RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING
Buena Vista, GA
December 11, 2024,
10:30 A.M.
Meeting Minutes

Council Members (Counties Represented: 14)

Albert King, Vienna
Bobby Jenkins, Cuthbert
Charles Coffey, Chattahoochee County
Darrell Holbrook, Webster County
J.R. Dowdy II, Crisp County, Vice Chair
James Davenport, Clay County
Jayson Griffin, Macon County
Joe Lee Williams, Stewart County
Kenneth Sumpter, Fort. Gaines
Kevin Brown, Buena Vista
Melvin Crimes, Webster County
Patrick Whearley, Hamilton*
Randy Howard, Sumter County
Richard McCorkle, Marion County
Rob Grant, Harris County
Rob Marion, Chattahoochee County
Skip Henderson, Columbus
Terrell Hudson, Dooly County
Tim Biddle, Chattahoochee County
Tom Queen, Taylor County
Tony Lamar, Talbotton
Toyia Tucker, Columbus

Members Not Attending

Barbara Cullefer, Lumpkin
Barry Whitley Butler
Bill McClellan, Schley County
Carl Oliver, Macon County
Carvel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman County, Chair
Danny Blackmon, Georgetown-Quitman County
Doug Ethridge, Harris County
Eugene Cason, Dooly County
Jeff McCarter, Randolph County
Jim Reid, Sumter County
Jimmy Daniels, Oglethorpe
Joshua Deriso, Cordele
Larry Sparks, Talbot County
Leah Clark, Ellaville
Lee Kinnamon, Americus
Maggie McGruther, Sumter County
Shane Grier, Marion County
Tameka Harris, Taylor County, Secretary
Xavier McCaskey, Columbus

Others Present

Amanda Hatton, Blue Cypress Consulting
Anthony Couch, Talbot County
Charles Auer, Fort Moore
Chole Landreth, New Horizons
Christopher Drake, Congressman Bishop's Office
Christy Bozeman, GA. DEcD
David McCoy, McNair, McLemore, Middlebrooks & Co., LLC
Don Morgan
Mandy White, Randolph Co. Dev. Authority
Mary Stevens, Talbot Co. Chamber of Commerce
Matthew Wilson, GDOT
Natalie Bradley, Flint Energies
Natalie Crawford, BRIDGE Georgia
Nicole Acree, Taylor Co. Development Authority
Rebecca White, DCA
Terry Stringfellow, Fort Moore
Tom Horn, Columbus Water Works

RVRC Staff

Jim Livingston, Executive Director
Tracie Hadaway, Director of Planning and Govt. Services
Katie Howard, Director of Area Agency on Aging
Addis Bugg, Administration
Debbie Zwaga, Administration
Allision Slocum, Planning
Destinee Williams, Planning
Mariyana Kostov, Planning
Michael Murray, Planning
Janice West, WIOA
Tammy Collins, Finance

WELCOME AND RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Dick Dowdy, RVRC Vice-Chairmen, brought the meeting to order and welcomed visitors. Melvin Crimes, Webster County, led the council in prayer, and Dick Dowdy led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF JUNE MINUTES*

The council reviewed the September 25, 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, Vice-Chairman Dowdy asked for a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was made by Charles Coffey, Chattahoochee County, and seconded by Darrell Holbrook, Webster County. The motion passed with no opposition.

RVRC AUDIT PRESENTATION

RVRC Auditor, David McCoy with McNair, McLemore, Middlebrooks & Co., LLC. Mr. McCoy presented the FY24 Audit Report, ending on June 30th, 2024, to the council. Mr. McCoy reported a clean audit with an unmodified opinion from the audit firm. The RVRC has received the Certificate of Excellence for the past 10 years and it is anticipated that the RVRC will meet the qualification to earn the certificate for FY24. A full review of the audit was conducted by the Executive Committee, and the audit was presented to the council with their recommendation for approval. Vice-Chairman Dick Dowdy asked for a motion to approve the Audit Review. The motion was made by Albert King, City of Vienna, and seconded by Melvin Crimes, Webster County.

