

MINUTES

Southwest Georgia Regional Commission

Regional Council Meeting

Camilla, Georgia

February 24, 2022

The Southwest Georgia Regional Commission (RC) held its Council meeting Thursday, February 24, 2022, at the Southwest Regional Commission building in Camilla, Georgia. Due to a recent surge of COVID19 cases in the area, a virtual meeting was held via ZOOM and was also accessible by telephone. A limited number of Council Members attended the meeting in person at the Commission office. Chairman Paul Nagy chaired the meeting and was present in person. Also attending in person were John Spann, Benny Flowers, Kregg Close, Al Hutchins, Jr., Donnie Baggett, and Elaine Mays. The following council members were present via ZOOM: Eddie Hopkins, Charlie Williams, Johnsie Handfield, Steve Brock, Anthony Jones, Jon Howard, Dr. Charles Ochie, Charlie Sol, Freddie Speight, June Knight, Jim Sellers, Joe Walden, Chad Griffin, Jason Scott, Ben Hayward, Nathaniel Keaton, Brenda Peterson, Mitchell Blanks, Tracie Beard, Scott Chastain, Al Bryan, Kemp Willis, Christopher Wheeler, and Melvin Harris.

Excused were Ferrell Ruis and Doug Powell.

Council members absent were Chris Moore, Darryl Warren, Barbara Grogan, Revonn Miller, Billy Poppell, Raymond Breaux, Casawn-Lhuillier Yheyais, John Wheaton, Dwight Hickman, Kregg Freeman, Carlos Williams, Jayme Smith, Danny Palmer, Ernest Johnson, Sondra Walker, and Rodney Prince.

Guest present was speaker Lee Jones, Regional Director of the USDA.

Staff members present were Executive Director Suzanne Angell, Deputy Director Barbara Reddick, Finance Director Traci Hall, and Executive Assistant Heather White.

Chairman Nagy called the meeting to order at approximately 6:12 p.m.

Executive Assistant Heather White gave the attendance report stating that there were 31 members present representing 13 counties and there was a quorum. Early, Grady, Seminole, Thomas, and Worth Counties had 100% representation.

Chairman Nagy asked for a motion to amend the agenda in order to consider approval of a letter of interest for the Rural Partner's Network program. Donnie Baggett made a motion to amend the agenda. Al Hutchins seconded the motion; all agreed.

Mr. Nagy asked for a motion that the January 2022 meeting minutes be approved. Elaine Mays motioned the minutes be accepted and Benny Flowers seconded the motion; all agreed.

Executive Director Suzanne Angell represented the Nominating Committee in Ms. Grogan's absence. Mrs. Angell read the list of the nominations for officers and executive committee members that have been tabled for 30 days to the Council. They were as follows; Paul Nagy, Chairman; Anthony Jones, Vice Chairman; Donnie Baggett, Treasurer; Elaine Mays, Chairman Emeritus, and members of the Executive Committee; Brenda Peterson, Benny Flowers, Al Hutchins, Jr., John Spann, and Danny Palmer. Mrs. Angell asked for any comments from the council. Chairman Nagy asked for a motion to accept this slate of Officers and Executive Committee members. John Spann made the motion to elect the slate of officers and executive committee members as presented by the Nominating Committee. Al Hutchins seconded the motion; all agreed. Chairman asked for a vote. There were no objections, all voted aye.

