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RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

Marion County Commission Office
100 Burkhalter Avenue, Buena Vista, Georgia

Minutes

February 25, 2015
10:30 A.M.

Members Attending/Representing

(Representing 16 Counties)

- Allen Fort, Georgetown-Quitman County
A J. Rivers, City of Cordele
Bruce Hill, City of Oglethorpe
Carlton Wilson, City of Ellaville
Cecil "Butch" McMickle, Marion County
Charles Gibson, City of Lumpkin
David Kinsey, Georgetown-Quitman Co.
Doug Ethridge, Harris County
Dr. Carole Rutland, Muscogee County
Chip Jones, Stewart County
Clinton Perry, Jr., Taylor County
Edward Lee, Cusseta-Chattahoochee County
Evelyn Turner-Pugh, Muscogee County
George Moore, Webster County
James Morton, Cusseta-Chattahoochee County
Jerry "Pops" Barnes, Muscogee County
Jim Lawrence, Cusseta- Chattahoochee County
Jimmy Bradley, Randolph County

- Mickey George, Macon County
Joe Lee Williams, Stewart County
Knox Blackmar, City of Talbotton
Lawrence Young, Stewart County
Lee Hubbard, Clay County
Maggie McGruther, Sumter County
Mike Speight, Crisp County
Nelson Brown, City of Americus
Noel Williams, Crisp County
Patricia Goodman, Randolph County
Ralph Brown, City of Buena Vista
Randy Howard, Sumter County
Richard McCorkle, Marion County
Richard Morris, Georgetown-Quitman County
Steven F. Martin, City of Ft. Gaines
Terrell Hudson, Dooly County
Tom Queen, Taylor County
Tommy McKenzie, Macon County

Members Not Present

- Barry Whitley, City of Butler
"Bump" Welch, Marion County
Clark Henderson, Crisp County
Eddie Daniels, City of Vienna
Fred Gordon, Muscogee County
Freeman Montgomery, Talbot County
Greg Bariteau, Schley County

- Harry Lange, Harris County
Melvin Crines, Webster County
Pam Jordan, Talbot County
Rebecca Chambers, City of Hamilton
Steve Whatley, City of Cuthbert
Wally Summers, Sumter County

Others Present

- Kevin Langston, Ga. Dept. of Economic Development
Chris Cannon, GDEd, Tourism Project Manager
Tonya Mole, DCA, Finance
Frank Etheridge, Randolph County Manager

- Laura Gower, Rep. for Senator Isakson
Andrew Ross, Rep. for Senator Isakson
Vickie Wainwright, City of Butler
Ms. Lemon, Family Connections

Staff Present

- Patti Cullen, Executive Director
Sarah Walls, Assistant Executive Director
Tiffany Ingram, AAA Director
Katie Howard, Comm. & Economic Director
Gerald Mixon, Planning Director
Emily Chambers, Finance Officer
Janice West, WIA Director

- Allison Slootm, Senior Planner, Historic Preservation
Julio Portillo, Regional Planner
Jim Livingston, Special Projects/Planncr
Mia Anderson, Marketing Mgr./Assistant Planner
Becky Holmes, Officer Manager

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Quitman | Randolph | Schley | Stewart | Sumter | Talbot | Taylor | Webster

Welcome and Recognition of Visitors

Terrell Hudson, Chair, brought the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Clinton Perry, Vice Chair, led the council in prayer and Chair Hudson led the council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Review and Approval of Minutes*

Council reviewed the minutes of the January 28, 2015 council meeting. Clinton Perry made a motion to approve the minutes as presented; Richard Morris seconded the motion. By a show of hands the motion passed unanimously.

Tourism is Economic Development

Katie Howard, RVRC Economic Development Director, introduced Kevin Langston, Deputy Commissioner for Tourism with the Georgia Department of Economic Development. Mr. Langston said he had visited Pasaquan earlier and that the art work was amazing and a great tourism asset. He urged everyone to go visit local attractions.

Mr. Langston gave a PowerPoint presentation explaining how tourism directly impacts economic development and the importance of it to each municipality in the region. He said tourism in Georgia had created of 250,000 jobs and indirectly created 400,000 jobs in 2014. Visitor spending on food, lodging, gas and collected taxes are just a few of the things that help to create these jobs. Domestic tourist from Florida are the largest spenders in Georgia and visitors from China, Brazil and South Korea are the largest international spenders. This is partially due to international visitors generally staying longer.

Mr. Langston introduced Chris Cannon, Presidential Pathways project manager. Amanda Peacock, who was unable to attend, is the Plantation Trace project manager. Last year over a billion dollars was generated in state and local taxes in the Presidential Pathways region, creating 8,060 jobs. The Plantation Trace region also generated over a billion dollars, creating 8,700 jobs from tourism.

