

MINUTES

Southwest Georgia Regional Commission

Regional Council Meeting

Camilla, Georgia

October 25, 2018

The Southwest Georgia Regional Commission (RC) held its Council meeting Thursday, October 25, 2018, at the Southwest Regional Commission building in Camilla, Georgia. Treasurer Danny Palmer chaired the meeting. The following council members were present; Charlie Williams, Deidre Evans Severson, Benny Flowers, Paul Nagy, Ferrell Ruis, Preston Jimmerson, Steve Brock, Kregg Close, Billy Poppell, Anthony Jones, Raymond Breaux, Jeffery Haynes, Al Hutchins, Jim Sellers, Joe Walden, Dwight Hickman, Chad Griffin, Carlos Williams, Nathaniel Keaton, Tracie Beard, Jack Powell, Ken Hickey, Donnie Baggett, Elaine Mays, Fred Dent, Charles Jones, and Norma Gilpatrick.

Council members calling to report conflicts were Chris Moore, John Spann, Eddie Hopkins, Revonn Miller, Matthew Reed, Freddie Speight, Glenda Battle, Ben Hayward, Brenda Peterson Mitchell Blanks, Ed Wade, Terry Scott, Karen Rackley, and Courtney Brinson.

Council members absent were B.J. Fletcher, Freddy Grimsley, Keith Moye, Dennis Roland, Allen Worsley, Jayme Smith, and Ernest Johnson.

Staff members present were Executive Director Robert McDaniel, Deputy Director Suzanne Angell, Planning Director Barbara Reddick, and Executive Assistant Heather White. Interns present were Abbey Casey and Stacey Whigham.

Guests present were Terry Smith with Geotechnical and Environmental Consultants, Inc., Ora Sue Nagy, and Hervin Severson.

Danny Palmer called the meeting to order at approximately 7:05 p.m. Mr. McDaniel gave the attendance report stating that there were 28 members present representing 13 counties and a quorum was present. He noted Calhoun County and Colquitt County had 100% representation and then introduced the guests of the Council. Danny Palmer asked that September minutes be approved. Dwight Hickman motioned the minutes be accepted and Jeffery Haynes seconded the motion; all agreed.

Executive Director Robert McDaniel called on a member of each county represented at the meeting to give a report on the impact of Hurricane Michael in their area of Region 10. The first to speak was Charlie Williams from Calhoun County. He stated that Calhoun County fared fairly well because they were not considered as part of the declared disaster area. Colquitt County's Paul Nagy said that their infrastructure fared well and the roadways were cleared by the Monday after the storm. He stated that agriculture took a big hit. Steve Brock from Decatur County gave his portion of the briefing. He stated there was 100% power outage. As of the night of the meeting there is 99% of power restored. He said there was damage to infrastructure and a big hit to agriculture. He stated that FEMA, GEMA and other agencies are working hard to get everything straightened out. Anthony Jones from Dougherty County stated that over 50% of the population was hit. Many trees down and the Pecan industry took a big hit. The Corps of Engineers are taking over clean up of debris. This area was just hit by tornadoes and were beginning to recover from that before this storm hit. He urged everyone to go online and get a FEMA number right away. Small Business Association is working with people with low interest rates as well. Jefferey Haynes gave the report for Early County. He said they have infrastructure damage. 85% of the electricity is restored. One of the most crucial impacts were when they went house to house and there were many elderly who had not eaten for two days and had no water. Everyone has come together and volunteered and have looked after one another. Jim Sellers of Grady County said most everyone was out of power. Whigham had electricity after only 3 days. Some homes were destroyed when trees fell on them. There was emergency mobilization before the storm. Everything was cleaned up quickly. This created difficulty documenting storm damage. Documentation is important for reimbursement of expenses, photographs of damages needed, and the documentation of recovery worker's hours. Dwight Hickman of Lee County spoke of people being without power for as much as 10 days or more. Several pecan orchards were

