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RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

Buena Vista, GA

August 24, 2022

10:30 A.M.

Meeting Minutes

Council Members

(Counties Represented: 14)

Albert King, Vienna
Bill McClellan, Schley
Bobby Jenkins, Cuthbert
Bruce Hill, Oglethorpe
Carvel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman, RVRC
Secretary
Charles Coffey, Chattahoochee
Chip Jones, Stewart
Darrell Holbrook, Webster
Jayson Griffin, Macon
Joe Lee Williams, Stewart
Kenneth Sumpter, Fort Gaines
Kevin Brown, Buena Vista
Lee Kinnamon, Americus

Maggie McGruther, Sumter
Melvin Crimes, Webster
Pam Jordan, Talbot
Ransom Farley, Hamilton
Rebecca White, Randolph
Richard McCorkle, Marion
Rob Grant, Harris
Sher'Londa Walker, Talbot
Tameka Harris, Taylor, RVRC Vice-Chair
Terrell Hudson, Dooly
Tim Biddle, Chattahoochee
Tom Queen, Taylor
Tony Lamar, Talbotton
Wesley Williams, Randolph

Members Not Attending

Barry Whitley, Butler
Bryon Hickey, Columbus
Carl Oliver, Macon
Danny Blackmon, Georgetown-Quitman
Doug Ethridge, Harris
Eugene Cason, Dooly
Greg Dominy, Schley
James Davenport, Clay
James R. "Bump" Welch, Marion

Jerry "Pops" Barnes, Muscogee, RVRC Chair
Jimmy Babb, Lumpkin
Joshua Deriso, Cordele
Mark Waddell, Sumter
Matt Gunnels, Marion
Randy Howard, Sumter
Richard Dowdy, Crisp
Skip Henderson, Columbus

Others Present

Diadra Powell, City of Americus
Paul Farr, SGTC
Shonda Blair, Taylor County
Buddy Walker, Hamilton
Christy Bozeman, GA Dept. of Economic
Development
Laura Gower, Office of Drew Ferguson

Brenda Williams, Office of Senator Warnock
Rayetta Volley, Sumter County
Buddy Walker, Hamilton
Samantha Hedgecoke, Chattahoochee County
Doug Jamison, Schley County
Will Johnson, Marion County
Hunter Singleton, Clay County

Mac Moye, Stewart County
Bill Twomey, ACCG
Kelvin Lewis, Macon County
Jessica Simmons, Georgia Technology Authority

Greg Turton, Crisp County
Toyia Tucker, Columbus
Belva Dorsey, Enrichment Services

RVRC Staff Attending

Jim Livingston, Executive Director
Mariyana Kostov, GIS Manager
Katie Howard, AAA Director
Rick Morris, Planning Director
Janice West, WIOA Director

Camille Bielby, Regional Planner
John Morgan, Bike and Pedestrian Planner
Merri Spence, Executive Secretary
Brittney Harris, Regional Planner
Gerald Mixon, Planning Director

Welcome and Recognition of Visitors

Tameka Harris, Vice-Chair, brought the meeting to order. She welcomed visitors to the meeting. Carvel Lewis, Secretary, led the council in prayer and Tameka Harris led the council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF JUNE 22, 2022 MINUTES*

Council reviewed the June 22, 2022 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 Tameka Harris requested a motion to approve the June 22 2022 council minutes as presented. Melvin Crimes, Webster County, made the motion to approve the June 22, 2022 minutes as presented; Albert King, Vienna, seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

UPDATE FOR REGIONAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Belva Dorsey, CEO for Enrichment Services, explained they are a community action agency and was created to address the causes and conditions of poverty. Ms. Dorsey said Enrichment Services conducts a community assessment every 3 years to identify the needs in the community and to shape services and to insure they have partners to address these needs. Their vision is that every family is thriving and engaged in the community. Their mission is to empower families to thrive through quality education, services, and partnerships. Enrichment Services serves the 8 western counties in our region. West Central Georgia out of Montezuma serves the eastern counties in our region.

