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RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING
Marion County Commission Office
June 26, 2019
10:30 A.M.
Minutes

Members Attending

(Representing 14 Counties)

Barry Waters, City of Ft. Gaines
Barry Whitley, City of Butler
Bruce Hill, City of Oglethorpe
Carlton Wilson, City of Ellaville
Chip Jones, Stewart County
Clay Jones, Sumter County
Doug Etheridge, Harris County
Ernest Jenkins, Clay County
Fred Gordon, Muscogee County
James R. "Bump" Welch, Marion County
Jeanie Barteel, City of Cordele
Jerry "Pops" Barnes, Muscogee Co., RVRC Secretary
Jimmy Bradley, Randolph County
Joe Lee Williams, Stewart County
Knox Blackmar, City of Talbotton
Maggie McGruther, Sumter County
Matt Gunnels, Marion County
Melvin Crimes, Webster County
Mickey George, Macon County
Randy Howard, Sumter Co., RVRC Vice-Chairman
Tameka Harris, Taylor County
Terrell Hudson, Dooly County
Tom Queen, Taylor County
Tony Kennedy, Webster County
Wally Summers, Sumter County
A.J. Rivers, Crisp County

Members Not Present

Carvel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman County
Clinton Perry, Jr. Taylor County, RVRC Chairman
Damon Hoyte, Cusseta-Chattahoochee County
Danny Blackmon, Georgetown-Quitman County
Dr. Carole Rutland, Muscogee County
Dr. Edward Lee, Cusseta-Chattahoochee County

Evelyn Turner Pugh, Muscogee County
Freeman Montgomery, Talbot County
Greg Barineau, Schley County
Harry Lange, Harris County
Hobby Stripling, City of Vienna
James Morton, Cusseta-Chattahoochee County
Jayson Griffin, Macon County
Jimmy Babb, City of Lumpkin
Nelson Brown, City of Americus
Pam Jordan, Talbot County
Ralph Brown, City of Buena Vista
Rebecca Chambers, City of Hamilton
Richard McCorkle, Marion County
Sam Farrow, Jr., Crisp County
Steve Whatley, City of Cuthbert

Others Present

Gloria Strode, US Census Bureau
Dr. Jack Blalock, Muscogee County
Shonda Blair, Taylor County
Tammy Jones, Field Rep. for Sen. Sanford Bishop, Jr.
Rebecca White, Randolph Co. Chamber of Commerce
Regina McDuffie, Macon Co., County Manager
Janet Joiner, Vienna, Community Development Director
Paul Farr, South Georgia Technical College
Mike Patel, Taylor County
Kathy Burns, Field Rep. for Senator Perdue
Laura Gower, Field Rep. for Senator Johnny Isakson
Casey Bean, Dept. of Community Affairs
Anna Hurt, GA Dept. of Economic Development
Representative, Region 8
Debbie Stone, City of Lumpkin
Elaine Gillespie, Field Rep. for Congressman Bishop
Janice Jarvis, Sumter County
Bill Twomey, ACCG

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Staff Members

Jim Livingston, Executive Director
Sarah Walls, Assistant Director
Katie Howard, AAA Director
Gerald Mixon, Planning Director
Emily Chambers, Finance Officer
Mariyana Kostov, GIS Manager
Tenisha Tookes, WIOA Program Specialist
Jill Hohnecker, Bicycle-Pedestrian Planner
Becky Holmes, Office Manager

Welcome and Recognition of Visitors

Randy Howard, Vice Chair, brought the meeting to order. He welcomed council members, guests and visitors. Jerry "Pops" Barnes, Secretary, gave the invocation and Bruce Hill, City of Oglethorpe, led the council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

RVRC Regional Plan Public Hearing

A public hearing was held concerning the River Valley Regional Plan. Gerald Mixon, Planning Director, requested that any needed changes or comments should to be submitted to him at the end of the public hearing. He said staff will complete the document (formatting, fonts, etc.) on June 28th and it will be submitted to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs June 29, 2019. Gerald noted that a motion by the council was not needed to submit the application.

Randy Howard, Vice Chair, requested a motion to close the public hearing. Melvin Crimes, Webster County, made a motion to close the public hearing; Terrell Hudson, Dooly County, seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

Review and Approval of Minutes*

Council reviewed the minutes of the May 22, 2019 council meeting that were either mailed or emailed to council members the previous week for their review. The minutes were also available in the council packet at the meeting.

There being no changes or additions, Randy Howard, Vice Chair, requested a motion to approve the May 22, 2019 council minutes. Knox Blackmar, City of Talbotton, made a motion to approve the minutes as presented; Wally Summers, Sumter County, seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

US Census Bureau

Jim Livingston requested that Elaine Gillespie, Field Representative for Congressman Bishop, introduce the guest speaker.