Mr. Langston also explained the marketing program for Georgia tourism. A few items he discussed was the printing of the Georgia Travel Guides which was completed at no cost to the Georgia tax payers, the new marketing campaign shifting to a younger population and Georgia.org website.

Facebook Photo Contest

Mia Anderson, Marketing Manager/Planner, gave a PowerPoint presentation of the "Show Your Love" photography contest that the Regional Commission held during the month of January via the commission's Face Book Page. The categories were Historic Sites (winner: the president of Andrew College's home at night), Life in the River Valley (winner: boy with his great-grandfather at Goodwin Brother's Farm in Weston), Our Town (winner: Chelsea's Fountain in Shellman) and Scenery (winner: Deer Creek Farm at Pataula Creek). She said many great photos were submitted for the contest. The grand prize winner was selected from the first place winners in each category, which was the president of Andrew College's home at night, taken by Patricia Goodman.

The People's Choice first place winner, based on the most number of likes on Facebook, was Chelsea's Fountain in Shellman taken by Patricia Goodman. Mia presented Patricia Goodman with a bag of goodies for having taken the overall winning photograph.

Resolution to Enter Into FY16 Contract with DHS for the Provision of Aging Services and Request Adoption of the Area Plan

Tiffany Ingram, Area Agency on Aging Director, presented and explained the Annual Area Plan Update Review and said that it is a required part of the Annual Plan each year. Tiffany gave details of the Executive Summary and the 20 services that are available thru the Area Agency on Aging.

She then requested approval to enter into the FY16 contract with the Department of Human Services, Division of Aging Services. She explained the resolution is required to be included in the Area Plan Update each year. The review and resolution was included in the council packet.

Clinton Perry made a motion to approve the resolution to enter into the FY16 contract with DHS; Jerry "Pops" Barnes seconded the motion. By a show of hands the motion passed unanimously.

Review and Approval of the Regional Work Program

Gerald Mixon, Planning Director, updated the council on the progress of the Regional Work Program since the January Council meeting. He explained that he had received twelve points that were added to the work program and three deletions. The Regional Work Program was included in the Council packet. Gerald then requested approval to submit the Regional Work Program Annual Update to the Department of Community Affairs for review.

George Moore made a motion to approve submittal of the Regional Work Program Annual Update; Carole Rutland seconded the motion. By a show of hands the motion passed unanimously.

Update on Proposed Columbus Office Building

Patti Cullen, Executive Director, gave a PowerPoint presentation updating the council on progress that has been made toward possibly purchasing a facility to house the Columbus staff.

Patti compared the existing office building with the possible new location. She explained a few of the disadvantages of the current office are overcrowding (8,323 square feet on two levels), no elevator, is not ADA compliant, lack of storage space, inadequate parking, safety issues and the general disrepair of the building.

The advantages of the new location would solve all of the problems listed above. It would also save money when comparing the repair cost of the current property verses the renovation cost of the proposed property.

Patti then asked Emily Chambers, Finance Officer, to explain the financing of possibly purchasing the facility and explain RVRC options.

Emily explained that the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) of Columbus will issue 20-year revenue bonds that will be purchased by the State Bank. The bonds will mature in 10 years and be reissued for an additional 10 years. The bonds will be secured by the existing building and the new building. RVRC will transfer the title of both properties to the DDA and sign a lease-purchase agreement with DDA. Payments will be fixed for 10 years and the RVRC will make lease payments directly to State Bank.

Emily then explained the options.

Option 1: Stay at the current property. Spend \$373,135 to renovate the property which is approximately \$70,000 more than the appraised value of the property. This option will not resolve the problems of overcrowding, insufficient meeting space, storage space, parking or safety of the staff.

Option 2: Purchase the new property. Spend \$250,000 to renovate the building which is \$123,000 less than repairs would be at the current property. This option would solve all issues.

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Option 3: RVRC lease a suitable building. Lease space in Columbus is presently going for a \$1.00 per square foot per month.

Emily said a vote would be held on the Bond Resolution at the March council meeting.

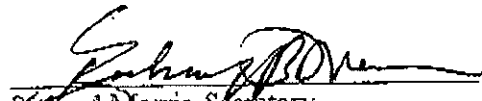
After much discussion, a straw vote was taken to show support of purchasing the facility on Front Avenue. No objections were raised.

Staff Reports

Staff reports were not given, due to time restraints, but were included in the council packet.



Verrell Hudson, Chair



Richard Morris, Secretary

March 25, 2015