

**NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION  
COUNCIL MEETING  
ATHENS HOLIDAY INN  
JANUARY 19, 2012  
NOON**

**MINUTES**

The regular meeting of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Council was held on Thursday, January 19<sup>th</sup> at Noon at the Athens Holiday Inn. Chairman Jim Joiner called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m.

**Members Present:**

Yearwood, Danny  
Bridges, Robert  
Graham, Ernie  
Denson, Nancy  
Eisenman, Emily  
Houston, Lamar  
Lyon, Tommy  
Palmer, Bill  
Sanders, Bud  
Bicknell, Hunter  
Joiner, Jim  
Short, Shane  
Hill, Charles  
Nalls, Billy  
Dove, Anthony  
Blackmon, Jody  
Gandy, Roy  
Ainslie, Andrew  
Perriman, Fred  
Brooks, Stenette  
Morgan, Kathy  
Roseberry, Jerry  
Turner, Frank  
Davis, Melvin  
Ivie, Charles  
Harden, Amrey  
Pittard, Billy  
Boggs, Ronnie  
Little, Kevin  
Lee, Kay  
Roberts, Roy  
Lewis, Vince

**Members Absent:**

Guest, Larry  
Wright, Glenn  
Thurman, Larry  
Yeany, Russ  
Thompson, Greg  
Knight, Harry

**Guests Present:**

Doug Callaway  
Marsay Simpson  
Marc Fordham  
Jim Hussey  
Bob Lofgren  
Frank Ginn  
T.K. Adams  
Michael Lamar  
Ellen Warren  
Dennis Pitts  
John Stephens  
Bob Thomas  
Jason O'Rourke

**Staff Present:**

Jim Dove, Executive Director  
Mott Beck, Executive Assistant  
Evans Brinson, Comptroller  
Carol R. Cofer, Director of Workforce Development  
Burke Walker, Planning & Local Gov't. Services Director  
Kenny Gilbert, GIS Planner  
Taylor Baxter, Planner

**Associates Present:**

Horton, Harold  
Seymour, Joel  
Adams, Louise  
Pitt, Flemmie  
Crawford, Charlie  
Jackson, Julian

**Media Present:**

Blake Giles, Oconee Enterprise  
Blake Aued, Athens Banner Herald  
Leanne Akin, The Paper

## **CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 2011 MEETING MINUTES**

Chairman Jim Joiner welcomed members, guests, media, and staff. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the November 2011 meeting. Such a motion was made by Commissioner Tommy Lyon and seconded by Dr. Stenette Brooks. The motion carried unanimously.

## **INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS**

At this time, Director Dove introduced new Council members. Robert Bridges, long time Mayor of Statham, is the new municipal representative from Barrow County, and assuming that role from Athens-Clarke County is Winterville Mayor Emily Eisenman. Larry Thurman is the new municipal representative from Jasper County and was recently elected as a City Councilman in Monticello. Jody Blackmon, Mayor of Comer, is the municipal representative from Madison County. Representing the municipalities in Oconee County is the new Watkinsville Mayor Charles Ivie, and Ronnie Boggs, Lexington Councilman, was chosen as the municipal representative from Oglethorpe County.

## **ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST**

**Barrow County:** The new cinemas have opened in the County and houses one of the largest 3D screens in the country. The annual audit is being conducted, and the County has a balanced budget for the first time in 10 years. There will be three new businesses locating in the Target Shopping Center along S.R. 316.

**Clarke County:** A childcare center has opened on the campus of the Medical College of Georgia/UGA Health Science facility. The new \$187 million water treatment facility has been completed on College Station Road. The Washington Street Parking Deck will house office and retail space, which will contribute to the tax base. A pedestrian bridge will be constructed over Sandy Creek. A number of SPLOST projects have been completed, and renovations to the Classic Center and Jail are ongoing. An Economic Development Task Force has been appointed to develop a strategy for the future.

**Elbert County:** A second German manufacturing facility, Hailo, has located in the County. Executive Director Dove and Executive Assistant Mott Beck with facilitate a retreat for the Elbert County Development Authority to discuss future economic development. The opening of a new Emergency Management Center was recently held, and appreciation goes to Mr. Frank Coggins for his \$30,000 donation for this endeavor. The three new fire stations are open and fully staffed; and work on the airport, which will extend the runway to 5,000 ft., is ongoing. The audit report indicated that the County was \$645,000 in the black.

**Greene County:** As of January 1<sup>st</sup>, St. Mary's Healthcare assumed ownership of the hospital in Greensboro; and it will be known as Good Samaritan Hospital. The 800 Megahertz public radio system is complete and fully operational. This

was a partnership with Oconee County and ties in to the Walton County public safety network. Baldwin County recently executed a contract to join the system through the tower sites in Greene County. Phase one of the East/West Connector is open, and phase two should be opening in a month. Plans are to construct a new hospital on 24 acres of property on the corner of Cary Station Road and S.R. 44. The County was awarded a Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting for the third year in a row.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Audit & Finance:** The Committee met prior to the Council to review the financial statements for the six-month period ending December 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 \$714,000. Revenues exceed expenses by \$983. Financial activity for the six-month period is approximately ½ of the annual 2012 budget. A motion to approve the financial report as presented was made by Mr. Turner and seconded by Mr. Roy Gandy. 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 COVINGTON** – Preparation of a OneGeorgia Economic Development, Growth, and Expansion (EDGE) Grant Application – The City is seeking financial assistance for a new business that will create 140 new jobs.

