RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING
Buena Vista, GA
March 22, 2023
10:30 A.M.
Meeting Minutes

Council Members (Counties Represented: 14)
Albert King, Vienna
Barbara Cullifer, Lumpkin
Barry Whitley, Butler
Bill McClellan, Schley
Bruce Hill, Oglethorpe
Carl Oliver, Macon
Chip Jones, Stewart
J.R. Dowdy, Crisp
James Davenport, Clay
Jayson Griffin, Macon
Jerry “Pops” Barnes, Muscogee, RVRC Chair
Jessie Smith, Sumter
Joshua Deriso, Cordele
Kenneth Sumpter, Fort Gaines
Kevin Brown, Buena Vista
Larry Sparks, Talbot County
Lee Kinnaman, Americus
Melvin Crimes, Webster
Randy Howard, Sumter
Ransom Farley, Hamilton
Rebecca White, Randolph
Rob Grant, Harris
Skip Henderson, Columbus
Terrell Hudson, Dooly
Tony Lamar, Talbotton

Members Not Attending
Bobby Jenkins, Cuthbert
Carvel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman, RVRC Secretary
Charles Coffey, Chattahoochee
Darrell Holbrook, Webster
Doug Ethridge, Harris
Eugene Cason, Dooly
Greg Dominey, Schley
Joe Lee Williams, Stewart

Others Present
Natalie Bradley, Flint Energies
Brenda Williams, Senator Warnock’s office
Tom Horn, Columbus Water Works
Kelvin Lewis, Macon
Clark Harrell, Crisp
Chris Kelley, Sanford Bishop’s Office
Toyia Tucker, Columbus
Rayetta Volley, Sumter
Diadra Powell, Americus

Jeff McCarter, Randolph
Maggie McGruther, Sumter
Richard McCorkle, Marion
Shane Grier, Marion
Tameka Harris, Taylor, RVRC Vice-Chair
Timothy Biddle, Chattahoochee
Tom Queen, Taylor
Xavier McCaskey, Columbus

Vicki Wainwright, Butler
Bill Twomey, ACCG
Martha A. Todd, Columbus Tech
Hunter Singleton, Clay
Rayetta Volley, Sumter
Paul Farr, SGTC
Deborah Jones, Randolph
Laura Gower, Drew Ferguson’s Office
WELCOME AND RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Jerry “Pops” Barnes, Muscogee, RVRC Chair, brought the meeting to order and welcomed visitors. Chair Barnes led the council in prayer and in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY MINUTES*

The council reviewed the February 22, 2023 meeting minutes which were emailed to 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, Chair Barnes asked for a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was made by Melvin Crimes, Webster County and seconded by Ransom Farley, Hamilton. The motion passed with no opposition.

GEORGIA COUNTY TIERS AND JOB TAX CREDITS

Jim Livingston, Executive Director introduced Christy Bozeman, GA Dept of Economic Development. During the introduction, Jim explained that we have very few professional Economic Development staff in our region and that Christy helps to fill the gaps for counties that don’t have an Economic Development person. He continued by explaining that one of the tools we have to support Economic Development is the Georgia Tax Credit tiers. Much of our region is in Tier 1. The tools local businesses have to take advantage of this is substantial and most businesses don’t know about the Georgia Tax Credit tiers.

Christy Bozeman talked about how counties are ranked and placed in economic tiers using the following factors 1) Highest unemployment rate 2) Lowest per capita income; and 3) Highest percentage of residents whose incomes are below the poverty level. She went on to explain the Job Tax Credits available to businesses and explained how to qualify. She encouraged communities to share the state information with local businesses so they can take advantage of the benefit.

REGIONAL PLAN*

Allison Slocum, Assistant Director of Planning reported RVRC staff has completed the Regional Plan development process. This document was first started in April 2022. April through July 2022, staff reviewed local, regional, and statewide plans. In July, a steering committee was established consisting of volunteers from the RVRC Council. This group met monthly from August through December 2022. Three listening sessions/focus groups were conducted throughout the region in Americus, Montezuma, and Talbotton and two pop-up events (the Waverly Hall Food Truck Festival and the Taylor Made Festival). A survey was the foundation of the SWOT analysis. Information was placed on the RVRC website and Facebook page. Steering committee members and stakeholders were also asked to share information through their social media platforms.

