RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

Josh Gibson Center
116 Rogers Street
Buena Vista, Georgia
May 23, 2018

Minutes

Members Attending/Representing
(Representing 14 Counties)
A.J. Rivers, Crisp County
Barry Waters, City of Ft. Gaines
Barry Whitely, City of Butler
Bruce Hill, City of Oglethorpe
Carvel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman Co.
Chip Jones, Stewart County
Danny Blackmon, Georgetown-Quitman
Dr. Carole Rutland, Muscogee County
Dr. Edward Lee, Cusseta-Chattahoochee
Evelyn Turner Pugh, Muscogee County
Freeman Montgomery, Talbot County
Harry Lange, Harris County
Hobby Stripling, City of Vienna
James Morton, Cusseta-Chattahoochee
Jayson Griffin, Macon County
Jerry “Pops” Barnes, Muscogee Co., RVRC Secretary
Knox Blackmar, City of Talbotton
Melvin Crimes, Webster County
Mickey George, Macon County
Nelson Brown, City of Americus
Pam Jordan, Talbot County
Randy Howard, Sumter County, RVRC Vice Chair
Richard McCorkle, Marion County
Sam Farrow, Jr., Crisp County
Terrell Hudson, Dooly County
Tom Queen, Taylor County
Tony Kennedy, Webster County

Wally Summers, Sumter County
Walt Rosso, Cusseta-Chattahoochee Co.

Members Not Present
Carlton Wilson, City of Ellaville
Clinton Perry, Jr. Taylor County, RVRC Chair
Cecil “Butch” McMickle, Marion Co.
Greg Barineau, Schley County
Doug Etheridge, Harris County
Fred Gordon, Muscogee County
James R. “Bump” Welch, Marion Co.
Jason Hoch, Schley County
Jeanie Bartee, City of Cordele
Jimmy Babb, City of Lumpkin
Jimmy Bradley, Randolph County
Joe Lee Williams, Stewart County
Lee Hubbard, Clay County
Maggie McGruther, Sumter County
Patricia Goodman, Randolph County
Ralph Brown, City of Buena Vista
Rebecca Chambers, City of Hamilton
Steve Whatley, City of Cuthbert
Tameka Harris, Taylor County

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Equal Opportunity Employer
Others Present
County and City Representatives
Commissioner Lynne Riley, GA Department of Revenue
Representative Debbie Buckner, Georgia, District 137
Representative Bill McGowan, Georgia, District 138
Representative Buddy Hardin, Georgia, District 148
Representative Gerald Greene, Georgia, District 151
Senator Freddie Powell Sims, Georgia, District 12
Senator Ed Harbison, Georgia, District 15
Field Representative Bret Smith (for US Congressman Drew Ferguson)
Field Representatives Laura Gower (for US Senator Johnny Isakson)
Field Representative Elaine Gillispie (US Congressman Sanford Bishop)
Director Kenneth Cutts (US Congressman Sanford Bishop)
Sarabyn Stafford, DCA
Casey Bean, DCA Representative, Region 8
River Valley RC Staff

Welcome and Recognition of Visitors
Randy Howard, Vice Chair, brought the meeting to order. He welcomed council members, distinguished guests and visitors. Jerry “Pops” Barnes, Secretary, led the council in prayer and Kenneth Cutts, representative for Congressman Sanford Bishop, led the council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Review and Approval of Minutes*
Council reviewed the minutes of the April 25, 2018 council meeting that was mailed or emailed to council members the previous week for their review.

There being no additions or changes, Vice Chair Randy Howard, requested a motion to approve the April 25, 2018 council minutes. Harry Lang, Harris County, made a motion to approve the minutes as presented; Carvel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman County, seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

Staff Recognition
Patti Cullen, Executive Director, recognized the finance department for receiving the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting. This was given by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) for the River Valley Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by the RVRC.

Several staff members, with five years or more of service in five year increments, were recognized for their years of service with the River Valley Regional Commission. They were Grace Grant, 40 years of service; Tammy Collins, 25 years of service; and Bill Weathers with 5 years of service.

Comments from the Department of Revenue
Commissioner Lynne Riley, GA Department of Revenue, updated the council on services that are available thru the Department of Revenue. She stated that over 50 bills were introduced this year-some were new-some were rewrites of bills. Ms. Riley said some of the taxes collected thru the Department of Revenue are

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income tax, sales tax, fuel, tobacco and motor vehicle taxes. She also presented information about income tax credits such as the Rural Hospital Credit Donations, Education Foundation Donations, Student Tax Credit, Railroad Track Maintenance Tax Credit, and Exemptions for Tech and Data Centers. She said her department also is working with cities and counties on local 911 services.

Legislator’s Remarks
Randy Howard, Vice Chair, introduced the following legislators and field representatives who updated the council and guests about legislative matters.

Representative Debbie Buckner, Georgia, District 137, updated the council stating the Broadband Bill did not fully pass due to technology changing so quickly and competition between competitors. She also explained that Marci’s Law was passed which will allow victim’s family members the opportunity to speak to defendants in court.

Representative Bill McGowan, Georgia, District 138, stated he did not run for re-election this year. He thanked the people of his district for all their support.

Representative Buddy Harden, Georgia, District 148, announced he would also be retiring this year and said that he had enjoyed his years of service to the citizens of Georgia. He also explained that the Distracted Driving Bill had passed and that it will no longer be legal to talk or text on the telephone while driving, unless it is hands-free.

Representative Gerald Green, Georgia, District 151, stated that he had the largest House district in the State covering nine (9) counties and that he is the seventh (7th) longest serving member in the House. He stated that the Education Act was fully funded. He presented Patti Cullen, Executive Director, with a Resolution of Recognition. This Resolution was adopted by the 2018 Georgia General Assembly to recognize the efforts of Patti to improve the quality of life for citizens in the River Valley Region during her over 35 years of work in community and economic development.

Senator Freddie Powell Sims, Georgia, District 12, distributed copies of information explaining tax incentives that has helped all Georgians since 2015. She also spoke about tax incentives to encourage businesses to locate in Georgia.

Senator Ed Harbison, Georgia, District 15, spoke about the Department of Corrections in the State of Georgia. He noted that a large problem in the prison system is the use of cell phones by prisoners that are smuggled into the prison by visitors. He also explained that employees in the Corrections Department have very dangerous jobs.

Field Representative Bret Smith (for US Congressman Drew Ferguson), stated that Congressman Ferguson had given recognition to 62 Viet Nam veterans during the month of May.

Field Representatives Laura Gower (for US Senator Johnny Isakson), explained that Senator Isakson is on the Veteran’s Affairs and the Senate Ethics Committees. She said their office handles one-third of all complaints in the nation for Veterans Affairs. His office also helps high school students get appointments to the various military academies. The Senator’s office can also help get passports issued in as little as one day, in cases of emergency. Their office is willing to help set-up tours if anyone is
going to D.C. and provide flags that have flown over the White House to charities among many other services they can help with.

Director Kenneth Cutts (for US Congressman Sanford Bishop), explained that Senator Bishop sent his best wishes and recognized all veterans that were present by requesting they stand and receive applause. Mr. Cutts explained that the Farm Bill will expire in September, 2018 and hopefully another bill will be put in place.

Vice Chair Randy Howard then asked Director Kenneth Cutts, representative for US Congressman Sanford Bishop, to give the blessing. Lunch was then served.

May 23, 2018
Date

Clinton Perry, Jr., Chair

Jerry “Pops” Barnes, Secretary