RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING
Buena Vista, GA
September 27, 2023
10:30 A.M.
Meeting Minutes

Council Members (Counties Represented: 14)

Barbara Cullefer, Lumpkin
Barry Whitley, Butler
Bobby Jenkins, Cuthbert
Bruce Hill, Oglethorpe
Carvel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman, RVRC Chair
Charles Coffey, Chattahoochee
Danny Blackmon, Georgetown-Quitman
Doug Ethridge, Harris
J.R. Dowdy, Crisp, Vice-Chair
James Davenport, Clay
Jayson Griffin, Macon
Jessie Smith, Sumter
Joe Lee Williams, Stewart
Kenneth Sumpter, Fort Gaines
Kevin Brown, Buena Vista
Maggie McGruther, Sumter
Melvin Crimes, Webster
Richard McCorkle, Marion
Rob Grant, Harris
Shane Grier, Marion
Tameka Harris, Taylor, RVRC Secretary
Terrell Hudson, Dooly
Timothy Biddle, Chattahoochee
Tom Queen, Taylor
Toyia Tucker, Columbus
Xavier McCaskey, Columbus

Members Not Attending

Albert King, Vienna
Bill McClellan, Schley
Carl Oliver, Macon
Chip Jones, Stewart
Darrell Holbrook, Webster
Eugene Cason, Dooly
Greg Dominey, Schley
Jeff McCarter, Randolph
Joshua Deriso, Cordele
Tony Lamar, Talbotton
Larry Sparks, Talbot County
Lee Kinnamon, Americus
Randy Howard, Sumter
Ransom Farley, Hamilton
Skip Henderson, Columbus

Others Present

Mary Stevens, Talbot Chamber of Commerce
Laura Gower, Congressman Ferguson's Office
Rebecca White, DCA
Nicole Acree, Taylor County Development Authority
Kenny Riner, Chattahoochee County Manager
Tom Horn, Columbus Water Works
Chloe Landreth, New Horizons Behavioral Health
Christopher Drake, Congressman Bishop's office
John Watford, President SGTC
Paul Farr, Director of Business Services, SGTC
Velma Coley, Andersonville Mayor Pro-Teem
Vicki Wainwright, Butler Administrator
Jill Harrison, Oglethorpe City Council
Deborah Jones, Randolph County Manager
Betsy Covington, Chatt. Community Foundation
Andy Hilmes, C4C Coalition
Mac Moye, Stewart County Manager
Brenda Williams, Senator Warnock's office
Alyse Wolf, Senator Ossoff's office
Tracy Mosley, Urban League of the River Valley

RVRC Staff Attending

Jim Livingston, Executive Director
Katie Howard, AAA Director
Allison Slocum, Assistant Director of Planning
Blaine Hoskins, Planning
Emily Chambers, Finance Officer
Tracie Hadaway, Planning
Mariyana Kostov, Planning
Janice West, WIOA
John Morgan, Planning

WELCOME AND RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

J.R. "Dick" Dowdy, RVRC Vice-Chair, Crisp County, brought the meeting to order and welcomed visitors. Secretary Tameka Harris, Taylor County led the council in prayer and Vice-Chair Dowdy, lead the council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AUGUST MINUTES*

The council reviewed the August 23, 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, Vice-Chair Dowdy asked for a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was made by Charles Coffey, Chattahoochee County and seconded by Kevin Brown, Buena Vista.

TECHNICAL COLLEGES

Dr. John Watford, President of South Georgia Technical College gave a presentation on activities at the school. Celebrating their 75th year, SGTC was one of the first two technical colleges in the state of Georgia and is one of only two technical colleges with campus housing. Dr. Watford shared the mission of South Georgia Technical College is to further the economy of Georgia through workforce education. SGTC boasts a 99% job placement rate and an 87% job placement in the field of study rate. SGTC serves 7 rural counties and is the leader in the state in the number of students enrolled in occupational programs. The 2023 academic year statistics are looking strong with 263 students enrolled in the truck driving program. Funds have been secured to start paving a truck-driving pad on the Crisp County campus. The LPN enrollment was up 10.77% last year and Dr. Watford received a letter yesterday from the Georgia Board of Nursing approving an LPN to RN bridge program. The Certified Nursing Assistant program was up 154% last year. The Law Enforcement Academy continues to increase in enrollment. The Aviation Maintenance program is a very successful program and has been a part of SGTC since the very beginning. Graduates of the Aviation Maintenance program are certified to work on any non-military aircraft, including balloons.

