RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING
Marion County Commission Office
November 20, 2019
10:30 A.M.
Minutes

Members Attending
(Representing 16 Counties)
A.J. Rivers, Crisp County
Barry Whitley, City of Butler
Bruce Hill, City of Oglethorpe, RVRC Secretary
Carlton Wilson, City of Ellaville
Chip Jones, Stewart County
Damon Hoyte, Cusseta-Chattahoochee County
Danny Blackmon, Quitman County
Dr. Edward Lee, Cusseta-Chattahoochee County
Ernest Jenkins, Clay County
Harry Lange, Harris County
James R. “Bump” Welch, Marion County
Jayson Griffin, Macon County
Jeannie Bartee, City of Cordele
Jerry “Pops” Barnes, Muscogee County, RVRC Vice Chairman
Joe Lee Williams, Stewart County
Melvin Crimes, Webster County
Mickey George, Macon County
Pam Jordan, Talbot County
Randall Howard, Sumter County, RVRC Chairman
Skip Henderson, Muscogee County
Tameka Harris, Taylor County
Terrell Hudson, Dooly County
Wally Summers, Sumter County

Members Not Attending
Barry Waters, City of Ft. Gaines
Clay Jones, Sumter County
Carvel Lewis, Quitman County
Doug Etheridge, Harris County
Dr. Carole Rutland, Muscogee County
Freeman Montgomery, Talbot County
Greg Barineau, Schley County
Hobby Stripling, City of Vienna
James Morton, Cusseta-Chattahoochee County
Jimmy Babb, City of Lumpkin
Jimmy Bradley, Randolph County
Knox Blackmar, City of Talbotton
Maggie McGruther, Sumter County
Matt Gunnels, Marion County
Nelson Brown, City of Americus
Ralph Brown, City of Buena Vista
Rebecca Chambers, City of Hamilton
Richard McCorkle, Marion County
Sam Farrow, Jr., Crisp County
Steve Whatley, City of Cuthbert
Tom Queen, Taylor County
Tony Kennedy, Webster County

Others Present
David McCoy, Clifton, Lipton, Hardison & Parker, LLC
Deron Davis, Georgia Nature Conservancy
Saralyn Stafford, University of Georgia
Amy Varnum, Georgia Department of Labor
William Eastin, Georgia Dept. of Transportation
Ann Holloway, City of Lumpkin
Charles Radeliffee, Chattahoochee County
Debbie Stone, Stewart County
Janet Joiner, City of Vienna
Janice Jarvis, Sumter County, Fiscal Administrator
John Brent, Harris County

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WELCOME AND RECOGNITION OF VISITORS
RVRC Chairman Randy Howard, Sumter County, brought the regular meeting of the River Valley Regional Council to order at 10:30 a.m. He welcomed council members and visitors. RVRC Vice-chairman Jerry “Pops” Barnes, Muscogee County, gave the invocation and RVRC Secretary Bruce Hill, City of Oglethorpe, led the council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES*
Council reviewed the minutes of the October 23, 2019 council meeting, which were either mailed or emailed to council members the previous week for their review. The minutes were also available in the council packet at the meeting.

There being no changes or additions Chairman Randy Howard requested a motion to approve the October 23, 2019 council minutes. Harry Lange, Harris County, made a motion to adopt the minutes as presented; Melvin Crimes, Webster County, seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

FY2019 COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL FINANCE AUDITORS REPORT
David McCoy, CPA, from the auditing firm of Clifton, Lipford, Hardison & Parker, LLC attended the meeting to review the FY2019 (year ending June 30, 2019) Comprehensive Annual Financial Report compiled by the River Valley Regional Commission finance staff and independently audited by their firm. The RVRC received an unmodified opinion by the auditing firm. Mr. McCoy explained that this is the highest opinion possible.

Chairman Randy Howard then asked for a motion to accept the FY2019 Independent Audit Report. Harry Lange, Harris County, made a motion to accept the FY2019 Independent Audit Report; Melvin Crimes, Webster County, seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

Chairman Randy Howard notified the council that the audit report is on the RVRC website for further review. For any questions, please contact Emily Chambers, Finance Officer, at 706-256-2910.

GEORGIA NATURE CONSERVANCY “CAN LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION STIMULATE THE LOCAL ECONOMY?”
Deron Davis, Executive Director of the Georgia Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, shared how land and water conservation can help drive Georgia’s economy. Currently, the Nature Conservancy is protecting 45,000 acres of land in Georgia, much of it being in the RVRC region. This protects natural areas such as forests, streams, and wildlife habitats.

By protecting these natural areas it promotes tourism through outdoor recreation and education. Last year in Georgia nature based tourism provided over 238,000 jobs across the state, paid $8 billion in wages for workers, and supported more than $27 billion in consumer spending. That provided nearly $1.8 billion in state and local tax revenue. The

*Approved by the council on October 23, 2019.
Nature Conservancy is currently working for Talbot and Marion Counties in association with the Fort Benning Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) on a Longleaf Pine habitat restoration.

