

In the REGION

City of Douglas LWCF Grant Awarded for Unity Park Rehabilitation Project

In October 2020, the SGRC's Community & Economic Development division submitted a Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) application for the City of Douglas requesting funding for renovations at Unity Park. Recently, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources announced that Douglas' application had been approved and the City was being awarded \$278,000 for the project. The City will be providing an equal match, plus \$15,000 extra in leverage/labor to make this project possible. This was only 1 of 27 LWCF grants awarded in Georgia.

While Unity Park has been used for recreation for decades, its use is changing due to the City's new recreation priorities. For instance, the baseball/softball fields that were for adults, are now being redesigned as part of this project for Little League play including new lighting, bleachers, and shade cloth covering. The existing fencing



Unity Park

will also be moved to modify the fields to accommodate Little League. For younger users of the park, a 1,477 square foot playground unit will be installed; and for older adults who wish to remain healthy, 9 stationary exercise pieces will be installed for a wellness park component.

Many areas of the park have also been used so frequently that they need major repairs or replacement. These areas include the Basketball

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The Southern Georgia Regional Commission proudly serves Atkinson, Bacon, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Cook, Echols, Irwin, Lanier, Lowndes, Pierce, Tift, Turner, and Ware Counties.

Community and Economic Development

City of Douglas LWCF Grant Awarded for Unity Park Rehabilitation Project (continued)

Courts, which will be completely rehabilitated with new goals and resurfaced courts, as well as complete rehabilitation of the picnic shelter and replacement of the tables and grills. New sidewalks and sign replacements will be done for safety reasons, and benches will be installed for the comfort of visitors.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund was established by Congress in 1964 to fulfill a bipartisan commitment to safeguard natural areas, water resources, and cultural heritage, and to provide recreation opportunities to all Americans. Using zero taxpayer dollars, the fund invests earnings from offshore oil and gas leasing to help strengthen communities, preserve history, and protect national endowment of lands and waters.

For assistance with this and other grants, please contact Community & Economic Development Director Kimberly Hobbs at (229) 333-5277.

SGRC Offers Free Transportation for Senior Citizens For Essential Trips and COVID-19 Vaccination Appointments

Southern Georgia Regional Commission, in partnership with the GA Department of Human Services and MIDS Transportation, Inc., provides transportation for various human service agencies in its 18-county region.

For senior citizens over the age of 60, the SGRC currently provides free transportation for trips to senior centers, medical appointments, pharmacies, grocery stores, etc.

Additionally, the SGRC can provide seniors with free transportation to receive a COVID-19 vaccination. After scheduling a vaccine appointment, seniors may contact a local senior center to schedule this free transportation. To find a COVID Vaccination site, follow this link to <https://dph.georgia.gov/locations/covid-vaccination-site>.

Lowndes County residents may contact the Area Agency on Aging at 1-888-732-4464 to schedule the free transportation.



Information Technology (IT)

SGRC-IT Division Offers Helpful Advice to Local Governments on Assessing IT Needs

Many local governments are faced with growing demand for Information Technology Services (ITS) while confronting a strained economy. Cities and counties are continuing to face significant challenges and new opportunities where technology innovation is essential. Many are beginning to assemble their budgets for the new fiscal year. While this applies to all aspects of local government, it is especially true for IT assets that the government relies on to function. Therefore, IT support and hardware replacement should be an important part of the budget.

While incidental IT-related problems will arise from day to day, IT technicians often respond to critical IT issues that are entirely avoidable, more costly, and more disruptive simply because an upgrade, replacement of software, or hardware was not planned for. In many of these cases, another old adage was substituted - "if it isn't broke, don't fix it." While this approach makes trimming a budget easy, it also sets users and local governments up for failure, and usually at the most inopportune time.

At this time of year, local governments are encouraged to take a serious look at the computers and IT infrastructure they rely on to keep going each day. The following questions may help assess how well IT needs have been planned for in the next fiscal year.

- In critical service areas, what are the ages of the desktops and servers being used?
- Are any of the above out of manufacturer warranty?
- Are any critical services provided on computers running an unsupported operating system or software?
- Do all computers on the network have up-to-date virus protection?
- Does the replacement cycle for computers and servers extend beyond 5 years?
- Is there a regular backup schedule for critical servers and staff computers?
- Are network switches, routers, and other devices labeled, organized, and not at the end of their engineered life?
- What software support and upgrades are purchased but not in use? Why?

