RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING
Buena Vista, GA
March 27, 2024
10:30 A.M.
Meeting Minutes

Council Members (Counties Represented: 13)

Albert King, Vienna
Bill McClellan, Schley County
Charles Coffey, Chattahoochee County
Chip Jones, Stewart County
Danny Blackmon, Georgetown-Quitman County
Darrell Holbrook, Webster County
James Davenport, Clay County
Jayson Griffin, Macon County
Jim Reid, Sumter County
Kevin Brown, Buena Vista
Larry Sparks, Talbot County
Lee Kinnamon, Americus
Melvin Crimes, Webster County
Richard McCorkle, Marion County
Terrell Hudson, Dooly County
Tom Queen, Taylor County
Xavier McCaskey, Columbus

Members Not Attending

Barbara Cullefer, Lumpkin
Barry Whitley, Butler
Bobby Jenkins, Cuthbert
Carl Oliver, Macon County
Carvel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman County, RVRC Chair
Doug Ethridge, Harris County
Eugene Cason, Dooly County
Greg Dominey, Schley County
J.R. Dowdy, Crisp County, Vice-Chair
Jeff McCarter, Randolph County
Jimmy Daniels, Oglethorpe
Joe Lee Williams, Stewart County
Joshua Deriso, Cordele
Kenneth Sumpter, Fort Gaines
Maggie McGruther, Sumter County
Patrick Whearley, Hamilton
Randy Howard, Sumter County
Rob Grant, Harris County
Shane Grier, Marion County
Skip Henderson, Columbus
Tameka Harris, Taylor County, RVRC Secretary
Timothy Biddle, Chattahoochee County
Tony Lamar, Talbotton
Toyia Tucker, Columbus

Others Present

Mickey George, Macon County
Anthony Couch, Talbot County
Mac Moye, Stewart County
Mike Dillard, Marion County
Rebecca White, DCA
Natalie Bradley, Flint Energies
Chloe Landreth, New Horizons
Alyse Wolf, Senator Ossoff's Office
Mark Masters, Georgia Water Planning and Policy Center

RVRC Staff

Jim Livingston, Executive Director
Tracie Hadaway, Director of Planning and Government Services
Katie Howard, Director of Area Agency on Aging
Grant Richardson, Assistant Director of Government Services
Mariyana Kostov, Planning
Naomi Masuoka, Planning
Destinee Williams, Planning
Camille Bielby, Planning
Merri Spence, Administration
Tammy Collins, Finance
Janice West, WIOA

WELCOME AND RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Terrell Hudson, Dooly County, brought the meeting to order and welcomed visitors. Melvin Crimes, Webster County, led the council in prayer and Terrell Hudson led the council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY MINUTES*

The council reviewed the February 28, 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, Terrell Hudson asked for a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was made by Darrell Holbrook, Webster County and seconded by Albert King, Vienna. The motion passed with no opposition.

GA-FIT AND APALACHICOLA-CHATTAHOOCHEE-FLINT STAKEHOLDERS UPDATE

Mark Masters, Director of the Georgia Water Planning and Policy Center gave a presentation about water issues that will affect the River Valley Region in the future. Observing agricultural water usage is key to creating plans and policies that will get the region through extreme droughts, and Georgia has been a leader in state and regional level water planning to better prepare for these periods. The Georgia Flow Incentive Trust (GA-FIT) has a program called DroughtSWAP that provides groundwater options to use during droughts in the Lower Flint River Basin. These efforts ensure that farmers can continue to farm and keep the economy strong, even during times of limited resources. Project implementation involves additional conservation measures, direct augmentation to streams, and stakeholder-driven management. This is a partnership between the Georgia Water Planning and Policy Center, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, and the Golden Triangle Resource Conservation & Development Council. There are currently opportunities for regional members to serve on water planning councils. $55 million has been awarded for these efforts to protect streamflow, and a draft Habitat Conservation Plan should be completed by the end of this year.

BEAD BROADBAND CHALLENGE

Camille Bielby, Regional Planner, provided an update on the region's access to broadband and the process that was used to identify the status of rural broadband. The Broadband, Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Challenge exists to ensure that all U.S. households, businesses, and institutions have access to high-speed internet. Georgia has received $1.3 billion in funds, and the priority is unserved locations or locations that have lower speeds. The RVRC is a licensed entity to file challenges on behalf of areas in the region that are in need. The RVRC shared maps from the Federal Communications Commission that demonstrate where high speed internet is available in each county, as well as maps from the BEAD program that show areas that are unserved. The maps provide an idea of which counties are in great need, and the RVRC created a survey that asks for the information that the state needs so that counties can submit their challenges. The deadline for the RVRC to submit challenges is April 2, 2024.

STAFF REPORTS

Katie Howard, AAA Director reported the Chattahoochee Judicial District has created and adopted multi-disciplinary teams to investigate suspicious deaths of seniors. The bill to mandate these teams in every district has now gone to the governor for signatures. Two projects for Senior Hunger Mini-Grant funds will be developed in Chattahoochee and Quitman Counties. These counties do not have senior centers and have not received grants in the past. The Senior Wellness Fair is at the Columbus Civic Center on May 3 from 9am-2pm. The Dementia Care Specialist conducted a Virtual

Dementia Tour at Legacy Senior Living, and staff continues to train and develop a coalition, contacting persons across the 16-county area for potential members. There are over 400 people on the waitlist for Home and Community Based Services, but there is nobody on the waitlist for respite.

Tammy Collins, Finance Officer reported that as of January 31, 2024, there was a net decrease in fund balance in the operating funds leaving an unassigned fund balance of $951,000 and cash on hand of $1.1 million. Fringe rates have increased and will be incorporated in the next budget amendment. The indirect rate was on target in January at 46%. Enterprise funds had an increase in net position of $5,673 and a total net position of $2,000,000 with cash on hand of $1.2 million available for lending.

Tracie Hadaway, Director of Planning and Government Services reported that CDBG applications are due Friday, April 5. The Climate Pollution Reduction Grant is due Monday, April 1. Ten applications were submitted for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block grant. A RAISE grant was completed for the City of Americus. There is a notice of funding opportunity from the DOT entitled Safe Streets for All. It is a planning grant to create safety actions to reduce fatalities. The planning grant application deadlines are April 4, May 16, and August 29. There is also a notice of funding from the Active Transportation Infrastructure Program. There is a webinar on April 9, and the deadline is June 17. The Taylor County Comprehensive Plan has been submitted. Staff is working on Comprehensive Plans for Harris, Crisp, Webster, and Quitman Counties and their cities.

Janice West, WIOA Director reported that staff is working on the Local WIOA Plan, and it is due to the State Office of Workforce Development on June 30. The Regional WIOA Plan will be due on September 30. Enrollments for period from July 1, 2023 through March 13, 2024 in various WIOA funded training activities total is 110 individuals being served. Enrollments will continue to increase over the program year. Staff is planning services for the next program year that will begin in July. An anticipated budget cut will affect the next year, so activities may be completed on a smaller scale. The Georgia unemployment rate for December was 2.9%, and the regional unemployment rate was 3.4%. The second quarter performance measures are on track with many measures being met and exceeded.

ADJOURN

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

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April 24, 2024

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Carvel Lewis, Chairman

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Tameka Harris, Secretary