Based upon recommendation from the Executive Director, a motion to approve the technical assistance requests for inclusion in the FY2012 Program of Work, effective January 19, 2012, was made by Mr. Lamar Houston and seconded by Commissioner Billy Pittard. The motion carried unanimously.

**Planning and Government Services:** The Committee met prior to the Council and considered two items of interest related to regional planning. Members reviewed and accepted the final draft of the Regional Agenda. This is the last of three parts of the Regional Plan 2035, and the Committee recommended that the Council adopt a resolution to transmit the Regional Agenda to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for review and approval. A motion to accept this recommendation was made by Commissioner Lyon and seconded by Commissioner Pittard. The motion carried unanimously. The Committee also reviewed and accepted two new nominations for Regionally Important Resources (RIRs) from the City of Madison (Historic District) and Lake Jackson in Jasper County. Again, the Committee recommended that these two nominations be approved and added to the existing RIR list. A motion to accept this recommendation was made by Commissioner Lyon and seconded by Dr. Brooks. The motion carried unanimously.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

The annual Northeast Georgia Regional Commission orientation for newly elected officials and Council members will be held on Thursday, January 26<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. at headquarters. This provides an opportunity to explain more of the programs, projects, and structure of the Regional Commission to those recently elected to office or a seat on the governing Council. We encourage those that have been in office or on the Council for a while to attend for a refresher course. Each Department Head will make a presentation and entertain questions and comments.

As mentioned earlier, Councilmember Ronnie Boggs is the new Municipal Representative from Oglethorpe County, replacing long time member and Past Chairman Charlie Crawford. In the past, names of former Chairs and others who wish to continue to participate on the Council as a non-voting Associate Member have been presented to the Council for consideration. Mr. Crawford has expressed an interest in serving in that role, and Director Dove expressed this to the Council. A motion to accept Mr. Crawford as an Associate Member was made by Commissioner Pittard and seconded by Commissioner Kevin Little. The motion carried unanimously.

At this time of year, Executive Assistant Mott Beck and Executive Director Dove are busy facilitating retreats for the local governments and associated groups throughout the region. Over the last few years, they have facilitated approximately 55 of these sessions. Thus far this year, retreats are scheduled for the City of Social Circle, Elbert County, Elberton, and Bowman Industrial Development Authority, Oconee County Arts Foundation, the City of Bogart, the City of Jefferson, Newton County Board of Commissioners, and the Town of Braselton.

At this time, Executive Director Dove introduced Chris Chalmers of the Woolpert firm. Mr. Chalmers is working with Oconee County on a digital imagery project and advised the Council of the economies related to flying the entire area for a regional imagery project should there be interest from other local governments. He has also been involved with Newton County in a similar project. Mr. Chalmers was formerly GIS Manager for Coastal Regional Commission and indicated he would make himself available as needed to discuss a joint effort in our region should it be desired.

## **UPDATE ON PLANNING & GOVERNMENT SERVICES (PGS) DIVISION AND NEW FACES**

At this time, Director of Planning & Government Services Burke Walker gave an update on ongoing projects in his division and introduced two new members of the staff. Kenny Gilbert was recently hired as the GIS Planner. His role combines GIS technical skills with planning so that he can perform mapping and GIS tasks as well as participate in plan development. Taylor Baxter assumed the role of Planner and will be working on Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plans for Oconee, Madison, Oglethorpe, and Greene Counties.

As part of the DCA contract, NEGRC will be purchasing video conferencing equipment that will enable conferencing with DCA staff and other agencies from NEGRC headquarters. The FY12 DCA contract also requires staff to schedule and meet with local governments to review existing comprehensive plans and short-term programs to ensure that they are being implemented. We will meet with governments in six counties during this Fiscal Year – Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Jasper, Madison, and Oglethorpe.

Mr. Walker also reported on past successful Transportation Enhancement projects in Watkinsville, Greensboro, and Jefferson. Finally, he reminded everyone of the regional Solid Waste Summit to be held on January 27<sup>th</sup> at the Classic Center in Athens.

### **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DIVISION REPORT**

The next item on the agenda was a report by Workforce Development Director Carol Cofer. She provided the Council with an update on the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) activities of the Program Year ending June 30, 2011. For the benefit of newly elected officials and other new Council members, Ms. Cofer advised that WIA is federal workforce investment funds allocated by Congress on an annual basis to each state. In Georgia, those funds are allocated to the 20 local workforce investment areas. In each area, a local Workforce Investment Board is appointed by local elected officials, with 51% of the membership being from the private sector and the remaining membership from education, vocational rehabilitation, public employment service, community based organizations, and organized labor.

For Program Year 2010, the local area met or exceeded all of the performance measures. The local area served 1,800 persons, which is 500 more than the previous year. Ms. Cofer indicated that there did not appear to be additional funds available to operate a large stand-alone Summer Youth Program. However, those youth currently enrolled in the WIA in-school program (approximately 230) would have an opportunity to participate in work experience this summer.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

The next meeting will be held on February 16<sup>th</sup>.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha J. Beck  
Executive Assistant