

GEORGIA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING

Hall County Government Building
Gainesville, Georgia
March 27, 2014

MINUTES

The GMRC Council held its regular meeting on Thursday, March 27, 2014, 6:00 p.m. at the Hall County Government Office Building in Gainesville, Georgia. The meeting was hosted by Hall County Commission.

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME

Chairman Sam Norton called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for their attendance. Hall County Commission Chairman Dick Mecum welcomed everyone to Hall County and their government facility. Mr. Mecum recognized County Commissioner Billy Powell; Randy Knighton, County Administrator; Patty Laine, Probate Judge; Gerald Couch, Sheriff; Charles Baker, Clerk of Courts; and Darla Eden, Tax Commissioner. He also recognized Jessica York, Executive Assistant and thanked her for making all the arrangements for this meeting. The meal tonight was prepared by Oakwood Occasions, which is located on the fourth floor of the Hall County Office Building.

INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

Vice-Chairman Dean Scarborough recognized special guests Barton Lowery, Senator Isakson's Office; Kathy Papa, Department of Community Affairs; and Cheryl Smith, Georgia Department of Economic Development.

INVOCATION/ PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/DINNER

L.J. Harrison, GMRC Chaplain, gave our devotion, invocation, and followed with the pledge of allegiance.

PROGRAM

Executive Director Danny Lewis introduced Heather Feldman. She is the Director of Economic Development for the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission. Ms. Feldman presented a program on Local Food and Farm Assessment. The farming tradition in Georgia dates back over two centuries with agricultural production playing a dominant role in North Georgia's economic history. The importance local food plays on a community's economy is now more important than ever before. Residents want to know where their food comes from and learn the story behind growing the food. Building the local food system also helps protect farmland and sustain rural heritage and lifestyles. The north Georgia region is home to nearly 15,000 farms and over 21,000 farmers. In an effort to promote regionalism, in 2013, Georgia Mountains RC partnered

with three other RC's to prepare a Local Food Assessment for all of north Georgia in order to assess the gaps between local food supply and local demand and provide recommendations for the future. The purpose of this research was to analyze agricultural production and local food spending for 34 Appalachian counties in north Georgia. The assessment employed surveys and other primary and secondary data to analyze trends in agriculture, document the food and farm products currently produced, and examine the relationships between foods grown in the region and consumption and spending by local residents and visitors. The study spanned 34 counties and 741 completed the survey. 53% of the survey responses came from the GMRC region, which is more than the other 3 regions combined. 20% of the surveys came from Rabun County alone. The study found that residents are eager to grow the local food system and provided the following recommendations: promote and support north Georgia farms and food, help farmers identify and access the training and support they need, highlight and develop connections between farms and businesses, promote positive experiences around food, and promote north Georgia food and farms to tourists.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Chairman Norton asked for any comments regarding the minutes of the February 27, 2014 meeting. Doug Wayne made a motion to accept the minutes as written and was seconded by Travis Turner. Motion carried unanimously.

REPORTS

Executive Director's Report

Danny Lewis reported that two cities in our region suffered devastating fires within a two week time period. The City of Clarkesville's fire destroyed seven businesses on the square which resulted in the loss of 50 jobs. City of Dahlonega also suffered a fire destroying two businesses and the loss of 30 jobs. Some were able to immediately move to another location and resume business, but others could not. Immediately the surrounding cities and counties along with the Department of Community Affairs and Workforce Development got together to see what assistance they could provide. The GMRC's Mobile Training Units were on site for ten straight days assisting people who had lost their jobs with filing for unemployment, developing resumes, and searching for jobs. A meeting was set up in Clarkesville for entities that could offer any assistance with grants, loans, job offers, etc. to let the individuals and businesses know what was available for them. Mr. Lewis stated that he was proud to be a part of this region.

