RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING
Buena Vista, GA
February 28, 2024
10:30 A.M.
Meeting Minutes

Council Members (Counties Represented: 16)

Albert King, Vienna
Barbara Cullefer, Lumpkin
Bill McClellan, Schley
Bobby Jenkins, Cuthbert
Carvel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman, RVRC Chair
Charles Coffey, Chattahoochee
Chip Jones, Stewart
Darrell Holbrook, Webster
Doug Ethridge, Harris
Eugene Cason, Dooly
J.R. Dowdy, Crisp, Vice-Chair
Jayson Griffin, Macon
Kenneth Sumpter, Fort Gaines
Kevin Brown, Buena Vista
Larry Sparks, Talbot County
Lee Kinnamon, Americus
Maggie McGruther, Sumter
Melvin Crimes, Webster
Randy Howard, Sumter
Rob Grant, Harris
Shane Grier, Marion
Tameka Harris, Taylor, RVRC Secretary
Terrell Hudson, Dooly
Tom Queen, Taylor
Toyia Tucker, Columbus

Members Not Attending

Barry Witley, Butler
Carl Oliver, Macon
Danny Blackmon, Georgetown-Quitman
Greg Dominey, Schley
James Davenport, Clay
Jeff McCarter, Randolph
Jimmy Daniels, Oglethorpe
Joe Lee Williams, Stewart
Joshua Deriso, Cordele
Patrick Whearley, Hamilton
Richard McCorkle, Marion
Skip Henderson, Columbus
Timothy Biddle, Chattahoochee
Tony Lamar, Talbotton
Xavier McCaskey, Columbus

Others Present

Mandy White, Randolph Co. Dev. Authority
Michael Chriszt, Federal Reserve Bank Atlanta
Christopher Drake, Congressman Bishop's office
Diadra Powell, Americus City Manager
Jill Harrison, City of Oglethorpe
Susan Andrews, Harris County
Colin Martin, AT&T Area Manager
Clark Harrell, Crisp County
Christy Bozeman, GA DEcD
Robert Sheridan, METRA
Grant Buckley, Crisp Co. Dev. Authority
Laura Gower, Congressman Ferguson's Office
Yolanda Majors, Taylor County
Rebecca White, DCA
Tom Horn, Columbus Water Works
Stephen Sanders, Dooly County
John Noe, Blue Cypress
Amanda Hatton, Blue Cypress
Shannae Johnson, GDOT
Harvey Smith, GDOT
Brittni Russaw, GDOT
Anthony Couch, Talbot County

Chloe Landreth, New Horizons

Mary Stewart, Talbot County Chamber

RVRC Staff

Jim Livingston, Executive Director
Tracie Hadaway, Director of Planning and Government Services
Katie Howard, Director of Area Agency on Aging
Mariyana Kostov, Planning
Rick Morris, Planning
Allison Slocum, Planning
Blaine Hoskins, Planning
Laura Schneider, Planning
Michael Murray, Planning
Naomi Masuoka, Planning
Merri Spence, Administration
Tammy Collins, Finance
Janice West, WIOA

WELCOME AND RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Carvel Lewis, RVRC Chairman, Georgetown-Quitman, brought the meeting to order and welcomed visitors. Secretary Tameka Harris led the council in prayer and Vice-Chairman Dowdy lead the council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF JANUARY MINUTES*

The council reviewed the January 24, 2024 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, Chairman Lewis asked for a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was made by Albert King, City of Vienna, and seconded by Melvin Crimes, Webster County. The motion passed with no opposition.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Michael Christz, Vice President and Regional Engagement Officer of the Federal Reserve Bank in Atlanta gave an informative presentation on the state of the U.S. economy and how the Federal Reserve Banks combat the pandemic's lingering effects on inflation. The most recent quarterly change in economic growth was 3.2%, which is a number far above economists' predictions on the trends of the U.S. economy. The Federal Reserve's target for inflation is 2%, and that number is predicted to be reached in the long run. The Federal Reserve also focuses on workforce development. Unemployment is currently under 4%, an all-time low. Positive economic trends resulted from the Federal Reserve's efforts to increase supply and reduce the labor force gap. However, input from smaller towns and rural areas is essential to understanding how businesses experience these effects. The Federal Reserve seeks to make long-term improvements and connect with local communities now that numbers are becoming more stable.

RURAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Amanda Hatton of Blue Cypress Consulting, working in conjunction with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), presented information on the Regional Transit Development Plan (TDP). GDOT is collaborating with Blue Cypress and AECOM to identify strategies for all Georgia residents to have access to transit. In rural areas, many of the needs are for disadvantaged populations. River Valley is one of the regions with a TDP currently being developed. The plan looks at a 20-year horizon, and it will be updated every five years. It is supported by grants from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The first round of receiving public input is in progress, and a second public engagement meeting will be in June or July 2024. By December 2024, a draft of the TDP should be complete and will then be reviewed by the council.

