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RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

Buena Vista, GA
September 28, 2022
10:30 A.M.
Meeting Minutes

Council Members

(Counties Represented: 14)

Albert King, Vienna
Bill McClellan, Schley
Carvel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman, RVRC
Secretary
Charles Coffey, Chattahoochee
Chip Jones, Stewart
Darrell Holbrook, Webster
J.R. Dowdy, Crisp
James Davenport, Clay
Jayson Griffin, Macon
Jerry "Pops" Barnes, Muscogee, RVRC Chair
Jimmy Babb, Lumpkin

Joshua Deriso, Cordele
Kevin Brown, Buena Vista
Melvin Crimes, Webster
Pam Jordan, Talbot
Ransom Farley, Hamilton
Rob Grant, Harris
Sher'Londa Walker, Talbot
Terrell Hudson, Dooly
Tim Biddle, Chattahoochee
Tom Queen, Taylor
Tony Lamar, Talbotton

Members Not Attending

Barry Whitley, Butler
Bobby Jenkins, Cuthbert
Bruce Hill, Oglethorpe
Byron Hickey, Columbus
Carl Oliver, Macon
Danny Blackmon, Georgetown-Quitman
Doug Ethridge, Harris
Eugene Cason, Dooly
Greg Dominy, Schley
James R. "Bump" Welch, Marion
Joe Lee Williams, Stewart

Kenneth Sumpter, Fort Gaines
Lee Kinnamon, Americus
Maggie McGruther, Sumter
Mark Waddell, Sumter
Matt Gunnels, Marion
Randy Howard, Sumter
Rebecca White, Randolph
Richard McCorkle, Marion
Skip Henderson, Columbus
Tameka Harris, Taylor, RVRC Vice-Chair
Wesley Williams, Randolph

Others Present

Paul Farr, SGTC
Shonda Blair, Taylor
Samantha Hedgecoke, Chattahoochee
Hunter Singleton, Clay
Mac Moye, Stewart

Kelvin Lewis, Macon
Toyia Tucker, Columbus
Clark Harrell, Crisp
Amy Varnum, GDOL
Vicki Wainwright, Butler
Rayetta Volley, Sumter

RVRC Staff Attending

Jim Livingston, Executive Director
Mariyana Kostov, GIS Manager
Katie Howard, AAA Director
Rick Morris, Planning Director
Janice West, WIOA Director
Camille Bielby, Regional Planner
John Morgan, Bike and Pedestrian Planner
Merri Spence, Executive Secretary

Brittney Harris, Regional Planner
Gerald Mixon, Planning Director
Ian Perry, Regional Planner
Blaine Hoskins, Regional Planner
Michael Murray, Regional Planner
Allison Slocum, Regional Planner
Emily Chambers, Finance Officer
Tammy Collins, Finance Officer

WELCOME AND RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

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

APPROVAL OF AUGUST MINUTES*

Council reviewed the August 24, 2022 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, Mr. Barnes requested a motion to approve minutes. Melvin Crimes, Webster County, made the motion to approve the minutes as presented; Darrell Holbrook, Webster County seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

HOUSING IN THE RIVER VALLEY

NeighborWorks – Cathy Williams, CEO of NeighborWorks Columbus said their vision is to eliminate sub-standard housing, and their mission is to promote and provide access to affordable housing and to build family assets for financial independence for all citizens with low to moderate incomes. She went on to explain the many programs and services NeighborWorks offers. Ms. Williams showed a slideshow of the neighborhoods that have benefited from NeighborWorks in Columbus and went on to say that in our 16-county area, 33% of the households have 1 – 4 housing problems. These problems include overcrowding, cost burden and lack of kitchen or plumbing. Ms. Williams said that it would benefit Georgia to have a comprehensive state-wide plan. She explained many solutions for our housing crisis and spoke about the Neighborhood Homes Investment Act (NHIA).

Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) – Jermaine Durham, Executive Director for GICH, spoke about the impact of the GICH program. He explained the goal of GICH is to get communities working together to organize, strategize, and problem-solve the housing and resource issues in our communities. GICH was launched in 2004 and since then, eight-six communities have directly benefited from the program. Their vision is to help communities improve quality of life and economic vitality through the development of locally driven housing and revitalization strategies. This is achieved through: technical assistance, collaboration, expert presenters, training facilitation, consensus building, networking, mentoring. GICH is funded through grants, The University of Georgia, sponsors and partners. They are looking for GICH communities in the River Valley region.

APPROVAL OF THE REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS)*

Brittney Harris, RVRC Regional Planner, presented the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy to council for approval. The overall summary of the document was shared, including pertinent details such as

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

survey results, CEDS goals/objectives and the Action Plan. It was explained to the council that there would be revisions to the formatting of the document, but all content was finalized for approval. The council was informed that the document would be submitted to the Economic Development Administration on September 30, 2022. Chair Barnes requested a motion to approve the CEDS document as presented. Melvin Crimes, Webster County made the motion to approve the CEDS document; Tom Queen, Taylor County seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION TO APPLY FOR GDOT FUNDING UNDER TITLE 49 U.S.C., SEC 5311 AND 5304*

Michael Murray, RVRC Regional Planner, asked Council to consider voting on a pair of resolutions to authorize the RVRC to apply for Georgia Department of Transportation funding for FY 2024. Mr. Murray informed the Council that he was working to complete the applications for GDOT 5311 and GDOT 5304 funding at that time.

Chair Barnes requested a motion to approve the resolution to apply for GDOT Under Title 49 U.S.C , Section 5311 as presented. Terrell Hudson, Dooly County made the motion to approve the resolution and J.R. Dowdy, Crisp County seconded the motion. The motion was passed with no opposition.

Chair Barnes requested a motion to approve the resolution to apply for GDOT Under Title 49 U.S.C , Section 5304 as presented. Melvin Crimes, Webster County requested a motion to approve the resolution and Albert King, Vienna seconded the motion. The motion was passed with no opposition.

STAFF REPORTS

Katie Howard, AAA Director reported the Area Agency on Aging has been busy revising the Area Plan and working to allocate the new ARPA funding. Plans for the funding include maintaining the service increases funded by the CARES and Families First funding as well as reducing the waiting list for in-home services such as homemaker and personal care aid. New projects will include assistive technology for Caregivers such as adult diapers and tools that can help caregivers. Ramps continue to be a need in the region; however, staff will need to work with providers to meet the new guidelines which are more stringent regarding the total expense allowed to be paid by Older Americans Act funding. Mental Health has never been a service that was provided by the AAA, but staff are working with New Horizons and Middle Flint Behavioral Health to determine how this might work in the River Valley region.

Janice West, WIOA Director reported that the WIOA Local and Regional Plans were submitted to the State Office of Workforce Development before the deadline of September 15. Plans will be reviewed by the state and WIOA will be notified when approved. The WIOA department had the state's annual monitoring for PY 2021 the week of September 19. Two minor corrective actions were needed by WIOA, but monitoring went well overall. Regional unemployment rates for July 2022 were 4.3% which was a decrease from 5.7% in July 2021. Rates continue to decrease for the region and state.

Gerald Mixon, Planning Director reported, in addition to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that Brittney Harris described, we are releasing three other plan drafts this month: one Comprehensive Plan and two Pre-disaster Mitigation plans. The GIS department has initiated Phase III of a multi-year contract with the GDOT to update and supplement the department's inventory/data base of transportation attributes. The application for Georgia EPD continued funding of Pataula Creek Watershed Protection Measures has been approved.

ADJOURN

As there was no further business, Chair Barnes requested a motion for the meeting to be adjourned. Motion was made by Chip Jones, Stewart County, and seconded by Darrell Holbrook, Webster County. Meeting was adjourned.

October 26, 2022

Jerry "Pops" Barnes, Chair

Carvel Lewis, Secretary