Gloria Strode, a regional Partnership Specialist from the Atlanta Regional Census Center, was the guest speaker for the council meeting. She updated the council on rules and procedures to complete and accurately collect information for the Census 2020 count. She explained that forming Complete Count Committees (CCC) is the key to creating awareness in communities. The CCCs will be able to utilize local knowledge, influence, and resources to educate communities and promote the census through targeted outreach efforts.

She stressed that in order for all counties and cities to receive the dollars that they should receive communities must "count every person once, only once and in the right place". Ms. Strode said "the money does not follow the need; it follows the numbers" so it is imperative that the census is accurate. Federal grant money is based on census counts.

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The most under-counted group is children. Military personal living in military barracks will be counted there but off-post personnel must complete their own census forms. Homeless citizens should be counted by homeless shelters, VA hospitals and census volunteers. College dormitories and/or prisons will be counted as groups. This year responding to the census survey will be easier since it can be completed by telephone, computer or the hardcopy that will be received in the mail beginning April 1, 2020. Ms. Strode said that anyone not responding to the survey will be contacted at their home to complete the survey.

FY 2020 Budget

Emily Chambers, Finance Officer, presented an overview of the proposed FY 2020 Annual Budget. She said the Executive Committee had met and reviewed the budget prior to the council meeting and recommended approval.

Barry Waters, City of Fort Gaines, made a motion to approve the FY 2020 budget as presented; Terrell Hudson, Dooly County, seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

Proposed Council Meetings

Jim Livingston, Executive Director, suggested the council continue to hold council meetings on the fourth Wednesday of each month, at 10:30 a.m. in the Marion County Commission office, in Buena Vista for FY 2020. He suggested the November meeting be held on November 20 due to the Thanksgiving holiday. Traditionally, council meetings are not held in July and December.

Randy Howard, Vice Chair, requested a motion to accept the meeting dates as suggested. Bruce Hill, Oglethorpe, made a motion to approve the date, time and location as presented for the FY 2020 Council meetings; Knox Blackmar, City of Talbotton, seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

Jim Livingston, Executive Director, also introduced new employee Jill Hohnecker. She is now the Regional Community and Bicycle-Pedestrian Planner and will be working out of the Americus branch of the RVRC.

Staff Reports

Emily Chambers, Finance Officer, announced that some mileage sheets were missing for council members that attended the Legislative Luncheon. She asked that those people complete a form and turn it in at the close of the meeting. She also reported that May was on track for the year and there was an increase in the General Fund of \$90,000.

Katie Howard, AAA Director, requested that if anyone knew of a senior that needed any type of services to call the RVRC/AAA office. She said that 2 employees are now Certified Dementia Friends and are available to present informational trainings.

Senior Farmers Markets have begun for low-income seniors (60+). Each senior will receive a \$20 voucher that can be used to buy fresh vegetables and fruits that will be provided on site by local farmers. Last year 260 people were served in Columbus. During August and September Tai Chi classes are being offered. The cost is \$25 for the 8-week class.

Tenisha Tookes, WIOA Program Specialist, said there were 223 people served from July, 2018 thru June 2019 in various training activities. Contracts are being completed for the upcoming year for WIOA providers. Tenisha reported that the unemployment rates, for all of the RVRC counties, for April 2019 are below the rates for April 2018.

Gerald Mixon, Planning Director, reported a successful Bike/Pedestrian workshop held in Columbus and Americus over Bike Week in May. He also reported progress on the Map 21 project being handled by the GIS department and successful submission of the Harris, Clay and Crisp County Comprehensive Plans.

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Sarah Walls, Assistant Executive Director/Economic Development Director, explained that broadband is a key focus of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) committee this year. RVRC staff attended a broadband meeting where Ms. Sabilia, who is a national expert on Broadband, was the guest speaker. At the meeting she shared rural broadband recommendations for the region's communities.

Sarah Walls also gave the staff report for the Community Development department in the absence of Grant Richardson, Community Development/Planner. She reported that staff is currently working on 15 active Community Development Block Grants; 9 grants moving toward completion.


Jim Livingston, Executive Director, explained that 15 of the 16 RVRC counties have passed a resolution for the Transportation Investment Act (TIA). The Regional Transportation Roundtable will be made up of 1 elected official from each county, the mayor of each city, and 2 elected officials from each consolidated government. He reminded everyone that the first TIA Roundtable meeting will be held on September 4, 2019 at the Marion County Commission office. More information will be forthcoming.

He also reminded everyone there will not be a council meeting held in July. Regular meetings will resume in August.

Adjourn

Mickey George, Macon County, made a motion to adjourn; Bruce Hill, Oglethorpe, seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

August 28, 2019


Randy Howard, Chair


Jerry "Pops" Barnes, Vice Chair