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River Valley Regional Commission

September 22, 2021

Council Members

(Counties 15)

Albert King, Vienna
Bruce Hill, Oglethorpe
Danny Blackmon, Georgetown-Quitman
Carvel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman, RVRC
Secretary
Charles Coffey, 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
Chair

Joe Lee Williams, Stewart
Kenneth Sumpter, Fort Gaines
Kevin Brown, Buena Vista
Maggie McGruther, Sumter
Melvin Crimes, Webster
Mickey George, Macon
Pam Jordan, Talbot
Rebecca White, Randolph
Richard McCorkle, Marion
Rob Grant, Harris
Sam Farrow, Crisp
Skip Henderson, Muscogee
Tameka Harris, Taylor, RVRC Vice-Chair
Terrell Hudson, Dooly

Members Not Attending

A.J. Rivers, Crisp
Barry Whitley, Butler
Bill McClellan, Schley
Bryon Hickey, Muscogee
Danny Blackmon, Georgetown-Quitman
Eddie Moore, Georgetown-Quitman
Eugene Cason, Dooly
Greg Dominy, Schley
James Davenport, Clay
James R. "Bump" Welch, Marion
Jimmy Babb, Lumpkin

Julie Brown, Hamilton
Mark Waddell, Sumter
Matt Gunnels, Marion
Nelson Brown, Americus
Patrick Shivers, Clay
Randy Howard, Sumter
Sher'Londa Walker, Talbot County
Steve Whatley, Cuthbert
Tom Queen, Taylor
Tony Lamar, Talbot
Wesley Williams, Randolph

Others Attending

Myrtle Habersham, AARP Georgia Ambassador
Kay Sibetta, AARP Associate State Director,
Community Outreach

Natalie Bradley, Georgia Dept. of Community
Affairs

Staff

Jim Livingston, Executive Director
Sarah Walls, Assist. Executive Director
Katie Howard, AAA Director
Emily Chambers, Finance Officer
Rick Morris, Planning

Mariyana Kostov, GIS
John Morgan, Bike-Ped Planner
Savannah Brown, Regional Planner
Merri Spence, Executive Secretary

WELCOME AND RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Jerry “Pops” Barnes, Chair, brought the River Valley Regional Commission council meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. Chair Barnes welcomed visitors Natalie Bradley, Department of Community Affairs and Myrtle Habersham, AARP Georgia Ambassador.

Mr. Barnes then gave the invocation and Tameka Harris, Vice Chair, led the council in the Pledge of Allegiance

REVIEW/APPROVAL OF AUGUST 25, 2021 MINUTES*

Council reviewed the August 25, 2021 meeting minutes which were 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, Chair, requested a motion to approve the August 25, 2021 council minutes as presented.

Bruce Hill, Oglethorpe, made the motion to approve the August 25, 2021 minutes as presented; Terrell Hudson seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

AARP AGE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

Myrtle Habersham, AARP Georgia Ambassador, shared a presentation on AARP’s Age Friendly Program. Ms. Habersham spoke about the similarities of this program and the RVRC AAA program. This program is demographic driven. 2020 Census shows in Georgia 14.3% of the population are 65 and older. The 2010 Census shows 22% over 65 years old in the River Valley Region. It is predicted that by 2030 25% of U.S. residents will be 65 or older.

Kay Sibetta, AARP Associate State Director for Age Friendly, spoke about the application process to become an Age Friendly Community. Applications can be found at AARP.com/livablecommunities.

Ms. Habersham said that once applications are received our logo and seal will go on AARP's national website and will promote that the RVRC Region is age friendly and will offer their many benefits and tools.

Ms. Habersham asked if anyone had questions and Darrell Holbrook, Webster County asked if the Council could get copies of the slideshow. Ms. Habersham replied she would get them to the RVRC to share.

Jim Livingston asked if the River Valley Regional commission were to apply, would that preclude any other community in the region to sign on. Ms. Habersham assured Mr. Livingston that if the RVRC's application is approved every city and county in the RVRC Region will be an Age Friendly Community, and that each city or county could do the same if they like.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

Bruce Hill, Oglethorpe, introduced the new Georgia Department of Community Affairs Region 8 Representative, Natalie Bradley. Ms. Bradley spoke of her relationship with the 16-county region of River Valley.

Ms. Bradley asked that we mark our calendars for March 16 for the first in-person Georgia Academy of Economic Development in Columbus since COVID. Natalie reminded the Council of the more than \$1 billion in federal funding that was given to Georgia for housing. She spoke of the funding going to the landlord to benefit both the renter and the landlord. She also spoke of the Healthy Choice Voucher for Section 8, the Georgia Dream for first time home owners and the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH). She spoke of communities working together to combine resources. Ms. Bradley shared her email and phone number: 470-653-8332 and natalie.bradley@dca.ga.gov.

Ms. Bradley sends a report each week to the DCA Commissioner on issues that have come up while meeting with communities on concerns and celebrations in each of the cities and the counties. She would like to receive email from cities and counties on important things to share with the DCA Commissioner.

