

SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
HYBRID COUNCIL MEETING
MINUTES
THE VENUE • 319 ALBANY AVE. WEST • PEARSON, GA
MAY 26, 2022
11:00 a.m.

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME: Chair Joyce Evans called the meeting to order and welcomed members and guests.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Chair Evans asked Willie Hardee to give the invocation, then he 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"/> Willis, Buddy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Foskey, Richard	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Taylor, Steve
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Johnson, Robert	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Taylor, Larry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Holt, Jason
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stone, Robbie	<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
Vacant	<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"/> Paul, Steven
<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"/> Michael-Angelo James
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

Backe, Elizabeth
 Courson, Scott
 Cribb, Lisa
 Hobbs, Kimberly
 Lovett, Roberta
 Rodgers, Kimberly
 Strom, Chris
 Vining, Kim

Guests Present

Bednarek, Kim
 Highsmith, Wes
 Liles, Parker
 Ponsell, Gary
 Westberry, Diane

INSTALLATION OF NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS: Chair Evans invited the two new members in attendance to come forward and take their oaths as incoming SGRC council members. The two new members were Buddy Willis, Atkinson County Commissioner, and Robbie Stone, Atkinson County's Private Sector representative.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF APRIL 28, 2022 MEETING MINUTES: Chair Evans reminded those present that a copy of the April 28, 2022 minutes had been emailed to members (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Don Morgan made a motion to approve the minutes. Vivian Miller-Cody seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

REVIEW AND ACCEPTANCE OF APRIL 2022 REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE REPORT: Chair Evans reminded those present that a copy of the April 2022 Revenue and Expenditure Report was emailed to council members and included in their council packets (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Barbara Maefield made a motion to accept the April financial report. Don Morgan seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

THE OKEFENOKEE EXPERIENCE: Chair Evans called SGRC Planning Director Elizabeth Backe to introduce the speaker for the Okefenokee Experience. Ms. Backe introduced Kim Bednarek, Executive Director of the Okefenokee Swamp Park. Ms. Bednarek thanked the council for the opportunity to give an update on a new project in the region. She then began her presentation titled, The Okefenokee Experience: Constructing a New Engine for Education, Research and Economic Development in Rural Southern Georgia. She explained that the Okefenokee Swamp Park (OSP), a nonprofit partner of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, created The Okefenokee Experience to bring attention to the region's natural attractions through tourism, outdoor recreation, education and research. Ms. Bednarek stated that the Okefenokee Experience's goal is to expand and integrate the Okefenokee Swamp's entrances and offerings into a collaborative experience and to strengthen the ability to advance all of the Swamp's ecosystem services. It will offer top-flight learning experiences, a state-of-the-art science and research center, a cultural history museum and archive, and a dark skies observatory. Ms. Bednarek stated that the Okefenokee Experience aims to bring some of the attention typically reserved for the state's coastal attractions to the Okefenokee. In closing, she shared that Senator Jon Ossoff had recently short-listed the Okefenokee Experience project for a Congressionally Directed Spending Request. Ms. Bednarek then answered questions from the audience.

REVIEW OF DRAFT SOUTHERN GEORGIA RC FY2023 WORK PROGRAM BY DIVISION: Chair Evans left the meeting early, so Vice-Chair Lee Gowen presided over the remainder of the session. Vice-Chair Gowen called upon SGRC Executive Director Lisa Cribb to introduce the Work Program presentations. Ms. Cribb referred those present to the PowerPoint slides in their packets (copies attached and made part of these minutes) for reference during the presentations. Georgia State law requires that the SGRC compile a work program for planned activities in the upcoming fiscal year. In June, the council will vote on the resolution to adopt the Work Program. She explained that each RC department would give detailed overviews of their programs and planned activities during the April, May and June meetings for the upcoming fiscal year. Thus, allowing the council time to review the draft work program, make suggestions, or ask questions before adopting it. During May's meeting, the following program representatives presented PowerPoint presentations highlighting the various activities for their department for the upcoming fiscal year: Roberta Lovett, Workforce Development Director; Kimberly Hobbs, Community and Economic Development Director; and Kimberly Rodgers, Aging Communications/Outreach Specialist.

REVIEW OF DRAFT SOUTHERN GEORGIA RC FY2023 BUDGET: Vice-Chair Gowen called on SGRC Executive Director Lisa Cribb, who referred council members to a page in their packet summarizing the estimated budget for FY2023 (copy attached and made part of these minutes). Ms. Cribb explained that the document was an overview of the projected budget. She said that RC Finance Director, Kelly Schultz, had met with program directors to arrive at this large-scale view of the projections for FY2023. Ms. Cribb explained that these projections include staff salary projections in the different program areas and any expected direct charges for the upcoming fiscal year. She also explained that these estimates include any pass-through funds for program areas. Ms. Cribb stated that over the next month, Ms. Schultz and staff would continue refining this information to assemble a more specific line-by-line budget for each program area, including related contracts, grants, and projects. She explained that a line item budget would be prepared for presentation and review by the council at June's meeting. Ms. Cribb concluded her report and encouraged council members to review and become familiar with the summary.

RESOLUTION TO ADOPT SGRC 2022 REGIONAL PLAN IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT: Vice-Chair Gowen called on SGRC Planning Director Elizabeth Backe to speak to the council. Ms. Backe referred those present to a copy of the resolution in their packet to adopt the 2022 Regional Plan Implementation Program Annual Report (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Ms. Backe reminded the council that the RC held a public hearing for the Annual Report before the March 24, 2022 council meeting and stated that DCA approved the draft submittal on May 10, 2022. She noted that the presented resolution is the one-year update required by DCA. Barbara King made a motion to adopt the Annual Implementation Program Report for the Regional Plan. Barbara Maefield seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

REPORT OF NOMINATION COMMITTEE: Vice-Chair Gowen presented the results from the Nomination Committee for the Executive Committee Vacancy and the Election of Council Secretary. Vice-Chair Gowen stated that the Nomination Committee held a meeting on May 26, 2022, before the council meeting at 10:30 a.m. He noted that the Committee voted to recommend Dennis Fender for the Executive Committee vacancy. Mr. Fender will fill the spot left vacant by Former Mayor Matt Seale. Then, he stated that the Nomination Committee would like

to recommend Keith Stone to be elected to serve as Council Secretary, which was also left vacant by Former Mayor Matt Seale. Barbara Maefield made a motion to approve the Nomination Committee's recommendations for the vacancy and the election of Council Secretary. Neal Bennett seconded the motion. With no other discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES/UPDATES:

Grants: SGRC Community and Economic Development Director Kimberly Hobbs referred those present to a copy of the project status list included in their member packets (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Ms. Hobbs stated that the project status list shows funded projects and projects that have been applied for in our region, grouped by county. She advised those present to contact RC Community and Economic Development staff regarding projects listed in their packet or any potential projects they may be interested in for their communities.

Planning: SGRC Planning Director Elizabeth Backe 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 schedule for upcoming deadlines for their communities and to contact SGRC Planning staff with any questions.

Division Reports: SGRC Executive Director Lisa Cribb referred those present to the division reports in their packets (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Ms. Cribb 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 Representation:** Vice-Chair Gowen recognized Brantley, Charlton and Lowndes counties for having 100% representation at the council meeting.
- 2.) **ACCG Update:** James Everett stated that the 2022 ACCG Summer Session would be held June 2-3, 2022 in Pine Mountain, GA, at Callaway Gardens.
- 3.) **GMA Update:** Barbara Maefield announced that the GMA Annual Convention would be held June 24-28, 2022 in Savannah, GA.

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



Joyce Evans, Chair



Keith Stone, Secretary