

**NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING
ATHENS HOLIDAY INN
NOVEMBER 17, 2011
NOON**

MINUTES

The regular meeting of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Council was held on Thursday, November 17th at Noon at the Athens Holiday Inn. Chairman Jim Joiner called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m.

Members Present:

Yearwood, Danny
Denson, Nancy
Houston, Lamar
Lyon, Tommy
Bicknell, Hunter
Joiner, Jim
Short, Shane
Nalls, Billy
Dove, Anthony
Faust, Ron
Brooks, Stenette
Morgan, Kathy
Roseberry, Jerry
Turner, Frank
Walter, Joe
Harden, Amrey
Pittard, Billy
Crawford, Charlie
Little, Kevin
Lewis, Vince

Members Absent:

Thompson, Chip
Graham, Ernie
Mercer, Jim
Guest, Larry
Palmer, Bill
Sanders, Bud
Wright, Glenn
Mayers, Tom
Hill, Charles
Newsome, Glenn
Gandy, Roy
Ainslie, Andy
Perriman, Fred
Davis, Melvin
Yeaney, Russ
Thompson, Greg
Knight, Harry
Lee, Kay
Roberts, Roy

Associates Present:

Postell, Larry

Guests Present:

Phil Pitts
Helen Parker
Pat Graham

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

CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF OCTOBER MEETING MINUTES

Chairman Jim Joiner welcomed members, guests, and staff. He asked for a motion to approve the October meeting minutes. Such a motion was made by Mr. Frank Turner and seconded by Commissioner Dove. The motion carried unanimously.

ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST

Newton County: The Newton County Board of Commissioners voted to hire a County Manager that will answer directly to the Board of Commissioners. The lighting of the Courthouse will be held on the evening of December 17th.

Oconee County: The County is in the process of updating its Unified Development Code. It recently received approval to begin right-of-way acquisition for Phase 1 of Mars Hill Road from 316 to Butlers Crossing. The project will cost between \$8 and \$9 million that will be reimbursed by the state. The completion of Jennings Mill Parkway is scheduled for December 2011. Sales Tax and SPLOST revenues are up from the previous year, and there has been an increase in single-family home building permits. The County was notified by the Governor's office that it has been awarded a \$1.2 million grant to acquire an interoperable communications infrastructure allowing them to join the OARS Radio System. This is a joint effort with Greene and Walton Counties. The City of Watkinsville utilized SPLOST funds to make improvements to Harris Shoals Park, and survey work has been done for sidewalk from Harden Hill Road to the Park.

Oglethorpe County: A \$7 million joint sewer project between the cities of Crawford and Lexington, the Board of Education, and the County, is ongoing. The comprehensive plan update is complete. Commissioner Pittard advised that he is serving on a Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Rules Task Force that is charged with review of the comprehensive planning and Developments of Regional Impact process to determine if changes are needed, and he reports that it is going very well. The County and municipalities have completed their LOST negotiations, and it has been submitted. The redistricting has been signed by the Governor and forwarded to the Department of Justice. A SPLOST referendum was recently passed, and funds will be used to renovate the interior of the courthouse. Commissioner Pittard recognized Mr. Charlie Crawford and Mayor Jim Mercer, who will be leaving the Council at the end of the year.

Walton County: The County recently passed both the ELOST and SPLOST with approximately 66% of the vote. The schools will use ELOST funds to purchase iPads instead of textbooks. The County will use its SPLOST funds to construct a new \$28 million jail. Land acquisition is approximately 75% complete for construction of the Hard Labor Creek Reservoir. The County has approached Governor Deal to request three-year funding for the Dam. The County is working jointly with the City of Walnut Grove on a major sewer project.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit & Finance: The Committee met prior to the Council meeting to review the financial statement for the month ending October 31, 2011. A review of the account balances reflects the strong financial condition of the Regional Commission. Cash and near cash assets exceed total liabilities, excluding the capital lease debt, by \$708,000. Revenues exceeded expenses by \$812. Financial activity for the four-month period was approximately 1/3rd of the annual 2012 Budget. A motion to approve the financial report as presented was made by Mr. Turner and seconded by Commissioner Dove. 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. **OCONEE COUNTY** – Development of a Pre-Disaster Hazard Mitigation Plan.
2. **CITY OF PORTERDALE** – 2012 Community Development Block Grant Application – Housing improvements and infrastructure.

