
CEDS Committee

Richard McCorkle, Chairman – Randolph County

Chip Jones Stewart County

Shonda Blair Talbot County

Rebecca White Randolph County

Mickey George Macon County

Bump Welch Stewart County

Edward Lee Chattahoochee County

Pops Barnes Muscogee County

Tom Queen Taylor County

Pam Jordan Talbot County

Brittney Harris RVRC

Camille Bielby RVRC

Allison Slocum RVRC

Janice West RVRC

Jim Livingston RVRC

Natalie Bradley Georgia DCA

Amy Varnum Georgia DOL

CEDS Minutes Combined

River Valley Regional Commission Consolidated Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

Committee

Virtual (Zoom) – Buena Vista, Georgia

January 26, 2022, 9:30 A.M Meeting Minutes

Attending: Sarah Walls, Ricky McCorkle, Natalie Bradley, Paul Farr, Shonda Blair, Camille Bielby, Jim Youngquist, Tom Queen, and Dr. Lee.

Zoom Participants: Janice West, Savannah Brown, Amy Varnum, Mickey George, Rebecca White, Pam Jordan

Ricky McCorkle, CEDS Chair welcomed the group and introduced Jim Youngquist, of the Southeastern Regional Directors Institute (SERDI) to the meeting. Youngquist conducted a focus group with seven questions related to the relationship of the CEDS committee with the RVRC and other partners.

McCorkle asked for a review of the minutes from the September 28, 2021 meeting. The motion to approve was made by Natalie Bradley, seconded by Paul Farr, and unanimously passed.

Old Business:

Camille Bielby, RVRC Regional Planner, gave an update on the Broadband Initiative. We are waiting to hear the results of the American Rescue Plan Act Broadband applications. Georgia's Broadband Deployment Investment funds have been transferred to the One Georgia Authority. It is expected that the application process will not begin until the ARPA funds are awarded, and the remaining unserved census blocks can be identified. She reported that the Cuthbert Hospital project was on hold.

New Business:

McCorkle and Walls both asked committee members to submit suggestions for upcoming meeting topics. Meetings will return to the monthly schedule. Suggestions from the floor included a TSPLOST renewal presentation, addressing asbestos removal and disposal that limits the ability to demolish abandoned residential properties.

CEDS Committee Members Updates

Savannah Brown reported that Harris County was now participating in the 5311 transit program. Sarah Walls gave an overview of the Covid RLF. She has two active projects in Americus, one in DeSoto and one in Unadilla. There is a pending project in Columbus. An earlier approved project may be rescinded due to lack of progress. She noted the balance needs to be loaned by June 30, 2022.

Natalie Bradley reported that the Department of Community Affairs rental and mortgage assistance programs are available and that they are relying on local governments to get the word out. She noted that utility and property tax assistance is available to residents and local government providers. Cities and/or citizens interested in applying should contact DCA. Walls asked if the programs were income-based and Bradley confirmed the requirement. She announced a virtual session on blight Scheduled for February 16 and promoted in a district-wide email notice. She announced an “traditional economic development deep dive” presentation on March 24 in Warner Robins. She said a future workshop on creating quality affordable workforce housing.

Adjournment

Respectfully Submitted,

Brittney Harris

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday February 23, 2022, 9:30 a.m.

Burkhalter Street, Buena Vista, Georgia and Virtual (Zoom)

Attendees: Richard McCorkle, Sarah Walls, Gerald Mixon, Scott DeClue, Janice West, and Camille Bielby

Chairman Richard McCorkle welcomed in-person and online attendees and called for approval of the January 26, 2022 minutes, which were accepted unanimously.

Under old business, RVRC Regional Planner Camille Bielby gave an update on the American Rescue Plan Act's Georgia Broadband Awards Results for the River Valley Counties. Five applications which included all or portions of 13 River Valley Region counties were funded with awards totaling \$82,346,255.81 and proposing to serve 24,329 households currently without access to broadband services.

Most of the funded projects were public-private partnerships between local governments and large telecom providers, and many also included an electric membership cooperative in the partnership. At least

a portion of all River Valley counties were included in at least one application, with the exceptions of Clay County and Randolph County. Ten applications including all or portions of 12 River Valley Region counties were not funded.

