

GEORGIA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION  
COUNCIL MEETING

Lavonia Railroad Depot/Welcome Center  
Lavonia, GA  
April 25, 2013

MINUTES

The GMRC Council held its regular meeting on Thursday, April 25, 2013, 6:00 p.m. at the Railroad Depot / Welcome Center in Lavonia, Georgia. The meeting was hosted by Franklin County and City of Lavonia.

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME/DINNER

Chairman David Stovall called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for their attendance. He also expressed his appreciation to Franklin County and City of Lavonia hosting the meeting at this beautiful Depot.

Mayor Ralph Owens, City of Lavonia welcomed everyone to the Railroad Depot. He commented that the citizens of Lavonia are very proud of the renovated Depot and are proud to be able to co-sponsor this meeting with the help of Franklin County. City Manager Gary Fesperman recognized attendees representing City of Lavonia; Councilman Harold Harbin, and wife, Susan; Councilman David Howell; Mayor's wife, Judy Owens; Gary's wife, Mary Jo Fesperman; Lyn Allen, Building Authority Executive Director; Marie Morse, Downtown Development Authority/Main Street Director; Vivian Young, Welcome Center Director; M.J. Mizer, local Radio Station; and Margaret Ayers, Northeast Georgia Bank. Chairman Thomas Bridges recognized attendees from Franklin County; City Manager Billy Morse; and Commissioner David Strickland and his wife, Chris.

INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

Vice Chairman Sam Norton recognized special guests, Kathy Papa, DCA; Bill Kokaly, Aide for Cong. Collins' Office; Tate O'Rourke, Aide for Sen. Isakson's Office, and Danette Smith, GDOL Office.

INVOCATION/ PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/DINNER

Executive Director Danny Lewis gave our invocation, and followed with the pledge of allegiance.

## PROGRAM

Chairman Stovall called on Gary Fesperman for a presentation about the Lavonia Railroad Depot/Welcome Center.

Mr. Fesperman stated that the Depot's renovations were done in three phases. He explained the different phases, timeline, and the work that went into the complete restoration of the Depot. Phase I was the recomplete rehab of the exterior of the building. The cost of this Phase was \$110,000. Phase II and III was the complete rehab of the interior which totaled \$240,000. All of the work was funded by \$100,000 in ARC grant funding and \$250,000 from the City Reserve Fund. He thanked the GMRC staff for their assistance in the preparation of the ARC Grant application. City of Lavonia is very proud of the Depot and it would not have been possible without the help from GMRC and the Appalachian Regional Commission. Tours were available after the meeting.

Planning Director Adam Hazell introduced Ms. Tamaya Huff with the Georgia Department of Transportation. Ms. Huff is the GDOT's Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator for the State. She has been on staff with DOT for eight years and presently works with various local, state, and regional transportation governments and organizations, and other agencies to promote bicycling and walking as healthy, non-polluting, and efficient modes of transportation in the State of Georgia.

Ms. Huff works with project managers and local planners to get many miles of bike facilities included in GDOT roadway construction projects. She also works with the public on their needs and desires for certain types of facilities in their communities that support bike and pedestrian traffic. DOT will use the current contracts with the RCs in Georgia for an opportunity to provide documents and support in terms of outreach that go into determining the type of bike/ped facility that's needed. Also, DOT is working on the Bike/Ped Safety Action Plan and are collecting comments, looking at statewide crashes, and are looking at opportunities to implement programs to support better pedestrian safety.

Chairman Stovall commented that there is a Rails-to-Trails project in our region that starts in Cornelia, Georgia and runs all the way to Franklin, SC. It runs along the Tallulah Falls old rail bed that is 99% still intact. There are several greenway projects that are currently being worked on along this trail. The next SPLOST for Habersham and Rabun Counties will possibly be put toward this project. Mr. Lewis also added that there is a second bike/ped route that the RC is working on that starts in Gainesville and runs to White County. Chairman Stovall stated that they would look forward to working with Ms. Huff on these projects in the future.

## CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Chairman Stovall asked for any comments regarding the minutes of the March 28, 2013 meeting. Leslie George made a motion to accept the minutes as written and was seconded by Ralph Owens. Motion carried unanimously.

## REPORTS

### Executive Director's Report

Mr. Lewis reported since the RC took the RLF program back over about three or four years ago, there have not been many loans made. He was excited to announce that prior to this meeting the RLF Committee approved three loans for applicants in this area. He encouraged everyone to let people know about our RLF program and possibly put some of this loan money to work in their area.

The RC has three different ways that we can make a difference in our area. Economic Development helps to acquire grants and funds to build industries, infrastructure, health facilities, etc. to help provide jobs. RLF also provides loan money to companies that also provide job opportunities. Workforce Development provides opportunities to people who have been laid off or need further education to obtain a new job. Through these three departments we are creating jobs and helping people make a difference.

John Phillips and Jessica Williams with Workforce Development are also working on another program that will allow youth that are in the Youth Detention Center, for whatever reason, to obtain their GED. Now they have two choices. They can go out into the community and be an active part and get a job or they can remain in jail. We want to be a part of making a difference in their lives.

Sarah McQuade is working with two bike/ped trail projects in our region. She just returned from attending a planning conference in Greenville, SC.