By taking an objective look at both resources and needs, local governments can take steps to avoid unplanned emergencies and unexpected upgrades and start a self-assessment. Once a local government has assessed its IT needs, the SGRC-IT Division can provide assistance to help plan the next steps.

Larry Adams, SGRC Director of IT Services, reminds local governments, "The SGRC-IT Division encourages everyone to view and maintain IT infrastructure just like all other tools that are vital to local governments. A computer upgrade may not generate the excitement within a department that a new patrol car, bucket truck, or even new office furniture does, but it is a necessary part of doing business that must be planned for." For more information about preparing an IT plan for the next fiscal year, please contact Larry Adams at ladams@sgrc.us.

Transportation and Environmental

Implementing the New River Project Post-BMP Water Quality Monitoring

The funding for the New River Project was awarded to the SGRC in 2017 by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) through a Section 319(h) Grant made available under the Federal Clean Water Act. This project primarily focuses on implementing Best Management Practices (BMP's) with the intent to improve water quality associated with fecal coliform bacteria levels in the New River Watershed. SGRC staff implemented BMP's for 13 agricultural operations and 9 residential septic systems and partnered with the City of Tifton on two projects. The two projects were the construction of a dog park for Tifton residents to enjoy and the mapping of stormwater infrastructure to help the city identify future projects to be included in their comprehensive plan. There are also two agricultural BMP's that are in the process of being installed that will conclude the project.

SGRC Environmental Project Manager, Megan Parker, was responsible for executing the "New River Targeted/Post-BMP Monitoring Plan" submitted to Georgia EPD in January 2020. The Monitoring Plan oversaw sample collection, analysis, and reporting to Georgia EPD both through scheduled reports (quarterly, and final sampling results report), and data entry to the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream (AAS) website. The New River Project focuses on mitigating the impacts of the presence of fecal coliform bacteria,

but the monitoring for the presence of this bacterium is done through the indicator species *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*). *E. coli* is a bacterium commonly found in the digestive tracts of warm-blooded mammals. The presence of *E. coli* in waterways is not uncommon; however, the levels are referred to as an indication of the likelihood of pathogens. Elevated *E. coli* levels have a correlation to increased probability of dangerous strains of *E. coli*, protozoa, and viruses within the sampled waterway. For this reason, Georgia has established coliform forming units per milliliter (CFU/mL) thresholds for the various waterway use classifications throughout the state, and established protocols for reporting high/extreme CFU/mL levels.

Historical data from the "TMDL Evaluation for 2 Segments of the New River in the Suwannee River Basin" shows the northern-most site (S-6669 in the AAS database) as having a bacterial count of between 5,000 and 8,000 CFU/100 mL from the end of February to the end of March 1998. The threshold for CFU/mL bacterial counts in the State of Georgia is 1,000 CFU/mL before additional monitoring or regulatory action is needed. With the completion of the majority of BMP implementations in the watershed, the bacterial counts for this site from the beginning of moni-

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Transportation and Environmental

Implementing the New River Project Post-BMP Water Quality Monitoring (cont.)

toring in February 2020 until January 2021 included readings ranging from 766 to 266 CFU/mL. At other monitoring sites most of the readings during this time period had a 0 CFU/mL E. coli count. The 2 Urban, 6 Residential/Septic, and 13 Agricultural BMP Implementation Projects—as of January 2021—had been successful in helping to address the fecal contamination to well below the regulatory guidelines in place from Georgia Adopt-A-Stream. The SGRC will

suggest that GAEPD begin steps for the declassification of the New River Watershed from the 305(b)/ 303(d) List of Impaired Streams. For more information or to discuss grant opportunities for watershed in your communities contact Megan Parker, Environmental Project Manager at mparker@sgrc.us or 229-333-5277.