CHIPS4CHIPS UPDATE

Marquet McKnight, Betsy Covington, Brigadier General Andy Hilmes, and Ben Moser gave a presentation on the Chips4Chips Coalition which is being housed at United Way of Chattahoochee Valley. Chips4Chips has created a regional technology hub in the Columbus region with an 18-month effort. The Chattahoochee Hub for Innovation and Production of Semiconductors (CHIPS) United Way has adopted a goal of reducing the 19.5% poverty rate in the region and is part of a strategy to increase employment with good paying jobs. The CHIPS Act provides $10 billion to support the creation of regional technology hubs. The coalition has applied to have the region designated as a regional technology hub and is in contention with Atlanta, Savannah, Columbus and Macon. 100% of all semiconductors are made in Asia and 92% in Tiawan. The U.S. federal government is aggressively pushing to return the manufacture of advanced chips and related fields to the United States due to a national defense concern as well as economic concerns. There is broad based community and financial support for this effort at all levels. The group has raised over $2 million to support the coalition.

UPDATE ON RIVER VALLEY TRANSPORATION ALLIANCE

Jim Livingston gave an update on the River Valley Transportation Alliance – US DOT strategy. The Alliance plans to use the TIA funding to leverage infrastructure/transportation funding. The TIA funding gives the region a unique advantage because of the availability of match funding. There are multiple grant opportunities which are outlined in the draft strategy discussed at the meeting. Near-term opportunities are also identified. This includes Regional Transportation

Projects that were identified but not funded during the last round of TIA funding. The transportation alliance allows the region to be better positioned for federal discretionary funding. Mr. Livingston reviewed several options to pursue funding.

STAFF REPORTS

Emily Chambers, Finance Director

There was a net decrease in fund balance in the operating funds, leaving a July 31 unassigned fund balance of $1,023,120. Cash on hand in the General Fund on July 31 was $589,000. The enterprise funds had an increase in net position of $2,400 this month. Total net position in the loan funds is $2 million with cash on hand of $1.2 million available for lending.

Allison Slocum, Assistant Director of Planning

RVRC's partnership with CVIOG and Fort Moore to develop the River Valley Compatible Community Development Plan is completed. A final presentation was held on August 18th at CSU. CVIOG will continue to work with the communities over the next few years under a different funding source to implement recommendations from the plan. RVRC staff reviewed a Development of Regional Impact (DRI) in Cordele. It's a 7-Eleven store on I-75. We are still waiting on approval of our extension request for our current Brownfields grant. Once we have written confirmation, we will begin the Site Re-Use Plan for the Ideal School. We had a good turn out at the Plains, Trains, and Bicycle Chains event at the Plains Peanut Festival.

Katie Howard AAA Director gave a report on the Area Agency on Aging. She asked members to make referrals to the ADRC (Aging and Disability Resource Connection) for anyone who needs services. Respite Care was emphasized as a service with a smaller wait list. The potential Federal Government shutdown was also discussed.

Janice West-Director of WIOA

WIOA has 61 individuals enrolled in various training services for September. Regional unemployment rate for July 2023 was 4.2%. Individual counties' unemployment rates are reported in the staff activity report in the WIOA section. WIOA staff will be assisting with Rapid Response services for two employers in the eastern counties that will be laying off employees. Information on WIOA training services and other community partner services will be shared with the employees that will be laid off. WIOA has 15 federal/state performance measure goals that local WIOA areas must meet. For the program year 2022 which ended on June 30, 2023, Middle Flint WIOA area is meeting or exceeding the 15 measures.

ADJOURN

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

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October 25, 2023 Carvel Lewis, Chair

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Tameka Harris, Secretary