All City and County Managers (Mayors, Chairman, or Clerks if no manager is available) are invited to attend the Spring City/County GMRC Managers meeting and luncheon on May 16<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. It will be hosted by Helen's City Manager, Jerry Elkins. Lunch is \$10 and is dutch-treat. Mr. Lewis encouraged all cities and counties to attend.

We are hosting the GARC Economic Development Conference at Brasstown Valley Resort on May 5-7<sup>th</sup>. Chairman Stovall will join me for the GARC Policy Officials functions during this session.

James Thompson, State ARC Director has arranged two meetings of the ARC folks to visit our area. On May 10<sup>th</sup>, the ARC Federal Co-Chair Earl Gohl and Guy Land will be in the NEGRC, GMRC, and NWGRC region on a Food Tour. They will visit Jaemor Farms and the Mountain Fresh Creamery in Clermont during this two day visit. We want them to learn about the local food in our region. Also on May 16 and 17<sup>th</sup>, ARC Executive Director Thomas Hunter and the folks from Union County, TN will be visiting our region to tour the new Cannery and Farmers Market built in our Union County. At the Winter ARC Meeting they were interested in building this type facility and wanted to see ours. Mr. Hunter was at the facility in July 2012 and was so impressed he wanted to show it to these folks. Lamar Paris will be hosting this group for dinner on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

## Financial Report

The Financial Report was given by GMRC Director of Finance, Becky Sievers. The Cash Position as of March 31, 2013 showed a bank balance of \$494,292, receivables of \$161,612 and payables of \$338,135, with an uncommitted cash balance of \$317,769. The Revenue Expenditure Report for the period of July 1, 2012 – March 31, 2013 indicated Revenue Income of \$932,723, Expenditures of \$946,355, with 67 percent of the budget being expended for the fiscal year. Will Wade made a motion to accept the report and was seconded by Dean Scarborough. Motion carried.

## Planning Department Update

Planning Director Adam Hazell spoke on two different issues. In our region, there are 22 communities that have Planning Commissions, which is a planning board that is responsible for reviewing applications for subdivisions and rezonings. These appointed officials are required to have training on their specific responsibilities. The Planning staff has always offered this training to our region. Mr. Hazell has spoken to some about performing this training and has offered to do an all day training for anyone needing this at the RC office or will come to your city/county and do a more specific training session on areas that you need. This training is provided by the planning staff through the DCA contract and is at no cost to your city/county.

Mr. Hazell also informed the Council that the Department of Human Services (DHS) has spoken to the RC about partnering in the Coordinated Transportation Program. Changes to the federal policy funding levels have made it where DHS (the State agency that is responsible for the sponsoring the transit services that most counties provide) have more funding and they are trying to move to where everywhere over the state would have a coordinated transit program. That means at the county level you not only have the county transit program that provide the senior services, but you would also have another transit program that would provide transportation for disabled persons, or households that need a ride and do not have a vehicle. From the State standpoint, it would be the administrators that would be processing the contracts. DHS would only have 12 contracts instead of 162. DHS has approached the RC about being the administrator for our area. The RC would not be coordinating any buses, scheduling trips, or doing anything that Legacy Link is currently doing. The RC would be processing the bills and the actual contracts from the services provided through DHS. Our reimbursement would be strictly based on a per ridership basis at 25 cents per ride. Mr. Hazell distributed the draft contract and some questions and answers about the contract. He asked the Council to please review this contract.

## OLD BUSINESS

### Food Survey Update

Patrick Larson thanked everyone who filled out the Food Survey or passed it along to family and friends. The RC had an overwhelming response. Presently from the 34 total RC counties in Georgia, 494 responses have been received. But, approximately 65% of the responses have

come from our region. Rabun County alone was responsible for 28% of these responses. May 1<sup>st</sup> is the deadline for all responses to be turned in.

Budget Update

Bill Chafin, Finance Committee Chairman reported that the Finance Committee met and reviewed the FY14 Budget. It is now being reviewed by the Executive Committee for 30 days and will be passed along to the Council next month. He thanked Becky Sievers and Danny Lewis for their hard work on this year's budget and also to the Committee for their time and service.

NEW BUSINESS

Legislative Appreciation Dinner

Next month will be the GMRC Legislative Appreciation Dinner in Dawson County. He encouraged each Council Member to call and invite your local legislators to attend this meeting. The location is undetermined at this time, but notices will be sent out.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Stovall announced that Dawson County Commission Chairman Mike Berg is the new ACCG President. Mr. Berg was unable to attend due to the ACCG Annual Conference being held in Savannah. Chairman Stovall was proud to announce that Mr. Berg is the second recent ACCG President from our region in about three years.

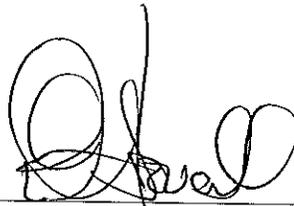
Several announcements were made regarding music festivals, parades, spring flings, and other activities that will be happening within the next couple of weeks in our region.

DOOR PRIZES

Door prizes that were donated by City of Lavonia and Franklin County were awarded to the lucky winners.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council Meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.



David Stovall, Chairman



L.J. Harrison, Secretary