RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING
Buena Vista, GA
March 26, 2025,
10:30 A.M.
Meeting Minutes

Council Members (Counties Represented: 14)

Albert King, Vienna
Barry Whitley, Butler
Bobby Jenkins, Cuthbert
Carvel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman County, Chair
Charles Coffey, Chattahoochee County
Darrell Holbrook, Webster County
Dennis Thomas, Lumpkin
Doug Ethridge, Harris County
Jayson Griffin, Macon County
Joe Lee Williams, Stewart County
Ken Chapman, Talbot County
Kevin Brown, Buena Vista
Lee Kinnamon, Americus
Linda Barfield, Macon County
Melvin Crimes, Webster County
Randy Howard, Sumter County
Rob Grant, Harris County
Shane Grier, Marion County
Terrell Hudson, Dooly County
Toyia Tucker, Columbus
Xavier McCaskey, Columbus

Members Not Attending

David Kinsley, Georgetown-Quitman County
Eugene Cason, Dooly County
Jack Clark, Schley County
James Davenport, Clay County
Jeff McCarter, Randolph County
Jim Reid, Sumter County
Jimmy Daniels, Oglethorpe
Joshua Deriso, Cordele
J. R. Dowdy III, Crisp County
Jeffrey McCarter, Randolph County
Patrick Whearley, Hamilton
Richard McCorkle, Marion County
Rob Marion, Chattahoochee County
Shane Grier, Marion County
Shane Tondee, Ellaville
Skip Henderson, Columbus
Tim Biddle, Chattahoochee County
Tom Queen, Taylor County
Tony Lamar, Talbotton

Others Present

Allyson Drinnon, Congressman Bishop's Office
Anthony Couch, Tabolt Co. Commissioner
Carla Penny, Sumter EMC
Carol Ison, Talbot Co. Manager
Carolyn Parker, Talbot Co. Chamber
Charles Auer, Fort Benning
Chirsty Bozeman, GA DEcD
Chole Landreth, New Horizons
Clark Harrell, Crisp Co. Manager
Connie Harris, Marion Co. Manager
Eric McDonald, GA Power
Kenneth Parker, Talbot Co. Chamber
Logan Gann, Diverse Power
Mandy White, Randolph Co. Dev. Authority
Mary Stevens, Talbot Co. Chamber
Matt Laverne, Randolph Co. Manager
Mickey Dunnavant, Crisp Co.
Natalie Bradley, Flint Energies
Niki Cadenhead, Diverse Power
Rebecca White, DCA
Rhett Wade, Hamilton City Manager
Tom Horn, Columbus Water Works
Tonya Jones, Sumter EMC
Tracie Lord, Flint Energies

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
Blaine Hoskins, Planning
Destinee Williams, Planning
Mariyana Kostov, Planning
Michael Murray, Planning
Janice West, WIOA
Tammy Collins, Finance

WELCOME AND RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Terrell Hudson, Dooly County, brought the meeting to order and welcomed visitors. Tamekia Harris, Secretary, led the council in prayer, and in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY MINUTES*

The council reviewed the February 26, 2025, 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, Carvel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman County, asked for a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was made by Toyia Tucker, Columbus, and seconded by Darrell Holbrook, Webster County. The motion passed with no opposition.

EMCs in the RIVER VALLEY

Three staff for regional Electrical Municipal Cooperatives (EMC) spoke about the work they do in the River Valey. Natalie Bradley, Community Relationship Specialist Electrical Municipal Cooperatives (EMC) with Flint Energies, Tonya Jones, Community Relations Manager with Sumter EMC, and Niki Cadenhead, with Diverse Power presented. EMCs provided an in-depth overview of the cooperative's ongoing commitment to fostering community leadership and development. The EMCs highlighted their diverse range of services, including offering research assistance and providing conceptual site planning to assist with community growth and planning efforts. A key focus of their presentation was the Operation Roundup program which facilitates grant awards to support local projects and initiatives. The EMCs also shared their dedication to enhancing education through scholarship programs and youth initiatives, ensuring that local students have the resources and opportunities to thrive. Additionally, they emphasized their ongoing efforts to strengthen rural communities by providing grants and expanding broadband access, ensuring that every community has the opportunity the benefit from the high-speed internet. Niki Cadenhead then provided discussion on the Kudzu Network, explaining its benefits to the community and its role in improving connectivity.