REVIEW OF 2020 CENSUS DATA

Jim Livingston shared the schedule for the Census Question Resolution process which is the method that the US Census Bureau will hear appeals to the county census counts. The schedule is as follows:

- Fall 2021: Federal Register notice announces the beginning of a 30-day comment period for the public.
- December 2021: The Census Bureau plans to officially notify tribal, state and local government officials eligible to file CQR cases.
- January 2022: The Census Bureau begins accepting CQR cases for processing from eligible tribal, state and local governments.
- June 30, 2023: Deadline for governments to send CQR cases to the Census Bureau.
- September 30, 2023: Deadline for the Census Bureau to provide results to impacted governmental units.

Muscogee County's population growth was highest since the 1950s, and the Columbus MSA and Harris County grew. Tract and block level data will be released by the end of September.

GDOT TITLE 6 POLICY PLAN*

Savannah Brown, Regional Planner, reported that GDOT requires RVRC to submit a Title VI Policy Plan update every three years to remain in compliance with contracts. Even though the RVRC does not operate a transit system, as a subrecipient of FTA funds, it is a requirement to submit this update. Most of the requirements of the plan are applicable to organizations that operate a transit system.

Ms. Brown gave an example: approximately 2,500 individuals in the region that identify themselves as Spanish-speaking only or as speaking English less than very well. This Limited English Proficiency (LEP) population would be the target focus of the plan. The goal is to ensure that everyone has the same access to transit services.

Ms. Brown noted that the Title VI Notice to the public is posted on the website, with the ability to have it translated to another language, along with a copy of the complaint form. She shared that individuals can request documents to be translated and since the last update three years ago, there have been zero requests to translate documents and zero Title VI complaints submitted.

Mr. Barnes, Chair, asked for a motion to approve. Damon Hoyte, Chattahoochee County, made the motion to approve and Darrell Holbrook, Webster County, seconded the motion. The motion was approved with no opposition.

STAFF REPORTS

Emily Chambers, Finance Officer, reported the FY21 audit was completed last week, and the auditors did not express any areas of concern. Pending their final review, it looks like there will be an increase in the fund balance in the General Fund of \$128,000 for FY21.

For July of FY22, there was an increase in fund balance of \$61,000 in the General Fund, and spending is just slightly below monthly projections in both the General Fund and the Internal Service Fund. The Enterprise/Loan funds had a decrease in net position of \$2,300 in July. Cash on hand at July 31 was \$737,000 in the Governmental Funds and \$895,000 in the Loan Funds.

Katie Howard, AAA Director, reported staff continues to work in a hybrid manner with 3 days a week in the office and 2 days teleworking. The Waiting List was reviewed. It was noted that there is a small WL for home delivered meals which will be addressed with additional funding just received. The larger WL is for homemaker aid and personal care aid. The AAA plans to use ARPA (American Recovery Plan Act) funding to address that once it is received; however, that may be as late as Spring 2022.

The Claris Tablet project was also discussed. Six (6) Case Management clients were identified to receive a Claris Tablet which is a basic Samsung Tablet with additional software to make it easy for seniors to use. The tablets also came with 12 months pre-paid data to allow for internet access. These clients will be participating in a virtual Tai Chi class in October.

Sarah Walls, Assistant Executive Director, reported that we were successful in closing and dispersing the funds for a COVID 19 loan to Tootie Tots Daycare. She reported the committee was reviewing an application for a take-out restaurant in DeSoto. She also reported that the CEDS Committee will meet Tuesday September 28 at 9:30 a.m. on Zoom.

Ms. Walls reported on WIOA for Janice West, WIOA Director. Ms. Walls reported the number of participants participating in WIOA programs is 66 (50 adults and 16 youth) with one receiving a credential and exiting the program. The program’s focus is helping dislocated workers get back to work through the service providers. The audit by the Georgia Technical College System was completed.

Rick Morris, Planning/Community Development Director spoke about comprehensive plan activity in Stewart County, Richland, Lumpkin and Randolph County. The Macon County Comprehensive Plan was approved by DCA. He reported on zoning activity in Chattahoochee, Talbot and Quitman; a DRI in Harris; and pre-disaster mitigation plans in Schley, Stewart, Talbot (plus two others that are ongoing). Mr. Morris reported staff has been reviewing GIS and mapping capabilities (school zone and sidewalk crossings, speed limits, cemeteries, census); brownfield and environmental planning; historic preservation (Columbus Board of Architecture review of four cases, design review in Pine Mountain, Historic Resource Survey in Vienna); and bike/pedestrian safety (UGA conducting a virtual community engagement to address high obesity in Stewart, intersection safety analysis).

TIA UPDATE

Jim Livingston updated the Council on the current work being conducted by the TIA Roundtable Executive Committee. They are completing their work in selecting projects to move forward on the Constrained Investment List. These are the specific projects that voters will decide on in May, 2022. The list should be ready at the beginning of October and shared with the region then. Three public hearings will follow in November - one in Cuthbert, one in Montezuma, and one in Columbus. The full Roundtable will then review and approve the final investment list in December.

ADJOURN

Pops Barnes, Chair, asked if anyone had announcements. No one had any announcements so Mr. Barnes thanked everyone and asked that they please be safe. Pops requested a motion for the meeting to be adjourned. Melvin Crimes, Webster County, made the motion to approve and Terrell Hudson, Dooly County, seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

Meeting adjourned.

October 27, 2021

Jerry “Pops” Barnes, Chair

Carvel Lewis, Secretary