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**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 Kinnamon, 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

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**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

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

**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, Sandford Bishop’s Office  
Toyia Tucker, Columbus  
Rayetta Volley, Sumter  
Diadra Powell, Americus

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

## **RVRC Staff Attending**

Jim Livingston, Executive Director  
Mariyana Kostov, GIS Manager  
Katie Howard, AAA Director  
Rick Morris, Director of Planning and Govt. Services  
Janice West, WIOA Director

Camille Bielby, Regional Planner  
Merri Spence, Executive Secretary  
Tammy Collins, Finance Officer  
Blaine Hoskins, Regional Planner  
Allison Slocum, Asst. Director of Planning

## **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,

[Chattahoochee](#) | [Clay](#) | [Crisp](#) | [Dooly](#) | [Harris](#) | [Macon](#) | [Marion](#) | [Muscogee](#)  
[Quitman](#) | [Randolph](#) | [Schley](#) | [Stewart](#) | [Sumter](#) | [Talbot](#) | [Taylor](#) | [Webster](#)

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.

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April 26, 2023

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Jerry "Pops" Barnes, Chair

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Carvel Lewis, Secretary