RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION

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RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING River Valley Regional Commission, Columbus Office
August 26, 2020
10:30 A.M.
Minutes

Members Attending in Columbus Office
(Representing Counties 13)

Melvin Crimes, Webster
Dr. Edward Lee, Chattahoochee
Knox Blackmar, Talbotton
Tameka Harris, Taylor
Tom Queen, Taylor

Members Attending via Video Call

Barry Whitley, Butler
Bruce Hill, Oglethorpe, RVRC Secretary
Carvel Lewis, Quitman
Doug Etheridge, Harris
Greg Dominy, Ellaville
Jayson Griffin, Macon
Jerry "Pops" Barnes, Muscogee, RVRC Vice Chairman
Jimmy Bradley, Randolph
Kevin Brown, Buena Vista
Maggie McGruther, Sumter
Matt Gunnels, Marion
Mickey George, Macon
Pam Jordan, Talbot
Richard McCorkle, Marion
Terrell Hudson, Dooly
Tony Kennedy, Webster

Members Not Attending

A.J. Rivers, Crisp County
Chip Jones, Stewart
Clay Jones, Sumter
Damon Hoyte, Chattahoochee
Danny Blackmon, Quitman
Eddie Daniels, Vienna
Freeman Montgomery, Talbot
Greg Barineau, Schley
Harry Lange, Harris
James Morton, Chattahoochee
James R. "Bump" Welch, Marion
James Davenport, Clay
Jeanie Bartee, Cordele
Jimmy Babb, Lumpkin
Joe Lee Williams, Stewart
Julie Brown, Hamilton
Kenneth Sumpter, Clay County
Nelson Brown, Americus
Randy Howard, Sumter, RVRC Chairman
Sam Farrow, Jr., Crisp
Skip Henderson, Muscogee
Steve Whatley, Cuthbert

Others Attending via Video Call

Kathy Burns, Rep. for Sen. Perdue
Mac Moye, Stewart County
Janice Jarvis, Sumter County
Laura Gower, Rep. for Sen. Loeffler
Douglas Jamieson, Schley County
Susan Gallagher, New Horizons
Tom Horn, Columbus Water Works
Vickie Wainwright, Butler
Rebecca White, Randolph County

Staff Members

Jim Livingston, Executive Director
Sarah Wall, Assist. Executive Dir.
Katie Howard, AAA Director
Emily Chambers, Finance Officer
Tammy Collins, Finance Officer
Gerald Mixon, Planning Director
Mariyana Kostov, GIS Specialist
Janice West, WIOA Director
Tenisha Tookes, WIOA Specialist
Becky Holmes, Office Manager

WELCOME AND RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Jim Livingston, Executive Director, brought the River Valley Regional Commission Council meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. He thanked everyone for joining the meeting either in person or by teleconference. Those joining by tele-conference could ask questions by e-chat or messaging him on his telephone.

Melvin Crimes, Webster County, then gave the invocation and led the council in the Pledge of Allegiance. Jim Livingston, Executive Director, asked Mr. Crimes to lead the council meeting in the absence of the Chairman in-person in Columbus.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES*

Council reviewed the minutes of the June 24, 2020 council meeting which were either mailed or emailed to council members the previous week for their review. The minutes were included in the council packet.

There being no changes or additions Melvin Crimes, Webster County, requested a motion to approve the June 24, 2020 council minutes.

Knox Blackmar, City of Talbotton, made the above requested motion; Tameka Harris, Taylor County, seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

2020 CENSUS UPDATE

Jim Livingston, Executive Director; Gerald Mixon, Planning Director; and Mariyana Kostov, GIS Specialist updated the council on Census 2020 campaign. A map was in the council packet that listed self-response rates in Region 8 as of August 16, 2020. Only 3 counties and 6 cities are above 50% response rate. Other counties and cities are between 18 and 50 percent reporting rates. Three-fourths of River Valley's counties are the lowest reporting counties in the state. Overall, Georgia's self-response rate is almost 67 percent.

Jim stressed that everyone needs to update their communities on the importance of the census. Every person not counted will cost their jurisdiction money and political representation for the next 10 years. Money that is lost due to not completing census information will go to other counties in the state.

APPROVAL OF OPENING EDA RLF BANK ACCOUNT*

Jim Livingston, Executive Director, explained that the RC had completed and submitted an EDA COVID-19 Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) application in the amount of $1,001,000. RVRC staff also completed and submitted an EDA COVID-19 Planning Grant Application to the Economic Development Administration for approximately $400,000. Both applications have been approved for funding. He said the COVID-19 RLF fund will be available from June 2020 to July 2022 or until all funds have been utilized. Jim explained that in order to receive the funds the RC needed council authorization to open a bank account for these funds.

Melvin Crimes, Webster County, requested a motion for approval to open an EDA Revolving Loan Fund bank account.

