



[www.rivervalleyrc.org](http://www.rivervalleyrc.org)

**Columbus Office**

710 Front Avenue, Suite A  
Columbus, GA 31901  
Phone (706) 256-2910  
Fax (706) 256-2908  
TDY (706)256-2944

**Americus Office**

228 West Lamar Street  
Americus, GA 31709  
Phone (706)256-2910  
Fax (229) 931-2745  
Fax (229) 931-2917

Toll Free (877)819-6348

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**River Valley Regional Commission**

**August 25, 2021**

**Council Members**

**(Counties 13)**

Albert King, Vienna

Bruce Hill, Oglethorpe

Carvel Lewis, Quitman, RVRC Secretary

Charles Coffee, Chattahoochee

Chip Jones, Stewart

Damon Hoyte, Chattahoochee

Darrell Holbrook, Webster

Doug Etheridge, Harris

Dr. Edward Lee, Chattahoochee

Jayson Griffin, Macon

Jeanie Bartee, Cordele

Jerry "Pops" Barnes, Muscogee, RVRC  
Chairman

Joe Lee Williams, Stewart

Kenneth Sumpter, Fort Gaines

Maggie McGruther, Sumter

Melvin Crimes, Webster

Mickey George, Macon

Richard McCorkle, Marion

Skip Henderson, Muscogee

Tameka Harris, Taylor, RVRC Vice-Chairman

Terrell Hudson, Dooly

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**Members Not Attending**

A.J. Rivers, Crisp

Barry Whitley, Butler

Bill McClellan, Schley

Bryon Hickey, Muscogee

Danny Blackmon, Quitman

Eddie Moore, Quitman

Eugene Cason, Dooly

James Davenport, Clay

James R. "Bump" Welch, Marion

Jimmy Babb, Lumpkin

Julie Brown, Hamilton

Kevin Brown, Buena Vista

Mark Waddell, Sumter

Matt Gunnels, Marion

Nelson Brown, Americus

Pam Jordan, Talbot

Randy Howard, Sumter

Rob Grant, Harris

Steve Whatley, Cuthbert

Tom Queen, Taylor

Tony Lamar, Talbot

Wesley Williams, Randolph

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**Others Attending**

Kenneth Franks, GDOT, TIA Administrator

William Easton, GDOT, TIA Regional Coord.

Janice Jarvis, Sumter County

Brenda Williams, Representative for Senator

Reverend Raphael Warnock

Saralyn Stafford, UGA, Rural Development

Rusty Haygood, Dept. of Community Affairs

Corinne Thornton, Dept. of Community Affairs

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**Staff**

Jim Livingston, Executive Director  
Gerald Mixon, Planning Director  
Janice West, WIOA Director  
Mariyana Kostov, GIS

John Morgan, Bike-Ped Planner  
Becky Holmes, Office Manager  
Merri Spence, Executive Secretary  
Katie Howard, AAA Director

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**WELCOME AND RECOGNITION OF VISITORS**

Jerry “Pops” Barnes, Chairman, brought the River Valley Regional Commission council meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

Carvel Lewis, Secretary, then gave the invocation and Tameka Harris, Vice Chairwoman, led the council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**REVIEW/APPROVAL OF JUNE 23, 2021 MINUTES**

Council reviewed the June 23, 2021 meeting minutes 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 Pops Barnes, Chairman, requested a motion to approve the June 23, 2021 council minutes as presented.

Terrell Hudson, Dooly County, made the motion to approve the June 23, 2021 minutes as presented; Melvin Crimes, Webster County seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS**

Rusty Haygood gave an update for the Georgia Department of Community Affairs on the Georgia Rental Assistance Program. Mr. Haygood advised the state has awarded almost one billion dollars in rental assistance money to renters who have had issues with COVID. Mr. Haygood asks the Council to direct people in our communities to the website: [georgiarentalassistance.ga.gov](http://georgiarentalassistance.ga.gov) to apply. The landlord and the tenant must both participate in the program and the funds will go directly to the landlord/property manager for up to 12 months of assistance in arrears. This program may also help with utility delinquencies. This assistance will benefit both the owner of the property and the renter.

Mr. Haygood also reported that in the next couple months there will also be a mortgage assistance program for homeowners that have been affected by COVID.

Mr. Haygood spoke about the Community Development Block Grant CV (Corona Virus) funding. He said the state received about \$75 million in funding. Regional food banks and food pantries will benefit. These funds are CDBG funds and changes have been made. The \$750,000 maximum award amount has been increased to \$1,000,000. A 90%/10% match is required with the community contributing 10%. He advised the application process has already begun and will close on December 10, 2021.

