RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING
Marion County Commission Office
October 23, 2019
10:30 A.M.
Minutes

Members Attending
(Representing 15 Counties)
A.J. Rivers, Crisp
Bruce Hill, Oglethorpe,
RVRC Secretary
Carlton Wilson, Ellaville
Chip Jones, Stewart
Damon Hoyte, Cusseta-Chatt.
Danny Blackmon, Quitman
Doug Etheridge, Harris
Dr. Edward Lee, Chattahoochee
Ernest Jenkins, Clay
Harry Lange, Harris
Jayson Griffin, Macon
Jeanie Bartee, Cordelee
Jerry “Pops” Barnes, Muscogee,
RVRC Vice Chairman
Joe Lee Williams, Stewart
Knox Blackmar, Talbotton
Maggie McGruther, Sumter
Matt Gunnels, Marion
Melvin Crimes, Webster
Mickey George, Macon
Pam Jordan, Talbot
Randy Howard, Sumter, RVRC
Chairman
Richard McCorkle, Marion
Skip Henderson, Muscogee County
Tamika Harris, Taylor
Terrell Hudson, Dooly
Tony Kennedy, Webster
Ralph Brown, Buena Vista
Rebecca Chambers, Hamilton
Sam Farrow, Jr., Crisp
Steve Whatley, Cuthbert
Tom Queen, Taylor
Wally Summers, Sumter
Greg Barineau, Schley
Hobby Stripling, Vienna
James Morton, Chattahoochee
James R. “Bump” Welch, Marion
Jimmy Babb, City of Lumpkin
Jimmy Bradley, Randolph
Nelson Brown, Americus
Laura Gower, Field Rep. for Senator Johnny Isakson
Ann Holloway, City of Lumpkin
Debbie Stone, City of Lumpkin
Edwina Turner, Stewart County Family Connections
Sarah Lee Crumbs, Quitman County Family Connections
Susan Gallagher, New Horizons

Members Not Present
Barry Waters, Ft. Gaines
Barry Whitley, Butler
Clay Jones, Sumter
Carvel Lewis, Quitman
Dr. Carole Rutland, Muscogee
Freeman Montgomery, Talbot

Others Present
Robyn Crittenden, Commissioner, Dept. of Human Services
Abby Cox, Director, Division of Aging Services
Shonda Blair, Taylor County Chamber of Commerce
Rebecca White, Randolph County Chamber of Commerce
Paul Farr, South Georgia Technical College
Chris Kelley, Field Rep. for Congressman Bishop
Janice Jarvis, Sumter County, Fiscal Administrator

Staff Members
Jim Livingston, Executive Director
Sarah Walls, Assistant Director
Emily Chambers, Finance Officer
Gerald Mixon, Planning Director
Rick Morris, Planning Director
Katie Howard, AAA Director
Janice West, WIOA Director
Allison Slocum, Historic Pres./Planner
Becky Holmes, Office Manager

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WELCOME AND RECOGNITION OF VISITORS
Randy Howard, Sumter County, RVRC Chairman, brought the regular meeting of the River Valley Regional Council to order at 10:30 a.m. He welcomed council members and visitors. Jerry “Pops” Barnes, Muscogee County, RVRC Vice Chairman, gave the invocation and Bruce Hill, City of Oglethorpe, RVRC Secretary, led the council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES*
Council reviewed the minutes of the September 25, 2019 council meeting which 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, Chairman Randy Howard requested a motion to approve the September 25, 2019 council minutes. Harry Lange, Harris County, made a motion to adopt the minutes as presented; Jeanie Bartee, Cordele, seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

CHANGE TO THE AGENDA
Chairman Howard requested a motion to amend the agenda to address the sale of RVRC property. Terrell Hudson, Dooly County, made a motion to amend the agenda; Harry Lange, Harris County, seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

SALE OF RVRC PROPERTY
Jim Livingston, Executive Director, explained that RVRC owned property located in Ellaville that has been leased to RESA for the past 25 years and that RESA is interested in purchasing the property. He stated that the Executive Committee had met and discussed it before the council meeting and was recommending moving forward with the sale of the property. He explained that the building needs about $100,000 in repairs. The value is $63,000 for the RVRC to avoid a loss on the building. Jim said the By-Laws require a council vote to move forward with the sale of the property.

Richard McCorkle, RESA Executive Director, thanked the Executive Committee and staff for working to make the purchase possible and looks forward to a continued partnership with the commission. The property sale will also need to be approved by his board.

Chairman Howard requested a motion to move forward with the sale of the RVRC property located in Ellaville. Earnest Jenkins, Clay County made a motion to move forward with the sale of the property located in Ellaville for $63,000; Mickey George, Macon County, seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

AGING IN GEORGIA
Abby Cox, Director, Division of Aging Services (DAS), introduced Robyn Crittenden, Commissioner of the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the former Georgia Secretary of State. Ms. Crittenden said Abraham Lincoln once said, “It is not the years in your life but the life in your years” and that DHS tries to keep that in mind when helping the senior citizens of Georgia. She explained that the Aging Division currently serves 1 in 5 senior in Georgia. Five goals of DHS is:
- long-term services and support;
- access to information;

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• strengthening families;
• preventing abuse, neglect and exploitation of vulnerable adults and children; and
• self-monitoring the Department of Human Services.

Ms. Crittenden said Georgia is ranked near the bottom nationally among those aged 60 and older, almost one in four, that suffer with hunger. A Senior Hunger Summit was held in Columbus October 16-17, 2018 to address the issue of senior hunger. Five areas were selected in addressing senior hunger in Georgia: Today’s Seniors, Health Impact of Senior Hunger, Food Access, Food Waste and Reclamation, and Meeting the Community’s Needs. Grant applications have been submitted for ten Senior Hunger Innovation Grants. Winners for the grants will be announced soon.