Chairman Nagy asked Deputy Director Barbara Reddick to present the Planning Report. She said she and some staff attended a meeting where the USDA was launching a Rural Partners Network. They are looking for agencies to connect our communities to resources that USDA has to offer. The program director, Lee Jones, was introduced to address the council. She said after Mr. Jones's presentation the Council will be asked to consider approval and submission of a letter of interest to the Rural Partner's Network. After the presentation, questions were solicited from the council. With no questions, Elaine Mays made a motion to submit the letter of interest for the Rural Partner's Network program. Gregg Close seconded the motion; all agreed. Mrs. Reddick asked for a vote to approve the Southwest GA Economic Recovery & Resilience Strategic Plan. A copy was provided to the Council in their packets. Elaine Mays made a motion to approve the Plan as presented. Benny Flowers seconded the motion; all agreed. Deputy Director Barbara Reddick continued with the rest of her planning report. She gave the update on ARPA Broadband awards for our region. Funded were Colquitt, Early, Lee, Terrell, and Thomas counties. CHIP applications for Boston, Grady/Cairo, Doerun, and Seminole were submitted in January. Dougherty County and Feeding the Valley Food Bank was awarded \$4m in CDBG Covid Relief funds. Pre-Hazard Mitigation Plans are as follows; Seminole County (in progress), Calhoun County (under review), Mitchell County (approved pending adoption), Decatur County (in progress), Worth County (under review), Grady County (new contract), and Terrell and Thomas counties have contracts that are being developed. A Community-Wide Assessment Brownfields Grant has been submitted and is under review. Announcements are expected in the Spring of 2022. She said that assistant Sansui Tolupe Mary is enrolled in school and will no longer be volunteering for the Commission. New staff has been hired; Sheena Stephenson has been hired as the new Planning Assistant and Keriston McMillan has been hired as a Planner.

Director of Finance Traci Hall presented the Financial Report for the period ending January 31, 2022, for the Council's approval. The General Fund had a net surplus of revenues over expenditures of \$57,975.77 bringing the ending fund balance to \$623,370.18. The FY22 unassigned fund balance per policy is \$365,652.97. The actual unassigned fund balance in excess of minimum is \$257,717.21. The Revolving Loan Fund had a surplus of revenues over expenditures of \$3,311.97 bringing the ending fund balance to \$618,850.37. The Regional Transportation Fund had a deficit of \$90,410.82 bringing the ending fund balance to \$2,692,588.26. The Pension Trust Fund had a deficit of \$221,950.71 bringing the fund balance to \$849,122.02. Chairman Nagy asked for a motion to accept the January 2022 Financial Report included in the meeting packets. Donnie Baggett made a motion to accept the January financial reports. Elaine Mays seconded the motion; all agreed.

Mrs. Angell proceeded to give the Executive Director's report. She welcomed new council members and introduced each of them. She reminded the new members that we will hold a New Council Member Orientation before the March meeting. Details will follow. The RLF CARES program has disbursed nine microloans totaling \$345,000 of the \$500,000 fund. This is 69% of the fund that has been utilized. Any entity that has not disbursed or committed at least 75% of their funds by April 1, will return 25% of their funds to EDA to be disbursed to other regions that may need them. We do have one complete RLF application for the RLF Board to review and we are hopeful that this loan will be approved and will put us above the 75% threshold. The FY22 Work Program Summary of Projects was mailed out in the Council packets. A new Grant Administrator started with the Regional Commission this month. Included in the packets was the most recent weekly legislative report provided to us by the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions (GARC) lobbyists, Mathews & Maxwell. House Bill 1180 that addresses the Regional Commissions and their Councils has been reintroduced. The mental health crisis continues to be a hot topic in the Federal and State Legislatures. The Department of Human Services FY 23 Transportation grant application was submitted, and rates were approved for FY23. These rates were much needed increases from previous year's rates. This will help make up some of the deficit we have experienced in our Transportation program this fiscal year. A follow up to the request from a council member in January concerning staff satisfaction surveys will be taken to the Executive Committee for review in March. Once again, we are having to change our payroll software program. Included in the packets was a flyer on 2022 AARP Community Challenge Grant Opportunity. Please share this information with your local governments so they can provide us with their potential projects.

Chairman Nagy stated if there was no other business, the next meeting will be March 31, 2022 at the Camilla Chamber of Commerce. Paul Nagy adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:27 p.m.

Paul Nagy, Chairman

Suzanne Angell, Executive Director