RVRC Assistant Executive Director, Sarah Walls introduced Jim Youngquist and Tim Ward of the Southeastern Regional Directors' Institute (SERDI), who provided an overview of the for the CEDS focus group results and general findings. A copy of the presentation will be made available on the RVRC website, and a link will be emailed to the committee members and meeting participants.

Under new business, RVRC Planning Director Gerald Mixon gave a presentation on the Transportation Investment Act penny sales tax infrastructure program, which is set to expire in December 2022 and is scheduled for a May 24, 2022 regional reauthorization referendum. Mixon reviewed the process utilized by the Transportation Roundtable to identify proposed projects to be funded upon a successful renewal in

the special election. He distributed handouts listing the 45 proposed projects and noted that all River Valley counties have at least one project, and that many have two. He noted that the expiring tax funded

\$400 million in road improvements in River Valley over the past decade, and reauthorization is projected to generate \$500 million. He emphasized the importance of local promotion in support of the referendum,

such as through chambers of commerce, etc. Mixon described the 75% allocation for the regional proposed projects and gave details on the 25% set aside that municipal and county governments can apply

to local transportation projects. He also explained how gasoline sales tax collections are distributed to local communities under the LMIG program. Mixon noted that the match for communities in regions which approve the T-SPLOST is reduced to 10%—while those in regions that do not authorize the tax are required to secure a 30% match. Additionally, the T-SPLOST local set aside funds can be used for the LMIG match in regions with successful transportation investment referendums. Richard McCorkle commented on the importance of TIA in the region and the risk to future transportation improvements should the region reject the referendum. He asked if the portion of the meeting with Mixon's presentation

could be shared. The meeting was not being recorded so Mixon agreed to put together a package that could help communities educate citizens.

Sarah Walls asked members to submit meeting topic suggestions to her. Asbestos disposal for blight remediation projects was suggested. Walls asked members to give it some thought and email recommendations for topics and speakers to her attention.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned

Respectfully Submitted,

Brittney Harris

River Valley Regional Commission Consolidated Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

Committee

Virtual (Zoom) – Buena Vista, Georgia

March 23, 2022, 9:30 A.M Meeting Minutes

Attending: Sarah Walls, Ricky McCorkle, Jim Livingston, Scott DeClue, Tom Queen, Paul Farr, Camille Bielby, Chip Jones (I think there were others, maybe scott can pull from the recording)

Zoom Participants: Janice West, Pam Jordan, Natalie Bradley (I think there were others, maybe scott can pull from the recording)

Ricky McCorkle, CEDS Chair, welcomed the group and asked for a review of the minutes from the February 23, 2022 meeting. The motion to approve was made by ???, seconded by ?????, and unanimously passed.

Old Business:

Camille Bielby, RVRC Regional Planner, gave an update on the American Rescue Plan Act Broadband Grant awards. Five applications which included all or portions of 13 River Valley Region counties were funded with awards totaling \$82,346,255.81 and proposing to serve 24,329 households currently without access to broadband services. Most recipients were local governments and non-profit organizations, and 14 service providers are represented running the gamut from large companies, EMCs, and local Georgia-based telecommunications companies. Ten applications including all or portions of 12 River Valley Region counties were not funded. At least a portion of all River Valley counties were included in at least one application.

New Business:

Jim Livingston, RVRC Executive Director, opened the review of CEDS Action Plan to prepare for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy rewrite which will be due on September 30, 2022. He explained the action plan's goals and strategies format is easy to follow and indicates the time frame and costs associated with each item. Broadband was discussed as a line item under infrastructure. Members indicated that broadband availability has become more

critical to the process of attracting new industry as businesses are not interested in locations within business parks that lack broadband access. The need for computer skills training for the general public and the importance of technology in workforce preparedness were discussed as significant issues for economic development. The potential for broadband expansion to improve population growth and attract new residents to rural communities has been recognized by some communities experiencing new residents and an uptick in home sales. It was recommended to elevate broadband from an infrastructure line item to a stand-alone economic development objective.

There was some discussion around education and other areas in which the Regional Commission has limited influence, and McCorkle invited Livingston to give a presentation to RESA members, which includes all area superintendents. Pam Jordan noted the need to help small businesses locate in parks outside of Columbus as the metropolitan area concentrates on recruiting and expanding large-scale employers. Chip Jones mentioned the need for education on tax credits for reviving abandoned homes and commercial properties and noted many communities could benefit from Air Bed and Breakfasts and Rentals by Owners.