Ms. Crittenden thanked the River Valley Regional Commission for the partnership and support with the Department of Aging over the past 50 years. She also thanked Katie Howard, Area Agency on Aging Director, and her staff for their work in the region. Ms. Crittenden asked everyone to review the RVRC Annual Report’s Aging section that breaks down information for the programs offered in the region during FY19.

COLUMBUS AND THE REGION
Jerry “Pops” Barnes, Muscogee Co., RVRC Vice Chairman, introduced guest speaker Mayor Skip Henderson, City of Columbus. Mr. Barnes said that Mayor Henderson had served 21 years on the Columbus City Council before being elected Mayor. He said the council is grateful that he ran for mayor because he knows the needs of the city.

Mayor Henderson stated that the United States Post Office paid tribute to Jerry “Pops” Barnes, Columbus City Councilor and RVRC councilor, by dedicating a postage stamp to him in honor of his military service and work with veterans. He said that the Columbus City Council has lost a long-time member with Evelyn Turner-Pugh announcing her resignation effective October 31, due to health concerns. A celebration is being planned and will be announced at a later date. Mayor Henderson said that he will be replacing her on the RVRC Council as a member.

Mayor Henderson said, “the State of Columbus” is very strong and good development is ongoing. Two projects are three new hotel groups are coming to Columbus making downtown have an additional 540 hotel rooms available and the Marriott Hotel is going to add a sky bridge connecting the hotel to the Columbus Convention & Trade Center. Columbus had previously budgeted $60,000 - $70,000 annually to address demolition. In 2019, however, Columbus City Council approved $1 million to demolish 4 trailer parks and 65 homes, many of which are known for criminal activities. He said Columbus is also facing challenges, in all communities, with a poverty rate of 22 percent and increasing criminal activities. He noted that the success of Columbus depends on the success of rural Georgia just as rural Georgia’s success depends on Columbus.

INSURANCE APPROVAL*
Emily Chambers, Finance Officer, updates the council saying that RVRC employees have health insurance coverage through the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA). GMA is now offering vision coverage to be included in the policy at no cost to the employee. Cost to the RVRC would be $300 per month. Emily said the Executive Committee had discussed the coverage change and has recommended approving the coverage change.
Randy Howard, Chairman, requested a motion to approve vision coverage being added to the GMA policy. Ernest Jenkins, Clay County, made a motion to approve the policy change to include vision coverage; Harry Lange, Harris County, seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

**STAFF REPORTS**

Emily Chambers, Finance Officer, explained that through August 31, 2019 the RVRC had a net decrease in fund balance in governmental funds of about $9,000, leaving a fund balance of $800,000, $700,000 of which is an unassigned fund balance. The enterprise funds had a $4,000 increase in net position, resulting in a total net position in enterprise funds of $1.2 million on August 31.

The Finance Department is working on a budget amendment to include contracts we have put in place since July. The auditors will present the FY19 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report at the November council meeting.

Katie Howard, AAA Director, reported staff began teaching a Tai Chi class August 7 in Columbus. These classes meet once a week for eight weeks at a cost of $25. More classes will be held throughout the region. The aging department is looking for people that are interested in training to be a lay leader to teach classes. Lay leader cross training for Chronic Disease Self-Management and Diabetes Self-Management will be held in the RVRC Columbus office on November 5, 6, 12, 13 and 14 from 9:00 am – 5:00 pm. If you are interested in becoming a lay leader for one of the programs call 706-256-2910 to register for the class. This class is free of charge.

Sarah Walls, Assistant Executive Director, reported for Jarrod McCarthy’s Mobility Management program. She reported that staff has sent out a draft Regional Transit Directory to public transportation systems, transit providers serving DHS and Medicaid, and service providers that qualify clients for DHS and Medicaid transit services. The directory will be reviewed, updated, and then distributed to residents who will be aware of transit options and contact information for schedule trips.

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy committee met in September. A list of Fall Festivals in the region was reviewed with a correction to the dates for Vienna’s Big Pig Gig. It will be held on November 1 – 2. The Taylor Made Festival being held on November 2, in Taylor County, was added to the list. It was announced that the Presidential Pathways meeting will be held in Newnan on October 24. Contact Holly Winner at hwinner@georgia.org for a list of meeting dates and membership information.

Sarah reported that staff has begun to work on a potential loan project in the Ellaville/Schley County area for funding through a revolving loan fund. Sarah reminded everyone if they know of anyone who would like to expand their business or start a new business that will create new jobs to call her for loan information. The loan fund program can finance a project from $50,000 - $100,000.

Janice West, WIOA Director, reported that staff has submitted a Corrective Action Response for the FY18 annual monitoring finding. The state WIOA Workforce Division has reviewed and accepted the response. The Georgia Department of Labor unemployment rate for August 2019 showed that unemployment had dropped in all 16 counties in the region.
Gerald Mixon, Planning Director, reported the comprehensive plan for Webster and Quitman counties have been approved by the Department of Community Affairs. GIS staff updated Vienna’s zoning map due to 6 parcels being rezoned. Staff has also been verifying road ownerships, operation, number of lanes, and surface and median types from Census lists.
Gerald also covered much of the planning work outlined in the staff report, including activity in Bike and Pedestrian Planning and work on both Comprehensive Plans and Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plans.

Chair Randy Howard reminded everyone that the Georgia Association of Regional Commission’s Annual Meeting will be held at St. Simons Island, November 6-8, and encouraged everyone to attend.

ADJOURN
Harry Lange, Harris County, made a motion to adjourn; Melvin Crimes, Webster County, seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

November 20, 2019

Randy Howard, Chairman

Bruce Hill, Secretary

Bruce Hill, Secretary
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