

NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING
ATHENS HOLIDAY INN
SEPTEMBER 18, 2014
NOON

MINUTES

The September meeting of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Council was held on Thursday, September 18, 2014 at the Athens Holiday Inn. Chairman Keven Little called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m.

Members Present:

Graham, Pat
Blechinger, Linda
Graham, Ernie
Lyon, Tommy
Bullard, Ed
Plott, Roy
Trammell, Gene
Dyer, David
Dove, Anthony
Gandy, Roy
Ainslie, Andy
Perriman, Fred
Bentley, David
Ellis, Keith
Roseberry, Jerry
Turner, Frank
Davis, Melvin
Ivie, Charles
Harden, Amrey
Boggs, Ronnie
Little, Kevin
Roberts, Roy

Members Absent:

Denson, Nancy
Eisenman, Emily
Houston, Lamar
Guest, Larry
Palmer, Bill
Brock, Phil
Duvall, Valerie
Crow, Tom
Fenn, Josh
Blackmon, Jody
Pittard, Billy
Johnson, Jesse
Thompson, Greg
Knight, Harry
Fordyce, Cary

Staff Present:

Jim Dove, Executive Director
Mott Beck, Executive Assistant
Evans Brinson, Comptroller
Burke Walker, Director of Planning & Government Services
Carol R. Cofer, Workforce Development Director

Associate Members Present:

Horton, Harold
Seymour, Joel
Crawford, Charlie

Media Present:

Blake Giles, Oconee Enterprise

Guests Present:

Jennifer Dees
Chris Edwards
Cheryl Smith
Craig Intro
Tom Krobot
Donald Harris
Nancy Bobbitt
Tate O'Rourke

CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF AUGUST MEETING MINUTES

Chairman Kevin Little called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. He welcomed members, guests, media, and staff. He asked for a motion to approve the August meeting minutes. Such a motion was made by Commissioner Gene Trammell and seconded by Mr. Ronnie Boggs. The motion carried unanimously.

ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

Newton County: The City is in the process of enhancing the Covington Square. Plans are to improve the park, install two new walkways, repave existing sidewalks, install new benches, and landscape around the Veterans' Memorial. The improvements will make the Square more photogenic for the movie companies that film in the downtown area and for the citizens, also. Commissioner Ellis expressed appreciation to the City for all it has done to improve the downtown area. Hotel/motel tax revenues were utilized for this endeavor. The Comprehensive Plan Update for the County, including municipalities, is ongoing. Baxter International is in the process of hiring, and a number of those people are moving into the County and surrounding communities.

Oconee County: The City of Watkinsville recently acquired a six-acre parcel in downtown that will remain a passive park, and an additional area behind the courthouse was obtained for public parking. OCAF is completing a pottery exhibit which is one of the largest in the state, and the Annual Fall Festival will be held on October 18th. Oconee County recently hosted Commissioner Chris Carr and staff of the Georgia Department of Economic Development & Tourism. They were able to see "first hand" some of the things that Oconee County has to offer regarding economic development, including opportunities for tourism, the film industry, and international manufacturing. The County is experiencing a 12% - 15% increase in SPLOST and LOST revenues compared to last year. DOT has let the contract for Phase I of the Mars Hill construction project from Butler's Crossing to Highway 316, and the County has received authorization to start the right-of-way acquisition for Phase II. Two items will be on the ballot for voters to consider on November 4th; a six-year, \$55 million SPLOST referendum and liquor by the drink in unincorporated area restaurants only, with similar restrictions that are now on beer and wine.

Oglethorpe County: The Development Authority has completed training, and citizens recently celebrated the retirement of Dr. Tumlin, who practiced medicine in the County for 46 years. Historic banners have been installed, and flowers have been planted in downtown Lexington. This is in preparation for the *Legends of Oglethorpe* that will be held on October 25th and 26th.

Walton County: The Board of Commissioners and the Board of Education took the rollback rate this year, and there should not be a tax increase in Walton County. Highway 138 Extension to Highway 11 is now open. Additional work is planned that will help alleviate congestion in that corridor. A 750 ft. long, 120 ft. high bridge has been constructed to span Hard Labor Creek. Also in the same vicinity is the largest Solar Farm East of the Mississippi. The Hard Labor Creek Dam is partially complete, and it is anticipated that the reservoir will be full in 18-24 months. A contract has been let for a sewer project that will benefit both the County and the City of Walnut Grove.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit & Finance: The Committee met prior to the Council meeting and reviewed the financial statements for the two-month period ending August 31st. Revenues exceeded expenses by \$1,994. Financial activity for the two-month period was approximately 1/12th of the FY15 Budget projections. A motion to approve the report as presented was made by Mr. Frank Turner and seconded by Mr. Dave Bentley. The motion carried unanimously. Also presented to the Council was a Policy Addendum to the Regional Commission's Fiscal Policy. This policy formally sets a target amount for the Fund Balance Account, and sets the minimum amount that the Fund Balance should not fall below. A motion to adopt this policy was made by Mr. Turner and seconded by Commissioner Anthony Dove. The motion carried unanimously. The policy will be attached to the minutes and placed in the official notebook.

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. **MADISON COUNTY** – Assistance in preparing an Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Grant pre-application. The County is seeking financial assistance for second floor improvements to the historic courthouse. No fee is required for this request, as this assistance is supported by the NEGRC's ARC Administrative Grant.

Based upon recommendation from the Executive Director, a motion to approve the technical assistance requests for the month to be added to the 2015 Program of Work, effective September 18, 2014, was made by Mr. Boggs and seconded by Mr. Bentley. The motion carried unanimously.

