

**SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING
MINUTES**

**SGRC OFFICE • 1725 SOUTH GA PARKWAY, WEST • WAYCROSS, GA 31503
FEBRUARY 24, 2022
11:00 A.M.**

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME: Vice-Chair Lee Gowen called the meeting to order and welcomed members and guests.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Vice-Chair Gowen gave the invocation and then led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

<u>Atkinson County</u>	<u>Bacon County</u>	<u>Ben Hill County</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Futch, Lace	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Foskey, Richard	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Taylor, Steve
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Robert Johnson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Larry Taylor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Holt, Jason
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> McKinnon, Janice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coley, Lisa	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dunn, Jason
<u>Berrien County</u>	<u>Brantley County</u>	<u>Brooks County</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gaskins, Ronnie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Harris, Skipper	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Folsom, Patrick
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clayton, John	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Maefield, Barbara	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Morgan, Don
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Smart, Lisa	Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deshazior, Zurich
<u>Charlton County</u>	<u>Clinch County</u>	<u>Coffee County</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Everett, James	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Metts, Roger	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dovers, AJ
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gowen, Lee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Blitch, Brooks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paulk, Tony
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> O'Quinn, Dana	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hardee, Willie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Smith, Adam
<u>Cook County</u>	<u>Echols County</u>	<u>Irwin County</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Purvis, Dwight	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Walker, Bobby	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Carver, Scott
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Duke, Buddy		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hudgins, Horace
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bennett, Derry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Garner, Cheryl	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paulk, Mona
<u>Lanier County</u>	<u>Lowndes County</u>	<u>Pierce County</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fender, Dennis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Evans, Joyce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bennett, Neal
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Darsey, Bill	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Miller-Cody, Vivian	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brooks, Keith
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fitton, John	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Payton, Anthony	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brannen, Andy
<u>Tift County</u>	<u>Turner County</u>	<u>Ware County</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> McBrayer, Tony	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Whiddon, Dana	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thrift, Elmer
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Smith, Julie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lumpkin, Sandra	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> James, Michael-Angelo
Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Giddens, Brandi	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> King, Barbara

<u>Governor's Office</u>	<u>Lt. Governor's Office</u>	<u>Speaker's Office</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lovein, Norman "Bo"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stone, Keith	Vacant
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Daughtrey, Guy		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jones, Johnathon		

Staff Present

Courson, Scott
 Cribb, Lisa
 Highsmith, Wes
 Hobbs, Kimberly
 Lovett, Roberta
 Strom, Chris
 Vining, Kim
 Wilcher, Lance

Guests Present

Gore, James
 Lane, Kelly
 Leggett, Carlos
 Mclean, Elizabeth
 Moore, Darrell
 Stone, Robbie
 Walker, Alfalene

INSTALLATION OF NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS: Vice-Chair Gowen invited the three new members in attendance to come forward and take their oaths as incoming SGRC council members. The three new members installed were: Richard Foskey, Bacon County Chairman; Jason Holt, Mayor of Fitzgerald; and Don Morgan, City of Quitman Councilman.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF JANUARY 27, 2022 MEETING MINUTES: Vice-Chair Gowen reminded those present that the January minutes had been emailed to members and included in their council packets (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Steve Taylor made a motion to approve the January 27, 2022 meeting minutes. Vivian Miller-Cody seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

REVIEW AND ACCEPTANCE OF JANUARY 2022 REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE REPORT: Vice-Chair Gowen reminded those present that a copy of the January 2022 Revenue and Expenditure Report had been emailed to council members and included in their council packets (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Vivian Miller-Cody made a motion to accept the January 2022 financial report. Steve Taylor seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

CENTER FOR SOUTH GEORGIA REGIONAL IMPACT: SGRC Assistant Executive Director Chris Strom introduced Darrell Moore, Executive Director of the VSU Center for South Georgia Regional Impact, to speak to the council. The Center for South Georgia Regional Impact (SGRI) was formed in 2018 as part of Valdosta State University's (VSU) strategic plan. Mr. Moore explained that VSU is a Regional Comprehensive University within the University System of Georgia. VSU has seven colleges offering five associate programs, 58 bachelor programs, 42 master programs and seven doctoral programs. VSU, through the SGRI, partners with Georgia communities to offer solutions to real-world challenges while focusing on student success and opportunities for experiences outside the classroom and developing resources for communities in the region. Mr. Moore shared some projects where SGRI had partnered with local communities. These projects showcased the process the partnership with the SGRI, VSU teachers, students, local leaders and business owners used to determine the needs and challenges faced by local communities and businesses. As a result, they were able to address each challenge and find solutions to improve the issues to benefit the local economic development and the community.

