RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING
Marion County Commission Office
September 25, 2019 - 10:30 A.M.
Minutes

Members Attending
(Representing 12 Counties)
Bruce Hill, City of Oglethorpe, RVRC Secretary
Clay Jones, Sumter County
Damon Hoyte, Cusseta-Chattahoochee County
Danny Blackmon, Georgetown-Quitman County
Dr. Edward Lee, Cusseta-Chattahoochee County
Ernest Jenkins, Clay County
Harry Lange, Harris County
Hobby Stripling, City of Vienna
James Morton, Cusseta-Chattahoochee County

Jayson Griffin, Macon County
Jerry “Pops” Barnes, Muscogee Co., RVRC Vice Chairman
Knox Blackmar, City of Talbotton
Matt Gunnels, Marion County
Melvin Crimes, Webster County
Mickey George, Macon County
Randy Howard, Sumter County, RVRC Chairman
Tamika Harris, Taylor County
Terrell Hudson, Dooly County
Tom Queen, Taylor County
Wally Summers, Sumter County

Members Not Present
A.J. Rivers, Crisp County
Barry Waters, City of Ft. Gaines
Barry Whitley, City of Butler
Carlton Wilson, City of Ellaville
Cavel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman County
Chip Jones, Stewart County
Clinton Perry, Jr., Taylor County
Doug Etheredge, Harris County
Dr. Carole Rutland, Muscogee County
Evelyn Turner Pugh, Muscogee County
Freeman Montgomery, Talbot County
Greg Barineau, Schley County
James R. “Bump” Welch, Marion County

Jeanie Bartee, City of Cordele
Jimmy Babb, City of Lumpkin
Jimmy Bradley, Randolph County
Joe Lee Williams, Stewart County
Maggie McGruther, Sumter County
Nelson Brown, City of Americus
Pam Jordan, Talbot County
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
Tony Kennedy, Webster County

Others Present
Bill Twomey, Government Relations Manager, ACCG
Elizabeth Bradley Turner, Research and Outreach Manager,
Georgia Family Connections
Rebecca Rice, Georgia KIDS COUNT Manager,
Georgia Family Connections
Amy Varnum, Georgia Department of Labor
Laura Gower, Field Rep. for Senator Johnny Isakson
Kathy Burns, Field Rep. for Senator Perdue

Sarah Lee Crumbs, Quitman County Family Connections
Shonda Blair, Taylor County Chamber of Commerce
Paul Farr, South Georgia Technical College
Chris Kelley, Field Rep. for Congressman Bishop
Tammye Jones, Field Rep. for Congressman Bishop
Debbie Stone, City of Lumpkin
Janet Joiner, Vienna, Community Development Director
Janice Jarvis, Sumter County, Fiscal Administrator

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

MINUTES*
Council reviewed the minutes of the August 28, 2019 council meeting which were either mailed or emailed to council members the previous week. The minutes were also available in the council packet at the meeting.

Randy Howard, Chair, requested a motion to approve the August 28, 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.

ACCG LEGISLATIVE POLICY UPDATE
Bill Twomey, ACCG Government Relations Manager, presented legislative policy updates to the council. He stated ACCG would be holding the District 8 Fall Meeting in Buena Vista, on November 13, at Fox Hall and encouraged everyone to attend.

Mr. Twomey gave a general overview of legislation that is proposed and would be on the table for a vote the following week, and changes that ACCG feels need to be considered. Some of those items were:

- Surface Mining Exemptions - The Forest Land Protection Act (FLPA) would provide that short-term mineral surface mining would not be a breach of covenant on properties that are under the FLPA covenant, provided that the property is returned to its pre-mining condition within three years.
- Tax Payer Bill of Rights – Millage rate to be amended.
- SPLOST – A special exception of permissible projects that is not currently allowable.
- Occupational Taxes - Certain professions that are charged a very low tax.
- Expanding Rural Broadband - Access to communities across Georgia, in places which have, historically, had difficulties establishing reliable services.
- Short-term Rentals - Owners of short-term rentals are not reporting proceeds and paying the appropriate taxes. Georgia is on the honor system to report rental property and pay taxes on short-term rentals.
- New voting machines - Have been delivered to the governor’s office which will give a more accurate vote count.

Mr. Twomey requested that council members get to know their legislators and have a relationship with them. He explained that when legislators know you and you bring concerns to them they will be able to better relate to the problem. He also asked that, “when ACCG request your help, please honor the request because your voice matters”.

Chattahoochee | Clay | Crisp | Dooly | Harris | Macon | Marion | Muscogee
Quitman | Randolph | Schley | Stewart | Sumter | Talbot | Taylor | Webster
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FAMILY CONNECTIONS CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

Sarah Lee Crumbs, Coordinator at Quitman County Family Connections, introduced Ms. Elizabeth Bradley Turner, Research and Outreach Manager, and Ms. Rebecca Rice, Georgia KIDS COUNT Manager, both from Georgia Family Connections office located in Atlanta. She said there is a Family Connection office in all Georgia counties. They then gave a presentation and provided the Georgia Civic Health Index Report booklets to everyone which explains the Georgia Civic Health Index. Ms. Turner said that civic health is “the strength within a community to work together to tackle collective problems”.

Ms. Turner said that civic health includes a wide range of civic engagement indicators. This report focused on three main areas of civic health: social connectedness, community involvement, and political action. Georgia ranked very poorly and showed a decline in many areas.