Maggie McGruther, Executive Director of Southwest GA Children's Alliance spoke of the many programs that benefit children and victims of domestic violence. The Southwest Georgia Court Appointed Special Advocates SOWEGA CASA recruits, screens, trains and supervises volunteers to advocate for abused and neglected children throughout the Southwestern Judicial Circuit. The Children in Need of Services (CHINS) program utilizes available community resources in assessment and intervention in cases of delinquency, dependency, or children in need of services. The Lighthouse Children's Advocacy Center assists with cases involving sexual abuse, severe physical abuse, witness to violence, Commercialization and Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) and other cases in which law enforcement and Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) request our assistance. The Truancy Program is designed to prevent high school dropouts, improve student school attendance and student graduation rates by providing school and home visits and bringing appropriate issues before the court system in a timely manner. A domestic violence program is also included under the Alliance umbrella. She explained where funding comes from and how to become a volunteer. Southwest Georgia Children's Alliance serves 17 counties in Georgia and 11 in our region.

UPDATE ON REGIONAL EXPANSION OF BROADBAND

Jessica Simmons, Georgia Technology Authority's Deputy Chief Information Officer for Broadband and Special Projects, gave an overview of the status of broadband funding programs. Grants are being administered by the Governor's Office of Planning & Budget, with GTA providing technical assistance and policy evaluation.

The Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund (CCPF) is a subset of resources within the American Rescue Plan Act. Location-level broadband maps help to strategically get resources to the communities in most need. The Capital Projects Fund is more tailored to last mile connectivity. Eligible project areas were selected from the most severely unserved (more than 20% unserved or more than 2,500 locations). Network owners (or owner-operators) are the eligible applicants. The application period for the Capital Projects Fund Grant Program will be September 6-October 7, 2022. There are five River Valley counties with preliminary eligible funding areas prior to the service provider verification process: Clay, Dooly, Macon, Randolph, Schley and Webster. The program is expected to be "oversubscribed" and that not all eligible project areas will receive funding and that it will depend on the competitiveness and quality of the applications.

The 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Federal Infrastructure Law allocated a minimum \$100 million to each state for broadband expansion through the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program expected to be available in 2023. digital equity and affordability will be an important component of this program as an extension of the Emergency Broadband Program (EBB) and Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which is a subsidy of up to \$30 a month for eligible applicants. Additional funds are expected to be awarded for digital equity and middle mile projects. The state still has funding set aside OneGeorgia Authority grant program will deploy \$20 million. They are working with Commissioner Nun on the ways that allocation will be deployed.

STAFF REPORTS

Katie Howard, AAA Director, shared information on the status of the Wait List for services as well as an update on the Wellness Programs offered. Ms. Howard also reported an additional Certified Tai Chi instructor has been brought in to better serve the eastern counties for this program.

Janice West, WIOA Director, reported the WIOA staff is working on the PY 2022-2026 WIOA local and regional plans. WIOA Plans are due to the State WIOA office on September 1, 2022. Plans will be reviewed by the State office and will notify staff if the plans are approved. Regional Unemployment Rates for June 2022 is currently 4.4%. This is a decrease over the past 12 months (June 2021) when regional rate was 6.4%. WIOA enrollments as of August 12th is 70 individuals enrolled in various training activities. The enrollment will be increasing over the next few months as the Fall semesters begin for local colleges and universities. WIOA department is preparing for the upcoming annual state monitoring which is scheduled for September 19th – 23rd, 2022 for the PY 2021 monitoring review.

Rick Morris, Planning Director, reported the Regional Commission staff is working to finish the Randolph County, Cuthbert and Shellman Comprehensive Plan and the Greater Dooly County Comprehensive Plan. Both plans need to be adopted by the end of October. The City of Columbus is hosting Georgia Planning Association fall conference in September. Registration for the GPA event is still open. Please call Allison Slocum or Rick Morris if you have any questions about the GPA event. There are three bike events scheduled in River Valley Region: Americus is hosting a Bike Rodeo for kids and a ride with the Mayor on Labor Day. In late September, the City of Plains Peanut Festival will also host a bike rodeo for kids, and the City of Lumpkin Affair on the Square and bike ride will happen in mid-October.

ADJOURN

As there was no further business, Vice-Chair Tameka Harris requested a motion for the meeting to be adjourned. Motion was made by Darrell Holbrook, Webster County, and seconded by Melvin Crimes, Webster County. Meeting was adjourned.

September 28, 2022

Jerry "Pops" Barnes, Chair

Carvel Lewis, Secretary