RVRC staff analyzed the region’s population, economic development initiatives, housing needs, community facilities/services, transportation system, and land use. From public participation efforts we developed lists of needs and opportunities for each of the elements (Economic Development, Housing, Community Facilities, Land Use, Transportation, Natural/Cultural Resources, and Regional Cooperation). Staff then identified goals,
priorities, and policies for each of these to guide decision-making. The final section of the regional plan is the Regional Work Program. Taking the identified priorities from the needs and opportunities section, staff developed strategies and activities RVRC intends to undertake in the next five years. Chair Barnes asked for a motion to transmit to DCA. The motion was made by Terrell Hudson, Dooly County and seconded by James Davenport, Clay County. The motion passed with no opposition.

**GRANT APPLICATION SUBMITTED – HOUSING**
Blaine Hoskins, Regional Planner reported the RVRC is pursuing several different funding avenues to establish a regional housing program. The funds will be used to expand RVRC’s capacity by creating a new position for a housing specialist. This new hire’s entire focus will be on improving housing in the region. The housing specialist’s responsibilities will include creating a housing analysis for the region, conducting housing assessments, and assisting communities with housing related grant applications and reviewing their development regulations. Chair Barnes asked for a motion to approve the Grant Application. The motion was made by Albert King, Vienna and seconded by Melvin Crimes, Webster County. The motion passed with no opposition.

**STAFF REPORTS**

**Katie Howard, AAA Director** announced the Senior Wellness Fair will be held at the Columbus Trade Center on May 12 from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Ms. Howard also announced that the Senior Hunger Plan Public Hearing for the region will be on April 11 from 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. This will be a hybrid meeting with an option to call in or attend in person. More information will be sent out and will be posted on Facebook as well as the website. Howard also discussed the waitlist and explained that there was no waitlist for the Respite Voucher Program and only one person on the Respite waitlist.

**Emily Chambers, Finance Officer** reported through January, the RVRC had a net increase in fund balance of $136,750 in the General Fund, leaving an Unassigned Fund Balance of $1.1 million and cash on hand on January 31 of $574,000. The enterprise funds had an increase in net position of about $8,000 with a total net position on January 31 of just over $2 million. Finance staff continue to monitor FY23 budgeted expenditures and will begin work on the FY24 budget soon.

**Janice West, WIOA Director** reported as of March 21, 2023 there are 104 individuals enrolled in WIOA training activities. Enrollments should continue to increase through June 30, 2023. As of December 22, 2022, the regional unemployment rate was 3.9%. Unemployment continues to be low in the region and statewide. WIOA preliminary performance measures outcomes for PY 22 Quarter 3 indicate the local WIOA area is exceeding eight measures and is meeting one measure. There are no Dislocated Workers enrolled to report performance measures achievement as of Quarter 3. WIOA performance measures for the Middle Flint WIOA Area 15 is doing well and on track to successfully meet federal/state WIOA performance measures for program year 2022-2023. WIOA staff are beginning the planning process for the upcoming year.

**Rick Morris, Planning Director** reported that Allison Slocum and staff completed a draft of the Regional Plan which will be submitted to DCA for review. Comprehensive Plans have been reviewed and approved by DCA for Dooly County, Macon County, Randolph County, Americus-Sumter County, and Andersonville-Desoto-Leslie-Plains. Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plans completed for Schley and Dooly Counties. Started comp plans in Taylor County and Clay County. Developing the Georgetown-Quitman Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan. Zoning activities are on-going in Clay County, Quitman County and Talbot County. Other RCVR projects include
Next Generation E-911 system update and continuing Brownfield Testing. The Upper Flint River Water Plan is available for review online.

**ADJOURN**

As there was no further business, Chair Barnes requested a motion for the meeting to be adjourned. Motion was made by Terrell Hudson, Dooly County and seconded by Melvin Crimes, Webster County. The meeting was adjourned.

April 26, 2023

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        Jerry “Pops” Barnes, Chair

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        Carvel Lewis, Secretary