Mr. Haygood also spoke about the 2020 Census. Statewide, Georgia grew by about 1,000,000 people, or just over 10%. 99.9% of households in the state were counted according to the US Census Bureau. A decrease of about 2,000 people was reported in the RVRC region; with 14 of 16 counties in the region losing population. Mr. Haygood says leadership is needed, not panic. Planning is very important now. The best times for planning are when your community is growing quickly or when your community has a decline in population.

Right now, there is a once in a lifetime opportunity to tap into federal funds. The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) funds are available through the state Office of Planning & Budget. The deadline has been extended for another two months. Eligible projects are: Water and Sewer Infrastructure, Broadband, and Negative Economic Impact.

A Council member asked Mr. Haygood define the term negative economic impact and identify what type of project that might entail. Mr. Haygood says there has not been a definition; it gives communities the liberty to define it themselves.

Carvel Lewis, Quitman County, asked how to relay information about the assistance to the food pantries. Mr. Haygood replied that board members need to take the information back to the communities. The local governments apply to DCA for this assistance.

#### TIA UPDATE – RIVER VALLEY REGION

Kenneth Franks, GDOT TIA Administrator, gave a presentation updating the Council on the progress of regional TIA projects. He said that the TIA total collections for local discretionary (25%) was \$103,824,277 through June 2021 for the local governments in the River Valley. Collections for the approved investment list (75%) was \$311,472,829 for a total collection of \$415,297,106.

Mr. Franks explained that 16 projects have been completed, 5 are ongoing, and 2 projects will be let before the end of the TSPLOST timeline in 2022.

William Eastin, GDOT TIA Regional Coordinator, shared photos of projects that have been completed and ones that are underway.

#### OFFICE OF PLANNING AND BUDGET ARPA FUNDING

Jim Livingston, RVRC Executive Director, spoke on the three areas for funding: Water and Sewer Infrastructure, Broadband, and Negative Economic Impact.

Jim said, the RVRC has been working with every community to prioritize the Water and Sewer Infrastructure applications. The RVRC is currently working with about 19 communities and about 30 applications are being developed in the region. The goal is to get as many of these resources into the region as possible.

Jim mentioned that there was more activity around Broadband that was encouraging for the region. He said regarding Negative Economic Impact, that everyone should look at partnerships in their

communities. There is a lot of flexibility with what can be done with the funding. He added that there is Economic Development Administration Funding for Economic Development projects.

#### RECOGNITION FOR YEARS OF SERVICE

Jim recognized and thanked the following for their dedicated years of service:

Sarah Walls, Executive Director, 50 Years of Service; Katie Howard, AAA Director, 20 Years of Service; Franetta Miles, Wellness Coordinator/Special Projects, 20 Years of Service; Kia Barrow, ADRC Program Manager, 15 Years of Service; Mariyanna Kostov, GIS, 15 Years of Service; LaCarole Lloyd, MDSQ Options Councilor, 5 Years of Service; Eboni Morris-Key, ADRC Councilor; Caregiver Specialist, 5 Years of Service.

#### PROPOSED COUNCIL MEETING DATES FOR FY22

The FY22 Meeting Dates were presented to the council in their council packets. Darrell Holbrook, Webster County made the motion to approve the FY22 Meeting Dates as presented; Joe Lee Williams, Stewart County seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

#### STAFF REPORTS

Katie Howard, AAA Director, read a success story detailing how the Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) helped a caregiver and client by providing assistive technology. This technology increased the independence of the client as well as reassured the caregiver that medication was being taken as prescribed.

Gerald Mixon, Planning Director, reports that work continues with several comprehensive and pre-disaster mitigation plans that are in various stages of development. Staff continues to provide technical assistance under zoning administration contracts and progress continues with the DOT contracts. Staff is assisting with a historic resources survey in Vienna. Key staff with the environmental consulting firm that were engaged 2-3 years ago to assist with brownfield identification resigned and RVRC has initiated a consultant procurement process. The council was reminded of the importance of educating the public about the need for TSPLOST renewal in next May's election.

Janice West, WIOA Director, reports WIOA services locations are open and operating utilizing safe protocols. Enrollment numbers are expected to increase as the Fall semester begins with colleges and universities started. Regional unemployment rate as of June 2021 was 5.7% which was a decrease over rates of 8.2% in June 2020. Since March 2020, regional Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims as of August 7<sup>th</sup> total 164,950 claims filed. WIOA department will be having the annual WIOA State monitoring during the week of August 30<sup>th</sup> – September 3, 2021.

#### ADJOURN

Mr. Barnes, Chairman, asked if anyone had announcements. No one had any announcements so Mr. Barnes thanked everyone and asked that they please be safe. He requested a motion for the meeting to be adjourned.

Terrel Hudson, Dooly County, made the motion to adjourn the meeting and Melvin Crimes, Webster County seconded the motion.

Meeting adjourned.

September 22, 2021

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Jerry "Pops" Barnes, Chairman

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Carvel Lewis, Secretary