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RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

April 28, 2021, 10:30 A.M.

Minutes

Representing 15 Counties

Members Attending in Office

Randy Howard, Sumter,
RVRC Chairman

Bruce Hill, Oglethorpe, RVRC Secretary

Charles Coffee, Chattahoochee

Chip Jones, Stewart

Darrell Holbrook, Webster

Doug Etheridge, Harris

Jayson Griffin, Macon

Kenneth Sumter, Ft. Gaines

Melvin Crimes, Webster

Tameka Harris, Taylor

Tom Queen, Taylor

Terrell Hudson, Dooly

Members Attending via Teleconference

Bryon Hickey, Muscogee

Carvel Lewis, Quitman

Dr. Edward Lee, Chattahoochee

Julie Brown, Hamilton

Rebecca White, Randolph

Sam Farrow, Crisp

Richard McCorkle, Marion

Sher'Londa Walker, Talbot

Members Not Attending

A.J. Rivers, Crisp

Barry Whitley, Butler

Bill McClellan, Schley

Danny Blackmon, Quitman

Damon Hoyte, Chattahoochee

Eddie Daniels, Vienna

Eddie Moore, Quitman

Eugene Cason, Dooly

Greg Dominy, Ellaville

James Davenport, Clay

James R. "Bump" Welch, Marion

Jeanie Bartee, Cordele

Jerry "Pops" Barnes, Muscogee,

RVRC Vice Chairman

Joe Lee Williams, Stewart

Jimmy Babb, Lumpkin

Kevin Brown, Buena Vista

Maggie McGruther, Sumter

Mark Waddell, Sumter

Matt Gunnels, Marion

Mickey George, Macon

Nelson Brown, Americus

Pam Jordan, Talbot

Rob Grant, Harris

Skip Henderson, Muscogee

Steve Whatley, Cuthbert

Wesley Williams, Randolph

Others Attending via Video Call

Paul Farr, South GA Tech

Carley Huguley, Eckerd Connects, Director
of Operations

Caleb Mims, Eckerd Connects, Program

Manager

Rhonda Holbrook, Interfor, Human

Resources

Saralyn Stafford, UGA, Rural Development

Manager for Public Service & Outreach,

Clark Harrell, Crisp, County Manager

Mac Moye, Stewart, County Manager

Howard Pendelton, Lower Chatt. WIOA

Chris Kelly, Rep. for Congressman Bishop

Staff Members

Jim Livingston, Executive Director

Sarah Walls, Assist. Executive Director

Katie Howard, AAA Director

Emily Chambers, Finance Officer

Tammy Collins, Finance Officer

Janice West, WIOA Director

Allison Slocum, Senior Planner

Mariyana Kostov, GIS

John Morgan, Bike-Ped Planner

Becky Holmes, Office Manager

Chattahoochee | Clay | Crisp | Dooly | Harris | Macon | Marion | Muscogee
Quitman | Randolph | Schley | Stewart | Sumter | Talbot | Taylor | Webster

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WELCOME AND RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Randy Howard, Chairman, brought the River Valley Regional Commission 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 were able to ask questions by e-chat.

Melvin Crimes, Webster County, then gave the invocation and Bruce Hill, Secretary, led the council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES*

Council reviewed minutes of the March 24, 2021 council meeting which were either mailed or emailed to council members the previous week for their review. The minutes were also included in the council packets that were available at the meeting.

There being no additions or changes, Randy Howard, Chairman, requested a motion to approve the March 24, 2021 council minutes, as presented.

Byron Hickey, Muscogee County, made the motion to approve the March 24, 2021 minutes as presented; Melvin Crimes, Webster County, seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

WIOA ON-THE-JOB TRAINING SERVICES

Carley Huguley, the Director of Operations for Eckerd Connects, explained that Eckerd Connects is a provider that matches participants with employers in the area. She said the company has been working with the WIOA program since 2004. Ms. Huguley introduced Caleb Mims who is the program manager for Ecker Connects.

Mr. Mims explained that the company helps job seekers who may have a limited work history and/or job turn-over to become a better employee by their On-the Job- Training (OJT) program. He said that OJT's objectives are to assist local employers find employees to meet the needs of their business, provide the OJT employer with wage reimbursement for training cost and provide the participant with training for employment, retention in employment and self-sufficiency. Some of the advantages for participants are hands-on-training, assessments for job matching, and items required for training are supplied at no cost to the participant.

Requirements are the participant must be 18 years old or older, a resident of the 8-county area, a U.S. citizen, high school diploma or GED, and meeting WIOA federal income guidelines.

Mr. Mims said the goal of the OJT is for employers to have the best WIOA participants to meet their needs and to give participants a job where they can be successful.

Rhonda Holbrook, who works for Human Resources, for the Preston company Interfor is excited to be a part of the WIOA program. It helps not only their company but the recipients also. She explained that a new employee is not productive when first hired and this program helps to defray the cost. Ms. Holbrook said the starting wage is \$16 per hour and no experience is required. Interfor prefers to hire non-skilled workers and train the worker to their specific job. They promote within the company which gives the workers an incentive to continue to work for Interfor.