Knox Blackmar, City of Talbotton, made the above requested motion. Tameka Harris, Taylor County, seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

APPROVAL OF PROPOSED MEETING DATES FOR FY21*

Jim Livingston, Executive Director, suggested the council continue to hold council meetings on the fourth Wednesday of each month, at 10:30 a.m. The meeting would be held in the RVRC Columbus Conference Room either in person or by teleconference. When it is determined that it is safe to do so, council meetings will then resume

at the Marion County Commission office, in Buena Vista for FY 2021. The November meeting would be held on November 18 due to the Thanksgiving holiday. Traditionally, council meetings are not held in July and December.

Melvin Crimes, Webster County, requested a motion to accept the meeting dates as suggested.

Tameka Harris, Taylor County, made the above requested motion; Knox Blackmar, City of Talbotton, seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

APPROVAL OF JOB DESCRIPTION*

Jim Livingston, Executive Director announced that due to CARES Act funding a new Outreach Specialist position has been created in the Aging department. This position will work developing and implementing a telephone reassurance program in the region as well as other programs to reduce social isolation for seniors.

Melvin Crimes, Webster County, requested a motion to approve the Outreach Specialist job description.

Tom Queen, Taylor County, made the above requested motion; Knox Blackmar, City of Talbotton, seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

RECOGNITION OF STAFF FOR YEARS OF SERVICE

Jim Livingston, Executive Director, recognized staff members for their years of service at RVRC. They were Gail Simpson, 25 years; Becky Holmes, 25 years; Allison Slocum, 20 years; and Debbie Zwaga 10 years.

Staff Reports

Emily Chambers, Finance Director, said the finance department staff had been preparing for the yearly audit. Auditors were in the Columbus office last week conducting the audit. She explained that a finance report would be available at the September council meeting.

Katie Howard, AAA Director, explained that the number of seniors on the waiting list for meals has risen rapidly due to COVID-19. Due to additional funding from the Families First and CARES Act funding many of those people are no longer on the Waiting List.

Katie said the AAA department has a new website and invited everyone to view it at www.rivervalleyaging.org. Tai Chi is now being taught by staff on CCGTV on Jerry "Pops" Barnes "Healthy Matters" show. There is a new lesson every two weeks and it is broadcast twice per day. The shows can also be viewed on AAA's You Tube channel at any time.

Katie stated that the Senior Farmer's Market was held for the 5th year, in all 16 counties, and was a great success with 1,739 clients served. The Third Annual Community Senior Farmers Market was held in Columbus and served 505 clients. Katie thanked all staff that helped make these markets happen as well as the volunteers.

Sarah Walls, Assistant Executive Director, presented the staff report for the Economic Development Department. She said as Jim Livingston, Executive Director had explained earlier staff had been approved for the EDA COVID-19 Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) in the amount of $1,001,000 and the EDA COVID-19 Planning Grant for approximately $400,000.

Sarah said the existing RLF Plan had to be revised in order to include the three variances that are allowed for the lending of these new funds. The variances include:

* lower interest rate on loans made at 2% interest;
* funds will not require leverage of additional capital; and,
* will not require evidence demonstrating that other credit is otherwise available.

Businesses that have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic will be eligible to apply with a pre-application which is available on the RVRC website or by contacting the office and requesting a copy of the pre-application be mailed to them. Sarah said the loan limit is $200,000. She asked if anyone knows of a business that would like to apply for a loan to contact her.

Sarah explained that the EDA COVID-19 Planning Grant for approximately $400,000 funds will allow the RVRC to hire two coordinators (regional planners) to work within many of our cities and counties where there is the most need due to the effect the pandemic has had on their communities. This will be a two-year grant.

Gerald Mixon, Planning Director, reported that zoning and technical assistance continues to several counties at this time. Staff held a virtual Zoning Basics training class for the Fort Gaines Planning and Zoning Commission on August 20. Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan Update is in GEMA review for Randolph and Stewart counties and updates are underway for Crisp, Dooly, Marion, Talbot, and Webster counties. Clay County's Pre Disaster Plan was approved by FEMA and adopted by the Clay County BOC, Fort Gaines, and Bluffton in May.

The GIS department is continuing to monitor census data as it becomes available. Mapping continues on the Columbus Mid-Town sidewalk, bike lane, and speed limits mapping. Staff is also in the process of merging GIS data between the Columbus and Americus offices.

Best Management Practices (BMP) are being implemented for the Mountain Oak Creek watershed and monthly water quality monitoring for the Mountain Oak Creek watershed was completed on July 23, and was repeated on August 19. Gerald announced that the RVRC was selected for the Georgia Adopt-a-Stream for the Watershed Award for their work and dedication to the program throughout 2019.

Janice West, WIOA Director, stated that WIOA state allocations for physical year 2020 had a 15 percent reduction in funding. This WIOA cutback covered all nineteen local WIOA areas in the state. Educational and training activities have been restored on a virtual or in-person basis. Service providers for these activities are requiring appointments in advance and the use of personal protective equipment will be required at all WIOA One Stop Centers and training sites.

State and region wide Unemployment Insurance claims were at a record high during the period of March 7-August 8 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

ADJOURN

Melvin Crimes, Webster County requested a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Knox Blackmar, City of Talbotton, made the above requested motion. Tameka Harris, Taylor County, seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

September 23, 2020

Randy Howard, Chairman

Bruce Hill, Secretary