The Legislative Appreciation Dinner will be held on May 29th and will be hosted by Dawson County and City of Dawsonville. The legislative session is over and all Council Members need to personally invite their legislators to this event. To be able to spend some one-on-one time and discuss issues in your area, offer to provide them transportation to this meeting.

Adam Hazell introduced GMRC's new Regional Planner, Caleb Davidson. Caleb is a Hall County native and is a Clemson graduate.

Financial Report

Becky Sievers, Director of Finance, presented the February Financial Report. The Cash Position as of February 28, 2014 showed a bank balance of \$381,384, receivables of \$214,476 and payables of \$285,686, with an uncommitted cash balance of \$310,624. The Revenue Expenditure Report for the period of July 1, 2013 – February 28, 2014 indicated the Actual Revenue Income of \$2,729,760, Expenditures of \$2,819,302, with 67 percent of the budget being expended for the fiscal year. L.J. Harrison made a motion to accept the report and was seconded by Sonny James. Motion carried unanimously.

Digital Economy Plan Stakeholders Meeting

Faith Bryan, Director of Information Services, informed the Council that all Regional Commissions in Georgia have received a contract through Georgia Technology Authority to create a Digital Economy Plan. The RCs will analyze broadband and internet usage throughout our region. Your assistant and input is needed on trends and needs for our area. The RCs are reaching out to different businesses, entities, and group for this information. Two meetings have been set up for April 10th and April 17th at the GMRC Office. Attendance at only one meeting is needed and RSVPs are requested by April 4th.

Audit Services

Bill Chafin, Finance/Audit Committee Chairman informed the Council that the Auditor that has performed the Audit for the RC for a number of years has changed firms. Chris Edwards is now with McNair, McLemore, Middlebrooks & Co., LLC, which is a larger firm in Macon. Mr. Edwards has offered to continue to provide our audit services for the same rate for the next five years. The Finance/Audit Committee, for the sake of continuity, recommends that the Executive Director be allowed to sign the letter of engagement with this firm for one year. This comes as a recommendation from the Executive Committee and Finance Committee. Jim Conley made a motion to allow the Executive Director to sign the letter of engagement with McNair, McLemore, Middlebrooks and Company. Motion was seconded by Doug Wayne and carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Organization of Ethics

Kevin Tallant, GMRC Attorney, referred to the Resolution that was presented to the Council last month, which would establish this group as an Organization of Ethics through the Georgia Municipal Association. To do this, the GMRC Bylaws would be amended and the Resolution would need to be passed. The Bylaws require any amendment to be sent to the Council ten days prior to voting. The Council has had this information for 30 days. If the Resolution is passed, all Council Members would need to sign this document. This comes as a recommendation from the Executive Committee. Tray Hicks made a motion to approve the Resolution and Bylaw amendment to make the Council an Organization of Ethics and was seconded by Randall Toussaint. There being no discussion, motion passed unanimously. Mr. Tallant stated that there would be a second reading of the Resolution at the April meeting to allow us to secure all the signatures on the document.

NEW BUSINESS

Annual Work Program Update

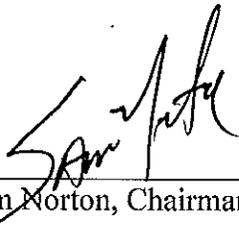
Adam Hazell, Director of Planning informed the Council that it is time for the Annual Work Program Update. This is a list of projects that the RC is taking on above and beyond the contractual obligation to the State. There have been no additional projects added to the project list that was submitted during the fall, just extension of some anticipated completion dates. This Update must be submitted to DCA for their review and consideration. Motion to approve the submittal of the Annual Work Program Update to DCA was made by Bill Chafin and seconded by Leslie George. Motion passed unanimously.

DOOR PRIZES

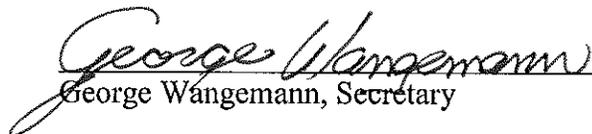
Hall County provided several door prizes that were given away to the lucky winners.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.



