GEORGIA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING

The Ridges Resort & Marina
Hiawassee, Georgia
April 24, 2014

MINUTES

The GMRC Council held its regular meeting on Thursday, April 24, 2014, 6:00 p.m. at The Ridges Resort and Marina in Hiawassee, Georgia. The meeting was hosted by Towns County.

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME

Chairman Sam Norton called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for their attendance. Bill Kendall, Towns County Sole Commissioner welcomed everyone to Towns County and Lake Chatuge. Mr. Kendall recognized Mayor Andrea Gibby, City of Young Harris; Mayor Barbara Mathis, City of Hiawassee; Hiawassee's City Council Members, Joan Crothers, Stephen Smith and wife, Mary; Pat Smith and husband, Jimmy; and Janet Allen and husband, Johnny.

Commissioner Kendall also introduced and asked Hilda Thomas, General Manger of Georgia Mountains Fairgrounds and Eric Seifarth, President of the Wine Growers Association to speak on two new events that are being held in Hiawassee. Ms. Thomas invited everyone to attend the Appalachian Wine and Jazz Festival on June 13-14 at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. Mr. Seifarth spoke about the wineries in Georgia. Twenty years ago, there were seven wineries in Georgia and now there are 42. He predicted that in the next ten years, this number will double. The majority of these wineries are located in Lumpkin, White, and Towns Counties, which are in our region. Further information on these two topics were placed on the tables.

INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

Chairman Norton recognized special guests Senator Steve Gooch, Stami Williams, Aide to Sen. Chambliss' Office; Kathy Papa, Department of Community Affairs; and Frank Riley, Chestatee Chattahoochee RC&D.

INVOCATION/ PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/DINNER

Jerry Payne gave our devotion, invocation, and followed with the pledge of allegiance.

PROGRAM

Executive Director Danny Lewis introduced our speaker, Mr. Ron Simmons. Mr. Simmons is the Area Director for the University of Georgia's Small Business Development Center. He spoke on working with local resource partners, such as the RC to help make loans to small businesses. The SBDC Office provides low cost training and free consulting services including assistance with business plan development, market analysis and marketing strategies, financial analysis, compliance and legal issues, and preparation of loan submission for individuals who

want to start their own businesses or expand an existing one. They work closely with the GMRC RLF program or people in our region that need loans.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

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

REPORTS

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Danny Lewis reported that the Workforce Development (WD) Board met earlier today. This Board is very active and challenges the WD staff. They are determined to get more people employed or into education to change their type of employment.

Mr. Lewis recognized the RLF Committee and Chairman Jim Conley. The RLF Committee has worked very diligently at making loans to individuals in our region to start a new business or expand their existing one. The Committee has approved a number of loans and the available balance of loan money is low, but that has not stopped them from making loans. Mr. Lewis commended the Chairman, Committee, and staff for their hard work.

Governor Deal was in three of our counties yesterday to sign pieces of legislation. During his speech, he was very complimentary of WD and the programs they are performing. The Governor talked about the program that allows inmates to get their GED while incarcerated. This program started in our region with GMRC Workforce Development starting it. Also, WD is working with Department of Labor on training service men and women to get their CDL license. Most of them, when they return from duty, do not have a license to drive large equipment but have done so during their deployment.

Mr. Lewis was proud to announce that that WD assisted the people in Clarkesville that were affected by the fire and that all have either found other jobs or have been put back into the education system. We are striving to make a difference in our region.

Financial Report

Becky Sievers, Director of Finance, presented the Financial Report. The Cash Position as of March 31, 2014 showed a bank balance of $480,085, receivables of $247,516 and payables of $276,499, with an uncommitted cash balance of $451,102. The Revenue Expenditure Report for the period of July 1, 2013 – March 31, 2014 indicated the Actual Revenue Income of $3,287,446, Expenditures of $3,286,450, with 75 percent of the budget being expended for the fiscal year. Doug Wayne made a motion to accept the report and was seconded by Bill Kendall. Motion carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Organization of Ethics

Kevin Tallant, GMRC Attorney, explained the Organization of Ethics resolution and document was presented, approved, and adopted at the March Council Meeting. It is being presented again

in order to get all Council Members signatures on the document before it is submitted. He encouraged any Council Member that has not signed the document to do so. The deadline for submittal is April 30, 2014.

NEW BUSINESS

FY15 GMRC Budget Review Process

Finance Committee Chairman Bill Chafin informed the Council that the FY15 Budget has been reviewed by the Finance and Executive Committees and is ready for the Council to review. This Budget has a 16% reduction in total funds due to sequestered fund of WD which ends on June 30, 2014. There is a small increase in Dues due to an increase in the population figures. Fringe Rate has been increased due to the possibility of a 10% increase in health insurance premiums. This Budget includes a 3% increase in salary for all 33 full-time and one part-time employees. A copy of the FY15 Budget will be emailed to all Council Members tomorrow for your 30 day review and will be considered at the May Council Meeting.

Revolving Loan Fund Report

Jim Conley, Committee Chairman, thanked everyone that served on the RLF Committee. Over the past year, the Committee has made some good decisions on loans in our region. He also thanked the Committee and Council Member that have referred potential loans to them. The Committee has just closed on a loan for a towing service in our region. The RLF has a remaining $400,000 left to loan.

ANNOUCEMENTS

The May meeting will be held at Dawson County Middle School and will be our Legislative Appreciation Dinner. Council Members were encouraged to contact and invite their Legislators.

DOOR PRIZES

Towns County and Georgia Mountains Fair provided a number of door prizes that were given away to the lucky winners.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council Meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Sam Norton, Chairman

George Wangemann, Secretary