Human Services: The Human Services Committee met prior to the Council and heard a report from Workforce Development Director Carol Cofer regarding the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) which was passed on July 22, 2014. This legislation will replace the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and will be effective beginning July 1, 2015. It consolidates 15 separate programs into one and will cause some partner agencies to have a stronger collaboration than some may have at this time. USDOL will issue interim rules by January 2015. Staff is participating in a variety of training sessions to become familiar with the legislation and will identify items which may require action from the Local Elected Officials. Commissioner Davis praised Ms. Cofer and staff for receiving a superior audit from the state. There were no findings or observations.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Executive Director Dove recently attended the Annual Training Conference of the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) held in Denver August 23rd – 26th. There were 650 attendees from 45 states representing 220 district

organizations. In conjunction with the Annual Training Conference, he attended the final NADO Board meeting for the ending Fiscal Year and the initial Board meeting of the new Fiscal Year. Executive Director Dove is now serving a seventh term on the NADO Board of Directors. He advised that the meeting was very informative and worthwhile.

The Appalachian Regional Commission held a meeting at The Barn at Jaemor Farms in Alto on August 28th. The purpose of the meeting was to unveil *Bon Appetit Appalachia!*, which is a guide to local food farms and flavor in the 13 state Appalachian region. The guide shows farmer's markets, farm-to-fork restaurants, farm tours, festivals and events, vineyards and wineries, and craft breweries and spirits. There are 24 Georgia locations listed on the guide and hundreds more on their website. In attendance were DCA Commissioner Gretchen Corbin, Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black, and representatives from the Department of Economic Development, Regional Commissions, and local government.

The Regional Commission recently received the annual contract from the Georgia Department of Transportation. It had been in doubt due to funding limitations at GDOT; however, working with GDOT Board Chair Jay Shaw, Board Member Johnny Floyd, and Deputy Commissioner Todd Long, it was finally approved and forwarded to Regional Commissions throughout the state.

The Southeastern Employment and Training Association (SETA) meeting was held on September 14th -17th in Montgomery. Those attending from the Regional Commission were Workforce Investment Board members *Reg Woods* and *Lori Rios* and Workforce Development staff members *Rhonda Keeter*, *Kim Meadows*, *Arun Hariani*, *Susan Wilson*, and *Rima Sullivan*. With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which will be implemented July 1, 2015, workshops, discussion and information regarding WIOA was the primary focus of this biannual conference held throughout the eight southeastern states.

Earlier this year, Executive Director Dove was invited by ACCG and the Carl Vinson Institute of Government to assist in designing a class on landuse planning for use in ACCG's Life Long Learning Academy. More than 2,800 county officials have received certification through courses offered by ACCG and CVIOG during the past two decades. On Tuesday, September 23rd, he will participate in the design of the City-County Relations Specialty Class as outlined by the ACCG Training Assessment Committee. The design team will work together to identify, conceptualize and develop leadership competencies as well as the content vital to the role of the County Commissioner. Some of the other members of the design team with a Northeast Georgia connection include Chairman Tommy Lyon from Elbert County and Michael Lamar, Morgan County Manager.

FY14 AUDIT REPORT

At this time, Chris Edwards of McNair, McLemore and Middlebrooks gave the FY14 Audit report. He advised that he and his staff had a very positive and pleasant experience conducting the Audit, and Regional Commission staff was always well prepared and very cooperative. There were no adjustments or findings, and everything was in compliance with guidelines of grantor agencies. The Audit received an Unmodified Opinion, which is the highest rating given (formerly Unqualified Opinion). The Pension Plan is well above average and is almost fully funded. A motion to accept the Audit report was made by Commissioner Gene Trammel and seconded by Mr. Bentley. The motion carried unanimously.

OVERVIEW OF PLANNING & GOVERNMENT SERVICES DIVISION ACTIVITIES

The next item on the agenda was a report by Planning & Government Services (PGS) Director Burke Walker on activities of the PGS division. Staff continues to be very busy updating Comprehensive Plans for the Cities of Talmo, Jefferson, and Arcade. The Plan for the City of Elberton will be scheduled soon. Plan implementation meetings for FY15 will be scheduled for Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Jasper, Madison, and Oglethorpe Counties. The purpose of these meetings is to review content, have open discussion regarding use, implementation activities, the need for Regional Commission assistance, and Regional Plan implementation. A letter of reminders to local governments of plan deadlines will be forwarded to inform of deadlines and the importance of QLG status. Staff is now operating under the new DCA planning rules; therefore, basic plans are prepared at no cost by the Regional Commission (provided for in the DCA contract). Additional planning elements will be assessed, if requested, at a cost to be determined at that time. Staff has completed four Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) pre-applications for Barrow and Madison Counties and the Cities of Nicholson and Bowman. Georgia Trust applications are due November 10th, and the Historic Oglethorpe County Jail received this award last year. Mr. Walker advised that the Shields-Ethridge Farm's Black Pot Cooking Festival will be held on October 18th from 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

REPORT FROM THE TOWN OF BRASELTON: RECENT ACTIVITIES AND SUCCESSES

Braselton Town Manager Jennifer Dees was introduced and gave an overview of that community. Braselton is located on the I-85 Corridor with close proximity to Atlanta, Gainesville, and Athens. It was recently awarded the honor of being one of the safest cities in the state. It has a population of approximately 10,000 and is one of the fastest growing cities in Georgia. She provided some very interesting statistics: the average household income is 74% higher than the national average, the per capita income is \$45,018, and the average household income is \$119,316. A Bachelor's Degree or higher has been achieved by 29.78% of the town's residents, and 86.35% have attained a high school degree or higher. Ms. Dees described the various town departments and services provided. In addition, she detailed the various commissions,

authorities, and agencies which serve the community. She offered considerable information on economic development activities in the community and provided an overview of the vast public communications network. She wrapped her presentation by addressing questions and comments.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, October 16th.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha J. Beck
Executive Assistant