Georgia’s Civic Health Rankings
- Voting in local elections dropped from 29th to 40th in the nation
- Contacting a public official dropped from 34th to 49th in the nation
- Group membership or participation dropped from 28th to 49th in the nation
- Frequently volunteering dropped from 34th to 44th in the nation
- Donations to charitable or religious organizations (more than $25) dropped from 40th to 47th in the nation

Child and family well-being in Georgia ranks 48th in the nation and 50th, or last, in the categories of “frequently spending time with family or friends” and “frequently talking with or spend time with neighbors”. Ms. Turner said, “Georgia’s success depends on its citizens connecting to each other and getting involved in their communities and the political process”.

Ms. Rebecca Rice, Georgia KIDS COUNT Manager at Georgia Family Connections, updated the council on the “Georgia KIDS COUNT” report. She explained that a survey is taken each year that compares states on four measures related to children’s welfare.

Georgia KIDS COUNT Report National Rankings
- Child well-being: 38th in the nation
- Economic well-being: 40th in the nation
- Family and community: 38th in the nation
- Education: 34th in the nation
- Health: 40th in the nation

Ms. Turner also updated the council concerning the Census, noting that beginning in 1790 the U.S. Constitution required that a Census Complete Count be taken every 10 years. The most undercounted population is children ages 0-5 years, children living in poverty, children living in dense neighborhoods, children living in high rental areas and children living in rural areas. Georgia has the 5th highest undercounted child population in the nation. Each person that is not counted, including children, is a loss of $23,000.

STAFF REPORTS
Kia Barrow, ADRC Program Manager, reported for Area Agency on Aging Director Katie Howard. She said the Governor’s request to cut 4% of state funding has resulted in budget cuts at the Department of Community Health and Division of Aging Services. Kia explained that there would not be any staff cuts but would be absorbed through other line items and some decreases in funding to some providers.
Sarah Walls, Assistant Executive Director, stated that Jim Livingston, Executive Director, was in South Carolina with the Columbus Chamber of Commerce. She explained that the CEDS committee met before the council meeting and the main topic was Broadband internet service. The committee will be selecting a new subject matter to focus on at the next meeting in November. The committee has a list of fall festivals in the 16-county area and requested that any not listed be emailed to her at swalls@rivervalleyrc.org.

Sarah noted that no loans have been made through the Revolving Loan Fund during the past 2 years. She encouraged the council members to have anyone they may know of interested in expanding or creating a new business to contact her at 706-256-2910 or email her.

Janice West, WIOA Director, reported that 109 people have been enrolled in various WIOA training activities from July 1, 2019 –September 13, 2019.

The WIOA program was monitored in August by the State office monitoring teams. One finding will require a corrective action be submitted to the State office. She said that staff has completed the corrective action to resolve the finding.

Janice announced that due to bankruptcy, 300 Fred’s retail stores will be closing; 50 of which are located in Georgia. She explained that staff will be providing rapid response services to laid-off employees in the area.

Gerald Mixon, Planning Director, said staff is continuing to work with several communities on comprehensive plans with Webster and Quitman Counties Draft Comprehensive Plans being currently under regional and state review. Plan implementation activities are underway for Harris County and the City of Hamilton. He said the City of Shiloh would be meeting later in September and Randolph County and the cities of Cuthbert and Shellman meeting in October. Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan Updates continue for Crisp, Dooly, Marion, Randolph, Stewart, Talbot, and Webster Counties.

Staff forwarded a contested address list from the Census Bureau to each jurisdiction and a list of suggested documentation needed to appeal if the community desires to do so. Appeals must be submitted no later than September 30.

The FY19 Brownfields Assessment Grant Coalition has been signed by all members of the coalition and is being sent to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for review. The Request for Proposals (RFP) process will begin this month to select an environmental engineer.

Gerald said that Best Management Practices (BMP) continue for the Patula Creek Watershed to include dirt road BMP installations, signage to address the illegal dumping of deer carcasses within the watershed, water quality monitoring and forestry BMP’s.

Staff reviewed 5 applications for Certificates of Appropriateness for the Columbus Board of Historic and Architectural Review.

Staff and Sumter Cycling are continuing to plan the upcoming Bike Rodeo event for Sumter County schools. Staff has completed the Reynolds Bike and Pedestrian Plan.

Grant Richardson, Community Development, announced Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) was awarded to the cities of Marshallville, Vienna, Plains and Reynolds for a total award in grant funds of $2.95 million.
Emily Chambers, Finance Officer, reported that staff is currently compiling the FY19 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. She said “unofficially” the RVRC will have a Government-wide increase in Net Position of $17,809 in Governmental Activities and an increase of $31,531 in business-type activities (primarily loan funds). The General Fund had an increase of $22,736 for a total Fund Balance of $706,970 at year-end. Of that Fund Balance $705,350 is unassigned, meaning the RVRC has a reserve of almost 12 months of General Fund Operating revenues. This is 9 months over the required 3 month reserve required. The auditors will report the final numbers at the November 2019 RVRC Council meeting but we do not expect significant changes.

For July FY20 there was an increase in the General Fund fund balance of $35,676 and an aggregate increase in the loan funds of approximately $3,000. Operating expenditures in the General and Internal Service Funds were on target for one month of expenditures.

Chair Randy Howard reminded everyone that the Georgia Association of Regional Commission’s Annual Meeting will be held at St. Simons Island, November 6-8, and encouraged everyone to attend.

**ADJOURN**

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

October 23, 2019

Date

Randy Howard, Chair

Bruce Hill, Secretary