The Nature Conservancy is looking to continue their work in the River Valley region through partnerships to support and promote these nature based tourist and increase the tax base and revenue in the local governments that the Nature Conservancy works. This is a developing partnership with RVRC and UGA Carl Vinson Institute.

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA CARL VINVSON INSTITUTE
Saralyn Stafford, University of Georgia, explained that she serves as a liaison between University of Georgia (UGA) Public Service and Outreach units including the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, the J. W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development, the Small Business Development Center and Archway Partnership to assist with community and regional challenges. Ms. Stafford is also a liaison between UGA and local elected officials, chambers of commerce, economic development professionals, school boards, nonprofit organizations, small business owners and other community leaders.

Ms. Stafford said many training opportunities are offered at the UGA Carl Vinson Institute. Over 88,000 local officials were trained last year through these programs by partnering with the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA), Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG), Georgia Economic Developers Association (GEDA), Georgia County Clerks Association (GCCA) and others.

TRANSIT PLAN APPLICATION RESOLUTION
Executive Director Jim Livingston presented and requested council authorization to file an application with the Georgia Department of Transportation to aid in the financing of technical planning activities to implement specific items of the FY2021 Section 5304 grant application.

Chairman Randy Howard requested a motion for council approval of the application resolution to file an application with the Georgia Department of Transportation for Section 5304 funding. Harry Lange, Harris County, made a motion to approve the resolution; Melvin Crimes, Webster County, seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

Jim Livingston also presented and requested council authorization to file an application with the Georgia Department of Transportation for public transportation funding assistance under the Federal Transit Act, Section 5311. These funds help to coordinate vehicles to multiple programs, coordinate across boundaries, and provide cost analysis to different systems.

Chairman Randy Howard requested a motion for council approval of the application resolution to file an application with the Georgia Department of Transportation for FY2021, Section 5311, funding. Harry Lange, Harris County, made a motion to approve the resolution; Tameka Harris, Taylor County, seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

STAFF REPORTS
Emily Chambers, Finance Officer, expanded on the auditor’s report from earlier saying the RVRC FY2019 CAFR showed an increase in government-wide net position of $49,340. Of that amount, the governmental activities increased by $17,809 and the business-type activities increased by $31,531. The total net position of the RC at June 30, 2019 was $3,010,349, of which about $1.25 million was unrestricted.

For FY2020, through September 30th, operating expenses exceeded revenues by $23,000. Even though expenses were about 3% below the budgeted amount for the first quarter, revenues were about 7% below budget. Management expects the revenues to catch up over the next few months to get us out of a deficit position. Loan funds had an

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increase in net position of about $4,600 for the first quarter, and the Area Development Corporation had an increase of $1,700.

AAA Director Katie Howard reported that Request for Proposals for all AAA services was issued November 1st. The proposal deadline is December 19th. Public hearings will be held December 2nd in Buena Vista and December 6th in Hamilton to discuss services that are available through the Area Agency on Aging. Katie announced that “Senior Day at the Capitol” will be held on February 12th and 13th this year. She said it is always well attended but this year each AAA is required to make reservations for the number of people that are going to the capitol. Please contact her if you plan to attend.

Assistant Executive Director Sarah Walls announced that the CEDS committee met before the council meeting. The main focus of the meeting was to gather a list of cultural events in the region. Sarah said a list has been compiled for the western counties and the committee is now working to complete a list for the eastern counties. She requested that anyone having knowledge of any events to contact her. A list of festivals in the region is posted on the RVRC website.

Sarah said the CEDS committee is continuing to work on rural broadband issues and said state and government entities are continuing to work on these issues also.

WIOA Director Janice West stated that staff has been using Rapid Response Services to assist approximately 41 workers that have been laid-off at Norboard, located in Cordele, due to the company operating on a reduced schedule.

Janice announced that a former and a current WIOA participant is being featured in television segments called “Great Georgia Jobs”. Victoria Herron completed the aviation program at South Georgia Technical College (SGTC) and is now the Chairperson and Aviation Instructor at the college. Joshua Smallwood is also featured and is currently in the aviation program at SGTC.

Planning Director Rick Morris announced that Comprehensive Plans for Webster and Quitman Counties have been approved by the Department of Community Affairs and adopted by each county. He said staff continues to update zoning ordinances and Quitman and Talbot Counties have received applications for expanding existing communication facilities and constructing new facilities.

Executive Director Jim Livingston presented the staff report for Community Development. He reported staff is working on 16 active Community Development Block Grants and 2 Immediate Threat and Danger grants. Two grants are in the acquisition phase, 2 have been awarded, 6 are in the start-up and design phase, and 2 are close to completion.

ADJOURN
Harry Lange, Harris County, made a motion to adjourn; Melvin Crimes, Webster County, seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

January 22, 2020
Date

Randy Howard, Chairman

Bruce Hill, Secretary

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