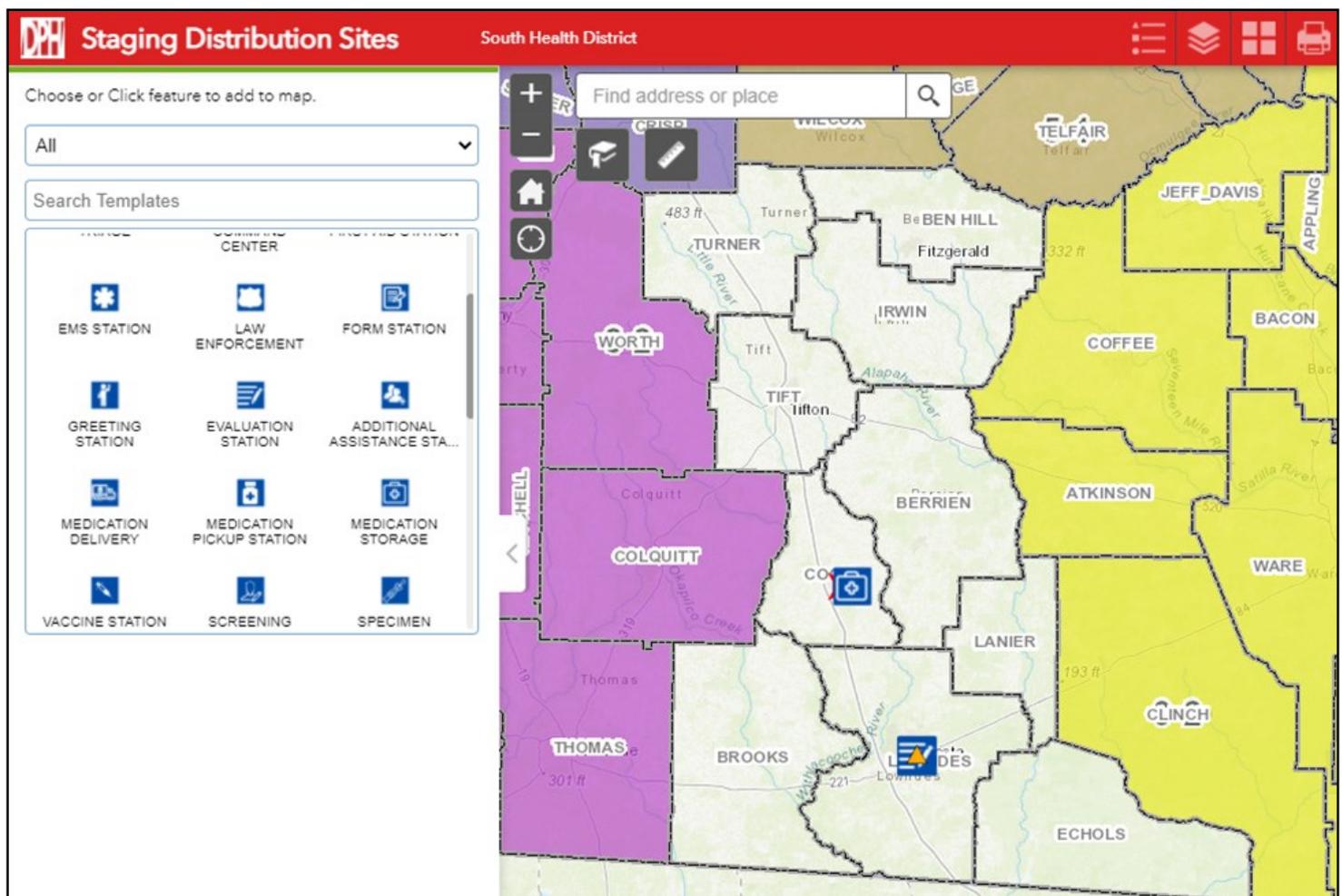


New River Watershed project sampling site

Geographic Information Systems

GIS Tools Assist in COVID Testing and Vaccination Site Logistics

In January 2021, the SGRC GIS Division delivered a new, interactive mapping solution to the South Health District (SHD), to aide in setup and logistics of COVID-19 testing and vaccination sites. The web map allows SHD personnel to use aerial photography and place icons for specific stations, directions of flow, entrances, and exits, creating a visual plan to review prior to implementation. This visual plan remains available and live via the interactive web map for adjustment as necessary.