Sam Norton, Chairman



George Wangemann, Secretary

**GMRC COUNCIL
ATTENDANCE SHEET
2013-2014**

COUNTY	COUNCIL MEMBER	7/25/13	8/29/13	9/26/13	10/10/13	11/21/13	12/6/13*	1/30/14	2/27/14	3/27/14	4/27/14	5/29/14	6/26/14
BANKS	Danny Maxwell	P	A	P	A	A	P		P	P			
	Jerry Payne	P	P	P	A	P	P		P	P			
	Leslie George	P	P	P	P	P	P		P (R)	P			
	Mike Berg	P	A	P	A	A	P		P	P			
DAWSON	James Grogan	P	A	A	P (R)	P	P		P	P			
	Charlie Auvermann	A	P	P	P	P	A		P	P			
	Brian Tam	P	P (R)	P	P	P (R)	P (R)		A	P			
	Ralph Perry	P	A	P	P	A	P		A	A			
FORSYTH	Randall Toussaint	(N)P	P	A	A	P	A		A	P			
	David Strickland	P	P	P	P	P	P		P	P			
	Ralph Owens	P	P (R)	P	A	P	P		P (R)	P			
	Gerald Voyles	P	P	P	A	P	P		P	A			
FRANKLIN	Sonny James	P	P	P	A	A	P		A	P			
	Audrey Turner	P	P	P	A	P	P		P	P			
	Ken Schubring			(N)A	P	P	P		P	P			
	Dick Mecum	P (R)	A	P	P	A	P (R)		P (R)	P			
HALL	George Wangemann***	P	P	P	A	A	A		P	P			
	Deborah Mack	P	P	P	P	P	P		P	A			
	Bill Myers	P	P	P	A	P	P		P	P			
	Tray Hicks	P	P	A	A	P	A		P (R)	P			
HART	Bill Chafin	P	A	P	P	P	A		A	P			
	Chris Dockery	P	P (R)	P	A	P	P		A	P			
	Sam Norton*	P	P	P	A	P	P		P	P			
	J.B. Jones	P	A	P	P	A	P		P	A			
Cancelled due to Inlement Weather													

December is not an official business meeting—Attendance is not counted

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2013-2014

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RABUN	Greg Jones	(N) R	A	P (R)	P (R)	A	P		P	P			
	Debbie Chisholm	P	P	A	A	P	P		P	A			
	Douglas Wayne	P	P	P	P	P	P		P	P			
	Dean Scarborough**	P	P	P	A	A	P		P	P			
STEPHENS	Jeanette Jamieson								(N) A	P			
	L.J. Harrison	P	P	P	A	P	P		P	P			
	Bill Kendall	P	P (R)	P	P (R)	P	P		A	P			
TOWNS										(N) A			
	David Stovall	P	P	P	P	P	A		A	P			
	Lamar Paris	P	A	P	A	P	P		A	P			
	Jim Conley	P	P	P	A	P	P		P	P			
UNION	Mitch Griggs	P	P	A	P	P	P		A	P			
	Travis Turner	P	A	P (R)	A	P (R)	A		P (R)	P			
	Annie Sutton	P	P	P	P	A	P		A	A			
	Bill Black	P	P	A	P (R)	A	P		A	P			
WHITE	Rex Farmer	P	P	P	P	A	P		P	P			
	Paul Kreager	P	P	P	A	P	P		A	A			
	Will Wade	A	P	P	A	P	A		P	A			
GOV APPT.	Larry Miller					P (N)	P		P	P			
	Peter Hill	P	A	P	P	P	A		P	A			

P = PRESENT A = ABSENT R = REPRESENTED V = VACANCY E = EXCUSED N = NEW MEMBER

* Chairman
** Vice Chairman
*** Secretary