



www.rivervalleyrc.org

Columbus Office

710 Front Avenue, Suite A
Columbus, GA 31901
Phone (706) 256-2910
Fax (706) 256-2908
TDY (706)256-2944

Americus Office

228 West Lamar Street
Americus, GA 31709
Phone (706)256-2910
Fax (229) 931-2745
Fax (229) 931-2917

RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING
Marion County Commission Office and On-line
March 23, 2022
10:30 A.M.
Minutes Summary

Council Members

(Counties Represented: 14)

Albert King, Vienna	Maggie McGruther, Sumter
Chip Jones, Stewart	Mark Waddell, Sumter
Danny Blackmon, Georgetown-Quitman	Matt Gunnels, Marion
Darrell Holbrook, Webster	Melvin Crimes, Webster
Doug Ethridge, Harris	Pam Jordan, Talbot
Dr. Edward Lee, Chattahoochee	Randy Howard, Sumter
Jayson Griffin, Macon	Richard Dowdy, Crisp
Jerry "Pops" Barnes, Columbus, RVRC Chair	Richard McCorkle, Marion
Jimmy Babb, Lumpkin	Rob Grant, Harris
Joe Lee Williams, Stewart	Tameka Harris, Taylor, RVRC Vice-Chair
Joshua Deriso, Cordele	Tom Queen, Taylor
Kevin Brown, Buena Vista	Wesley Williams, Randolph
Lee Kinnamon, Americus	

Members Not Attending

Barry Whitley, Butler	James Davenport, Clay
Bill McClellan, Schley	James R. "Bump" Welch, Marion
Bobby Jenkins, Cuthbert	Julie Brown, Hamilton
Bruce Hill, Oglethorpe	Kenneth Sumpter, Fort Gaines
Bryon Hickey, Columbus	Patrick Shivers, Clay
Carl Oliver, Macon	Rebecca White, Randolph
Carvel Lewis, Georgetown-Quitman, RVRC Secretary	Sher'Londa Walker, Talbot
Charles Coffey, Chattahoochee	Terrell Hudson, Dooly
Eddie Moore, Georgetown-Quitman	Tim Biddle, Chattahoochee
Eugene Cason, Dooly	Tony Lamar, Talbotton
Greg Dominy, Schley	Skip Henderson, Columbus

Others Attending

Paul Farr, Southwest Georgia Technical College
Natalie Bradley, DCA
Cal Myers, City Council Buena Vista
Diadra Powell, Americus City Manager
Michelle Delaney, Congressman Austin Scott’s Office
Chris Kelley, Congressman Sanford Bishop’s Office

Josh Beard, Columbus Mayor’s Office
Mac Moye, Stewart County Manager
Saralyn Stafford, Rural Development Mgr./UGA
Paul Tanner, GDOT
Hunter Singleton, Clay County Administrator
Jody Redding, Gov. Brian Kemp’s Office
Alyse Wolf, Senator John Ossoff’s Office

Staff

Jim Livingston, Executive Director
Katie Howard, AAA Director
Emily Chambers, Finance
Tammy Collins, Finance
Rick Morris, Planning
Janice West, WIOA
Mariyana Kostov, GIS Planner
John Morgan, Bike-Ped Planner

Sarah Wall, Asst. Executive Director
Merri Spence, Executive Secretary
Gerald Mixon, Planning
Kat Mournighan, Planning
Scottie DeClue, Planning
Camille Bielby, Planning
Alison Slocum, Planning

WELCOME AND RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Jerry “Pops” Barnes, Chair, brought the River Valley Regional Commission council meeting to order at 10:30 A.M. Chair Barnes welcomed visitors Saralyn Stafford, Carl Vinson Institute, and Paul Tanner Georgia Department of Transportation to the meeting.

Chair Barnes then gave the invocation and Tameka Harris, Vice-Chair led the council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 23, 2022 MINUTES*

Council reviewed the February 23, 2022 meeting minutes which were emailed to council 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, Pops Barnes, Chair, requested a motion to approve the February 23, 2022 council minutes as presented.