South Health District Map with COVID-19 test site and COVID-19 vaccine site icons

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Local Government Services

Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Seeking Success Story Nominations

The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) is soliciting stories of successful plan implementation to highlight in their repository. The planning staff with SGRC can provide assistance with the submission of a nomination. If a community has completed a successful project with positive outcomes and would like assistance with submittal of a success story, please let the SGRC Planning Division know prior to March 17, 2021. Submittals are optional, however they are required annually for PlanFirst communities. Success stories chosen for inclusion by DCA will be highlighted on their website, blog, and GIS story map.

To ensure a competitive submittal, the success story should be identified in the community's Comprehensive Plan and preferably also listed as a project in the Community Work Program. The project should be unique to the community. The following are the criteria for inclusion required by DCA:

- ⇒ The local plan called for the project or activity to be implemented, preferably in the Community Work Program. *Please list plan references i.e. section and page number.
- ⇒ The project or activity resulted from the plan (it was not added to the plan after a decision was otherwise made to undertake the activity).

- ⇒ The project or activity has happened.
- ⇒ The project or activity had a successful outcome.
- ⇒ The project or activity had a significant impact on the community (jobs created, investment, etc.).
- ⇒ Include a photo (if applicable)
- ⇒ Photo credit (if applicable to photo included)

In the narrative portion of the nomination application, DCA asks that each success story address the following:

- ⇒ Why the story submitted as a success story
- ⇒ How it is included/stated in the Comprehensive Plan
- ⇒ State the activity has already occurred
- ⇒ Describe how the project had a successful outcome
- ⇒ That the community or the leadership supported the activity

The nomination should be related to a best practice, as determined by DCA. These practices are addressed in each Comprehensive Plan. They include Economic Prosperity, Resource Management, Efficient Land Use, Local Preparedness, Sense of Place, Regional Cooperation, Housing Options, Transportation Options, Educational

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Local Government Services

Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Seeking Success Story Nominations (continued)

Opportunities, and Community Health Projects that were successful story nominations in 2020 included utility meter replacement, park improvements, software updates to improve operations, downtown revitalization, sidewalk improvements to create pedestrian-friendly connections to downtown, housing and neighborhood revitalization, airport improvements, safe sidewalks for children walking and biking to school, streetscape improvements, and more.

Any additional supporting documentation or illustrations that support the nomination should be included in the nomination application. The due date for submission to DCA is March 31, 2021. Anyone who believes their community has a successful story to tell is encouraged to submit a nomination. Visit the following website to view examples of existing success stories chosen by DCA for inclusion in their repository: <https://apps.dca.ga.gov/toolkit/gaexamples.asp>.

For additional details and assistance, SGRC Planning staff are available at 229.333.5277.



Pictured above is the Miracle League of Lowndes County's Baseball Field that was selected for a 2019 DCA Success Story Project

Area Agency on Aging (AAA)

Senior Center Directors Receive Georgia Gerontology Society Citations of Merit

In January 2021, Georgia Gerontology Society (GGS) named Fran Kinchen, Director of the Leroy Rogers Senior Center in Tifton, and Lynn Platt, Director of the Pierce County Senior Center in Blackshear, as recipients of 2020 Citation of Merit Awards.

Kinchen has been employed at the center as the director for the past nine years. Kinchen retired from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College as the Executive Assistant to the President of the college. Scott Courson, Director of Aging Services for the SGRC-AAA, said, “We are so fortunate to have Fran in this role and we are grateful for all she does for our seniors. Her passion for serving others is clearly evident. We certainly celebrate this with her and we congratulate her on this honor.”

Platt has been the director of the center in Pierce County for over four years. She said that she was motivated to work at the center because it provides a place for seniors to gather, learn new skills, share their expertise, and participate in activities. About Platt, Courson said, “Lynn is a treasure. Her enthusiasm is contagious and she works diligently to keep seniors active and to facilitate programming that gets them out of their homes and into the community, while still following all of the necessary protocols to keep them safe. She has really implemented some creative events during the COVID-19 pandemic and we congratulate her on this award.”



Pictured above left to right are Pete Pyrzenski, Tifton City Manager, and Fran Kinchen, Director of the Leroy Rogers Senior Center

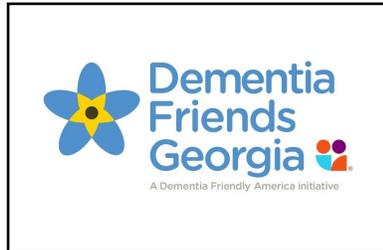


Pierce County Senior Center Director Lynn Platt, an employee of Action Pact, Inc.

