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**RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING**  
**John H. Pope Center, SGTC**  
**May 24, 2023**  
**10:30 A.M.**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Council Members**

**(Counties Represented: 13)**

Barry Whitley, Butler  
Bruce Hill, Oglethorpe  
Carvel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman,  
RVRC Secretary  
Darrell Holbrook, Webster  
Jayson Griffin, Macon  
Joshua Deriso, Cordele  
Kenneth Sumpter, Fort Gaines  
Kevin Brown, Buena Vista  
Larry Sparks, Talbot  
Lee Kinnamon, Americus

Maggie McGruther, Sumter  
Melvin Crimes, Webster  
Randy Howard, Sumter  
Ransom Farley, Hamilton  
Rebecca White, Randolph  
Richard Dowdy, Crisp  
Skip Henderson, Columbus  
Tameka Harris, Taylor, RVRC Vice-Chair  
Terrell Hudson, Dooly  
Tony Lamar, Talbotton

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**Members Not Attending**

Albert King, Vienna  
Barbara Cullifer, Lumpkin  
Bill McClellan, Schley  
Bobby Jenkins, Cuthbert  
Carl Oliver, Macon  
Charles Coffey, Chattahoochee  
Chip Jones, Stewart  
Doug Ethridge, Harris  
Eugene Cason, Dooly  
Greg Dominy, Schley  
James Davenport, Clay

Jeff McCarter, Randolph  
Jerry "Pops" Barnes, Columbus, RVRC Chair  
Joe Lee Williams, Stewart  
Richard McCorkle, Marion  
Rob Grant, Harris  
Shane Grier, Marion  
Tim Biddle, Chattahoochee  
Tom Queen, Taylor  
Wesley Williams, Randolph  
Xavier McCaskey, Columbus

## **Others Present**

County and City Representatives

Patty Bentley, Representative, GA House District 150

Debbie Buckner, Representative GA House District 137

Mike Cheokas, Representative GA House District 138

Gerald Greene, Representative, GA House District 154

Vance Smith, Representative, GA House District 138

Jody Redding; Office of Governor Brian Kemp

Ben Garcia, Office of the Lt. Governor

T.J. Hudson, Office of the Lt. Governor

Sharonda Hill, Deputy District Director for Congressman Sanford Bishop

Christopher Drake Office of Congressman Sanford D. Bishop

Adrian Rivers Office of Senator Raphael Warnock

Eboni Morris Key, Office of Senator John Ossoff

Alyse Wolf, Office of U.S. Senator Jon Ossoff

Charles White, Office of US Congressman Austin Scott

Sarahlyn Stafford, Rural Development Manager, Carl Vinson Institute of Government

River Valley RC Staff

## **Welcome and Recognition of Visitors**

Carvel Lewis, RVRC Secretary brought the meeting to order. He welcomed council members, distinguished guests, and visitors.

Carvel Lewis, Secretary, led the council in prayer and Tameka Harris, Vice-Chair, led the council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **Staff Recognition**

Jim Livingston, RVRC Executive Director, recognized employees of the River Valley Regional Commission for Years of Service. Tammy Collins Financial Officer celebrated 30 years of service, while Williams Griggs and Laura Schneider, both Community Planners celebrated 5 years of service.

## **Legislator's Remarks**

Secretary Lewis introduced field representatives from state and federally elected officials who updated the council and sent greetings from the elected officials.

Secretary Lewis then asked the state elected officials for updates from the most recently completed legislation session.

**Representative Patty Bentley, District 150** welcomed the audience to Georgia House District 150 and South Georgia Technical College. Representative Bentley is vice-chair of the House Rural Development Council for the 2023-2024 Session.

**Representative Debbie Buckner, District 137** serves as the vice chair of the House Rural Caucus. She is serving on a legislative committee which is conducting a review of all of Georgia's tax credits to make sure the various tax credits boost economic development and job creation and give taxpayers a good return on investment.

**Representative Mike Cheokas, District 151** mentioned the Fiscal Year 2024 state budget included a \$5 million bond package to renovate Georgia Southwestern State University's James Earl Carter Library.

**Representative Gerald Greene, District 154** is the Dean of the Georgia House of Representatives and gave an overview of his work as co-chair of the House Rural Development Council, which was established by the late Georgia House Speaker, David Ralston, and is charged with the study of services to individuals and businesses in the rural areas of the state focusing on health, social and economic opportunities. He noted the importance for rural communities to work together.

Secretary, Carvel Lewis gave the blessing. Lunch was then served.

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[Quitman](#) | [Randolph](#) | [Schley](#) | [Stewart](#) | [Sumter](#) | [Talbot](#) | [Taylor](#) | [Webster](#)

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June 28, 2023

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Jerry "Pops" Barnes, Chair

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Carvel Lewis, Secretary

Chattahoochee | Clay | Crisp | Dooly | Harris | Macon | Marion | Muscogee  
Quitman | Randolph | Schley | Stewart | Sumter | Talbot | Taylor | Webster