Based upon recommendation from the Executive Director, a motion to approve the technical assistance requests for inclusion in the FY2012 Program of work, effective November 17, 2011, was made by Mr. Charlie Crawford and seconded by Commissioner Danny Yearwood. The motion carried unanimously.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

At this time, Director Dove advised that the second annual installment of Northeast Georgia's presentation of Georgia Transit Day was held on November 2nd at the Athens Community Council on Aging. The event focused on the importance of public and human services transportation in our communities and our region and state. Following introductory remarks by ACCA CEO Jennie Deese, Georgia Transit Association Executive Director Kerima Haynes, and Director Dove, those in attendance viewed a video presentation featuring State Senator Jeff Mullis and GDOT Planning Director Todd Long. The group was treated to a presentation by GTA Vice President Scott Haggard and a panel discussion featuring experts in the field. The activities concluded with a tour of transit vehicles on display.

The 13th annual Georgia Association of Regional Commissions Annual Conference was held at St. Simons on November 9th – 11th. It was attended by a number of Council members and staff including Chairman Joiner, Vice Chairman Little, Hunter Bicknell, Danny Yearwood, Melvin Davis, Lamar Houston, Tommy Lyon, Kathy Morgan, Billy Pittard, Director Dove, Mott Beck, Evans Brinson, and Burke Walker. There were approximately 250 persons in attendance throughout the state. There were several excellent presentations including those by Mike Beatty, Todd Long, Tim Kassa, Ross King, Lamar Norton, and others.

Director Dove reported that two new employees are joining the staff on Monday, November 28th. Taylor Baxter will be filling the position of Planner. He has a Masters Degree in City and Regional Planning from Georgia Tech, and most recently worked with the City of Sandy Springs. Kenneth Gilbert will be filling the position of GIS Planner. He has worked for the past four years for a private firm in Oxford, Mississippi. He received a Master of Science Degree in Geography from the University of Alabama. The Council will have an opportunity to meet these young men at a future meeting.

UPDATE ON PLAN 2035: NORTHEAST GEORGIA'S REGIONAL PLAN

The next item on the agenda was a report by Planning and Government Services Director Burke Walker on the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan update. Georgia's Regional Commissions develop and implement regional plans to accomplish state planning goals in the areas of economic development, natural and cultural resources, infrastructure and services, housing, coordinated planning of land use and transportation, and intergovernmental coordination. Regional plans consist of three sections: Regional Assessment, Stakeholder Involvement Program, and Regional Agenda. NEGRC Staff initiated work on Plan 2035 in late 2010, and has completed the Regional Assessment and Stakeholder Involvement Program in preparation for developing its Regional Agenda. The Plan is tentatively scheduled to be adopted by the Council in April 2012. Mr. Walker also gave highlights of additional ongoing activities, and provided members with an updated brochure of the Planning and Government Services Division.

EMPLOYMENT AND WORKFORCE TRENDS

Dr. Helen Parker, U.S. Department of Labor Regional Administrator for Region 3, provided the Council an overview of the status of the federal budget discussion and funding for the Workforce Investment Act unemployment claim data for the State of Georgia and Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund loans with state comparisons. She also provided an overview of the Northeast Georgia's PY2010 performance against the Workforce Investment Act national performance standards. Dr. Parker indicated that the Northeast Georgia area continues to meet and/or exceed those measures consistently. She provided information on several initiatives that the U.S. Department of Labor has implemented to assist all persons, with particular emphasis on veterans, in their efforts to seek and prepare for employment.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Annually, the November meeting marks the last meeting of the calendar year. There are always mixed emotions associated with this meeting, because it marks the final meeting for some Council members. At this time, Director Dove recognized six Municipal Representatives that will be leaving the Council. Ron Faust has served for two years as representative of municipalities in Madison County, Joe Walter has served two years as municipal representative from Oconee County, Chip Thompson from Winder will be leaving office at the end of this year, as will Glenn Newsome who has

served admirably from Monticello. Jim Mercer has been a great representative from the City of Winterville, and Charlie Crawford, former Chairman, will be leaving office in Lexington. Director Dove expressed appreciation for their dedication and service to the Council.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting will be held on January 19th.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha J. Beck
Executive Assistant