UGA CARL VINSON INSTITUTE UPDATE

Randy Howard, Chairman, introduced Saralyn Stafford, Rural Development Manager, at the University of Georgia, Carl Vinson Institute of Government. Ms. Stafford explained the Carl Vinson Institute of Government services. Some of these services are Strategic Planning, Board Retreat facilitation, workforce development analysis/planning, training (state agencies, local governments, and development authorities), information technology, fiscal and economic analysis, and human resources compensation studies. Several of these programs are self-study which gives the student 30 days to complete the course using video lessons and multiple choice review questions for each lesson. The course then gives a final exam. Some of the courses cover government finance, open meeting records, and safeguarding against fraud.

Ms. Stafford explained that the Carl Vinson Institute of Government also represents the Fanning Institute for Leadership Development and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC).

For more information go to facebook.com/VinsonInstitute or www.cviog.UGA.edu.

BUDGET AMENDMENT*

Emily Chambers, Finance Officer, presented Budget Amendment 2. She explained this amendment is mainly an effort to include two major contract amendments that the RVRC received from the Department of Human Services. The net result of the amendment is a \$3,600 change in the General Fund. Budgeted change in the fund balance in the General Fund increased from \$100,041 to \$103,672. The amendment was reviewed by the Executive Committee and comes with their recommendation for approval.

Randy Howard, Chairman, requested a motion to approve Budget Amendment 2, as presented.

Melvin Crimes, Webster County, made the motion to approve Budget Amendment 2; Tameka Harris, Taylor County, seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

STAFF REPORTS

Emily Chambers, Finance Officer, reported that through February, the operating funds show an increase in fund balance of \$57,000, and the enterprise funds have an increase in net position of \$11,000. These numbers are on track for what we have budgeted for the year. The balance sheet at February 28 shows Unassigned Fund Balance in the General Fund of \$839,238 and cash on hand of about \$725,000.

Katie Howard, AAA Director, reported that staff is continuing to provide services to meet the needs of seniors in the region. We have significantly reduced the Wait List for Home Delivered Meals and are hoping to be able to use new Stimulus funding to reduce the Wait List for Homemaker and Personal Care Aid Services. Everyone is invited to attend the Senior Wellness Drive Thru Event on May 7 at the Columbus Office starting at 10:30 a.m. and ending at 1:30. The first 350 people will get a boxed lunch and a free T-shirt.

Sarah Walls, Assistant Executive Director; reported that the RVRC Loan Committee has approved a loan for a restaurant/catering service facility, to be located in Richland, with RLF grant funds from the COVID-19 Revolving Loan Fund. She stated that we are very excited to be making our first loan with funds from this grant. A loan was also approved by the RVRC RLF Loan Committee and the project has been pending as it involves not only our funds from the COVID-19 RLF, it involves a local bank in Columbus, and a SBA 504 loan (which SBA has approved and we are waiting for the authorization for their fund to be accepted and signed by the borrowers) as well as cash injection from

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the borrowers. We hope to disburse the funds sometime during the month of May.

Jim Livingston, Executive Director, gave the staff report for the Planning Department. He reported that the TIA Roundtable has 58 projects that have been submitted. He urged everyone to submit their projects. The deadline for submitting projects is May 31. Jim explained that staff continues to work on CDBG application which will be submitted on-line for the first time. He said counties/cities also need to be sure the new process accounts are open.

Janice West, WIOA Director, WIOA currently has 139 individuals enrolled in various education and training activities as of April 27th. WIOA Service Providers are open and operating services. Providers are actively seeking, conducting outreach, and recruitment efforts in the area. WIOA staff activity report provides information on the number of Unemployment Insurance claims have been filed in the region. Pandemic unemployment benefits are still currently available to those filing claims. The most recent regional unemployment rates available (December 2020) shows the region's unemployment rates have shown an increase over the past 12 months, mainly due to COVID 19 pandemic.

Questions and Other Information

Tamika Harris, Taylor County, asked Jim if TIA projects that have been submitted can be amended. He submitted projects can be amended.

Jim Livingston, Executive Director, urged elected officials to verify that their county/city has an up-to-date SAM and DUNS registration numbers. These are required in order to receive funding from the American Recovery Plan.

Jim also announced that the Legislative Meeting will be held virtually during the next council meeting on the ZOOM format. You will be receiving information to join the meeting soon.

The council hopes to begin meeting in person, in Buena Vista, again in August. More information to follow concerning in-person council meetings.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the council, Randy Howard, Chairman, requested a motion to adjourn the River Valley Regional Commission Council meeting.

Melvin Crimes, Webster County, made the motion to adjourn the River Valley Regional Commission Council meeting; Tamika Harris, Taylor County, seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

Date

Randy Howard, RVRC Chairman

Bruce Hill, RVRC Secretary

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