was held on September 4th, and an agreement was reached in part, and the County has requested a second voluntary mediation session with hopes of resolving outstanding issues. Chairman Pat Graham commented on the difficulty associated with negotiating the Service Delivery Strategy in Barrow County.

Clarke County: A lot of exciting things are happening in Winterville. Mayor Dodd Ferrelle advised that 10 years ago, there were no permits issued for single family homes; today there are 22 houses under construction. The Arts and Community Center are thriving, and a number of businesses have expressed an interest in coming to Winterville. It is anticipated that two will be locating there soon. The Firefly Trail from Five Points through Winterville to the Oglethorpe County Line is projected to be completed by next fall. Mayor Ferrelle expressed appreciation to Leigh Burns of the Fox Theatre Institute for the \$56,000 Grant which paid for HVAC and a new roof for the Historic Theatre.

Elbert County: There will be a called meeting on Friday, September 21st for the BOC to set the new millage rate. This is the first increase in the Tax Digest since 2007. The Elbert County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved an amendment to the zoning ordinance to add a new section for regulations on large solar farms as well as solar connections to residential units. Elbert County has issued an RFQ for a spec building. The County is utilizing funds from the Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP) to make improvements to houses in blighted areas.

Greene County: After three years, the County and Union Point have settled the lawsuit regarding the Service Delivery Strategy. There are 145 new homes under construction in the gated communities, and this year the county has issued permits for homes totaling \$47 million in value. The County is "sprucing up" interchanges on I-20. All in all, things are going great in Greene County!

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit & Finance: Members of the Audit & Finance Committee met prior to the Council meeting and reviewed the financial statements for the one-month period ending July 31, 2018. Revenues exceeded expenditures by \$3,082.95. Financial activity for the one-month period should be at approximately 92% of the remaining FY2019 Budget projections overall. The committee reviewed budget adjustments that were recommended by staff to finalize budget for Fiscal Year 2018 for the FY18 Financial Audit. A recommendation was made to approve the budget adjustments as presented. Clay Pilgrim and Sam Latimore with Rushton and Company reviewed the final FY18 Financial Audit for the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission with the committee. Mr. Pilgrim gave the report of the Annual Audit to the Council. Mr. Pilgrim advised that the Audit was a clean audit with no findings, and it was given an unmodified opinion which is the highest given. He reported that staff was very organized and helpful and a pleasure to work with. After presentation of the Audit, **a motion to accept the financial report as presented was made by Elbert County Commission Chairman Tommy Lyon and seconded by Walton County Commission Chairman Kevin Little. The motion carried unanimously. A motion to accept the Fiscal Year 2018 Audit as presented was made by Dr. Howard Ledford and seconded by Mayor Blechinger. 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 for the month:

1. **CITY OF ILA** – Assistance in updating the Comprehensive Plan and the Service Delivery Strategy (SDA). An update is necessary so the City can restore its Qualified Local Government (QLG) status with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. There is no fee for the Basic Plan; however, there is a fee for additional, required plan elements that will be quoted in advance for the City's approval prior to work. The development of the Service Delivery Strategy is an effort best coordinated in conjunction with the county and other municipalities. PGS staff can assist in advisement for the coordination of the SDA with other local government, with no fee required.
2. **CITY OF ELBERTON** – Assistance in seeking funding for the rehabilitation of the Bailey Building in Downtown Elberton. This assistance will involve grant writing and procurement services for developing a Community Development Block Grant-Redevelopment Fund (CDBG-RDF) application for submission to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The fee for this assistance is \$3,500 that will be invoiced following the grant's successful submission to DCA. Upon the grant's approval, the NEGRC will administer the awarded grant project in coordination with DCA.

3. **MORGAN COUNTY** – Assistance in developing a grant application to FEMA’s Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program. Funding from the AFG would be used to support the equipment and operations of the Morgan County Fire Department. The fee for this assistance will not exceed \$1,500 and will be invoiced following the grant’s successful submission to FEMA.

