RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING
Buena Vista, GA
August 27, 2025
10:30 A.M.
Meeting Minutes

Council Members (Counties Represented: 16)

Albert King, Vienna
Bobby Jenkins, Cuthbert
Carvel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman County,
Chair Charles Coffey, Chattahoochee County
Darrell Holbrook, Webster County
David Kinsey, Georgetown-Quitman County
Dennis Thomas, Lumpkin
Doug Ethridge, Harris County
Eugene Cason, Dooly County
J. R. Dowdy III, Crisp County, Vice Chair
James Davenport, Clay County
Jayson Griffin, Macon County
Joe Lee Williams, Stewart County
Kenneth Sumpter, Ft. Gaines
Kevin Brown, City of Buena Vista
Linda Barfield, Macon County
Melvin Crimes, Webster County
Randy Howard, Sumter County
Rob Grant, Harris County
Rob Marion, Chattahoochee County
Skip Henderson, Columbus
Tameka Harris, Taylor County, Secretary
Terrell Hudson, Dooly County
Timothy Biddle, Chattahoochee County
Tom Queen, Taylor County
Tony Lamar, Talbotton
Xavier McCaskey, Columbus

Members Not Attending

Barry Whitley, Butler
Jack Clark, Schley County
Jeffrey McCarter, Randolph County
Jim Reid, Sumter County
Jimmy Daniels, Oglethorpe
Joshua Deriso, Cordele
Ken Chapman, Talbot County
Lee Kinnamon, Americus
Maggie McGruther, Sumter County
Patrick Whearley, Hamilton
Richard McCorkle, Marion County
Shane Grier, Marion County
Shane Tondee, Ellaville
Toyia Tucker, Columbus

Others Present

Alyse Wolf, Senator Ossoff Office
Dr. Barry Poyner, PORCH Project
Chirsty Bozeman, GA DEcD
Clark Harrell, Harris Co. Manager
Celine Benoit, Atlanta Regional Commission
Connie Harris, Marion Co. Manager
Gail Hubbard, Town of Bluffton
Greg Panzer, Harris Co. Dev. Authority
Lee Hubbard, Town of Bluffton
Mandy White, Randolph Co. Dev. Authority
Marcha Toussaint, City of Cordele
Mary Stevens, Talbot Co. Chamber
Mike Dunnavant, Crisp County Manager
Natalie Bradley, Flint EMC
Nicole Acree, Taylor Dev. Authority
Rebecca White, DCA
Rhett Wade, Hamilton Manager
Scotty Mashburn, Dooly County Eco. Dev.
Sissy McLaughin, Reynolds City Clerk
Susan Andrews, Harris County Commissioner
Vicki Wainwright, Butler City Clerk
Will Johnson, City of Columbus

RVRC Staff

Jim Livingston, Executive Director
Katie Howard, Director of Area Agency on Aging
Tracie Hadaway, Director of Planning and Govt. Services
Addis Bugg, Administration
Destinee Williams, Regional Planner
Grant Richardson, Assist. Director of Community Dev.
Laura Schneider, Regional Planner
Mariyana Kostov, GIS Specialist
Michael Murray, Mobility Manager
Janice West, Director of WIOA

Welcome and Recognition of Visitors

Carvel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman County, brought the meeting to order, welcomed visitors, and led the council in prayer and in the Pledge of Allegiance.

AMENDMENT OF THE AGENDA*

Chairman Carvel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman County, asked for a motion to amend the agenda for August 27, 2025, to include a resolution to approve for federal funding. The motion was made by Rob Grant, Harris County, and seconded by Charles Coffee, Chattahoochee County. The motion passed with no opposition.

APPROVAL OF JUNE MINUTES*

The council reviewed the June 25, 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 Albert King, City of Vienna, and seconded by Melvin Crimes, Webster County. The motion passed with no opposition.