CLIMATE POLLUTION REDUCTION GRANT APPLICATION TO EPA*

Laura Schneider, Environmental Planner presented a grant opportunity from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA is providing funding under the Climate Pollution Reduction Grants Program: Implementation Grants General Competition for state agencies and others to implement greenhouse gas reduction programs, policies, projects, and measures as identified in a Priority Climate Action Plan developed under a Climate Pollution Reduction planning grant. The RVRC plans to apply for funding regionally to improve tree canopy in the downtown communities. This will reduce greenhouse gas emissions through carbon sequestration and will promote alternative methods of transportation

including walking and biking. This will be a coalition application, which will include the University of Georgia, Trees Columbus, and Georgia Forestry Commission as partners. The RVRC has also reached out to Keep Georgia Beautiful about a potential partnership. They anticipate working closely with the local Keep Georgia Beautiful affiliates, downtown development authorities, and main street communities as well. EPA has $4.3 billion dollars available for this grant competition, with grants awards expected to range between $2 million and $500 million, based on scope, scale, and cost of greenhouse gas reduction measures. There is no match requirement. Grant applications are due on April 1st, and anticipated notification of funding is July 2024. Awards are anticipated to be granted in October 2024. If funded, the grant period will be up to five years. Chairman Lewis asked for a motion to approve the RVRC applying for this grant. The motion was made by Chip Jones, Stewart County and seconded by Larry Sparks, Talbot County. The motion passed with no opposition.

APPROVAL OF FY25 AREA PLAN OF SERVICES FOR SENIORS*

Katie Howard, AAA Director presented the FY25 Area Plan of Services for Seniors. The River Valley Area Plan provides a roadmap for services to be provided to seniors and their caregivers for the fiscal years 25-28. Services include home delivered meals, senior centers, homemaker aide, personal care aide, respite (in-home and voucher) as well as case management, nursing home transitions, and wellness programs. The state has a goal of 90% accuracy in data entered into the database. River Valley has a 98% accuracy for data entered. The state also has a goal that 90% of the clients served will meet at least one target criteria. River Valley has 100% of clients meeting at least one target criteria. A locally developed goal involved increasing staff retention. This will be done with training and team building exercises. Chair Lewis asked for a motion to approve the FY25 Area Plan of Services for Seniors plan. The motion was made by Darrell Holbrook, Webster County and seconded by Toyia Tucker, City of Columbus. The motion was passed with no opposition.

STAFF REPORTS

Katie Howard, AAA Director reported the River Valley Area Plan is complete and will be submitted on March 1. The aging staff continues to provide services to seniors and persons with disabilities. A diabetes management class is upcoming in Cusseta, and a Matter of Balance class is upcoming at Piedmont. Our largest waiting list right now is for home delivered meals and homemaker assistance. Care-Net is continuing to communicate with members, and the next meeting will be held on March 12 with Amber Crawford speaking on Estate Planning. MDS-Q Options Counseling continues to provide Educational Sessions in our 16-county area regarding clients transitioning out of the nursing home and back to the community. Case management continues to receive referrals and provide case management for traditional clients. CM has received many referrals for assisted technology and has been delivering the items (if available).

Tammy Collins, Finance Officer reported that as of December 31, 2023, there was a net decrease in fund balance in the operating funds leaving an unassigned fund balance of $918,353 and cash on hand of $675,967. Enterprise funds had an increase in net position of $1,267 and a total net position of $2,000,000 with a cash on hand of $1.2 million available for lending. A budget amendment will be requested in March or April.

Tracie Hadaway, Director of Planning and Government Services reported that four CHIP applications have been submitted. Seven CDBG applications are being written. A RAISE grant is being written for the City of Americus. The United Way of the Chattahoochee Valley is being assisted with a recompete pilot project grant. Staff has attended the virtual webinar for the Defense Community Infrastructure Program grant application and has been working with staff from UGA on the application preparation. 31 grants are being administered currently, and five comprehensive plans are being developed. The GIS Staff continues working with the county on the development of the GIS online data portal. The paper-to-digital conversion of the zoning map is done and presented to the county for a review. The Existing Land Use map was created and sent to the county for comments. The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program has just extended their deadline to March 15, 2024. The priority counties encouraged to apply are Clay, Randolph, Quitman, Taylor, Stewart, and Schley.

Janice West, WIOA Director reported enrollments for the period from July 1, 2023 through February 14, 2024 in various WIOA funded training activities total is 137 individuals being served. Enrollments will continue to increase over the program year. Local WIOA Plans will be due to State Office of Workforce Development on June 30, 2024. Regional WIOA Plans will be due on September 30, 2024. Upcoming meetings for the WIOA staff include the Workforce Directors Meeting and the Georgia Workforce Leadership Association Meeting.

ADJOURN

As there was no further business, Chairman Lewis requested a motion for the meeting to be adjourned. A motion was made by Darrell Holbrook, Webster County and seconded by Terrell Hudson, Dooly County. The motion passed with no opposition. The meeting was adjourned.

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March 27, 2024 Carvel Lewis, Chairman

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Tameka Harris, Secretary