Area Agency on Aging

Dementia Friends Sessions Continue in Virtual Format

The SGRC-AAA, in partnership with the Georgia Division of Aging (DAS), is working to create dementia-friendly communities and improve the lives of people living with dementia. According to their website, the DAS reports that 140,000 people in Georgia are living with dementia, and they continue to be vital members of the communities. It is important that everyone has information about dementia and that is why Dementia Friends (DF) exists.



DF is a social action movement that aims to improve society's understanding of dementia. The goal of DF is to help everyone in a community understand five key messages about dementia, how it affects people, and how everyone can make a difference for people living with dementia. The next session is planned for March 30, 2021, at 10:00 am. Anyone may register in advance for this virtual information session at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMtde2qqzMjHtNV52X1Rrrz6BoorRTLLex3>

After registering, participants will receive a confirmation email and meeting link. For more information, please contact Kimberly Rodgers at (912) 285-6097 or krodgers@sgrc.us.



Connie Miss to Coordinate Southern Georgia CARE-NET

The Southern Georgia CARE-NET is a coalition of family and professional caregivers who collaborate and work to improve services for caregivers in their community. Connie Miss was recently named the coordinator of the CARE-NET for the SGRC-AAA.

Miss replaces Betty Bryant in this role and she may be reached at (912) 285-6097 or via email at cmiss@sgrc.us to learn more about the coalition and how to become involved to improve caregiver services and supports.



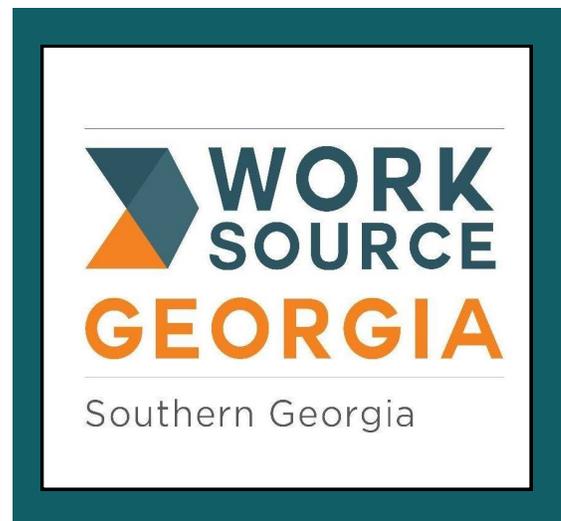
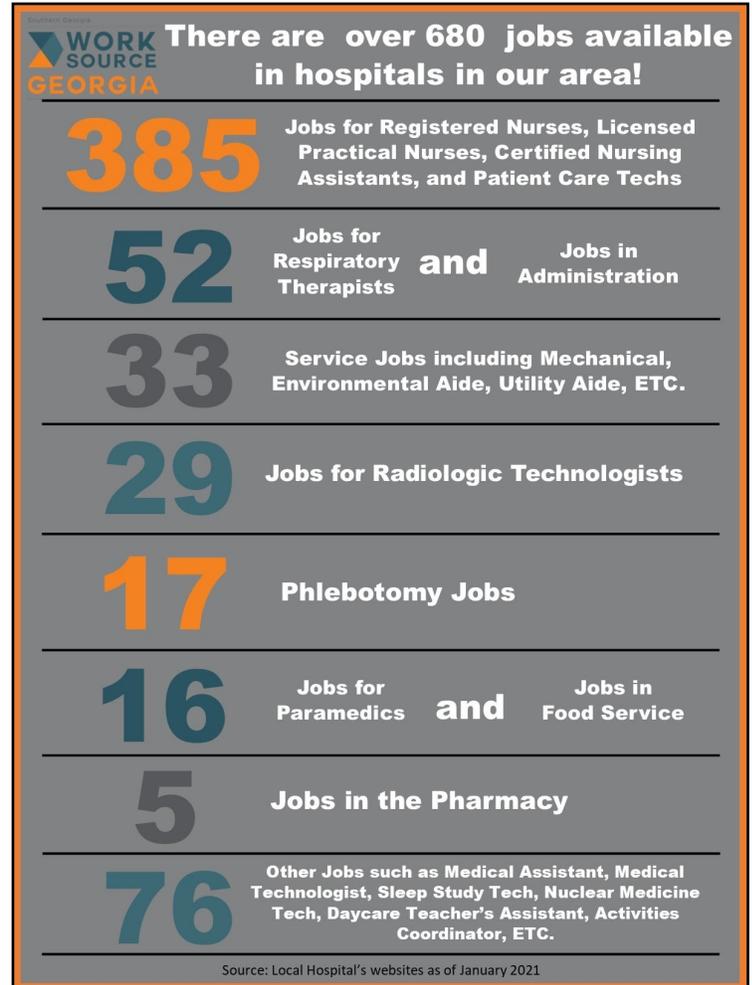
Workforce Development