Based upon recommendation of the Executive Director, **a motion to accept the technical assistance requests for the month for inclusion in the FY19 Program of Work, effective September 20th, 2018, was made by Mayor Rick Berry and seconded by Mr. Dave Bentley. The motion carried unanimously.**

Planning & Government Services: The Committee met prior to the Council meeting to discuss several items of interest. None of them required Council action. The PGS Division is hosting its first regional County Managers’ meeting on November 14th at 10:30 a.m. at NEGRC headquarters. These meetings will be held quarterly and are intended to provide an opportunity for information exchange. The meetings will include lunch, which is sponsored by Goodwyn, Mills and Cawood, Inc. A very special thank you goes out to Andy Pippin of that firm for sponsoring the lunch.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

At this time, Executive Director Dove gave a report on a recent success story involving the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission and the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission. The two agencies worked together, along with governments in Franklin, Madison, and Elbert Counties, to prepare a grant application to the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) for water infrastructure improvements needed to support construction of two facilities by Georgia Renewable Power (GRP) that will provide 58 megawatts of power to be sold to Georgia Power Company. The two GRP Biomass facility sites are located in Franklin and Madison Counties. In this collaborative effort, the governments worked to attract investment in alternative power generation, providing not only electricity for the region along with 50 direct jobs, but also as a catalyst for local economic growth. On Monday, September 10th, ARC announced that the grant, in the amount of \$2,225,177, had been awarded. The company will be investing approximately \$368,103,576 to fund the development and startup operations for the project. With this additional infrastructure, these communities will have a foundation needed to successfully recruit additional companies and create opportunities to grow the local economy.

Executive Assistant Mott Beck and Executive Director Dove facilitated a day-long retreat for the Jackson County Community Outreach (JCCO) on Saturday, August 25th. JCCO works to assist local students to gain the necessary skillsets too be an integral part of the local workforce. In addition to working with the local public school systems in Jackson County, JCCO assists in providing scholarships to deserving students to both four-year and technical colleges. The next retreat to be facilitated by Ms. Beck and

Executive Director Dove is scheduled for October 26th for the City of Oxford Mayor and Council. They have been conducting an annual retreat for Oxford's Mayor and Council for many years.

Executive Director Dove expressed appreciation to Rushton and Company for their efforts on the FY18 Audit. They were truly a joy to work with, and the NEGRC looks forward to continuing a working relationship with that firm. And of course, the Council and staff appreciate the clean audit and unmodified opinion!

REMARKS FROM CONGRESSMAN HICE

The next item on the agenda was a report by Congressman Jody Hice who expressed appreciation for the opportunity to address the group. Regarding items of interest from around the area, he said, "It is very exciting to hear the county reports advising of all the good things happening in the region." He first reported that the 2019 Regional Job Fair will be held at the Piedmont Technical College on October 5th. There will be over 50 industry partners exhibiting and over 700 plus jobs needing to be filled by qualified candidates. The Congressman then focused on the positive economic news emanating from the nations' Capitol, and discussed tax cuts and the huge role of public-private partnerships. He was pleased to report on growth in wage rates, most recent unemployment figures, and increase in jobs. Employers hired 201,000 workers in August, marking the third time in four months that job gains have exceeded the 200,000 mark. Unemployment stayed at 3.9% in August and will likely fall further. The number of part-time workers who want full-time work dropped in August for the sixth consecutive month. Expect salaries to advance at a 3% rate by year's end, and inflation retreated to 2.7% in August from its recent peak of 2.9% in July. There is a positive economic outlook for the future.

FOX THEATRE INSTITUTE'S (FTI) OUTREACH PROGRAMS

At this time, Leigh Burns, Director of the Fox Theatre Institute (FTI), gave a report on grants and programs offered through FTI. Founded in 2008, it is a dynamic outreach program offering historic preservation and operations expertise, consultation, and education to performing arts venues in Georgia and the region. Created by Atlanta's Fox Theatre, FTI assist other cultural institutions renew, reinvigorate, and restore artistic vitality in their respective communities. In keeping environmental and economic impact in mind, FTI offers the financial assistance, restoration support, and operations mentoring needed to leverage scarce resources and stimulate local economies. They provide historic preservation grants and guidance, professional development through seminars and strategic planning, and manage a statewide booking consortium which encourages collaboration among arts presenters in Georgia and the region. Two venues in the NEGRC region received grants from FTI. Madison-Morgan Cultural Center received a grant for \$16,195 to support the repair and replacement of the seating fabric within the theater to improve the patron experience in the auditorium. The Winterville Auditorium, a historic landmark in the City, received \$55,476 that was used to install new sound and lighting systems as well as other

support systems for its ongoing historic theatre rehabilitation efforts. "It is an honor to support these historic theaters beyond the much needed financial assistance. I am excited to see these organizations serve as a catalyst to positively impact the financial revenue of the surrounding community as well as grow access to the performing arts," said Ms. Burns.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting will be held on October 18th.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha J. Beck
Executive Assistant