

MINUTES

Southwest Georgia Regional Commission

Regional Council Meeting

Camilla, Georgia

March 28, 2019

The Southwest Georgia Regional Commission (RC) held its Council meeting Thursday, March 28, 2019, at the Southwest Regional Commission building in Camilla, Georgia. Chairman Elaine Mays chaired the meeting. The following council members were present: Chris Moore, John Spann, Eddie Hopkins, Charlie Williams, Deidre Evans-Severson, Benny Flowers, Paul Nagy, Ferrell Ruis, Virginia Hart, Steve Brock, Gregg Close, Billy Poppell, Jon Howard, Freddy Grimsley, Raymond Breaux, Jeffery Haynes, Al Hutchins, Freddie Speight, Joe Walden, Dwight Hickman, Chad Griffin, Glenda Battle, Carlos Williams, Ben Hayward, Danny Palmer, Nathaniel Keaton, Brenda Peterson, Mitchell Blanks, Tracie Beard, Ed Wade, Jack Powell, Donnie Baggett, Terry Scott, Al Bryan, Joe Gaines, Christopher Wheeler, Karen Rackley, and Norma Gilpatrick.

Council members calling to report conflicts were Revonn Miller, Anthony Jones, Matthew Reed, June Knight, John Wheaton, Nicole Nixon, Jayme Smith, and Courtney Brinson.

Council members absent were Preston Jimmerson, Jim Sellers, and Ernest Johnson.

Staff members present were Executive Director Robert McDaniel, Deputy Director Suzanne Angell, Planner Kim Brooks and Executive Assistant Heather White.

Guests present were Speaker, Jack Spruill, Director of Marketing for the Georgia Department of Agriculture, Speaker Haydn Blaize, Manager of the Floodplain Unit of The Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Speaker Jack Knolikowski of the Floodplain Unit of The Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Becky Geer, Herven Severson, Toney Thompson, John Peterson, and Kathy Wade.

Chairman Elaine Mays called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m. Mr. McDaniel gave the attendance report stating that there were 39 members present representing 14 counties and a quorum was present. He noted that Baker County, Calhoun County, Early County, Mitchell County, Seminole County, Thomas County, and Worth County had 100% representation and then introduced the guests of the Council.

Elaine Mays asked for a motion that the February 2019 meeting minutes to be approved. Dwight Hickman motioned the minutes be accepted and Terry Scott seconded the motion; all agreed.

Director of Marketing for the Georgia Department of Agriculture Jack Spruill was introduced to the Council. He discussed the new proclamation introduced by the Georgia Governor in conjunction with the Commissioner of Transportation that said from this day forward all plants and all greenery and everything at rest areas and everything on state highways and everything that state controls will be Georgia grown vegetation coming from Georgia nurseries. He then addressed the damage and recovery of agriculture from Hurricane Michael. Mr. Spruill said that under the Constitution of the State of Georgia there is a Gratuity Clause which means that the State of Georgia cannot individually dispense money to somebody in the form of a grant, in the form of a hand up. The state government cannot do a relief package such as the federal government can. The day after the hurricane event the state officials were convening to decide what can be done. Various agricultural experts were being consulted. They came up with a short-term assistance. This was to assign \$75 million to the Georgia Development Authority so that there could be low-interest loans. This was intended to be a stop-gap. This was to keep the banks from becoming insolvent. This was intended to keep the agricultural community going until federal disaster money comes. Five and a half months later and the federal government has not come in with disaster assistance for the agriculture community. The Georgia congressional members and state senators have been pro-active and vocal to try to get help. A motion has been passed to proceed and open the discussion for assistance. There may be a vote on it next week. A committee of retired state agency, retired farm credit agencies, and county agencies employees was hired and in about five and a half weeks every penny of the \$75 million dollars that was given to the Georgia Development

Authority was put in people's hands and committed to help. Now there will not be funds when released in time for cotton planting. It was discussed that when federal money does come that it should be given to an independent arm of the Department of Agriculture to dispense as a block grant. Mr. Spruill said this is problematic because judging how to dispense the money to the agriculture community is difficult. While crops such as cotton were destroyed and there won't be money in time for the next planting, it gets more complicated with pecan orchards that were lost because pecan orchards take many years to recover, nearly an entire generation. Mr. Spruill said that he would be available after the meeting for any further questions.

The next guest speaker was introduced by Chairman Mays. Haydn Blaize is the manager of the Floodplain Unit of The Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Mr. Blaize presented a Powerpoint presentation that was very comprehensive, covering Region 10. He started by explaining what the Floodplain Unit does. They are a technical partner with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and they are responsible for developing flood maps for 159 counties in Georgia. They also provide technical assistance and outreach for those communities. The maps produced are used by lenders to determine who should have flood insurance. They determine special flood areas that are sometimes referred to as the 100-year floodplain. They determine flood zones and flood elevations. This means how high will the water rise during these 100-year flood events. The communities regulate to the maps. The maps can take as long as 5 years to produce. Before the maps are adopted, they are available to the public and several meetings happen. This allows criticism of the maps. They can also tell you what the chances are that the public's property will be flooded during flooding events. The community's responsibilities are to enforce the floodplain's ordinances and regulate development in special floodplain areas. If they are a member of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), you must have a floodplain ordinance and enforce that ordinance. Close to 35% of the claims filed with the National Flood Insurance Program are not in a special floodplain area. If a community follows this step, residents and businesses in that community can purchase NFIP flood insurance. Mr. Blaize gave the Council the web address to visit the Floodplain Unit website and look up maps for their communities.

Elaine Mays asked Planner Kimberly Brooks to give the March 2019 Planning Report. Ms. Brooks said that there were four Community Home Investment Program (CHIP) grants. These were for the Cities of Camilla, Arlington, Donalsonville, and the Sylvester Housing Authority. She said they are in the process of completing Community Development Block Grant applications that are due Monday. These are for Terrell County, the City of Thomasville, The City of Damascus, and the City of Bronwood. The Planning Department has completed all of the updates of the Comprehensive Plans. They are starting over with the Comprehensive Plans 5-year updates. The Housing Conference will be held May 14th, 2019 in Thomasville at Archbold Hospital. Registration can be completed on line.

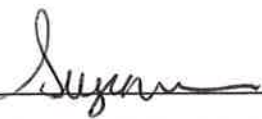
Suzanne Angell gave the February 2019 Financial Report. Ms. Angell reported that the General Fund has net surplus of \$32,945.01 and the General Fund balance is \$518,947.90. The year to date Revolving Loan Fund net surplus was \$2,562.11 and the fund balance is \$295,682.15. Ms. Angell stated that Regional Transit Program has a net surplus of \$34,762.63 and the ending fund balance is \$220,506.73. The Pension Trust Fund has a gain on investments of \$12,017.24 through February 28, 2019. Jack Powell made a motion to accept the February 2019 financial report and Freddie Grimsley seconded the motion; all agreed.

Elaine Mays asked Executive Director to give his report. Mr. McDaniel mentioned that the Planning Department has been very busy with the CDBG applications. There was a New Council Member Training held prior to the meeting and was well attended.

The next meeting will be held April 25, 2019 at the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission building.

With no other business, Elaine Mays asked for a motion to adjourn. Paul Nagy motioned to adjourn. Donnie Baggett seconded the motion; all agreed. Elaine Mays adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:00 p.m.


Elaine Mays, Chairman


Robert McDaniel, Secretary
Suzanne Angell