REGIONAL PLAN ANNUAL WORK PROGRAM*

Allison Slocum, Assistant Planning Director, reported that staff have completed the Regional Plan Annual Work Program for FY 2025. In accordance with state planning requirements, the River Valley Regional Commission prepares and implements a regional plan with the most recent ten-year document having been adopted in 2023. The next scheduled update of the regional plan will be in 2027. In each of the intervening years, staff prepare an annual report consisting of a report on accomplishments and a report on local government performance. The draft Annual Report for FY 2025 was emailed to all council members and was included in the council packets available on each table. The Chairman had asked for a motion to approve the Regional Plan Annual Work Program. The motion was made by Charles Coffey, Chattahoochee County and seconded by Darrell Holbrook, Webster County. The motion passed.

FY 2025 BUDGET AMENDMENT*

Tammy Collins, RVRC Financial Officer, shared a proposed budget amendment for FY2025 that more accurately identifies our revenue and expenses for the year. The General Fund has an increase of $46,000 in revenue and a decrease of expenses of $18,000. The Enterprise Funds have an increase in revenue of $16,000 and an increase in expenses of $1,500 for an overall change in fund balance of $87,981. Chairman had asked for a motion to approve the FY 2025 Budget Audit. The motion was made by Randy Howard, Sumter County and seconded by Albert King, Vienna. The motion passed.

STAFF REPORTS

Tammy Collins, RVRC Financial Officer, gave the council the January Financial Report. The January 2025 financial report includes a net increase of $68,300 in fund balance in the general fund leaving a January 31st unassigned fund balance of $1,157,816. Cash on hand in the general Fund on January 31st was $731,111. The proprietary funds had an increase in net position of $4,021. Total net position in the loan funds is $2,082.000 with a cash on hand of $1.4 million available for lending.

Tracie Hadaway, Director of Planning and Government Services, reported that the public outreach meetings for the Comprehensive Plans and the Hazard Mitigation Plans were very successful and the RVRC staff would be facilitating one in Marion County on March 27th. Ms. Hadaway stated that 6 CDBG applications would be submitted on April 4th. The RVRC did receive notice that the GEFA Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grants were proceeding. Ms. Hadaway mentioned that staff was providing Zoning and Historic Board Review to 7 jurisdictions. She also mentioned that the GIS Manager was assisting Harris County with creating a address list for the Rapid SOS platform.

Katie Howard, AAA Director, reported that work is nearly finished on the FY26 Area Plan for services for seniors in the River Valley Region. The Area Plan is due to the Division of Aging Services on March 1, 2025. In January, the ADRC received 254 referrals from agencies requesting services and information for seniors and people with disabilities. This is a 14% increase from the previous year. The Caregiver Timeout program currently has no waiting list. A Matter of Balance class is scheduled in Quitman County at the Public Library, while two Chronic Disease Self-Management Classes are being held at the Taylor County Senior Center. A Chronic Disease Self-Management Class (CDSMP) started on February 3, 2025, in Columbus, GA. Tai Chi classes will resume in July.

Janice West, WIOA Director, reported that a total of 105 individuals were served for the enrollment period from July 1, 2024, through March 15, 2025. Unemployment Rate for Georgia for January 2025 was 3.6%. The regional Unemployment Rate was 4.7%. WIOA staff are in the planning phase for the upcoming program year 2025-2026. One Stop Partner's meeting will be held on March 27, 2025, at the RVRC Americus office location.

ADJOURN*

As there was no further business, Chairman Carvel Lewis requested a motion for the meeting to be adjourned. A motion was made by Charles Coffey, Cusseta-Chattahoochee County, and seconded by Darrell Holbrook, Webster County. The motion passed with no opposition. The meeting was adjourned.

March 26, 2025.

Carvel Lewis, Chairman

Tameka Harris, Secretary