Darrell Holbrook, Webster County made the motion to approve the February 23, 2022 minutes as presented; Melvin Crimes, Webster County seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

APPROVAL SUBMITTING DCA ANNUAL REPORT*

Gerald Mixon called Council’s attention to the annual report for the River Valley Regional Plan in the board handout, stating that a public hearing was held March 21, 2022. Nearly all work program activities were completed. The annual report will be submitted to the Department of Community Affairs

for review and circulation to state agencies and adjoining regional commissions. The report does not require Council approval at this time, but Council was asked to authorize the executive director to transmit the document for state review. Chair Barnes requested a motion to submit the document for state review. Darrell Holbrook, Webster County made the motion to approve, and Albert King seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

RIVER VALLEY COMPATIBLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Saralyn Stafford, Carl Vinson Institute, spoke on the River Valley Compatible Community Development project. She thanked the RVRC for making it possible to be involved in this partnership effort and added without Jim Livingston's recommendation they wouldn't have had the opportunity to talk with the Army Compatible Use Buffer Advisory Council, apply for the funding from the Department of Defense, or get engaged with the five Georgia counties and one Alabama county in this project.

The six counties involved are, Chattahoochee, Marion, Stewart, Taylor, Talbot, and Russell County in Alabama. The Carl Vinson Institute has begun an analysis of the tax digest in the counties that have been impacted by the new buffer land. This is an analysis of the tax digest pre-imposed conservation land and an analysis of what is to come due to the plan to add more conservation land. It's not part of the project but good information for the county governments impacted by the conservation land and using that as a baseline to see how to add new value to the community tax digest by adding new opportunities. There are plans for downtown development but also a need for utilizing natural resources for outdoor recreation for tourism and community recreation.

There will be an individual plan for each of the six counties. Steering committees have met and there are plans to meet with focus groups and meetings for the general public to participate in all six counties. Also, surveys will be available for the general public to give their input.

Ms. Stafford talked about a grant that has been awarded from the USDA to initiate a training program to teach local communities on how to do their own strategic planning. The Carl Vinson Institute is currently working with five rural communities in the state of Georgia to train their leaders on planning. A meeting was held in February to start building the Steering Committee.

The Carl Vinson Institute of Government sees their charge as one to inform, to inspire and to innovate.

Mr. Livingston asked about timing of the Compatible Community Development initiatives. Ms. Stafford replied that today moving forward plans should be complete by Fall. After the plan is complete, there will be regional opportunities to work together on the elements of the plan and how it may be used regionally so the cost burden can be shared. Everything should be finished by the end of 2023. There's still work to do. The Department of Defense is funding this project through the RVRC and there's lots of time to build a great plan for the region and for the individual communities.

REVAMP PROGRAM UPDATE

Mariyana Kostov, Planning, introduced Paul Tanner a consultant with the Georgia Department of Transportation. Mr. Tanner spoke about the REVAMP program (Roadway Element Validation and Mapping Program) and the partnership between GDOT, UGA and the Georgia Association of Regional

Commissions. Mr. Tanner spoke of Federal reporting requirements for all states. He shared that when the program was first started, GDOT realized that the Regional Commissions are tied to the local governments and could help with mapping. The Regional Commissions gather the data and GDOT combines it and provides it to the Federal Government. Mr. Tanner continued by presenting a very informative slide show explaining the program and its benefits.

RIVER VALLEY AREA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION EXPLANATION

Sarah Walls, Assistant Executive Director, gave a brief explanation of how and why the River Valley Area Development Corporation was formed. The original corporation was formed to be able to provide services to the general public. Prior to the merger, the Boards of Directors for the original Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint Regional Development Centers were appointed to serve as the General Membership of each and the Executive Committees were appointed to serve as the official committees to approve all projects undertaken by the Corporation. This included serving as the Loan Committee for the revolving loan funds. The merger of the two RDCs to form the River Valley Regional Commission also amended the River Valley Area Development Corporation makeup. This included adding the full River Valley RC Council as the “full membership” and the RVRC Executive Committee to serve as the “Loan Committee plus three additional members.” The Loan Committee has the authority to review and approve or disapprove all loans presented to them and of course to report back to the full membership of all loans made by them.

STAFF UPDATES

Emily Chambers, Finance Officer reported, through January, the Operating Funds had an increase in fund balance of \$136,000, leaving fund balances totaling almost \$2 million in those funds. \$1,046,000 of that is unrestricted fund balance in the General Fund. Cash on hand in the General Fund was \$629,000 on January 31.