Mr. Moore also shared that the SGRI had recently signed a contract to work with the Governor's Rural Strike Team. The Strike Team's mission is to support Georgia's rural communities by eliminating obstacles and enhancing competitive advantages through partnerships that create opportunity and success in rural Georgia. The purpose of the Strike Team is to bring jobs, investment and economic development to all corners of the state. The Strike Team had already started working with local and regional economic development professionals to conduct its first survey to map strategic assets in rural Georgia. The first survey covered a broad range of topics, including marketing, regional initiatives, sites/buildings and identifying challenges to economic development in their respective communities. Mr. Moore responded to questions from the audience and encouraged anyone wanting more information after the meeting to contact him or the SGRI office on VSU's campus.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS: Vice-Chair Gowen introduced SGRC Community & Economic Development Director Kimberly Hobbs to share Community and Economic Development (CED) Project Highlights to date. Ms. Hobbs referred those present to the handout in their packets (copy attached and made part of these minutes). She then gave an overview of the SGRC CED Division's current project numbers. SGRC's CED Division is currently overseeing 40 projects with \$28.1M in grant funds and a total project cost of \$48.9M. These 40 projects have created/retained 22,824 beneficiaries or jobs. Ms. Hobbs shared examples of the different types of funded projects in the region and explained each funding program and grant requirements. The SGRC CED funding programs available are the: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG); CDBG-Employment Incentive Program (EIP); CDBG-Mitigation (MIT); CDBG-Coronavirus (CV); EDA Public Works; One-Georgia Equity; USDA Community Facilities; Community HOME Investment Program (CHIP); and Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

Ms. Hobbs answered questions from the audience about eligible projects, minimum and maximum project costs and private investment requirements. She then encouraged those present to contact SGRC CED staff to discuss their community's needs or how a community can get involved in an economic development project.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES/UPDATES:

Grants: SGRC Community & Economic Development Director Kimberly Hobbs directed council members to the project status list in their packets (copy attached and made part of these minutes). Ms. Hobbs stated that the list includes the status of current projects the Community & Economic Development department has in progress. She encouraged those present to review the project list to see the scope of projects in progress throughout our region. She then advised them to contact SGRC Community & Economic Development staff regarding any project listed or potential projects they may be interested in for their communities.

Planning: SGRC Community & Economic Development Director Kimberly Hobbs referred those present to a handout listing the various plans that local governments are required to submit and the deadlines for submission (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). She encouraged council members to review the upcoming deadlines for their communities and contact SGRC Planning staff with any questions.

Division Reports: SGRC Community & Economic Development Director Kimberly Hobbs referred those present to the division reports in their packets (copy attached and made a part of


these minutes). Ms. Hobbs asked those present to review the reports to see what the RC is doing in the region each month.

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- 1.) **Recognition of Guests:** Vice-Chair Gowen recognized Kelly Lane, DCA Region 11 Representative and Executive Director of the Georgia Academy for Economic Development; and Elizabeth Mclean, Sr. Project Manager with the Georgia Department of Economic Development. He thanked both visitors for attending the SGRC council meeting.
- 2.) **Recognition of Representation:** Vice-Chair Gowen recognized Charlton county for having 100% representation at the council meeting.
- 3.) **ACCG Update:** James Everett stated that the 2022 ACCG Legislative Breakfast would be held Wednesday, March 9th, from 7:00am – 11:00am at the James H. Sloppy Floyd Building in Atlanta, GA. Mr. Everett also announced that the 2022 ACCG Annual Conference would be held April 28th – May 1st in Savannah, GA.
- 4.) **GMA Update:** Barbara Maefield announced the GMA Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) Regional Training would be held at the SGRC office in Waycross on March 22nd from 9:00 am – 4:00 pm. Ms. Maefield also shared that the 2022 Spring Session of the Newly Elected Officials Institute would be held March 16th – 18th at the UGA Tifton Campus Conference Center, and the Spring 22 Robert E. Knox, Jr. Municipal Leadership Institute would be held April 12th – 15th at Callaway Lodge and Spa in Pine Mountain, GA.
- 5.) **DCA Update:** Kelly Lane shared that the GA Homeowner Assistance Fund had recently launched. The GHAF is a \$354M fund allocated to GA through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 designed to help eligible homeowners with financial hardships caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Ms. Lane encouraged those present to share the news with their communities and to visit www.georgiamortgageassistance.ga.gov for more information.
- 6.) **GDEcD Update:** Elizabeth Mclean shared that in the first half of FY22 (July-December 2021), economic development projects across Georgia had resulted in the creation of almost 24,400 jobs and a \$9.8 billion investment in the state. Ms. Mclean also shared that counties whose Job Tax Credit tiers changed for 2022 would need to file a Notice of Intent (NOI) before March 31, 2022.
- 7.) **Meeting Notice:** Vice-Chair Gowen announced that the next SGRC Council meeting would be held on Thursday, March 24th location TBD.

ADJOURN: As there was no further business to conduct, Vice-Chair Gowen asked Willie Hardee to bless the meal, and the meeting adjourned.


Joyce Evans, Chair


Lee Gowen, Vice Chair