PORCH Project Overview

Jim Livingston, RVRC Executive Director, introduced Dr. Barry Poyner, Project Coordinator. Dr. Poyner spoke about how the PORCH Project which provides NARCAN educational training and distribution to all local responders and community partners.

Overview of Data Centers

Laura Schneider, RVRC Regional Planner, introduced Celine Benoit, Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) Principal Planner to provide an update on her research with Data Centers. The presentation highlighted co-location and hyperscalers facilities, data centers growth in the state and region, energy, cooling and water use in data centers, and considerations for local communities on land use, economic impacts, infrastructure needs, and critical issues. The presentation was shared with attendees via email after the meeting.

RVRC Nominating Committee*

Terrell Hudson, Dooly County, gave the council a report of the RVRC Nominating Committee. The committee consisted of Terrell Hudson, Randy Howard and Carvel Lewis. The committee recommended keeping the slate of officers for the RVRC of Carvel Lewis, Chair; Dick Dowdy, Vice Chair; Tameka Harris, Secretary. This report came to the council in the form of a motion. Charles Coffee, Chattahoochee County, second the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE GA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION GRANT 5304*

Michael Murry, Regional Planner, addressed the council and informed them that the River Valley Regional Commission (RVRC) is requesting approval for the application with the GA Department of Transportation (GDOT) for 5304 transit funds. Carvel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman County, asked for a motion to approve the resolution. The motion was made by Kevin Brown, City of Bunea Vista, and seconded by Albert King, City of Vienna. The motion passed with no opposition.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE GA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION GRANT 5311*

Michael Murry, Regional Planner, addressed the council and informed them that the River Valley Regional Commission (RVRC) is requesting approval of the application with the GA Department of Transportation (GDOT) for 5311 transit funds. Carvel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman County, asked for a motion to approve the resolution. The motion was made by Melvin Crimes, Webster County, and seconded by Kevin Brown, City of Bunea Vista. The motion passed with no opposition.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE US DOT RURAL AND TRIBAL GRANT*

Tracie Hadaway, Director of Planning Government Services, addressed the council and informed them that the River Valley Regional Commission (RVRC) is requesting to approve an application for funds from the Rural and Tribal Assistant Program. Carvel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman County, asked for a motion to approve the resolution. The motion was made by Darrell Holbrook, Webster County, and seconded by Kenneth Sumpter, City of Fort Gaines. The motion passed with no opposition.

STAFF REPORTS

Tracie Hadaway, Planning and Government Services Director, reported that staff is completing two comprehensive plans and are beginning work on three plans. Staff is also working diligently on several Hazard Mitigation Plans. She stated that the RVRC assisted with CHIP project awards and two CDBG awards.

Katie Howard, AAA Director, reported on the Senior Farmers' Market which has already served thousands of seniors in the region. There are 21 Evidence Based programs being taught throughout the region which will be completed by September 30. The ADRC continues to receive over 200 referrals a month. She reviewed the wait list and encouraged people to call about services.

Janice West, WIOA Director, WIOA enrollments for PY 2025 totals 46 individuals thus far in various WIOA funded training services. Georgia unemployment rate for June 2025 was 3.7%. Regional unemployment rate for June 2025 was 4.4%. Several businesses in the eastern counties of the region are experiencing employee lay-offs. Fresh Realm will be Permanently closing and laying off approximately 78 employees in mid-October. Golden Foundry in Cordele laid off 35 employees on August 11th. WIOA had its annual state office PY 2024 monitoring the week of August 18-22, 2025. No findings were reported from the monitoring. Taylor County will be hosting a job fair on August 28th from 2 – 6 p.m. at the Taylor Workforce Development center in Butler.

ADJOURN*

As there was no further business, Chairman Carvel Lewis requested a motion for the meeting to be adjourned. A motion was made by Darrell Holbrock, Webster County, and seconded by Albert King, City of Vienna. The motion passed with no opposition. The meeting was adjourned.

August 27, 2025.

Carvel Lewis, Chairman

Tameka Harris, Secretary