Community and youth leadership were discussed as factors influencing a community's quality of life, and Livingston noted the topic was listed in the SERDI assessment. Tom Queen brought up agriculture and partnerships with the Farm Bureau. Chip Jones mentioned the need to educate out-of-town property owners about conservation and the benefits of buffer land. Natalie Bradley mentioned the Main Street and Better Hometown programs and the difficulty for small communities to meet the criteria. She described possibly consolidating joint authorities and other creative approaches that could offset the challenges for smaller towns. Chip Jones asked if the downtown affiliate program was still active, and Bradley confirmed. She said helping communities get started and coaching to work the plan has produced positive results and helped with establishing fund raising pipelines. Livingston noted that exploring a startup model in would help many small communities. A lunch and learn educational piece could be developed, as it is difficult to overcome problems if you don't understand how downtown development is supposed to work. Bradley commented that the number one issue in all the webinars has been addressing blight. She mentioned You Tube links with webinar recordings. Paul Farr raised the

topic of landbanks. The importance of code enforcement was emphasized. Environmental integrity action items included tri-state water issues and brownfields. Chip Jones asked Natalie Bradley the status of the Presidential Pathways Tourism Committee and she said it remains on Covid hiatus. Outreach to encourage participation in the Camera-Ready program was also discussed.

Sarah Walls mentioned the Small Business Development Center program to assist with the recruitment of interns from film schools. Paul Farr mentioned attending a meeting with Georgia Southwestern and South Georgia Tech focused on internships with local businesses. Natalie Bradley explained how she used University interns in her wedding planning business by offering course credit for marketing students. Farr explained experiential learning is an important focus at South Georgia Technical College. Chip Jones mentioned efforts to get help building out two websites. Sarah Walls mentioned accommodations improvements in Clay County at Bagby State Park.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brittney Harris

Minutes

RVRC CEDS Committee

Virtual (Zoom) – Buena Vista, Georgia

April 27, 2022, 9:30 a.m.

Attending:

Sarah Walls, Ricky McCorkle, Jim Livingston, Scott DeClue, Edward Lee, Natalie Bradley, Micky George, Tom Queen, Janice West, Camille Bielby

Zoom Participants:

Rebecca White, Amy Varnum, Pam Jordan, Brittney Harris

Opening:

Ricky McCorkle, CEDS Chair, welcomed the group and asked for a review of the minutes from the February March 2022 meeting. The motion to approve was made by Mickey George, seconded by Edward Lee, and unanimously passed.

Old Business:

Camille Bielby, RVRC Regional Planner, gave an update on the American Rescue Plan Act Broadband Grant awards. Five applications which included all or portions of 13 River Valley Region counties were funded with awards totaling \$82,346,255.81 and proposing to serve 24,329 households currently without access to broadband services.

Camille added that Last Mile and Middle Mile grants are available currently for broadband. She also said that there may not be broadband funds in the second trench of ARPA funds. EDA progress reports were submitted for the current grant period by RVRC.

New Business:

Jim Livingston, RVRC Executive Director, opened the review of CEDS Action Plan to prepare for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy rewrite which will be due on September 30, 2022. Mr. Livingston indicated that the committee's next step in the CEDS rewrite was to review each objective and their respective action items and verify, add, amend, or remove those items as a group. The Committee was able to complete progress objective 1 and planned

to review objectives 2-4 at the May committee meeting. The committee adopted the concept of adding “partners” and “funding source” columns for each objective. Brittney Harris, Regional Planner for RVRC was introduced as a facilitator of the CEDS rewrite.

Objective 1: The group made no general changes and approved the key action items.

Closing:

Committee agreed to me May 18th
from 9 to 10:30 a.m. both in-person and virtually at the
Marion County BOC office. The meeting was adjourned

Respectfully Submitted,

Brittney Harris

Minutes

RVRC CEDS Committee

Virtual/ In Person (Zoom) – Buena Vista, Georgia

May 18, 2022, 9:00 a.m.