Southern Georgia WorkSource Announces Healthcare Jobs

Not unlike other parts of the country, there are a relatively large number of job openings for healthcare workers in the Southern Georgia area. In fact, in January 2021, a review of local hospital's websites indicated that there were over 680 hospital jobs available in the SGRC region.

WorkSource Southern Georgia, through the sector partnership called the South Georgia Healthcare Group, tallied and organized relevant data from eight hospitals in the 18-county service area of the SGRC and created the list to the right. The available healthcare jobs were located at the following hospitals: [Dorminy Medical Center](#), [Irwin County Hospital](#), [Clinch Memorial Hospital](#), [Memorial Satilla Health](#), [Bacon County Hospital and Health System](#), [Coffee Regional Medical Center](#), [South Georgia Medical Center](#) and [Southwell](#). Anyone interested in a healthcare job is encouraged to contact the hospital websites linked above.

Worksource Southern Georgia coordinates the development of a well-trained labor force with skills in both the region's current employers and as a benefit that may attract new business and industry to the area. Worksource offers on-the-job training, work experience, and much more! For more information, contact Amy Jones at 912-285-6097 or via email at ajones@sgrc.us.



Small Business Lending

SGADC Outperforms Expectations on SBA's SMART Analytical Review of the Program

In the last several years, SBA has rolled out a number of different reviews that are required for active Certified Development Corporations (CDCs) to determine any credit risk they may pose to the SBA. These reviews are carried out by the Office of Credit Risk Management and the Office of Financial Assistance. The Southern Georgia Area Development Corporation (SGADC) was selected in January 2020 to submit a 60-plus-item-report to SBA to ensure compliance regarding: 1) Solvency and Financial Condition; 2) Management and Board Governance; 3) Asset Quality and Servicing; 4) Regulatory Compliance; and 5) Technical Issues and Mission (SMART). SGRC Lending staff spent many hours gathering the required 60-plus-items of materials and documentation which were to be submitted to SBA as part of the report and the report was submitted to SBA well before the deadline in February 2020.

SBA's response to the report came in December 2020, and the SGADC received an "Acceptable" score and only a few items of "Recommendations for Improvement." All of the recommendations were addressed and resolved at the SGRC Loan Board Meeting January 26th, 2021. SGRC Lending staff worked extremely hard to comply with all regulations and maintain all required records pertaining to the SBA program, and the hard work has paid off. In a Zoom Meeting with SBA

Reviewers, SGRC Lending staff and SGRC Executive Director Lisa Cribb, SBA Reviewers pointed out that while they performed nearly 50 of these SMART reviews this year only 3 resulted in "no findings." The SGRC Lending Division is very pleased to have been one of few reviews with "no findings."

For more information on SBA Lending or any other assistance available to small businesses please contact the SGRC Lending Division at rdorsey@sgrc.us.



Contact the SGRC

SGRC Council 2021 Meeting Schedule

Meeting Locations TBD

March 25, 2021 – 11:00 am

April 22, 2021 – 11:00 am

May 27, 2021 – 11:00 am

June 24, 2021 – 11:00 am

July - No Meeting

August 26, 2021 – 11:00 am

September 23, 2021 – 11:00 am

October - No Meeting

October 28, 2021 -

Area Officials Appreciation Dinner
(subject to change)

November – No meeting
(combined with December meeting)

December 9, 2021 – 11:00 am
(subject to change)



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