REGION ECONOMIC IMPACT DATA

Natalie Crawford, BRIDGE Georgia, presented the County-Level Economic Impact Data to the council. Georgia remains one of ten states yet to expand Medicaid coverage, and 1.3 million Georgians are uninsured. Of those 1.3 million, 300,000 Georgians are impacted by the coverage gap. Individuals in the gap, including farmers, veterans, part-time workers, etc., cannot afford private health insurance yet earn just above the threshold to qualify for Medicaid. The federal government pays 90% of the costs for covering the Medicaid expansion population, with the state covering the remaining 10%. This will not only increase access to healthcare, but it will also generate other savings-from child welfare to law enforcement. Closing the gap will also spur more than 51,000 new jobs statewide, increase household income by $900 per household, increase economic output by $9.4 billion, and result in 10% savings in premiums. Medicaid expansion will substantially grow Georgia's diverse economy and improve access to healthcare.

RVRC TRANSIT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Amanda Hatton, Blue Cypress Consulting, and Matthew Wilson, Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), gave an update 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. The Regional TDP identifies transit needs and should inform future transit system investments and establish a regional transit vision and goals. The plan looks at a 20-year horizon, and it will be updated every five years. The development of the TDP is a 16-month process that involves gathering stakeholder and public input. The Regional TDP Plan has 3 main components including the executive summary, the existing conditions report, and the alternatives analysis and recommendations. Through the development of the plan, 3 strategy buckets are recommendations, transit expansion, transit enhancements, and administrative tools and guidance. Transit expansion includes identifying mobility gaps, additional vehicles, etc. Transit enhancement involves encouraging expanded hours of

service, increasing safety and ease of use, efficiency, and more. The next steps include an online public review period from December 11 to January 21, and the Regional Transit Development Plan review and adoption.

RESOLUTION TO SUBMIT COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRAGETY (CEDS) ANNUAL UPDATE*

Destinee Williams addressed the Council and informed them that the RVRC will be submitting the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2024 annual update to the EDA. The CEDS annual update was reviewed and approved by the CEDS committee. Vice-Chairman Dowdy asked for a motion to approve the authorizing resolution for the annual update. The motion was made by Darrell Holbrook, Webster County, and seconded by Melvin Crimes, Webster County. The motion passed with no opposition.

STAFF REPORTS

Tracie Hadaway, Director of Planning and Government Services, reported that the region received $600,000 in funding for the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant. Funding will be used to develop the River Valley Regional Safety Action Plan, covering fifteen of the region's sixteen counties, including Chattahoochee, Clay, Crisp, Dooly, Harris, Macon, Marion, Quitman, Randolph, Schley, Stewart, Sumter, Talbot, Taylor, and Webster Counties. Staff are applying for EDA's FY25 Partnership Planning Grant, and a Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant pre-application was submitted to DNR on October 31st for the City of Buena Vista. Staff hosted the State Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA) on November 26th to discuss the Georgia Transportation Infrastructure Bank (GTIB) grant opportunity, a low-interest loan program to encourage safe and responsible transportation infrastructure for Georgia. The grant application is due on January 14th, 2025.

Katie Howard, AAA Director, reported that work has begun on the FY26 Area Plan for services for seniors in the River Valley Region. A survey to identify priority services has been distributed to gather information on the top needs among seniors in the region. Three public hearings have been scheduled in December. The Area Plan is due to the Division of Aging Service on March 1st, 2025.

Janice West, WIOA Director, reported that a total of 97 individuals were served for the enrollment period from July 1, through November 22. Spring Enrollment begins in January 2025. WIOA local area will host the annual state monitoring the week of January 27-30th, 2025. Staff will begin working on compiling and uploading request documents to the State office before the onsite visit. An additional $600,000 was awarded to the youth services program. The state unemployment rate for October 2024 was 4.1, equal to the region's unemployment rate of 4.1%.

Tammy Collins, Finance Officer

The August 2024 financial reports include a net increase in fund balance in the operating funds leaving an August 31st unassigned fund balance of $ 1,820,290. Cash on hand in the General Fund on August 31st was $ 1,011.596. The enterprise funds had an increase in net position of $ 3,233. Total net position in the loan funds is $ 2,057.222 with a cash on hand of $ 1.3 million available for lending.

ADJOURN*

As there was no further business, Vice-Chairman Dick Dowdy requested a motion for the meeting to be adjourned. A motion was made by Darrell Holbrook, Webster County, and seconded by Melvin Crimes, Webster County. The motion passed with no opposition. The meeting was adjourned.

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January 22, 2025 Carvel Lewis, Chairman

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Tameka Harris, Secretary