Attending:

Scott DeClue, Allison Slocumb, Brittney Harris, Chip Jones, Natalie Bradley

Zoom Participants: Pam Jordan, Rickey McCorkle,

Opening:

Ricky McCorkle, CEDS Chair, welcomed the group and asked for a review of the minutes from the April 27, 2022 meeting, for which Mickey George recommended an amendment changing the word “complete” to “progress” regarding updates to Action Plan Objective 1. The motion to approve the amended minutes was made by Mickey George, seconded by Jim Livingston, and unanimously passed.

New Business:

Jim Livingston opened the review of CEDS Action Plan to prepare for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy rewrite which will be due on September 30, 2022. The committee reviewed objectives 1-4 and their respective action items and verified, added, amended, and removed Action Plan components as a group. Chip suggested that the group independently review the Implementation section for each action topic. The committee then planned to review objectives 9-11 at the upcoming June 22 committee meeting. RVRC agreed to make changes to the Action Plan based on meeting suggestions.

Closing:

The committee agreed to meet June 8th from 9 to 10:30 a.m. virtually to continue CEDS discussion. The meeting was adjourned

Minutes

RVRC CEDS Committee

Virtual/In-Person (Zoom) –Americus/Columbus

June 8,2022 9:00 a.m.

Attending:

Scott DeClue,, Brittney Harris, Camille Bielby, Mickey George

Zoom Participants:

Chip Jones ,Ricky McCorkle, Natalie Bradley, Micky George, Tom Queen, Rebecca White

Opening:

Ricky McCorkle, CEDS Chair, welcomed the group and asked for a review of the minutes from the May 2022 meeting. The motion to approve was made by Chip JOnes, seconded by Rebecca White, and unanimously passed.

Old Business:

Jim Livingston opened the review of CEDS Action Plan to prepare for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy rewrite which will be due on September 30, 2022. The committee reviewed objectives 1-4 and their respective action items and verified, added, amended, and removed Action Plan components as a group. The committee then planned to review objectives 5-7 at the upcoming June 8 committee meeting. RVRC agreed to make changes to the Action Plan based on meeting suggestions.

The committee agreed upon the need for a method to measure outcomes and to also include a narrative to the front of the action plan. RVRC agreed to draft a narrative explaining the document's purpose and ways to track its progress.

New Business:

Scott DeClue introduced the draft narrative to the committee, and also presented the idea of facilitating roundtables to allow stakeholders to discuss CEDS action plan progress. Chip Jones inquired about the stakeholder identification. Scott provided a stakeholder list that was used

for the previous CEDs report. The committee reviewed objectives 5-8 and their respective action items and verified, added, amended, and removed Action Plan components as a group. Chip suggested that the group independently review the Implementation section for each action topic. The committee then planned to review objectives 9-11 at the upcoming June 22 committee meeting. RVRC agreed to make changes to the Action Plan based on meeting suggestions.

Closing:

Committee agreed to meet June 22 from 9 to 10:00 a.m. both in-person and virtually in Buena Vista.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brittney Harris

Minutes

RVRC CEDS Committee

Virtual/In-Person (Zoom) –Buena Vista

June 22,2022 9:00 a.m.

Attending:

Scott DeClue,, Brittney Harris, Camille Bielby, Mickey George, Rebecca White, Natalie Bradley,
Chip Jones, Ricky McCorkle

Zoom Participants:

Micky George, Tom Queen, Pam Jordan

Opening:

Ricky McCorkle, CEDS Chair, welcomed the group and asked for a review of the minutes from the June 8 2022 meeting. The motion to approve was made by Chip Jones, seconded by Rebecca White, and unanimously passed.

Old Business:

Scott DeClue introduced the draft narrative to the committee, and also presented the idea of facilitating roundtables to allow stakeholders to discuss CEDS action plan progress. Chip Jones inquired about the stakeholder identification. Scott provided a stakeholder list that was used for the previous CEDs report. The committee reviewed objectives 5-8 and their respective action items and verified, added, amended, and removed Action Plan components as a group. Chip suggested that the group independently review the Implementation section for each action topic. The committee then planned to review objectives 9-11 at the upcoming June 22 committee meeting. RVRC agreed to make changes to the Action Plan based on meeting suggestions.