The Enterprise Funds had an increase in net position of \$733,000, but \$709k of that is money from EDA that went directly to loan recipients for the EDA CARES Revolving Loan Fund. The Enterprise Funds have a total Net Position of \$1.9 million, and just over \$1 million of that is cash on hand that is available for small business loans in the region.

Katie Howard, AAA Director reported, the Area Agency on Aging invited Council members and other interested parties to attend the virtual Aging State Plan Public Hearing on April 6. Call in information can be found at the River Valley AAA Facebook Page. The implications of the Census on AAA funding were also discussed. For FY23 Aging Programs have been buffered from most of the cuts to be received. However, these funds will not be available for FY24. ARPA funding will be available and may be able to help but eventually these cuts will be felt by the AAA, providers, and clients.

Sarah Walls, Assistant Executive Director, reported that the CEDS Committee met, and the main topic of discussion involved the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy that is due to the Economic Development Administration by September 30, 2022. Jim Livingston helped the committee review the items listed in the Strategy’s Five-Year Action Plan to determine whether to keep it the way it is or to amend the Action Line Items. It was determined that Broadband needs should be a separate item and maybe even the top item of concern/need in the Region. Businesses need reliable internet service if they are to locate in the Region.

Ms. Walls also reported that a loan request by Café Campesino, Americus, Georgia has been approved by the RVADC Loan Committee in the amount of \$110,000 and this loan will be funded through our EDA Covid-19 Revolving Loan Fund and the loan will be closed and disbursed within the next month.

Gerald Mixon, Planning Director, reported the Stewart County-Lumpkin-Richland joint plan was adopted earlier this month, and staff has three other plans currently in plan. Staff is working on two plans in greater Sumter County, a joint Americus-Sumter plan and a joint plan for Andersonville-DeSoto-Leslie and Plains, both of which are expected to be submitted for state review in a month or so, and staff is deep into updating the Randolph County joint comprehensive plan.

Planning staff continue providing zoning technical assistance to a half dozen of our communities. In the past couple of weeks, an evaluation was performed of the Dooly County zoning ordinance to identify the extent and nature of any needed updates/revisions.

The Talbot County pre-disaster mitigation plan is in the closeout process. The Crisp plan is in state review and the Dooly and Schley plans are being updated.

As Paul Tanner mentioned in his presentation earlier, we continue updating the inventory of transportation facilities under terms of our Department of Transportation contract. Staff began the field work necessary to prepare a city cemetery map for Unadilla.

After a delay of several months in our brownfield project caused by turnover in our consulting environmental engineer, the RVRC is back in business having recently completed seven environmental site assessments with seven others currently underway. This project, funded by the federal Environmental Protection Agency is targeted to Crisp, Dooly, Macon and Sumter Counties.

Regional Water plans for the state's major water basins are prepared under the auspices of the Department of Natural Resources and are updated every five years. Staff attended the Middle Chattahoochee and the Upper Flint Regional Water Council meetings earlier this month.

Our historic preservation planner reviewed several applications for certificates of appropriateness to ensure proposed exterior improvements for properties located in Columbus' historic districts are in keeping with the preservation ordinances.

Staff facilitated and assisted with numerous biking and pedestrian events in the past month.

A state contract was renewed for continued administration of transportation services and the RVRC Transportation Manager is preparing a transit plan for three of our counties.

The regional Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax will be on the ballot May 24, 2022.

Janice West, WIOA Director, reported WIOA is winding up the third quarter of the program year. April – June 30, 2022, will complete the fourth and final quarter of PY 2021. COVID is continuing to impact our WIOA enrollments numbers locally and across the state as well. WIOA is continuing to enroll WIOA eligible individuals in training services. WIOA enrollments as of March 18th is 86 individuals in various

training activities. WIOA is working with several local area employers with On-The-Job Training (OJT) services for their newly hired employees training.

WIOA staff will soon begin working on the 4-year WIOA Regional Plan. Tentative due date for the Plan is August 1, 2022. WIOA Staff is currently working on the One Stop Certification for the 2022-2024 period. Deadline for One Stop Certification is June 30, 2022.

WIOA will be impacted by federal funding cuts for PY 2022 which begins in July 2022. WIOA has been experiencing WIOA funding cuts for the past six (6) years. Funding cuts will impact the local areas enrollment numbers and available services in the upcoming year.

ADJOURN

As there was no further business, Chair Barnes 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.

April 27, 2022

Jerry “Pops” Barnes, Chair

Carvel Lewis, Secretary