completely destroyed. Many cotton crops and peanut crops were picked right before the storm. There will be a 20 – 30 percent of the crop in peanuts and cotton about 40%. Carlos Williams of Miller County stated they had resources on the ground quickly. 100% of Miller County was without power. 90% of power has been restored. Danny Palmer reported on Mitchell County. He stated that Mitchell County got hit pretty hard but they got their power on by the middle of last week. He said there was a lot of trees and a lot of debris. No injuries. Tracie Beard of Seminole County stated they had 100% power outage, some are still out, most out for 10 days. There was one fatality. Everyone has been working together. There has been no lack of food because everyone has been feeding those needing food. Everyone has been checking on the elderly. Jack Powell of Terrell County stated there were some losses on houses. The pecan farms had large losses and the county had a lot of debris. Ken Hickey spoke for Thomas County. He said they lost about 90% of their power. Pecan trees and cotton crops were lost. Cotton was about a 50% loss. Thomas County public works had 210 people on the ground working the night of the storm. Fred Dent of Worth County said there were a lot of trees down. There was 100% power outage. He was about 4 days out of power. Agriculture took a hit, especially the cotton. Anthony Jones asked everyone to keep up with volunteer hours to report to FEMA. Executive Director Robert McDaniel told everyone there are resource materials available for everyone. It was mentioned the timber industry and poultry industry were hard hit as well.

Danny Palmer asked Deputy Director Suzanne Angell to brief the Council on the Retirement Trustees meeting. She explained that there was a question about a request for benefits from a former employee. The question has been resolved and the benefits will be paid.

Danny Palmer asked Deputy Director Suzanne Angell to give the September 2018 financial report. Ms. Angell reported that the General Fund had a year to gain of \$2,450.57. The General Fund's ending fund balance was \$488,453.46. The Revolving Loan Fund had net surplus of \$635.16 which brings the fund balance to \$293,755.20. Ms. Angell stated that the Transportation fund had a surplus of \$21,522.41. This brought the Transportation Fund Balance to \$207,266.51. The Defined Benefit Pension Trust Fund had a year to date gain on investments for the year of \$36,427.33. Donnie Baggett made a motion to accept the September 2018 financial report. Dwight Hickman seconded the motion. All agreed.

Treasurer Danny Palmer asked Planning Director Barbara Reddick to present the Council with her staff report for the Planning Department. A Housing Preservation Grant (HPG) was awarded in the amount of \$61,000. This will allow approximately \$5000 per household for improvements such as wheel chair ramps, air conditioning, and other improvements to houses that don't need major construction. There is already a long waiting list from home owners who wish to participate in this program. The City of Edison, Terrell County, the City of Bronwood and the City of Damascus have applied for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for next year. The Community Home Investment Program (CHIP) applications have a deadline of December 4th, 2018. Cities of Camilla, Arlington, Donalsonville, and the Sylvester Housing Authority have already applied. The City of Boston will possibly apply as well. Kimberly Brooks has presented a safety training program to the Boys and Girls Club as part of the Department of Transportation grant for Complete Streets. The Planning Department is working with the City of Albany with their EDA Disaster Relief Grant to work on infrastructure improvements to areas around Phoebe Putney Hospital. Phase 1 has been approved and Phase 2 is under review. Ms. Reddick introduced Stacey Whigham. Ms. Whigham is a volunteer at the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission. Ms. Reddick mentioned Shaniqua Daniels, an intern that started at the same time as Ms. Whigham on Monday. The zoning contract for the City of Camilla has been completed. The Donalsonville zoning contract is currently under review. The City of Sylvester has Housing Projects and Zoning Ordinance updates being worked on. The City of Bainbridge and Colquitt County have solid waste contracts in progress. The City of Camilla has a housing plan in progress. Lee County and the Lee County cities are working on getting their Service Delivery Strategy (SDS) adopted. Extensions for cities and counties Service Delivery Strategy plan can be applied for with the Department of Community Affairs. Even if the plan is turned in by the deadline, the Department of Community Affairs needs 30 days to review the plans, so an extension needs to be filed. If an extension is not filed for in this case, a city or county can lose their Qualified Local Government (QLG) status. The Planning Department is looking for success stories of communities implementing activities and projects under their Comprehensive Plan to share with the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). Ms. Reddick told the council the importance of becoming a Plan First City or County. In order to achieve a Plan First designation, they must show they are implementing parts of their comprehensive plan. Once approved the benefits of being a Plan First city or county include being able to apply for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) every year instead of every

other year and the ability to be awarded more points on Community Home Investment Program (CHIP) applications and more points on loans. The Cities of Thomasville and Sylvester currently have a Plan First designation.

Executive Director Robert McDaniel was asked to give his Executive Director report. Mr. McDaniel stated that the November/December Council meeting will be hosted by the City of Colquitt and Miller County at their new state theatre building in downtown Colquitt, Thursday, December 13th at 6:00 p.m.

The September 2018 meeting adjourned at approximately 7:48 p.m.



Glenda Battle, Chairman



Robert McDaniel, Secretary