New Business:

The RVRC staff reviewed finalized changes to objectives 1-8 to ensure accurate incorporation of changes. The committee then reviewed objectives 9-11 and their respective action items and verified, added, amended, and removed Action Plan components as a group. RVRC

Brittney Harris introduced proposed survey questions to the committee for changes, amendments, and additional suggested questions. Natalie Bradley suggested that we add a question that asks communities about additional resources that they would like to see from the State of Georgia. She also suggested asking about any additional training that community leaders would like to see. The committee agreed to both of those suggestion, and the survey was amended to reflect those changes. The CEDS survey was finalized, and Brittney Harris suggested that the survey remain live for a month from July 15, 2022 - August 15, 2022. The committee then planned to review finalized action plan suggestions and survey results at the upcoming August 24, 2022 committee meeting.

Closing:

Committee agreed to meet August 24, 2022 from 9 to 10:00 a.m. both in-person and virtually in Buena Vista, in accordance with Council. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brittney Harris

Minutes

RVRC CEDS Committee
Virtual/In-Person (Zoom) –Buena Vista
August 24,2022 9:00 a.m.

Attending:

Jim Livingston, Brittney Harris, Mickey George, Natalie Bradley, Shonda Blair, Janice West, Rebecca White, Chip Jones

Zoom Participants:

Ricky McCorkle, Tom Queen, Pam, Jordan

Opening:

Ricky McCorkle, CEDS Chair, welcomed the group and asked for a review of the minutes from the June 22 meeting. The motion to approve was made by Chip Jones, seconded by Rebecca White, and unanimously passed.

Old Business:

The RVRC staff reviewed finalized changes to objectives 1-8 to ensure accurate incorporation of changes. The committee then reviewed objectives 9-11 and their respective action items and verified, added, amended, and removed Action Plan components as a group. RVRC Brittney Harris introduced proposed survey questions to the committee for changes, amendments, and additional suggested questions. Natalie Bradley suggested that we add a question that asks communities about additional resources that they would like to see from the State of Georgia. She also suggested asking about any additional training that community leaders would like to see. The committee agreed to both of those suggestions, and the survey was amended to reflect those changes. The CEDS survey was finalized, and Brittney Harris suggested that the survey remain live for a month from July 15, 2022 - August 15, 2022. The committee then planned to review finalized action plan suggestions and survey results at the upcoming August 24, 2022 committee meeting.

New Business:

Brittney Harris presented the final draft of the Action Plan, with inclusion of suggestions from previous meeting on June 22, 2022. Rebecca White shared the importance of incorporating Career Fairs in the Workforce section of the Action Plan. The RVRC staff then shared the results of the regional survey. Jim Livingston discussed the 2022 perceived strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities as compared to the survey administered in 2015. The committee agreed with presenting survey analysis by separating the region as follows: Overall region, City of Columbus, Sumter/Crisp and Other rural counties. Lastly, the RVRC staff shared the updated timeline until the date of submission. The committee agreed that we needed one additional meeting before the CEDS Rewrite is presented to Council for approval.

Closing:

Committee agreed to meet September 20,2022 from 9 to 10:00 a.m. virtually. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted

Brittney Harris

Minutes

RVRC CEDS Committee

Virtual (Zoom)

September 2, 2022 9:00 a.m.

Zoom Participants.

Jim Livingston, Brittney Harris, Mickey George, Natalie Bradley, Shonda Blair, Janice West, ,
Chip Jones Ricky McCorkle, Tom Queen, Pam, Jordan

Opening:

Ricky McCorkle, CEDS Chair, welcomed the group and asked for a review of the minutes from the June 22 meeting. The motion to approve was made by Chip Jones, seconded by Natalie Bradley, and unanimously passed.

Old Business:

Brittney Harris presented the final draft of the Action Plan, with inclusion of suggestions from previous meeting on June 22, 2022. Rebecca White shared the importance of incorporating Career Fairs in the Workforce section of the Action Plan. The RVRC staff then shared the results of the regional survey. Jim Livingston discussed the 2022 perceived strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities as compared to the survey administered in 2015. The committee agreed with presenting survey analysis by separating the region as follows: Overall region, City of Columbus, Sumter/Crisp and Other rural counties. Lastly, the RVRC staff shared the updated timeline until the date of submission. The committee agreed that we needed one additional meeting before the CEDS Rewrite is presented to Council for approval.

New Business:

Brittney Harris presented the final draft of the CEDS to the committee. Each section was reviewed and the committee approved and agreed to submit to Council for resolution. Brittney Harris reminded committee members of September 30, 2022 submission date.

Closing:

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted

Brittney Harris