

GEORGIA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION  
COUNCIL MEETING  
September 28, 2023

MINUTES

The GMRC Council held its regular monthly meeting on September 28, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. at Unicoi State Park located at 1788 Hwy 356, Helen, Ga 30545. The meeting was sponsored by White County and the City of Cleveland.

CALL TO ORDER

GMRC Chairman Ken Schubring called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and welcomed all attendees.

WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS

White County Board of Commissioners Chairman Travis Turner welcomed all in attendance to White County. Chairman Turner thanked Senator Steve Gooch for attending the meeting. Mr. Turner went on to recognize White County Board of Commissioners Terry Goodger and Craig Bryant; Billy Pittard, County Manager; Shanda Murphy, County Clerk and HR Director; David Murphy, EMA Director; Don Strength, EMA Division Chief; Bryson Barret, Public Information Officer; John Sell, Economic Development Director; and Nan Bowen, City of Cleveland Councilwoman.

INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

Vice-Chairman Courtney Umbehant recognized special guests; Mike Fisher, WGI; Kathy Papa, Department of Community Affairs; Margret Ryder, UGA Small Business Development Center; Melanie Garrett, UGA Small Business Center; Tammy Rauch, Technical College System of Georgia. Mr. Umbehant also recognized all the E-911 and Emergency Management representatives in attendance.

INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/DINNER

Ms. Deborah Mack gave the devotion, invocation, and followed with the Pledge of Allegiance.

PROGRAM

Aleisha Rucker-Wright, Deputy Executive Director for Georgia Communications Authority, Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency presented a program on NextGen 911.

A copy of the presentation can be found at <https://www.gmrc.ga.gov/gmrcouncil>.

## CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES AND ATTENDANCE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Secretary Bruce Palmer asked for any comments or a motion regarding the minutes and attendance report for the August 31, 2023 Council meeting. Billy Thurmond made a motion to approve the minutes as written and Denise McKay seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

## REPORTS

### Chairman's Report

Chairman Schubring was pleased to announce that GMRC had recently been designated as an Age Friendly Community by the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. The Chairman asked Adam Hazell to give an overview on the designation. Mr. Hazell gave a brief overview explaining that the designation shows that communities are aware of the different needs of their senior citizens and working towards meeting those needs. AARP will be attending a Council meeting soon to present certificates to the counties that make up the GMRC as well as provide more detailed information on the designation.

### Executive Directors Report

Ms. Feldman recognized former GMRC Council member, Audrey Turner, and thanked her for attending the meeting.

Executive Director Feldman was excited to announce that GMRC is once again the recipient of three National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Impact Awards for the following projects:

- Banks County Martin Bridge Infrastructure Project - Economic Development
- Supervisor and Industry Leadership Academy - Workforce Development
- 2022 Economic Base Assessment – Planning Department

Ms. Feldman congratulated and thanked all staff who worked on these impactful projects for the region.

GMRC held its annual staff retreat on September 14<sup>th</sup> at Lake Lanier Islands. It was an extremely productive day of cross-training, team building, and learning. Ms. Feldman thanked GMRC Vice-Chairman, Courtney Umbehant and Secretary, Bruce Palmer for attending and speaking to the staff.

Heather Feldman and Patrick Larson recently attended the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Annual Conference in Ashland, KY. Sessions included workforce development, recovery-to-work, entrepreneurship, tourism, capacity building, and infrastructure. Ms. Feldman reported that it was a great opportunity to network with peers and colleagues from the 13-state Appalachian Region. Ms. Feldman also had the opportunity to speak to the full Board of the Appalachian Regional Commission.

The Technical College System of Georgia is conducting their annual performance and financial monitoring of WorkSource Georgia Mountains the week of October 2<sup>nd</sup>. Executive Director Feldman thanked the WorkSource, Finance, and Admin teams for pulling together the information in preparation for monitoring.

GMRC will have exhibit space at the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce's Small Business Resource Fair which is being held on October 10<sup>th</sup> from 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at Lanier Technical College. Heather Feldman and Laurin Yoder will be there to provide information on the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF).

Executive Director Feldman announced that GMRC is currently planning for the 2024 Council meeting calendar and asked that any community that would like to host a monthly GMRC Council meeting, to please reach out to Gina Kessler at [gkessler@gmrc.ga.gov](mailto:gkessler@gmrc.ga.gov) or 770-538-2607.

It was also announced to be on the lookout for an email from Ms. Kessler the first week in October to vote for the Council Member of the Year Award which will be given at our Annual Meeting and Awards Dinner on Friday, December 1<sup>st</sup>.

#### OLD BUSINESS

None

#### NEW BUSINESS

##### Annual Meeting and Awards Dinner

Annual Meeting Committee Chairwoman Deborah Mack announced that the GMRC 61<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting and Awards Dinner will be held on Friday, December 1, 2023. The reception will start at 4:30 p.m. with dinner and awards to follow at 6:00 p.m. Ticket prices are \$45. The committee took the survey results from last year into consideration and there will be changes to the entertainment. The link to purchase tickets and sponsorship opportunities has been sent out. Communities that purchase 10 – 12 tickets can have a table reserved. All other seating will be on a first come first serve basis, unless noted otherwise in a sponsorship. The deadline for advance ticket purchases is Wednesday, November 29<sup>th</sup>. Tickets can be purchased at the door for exact cash or check. Sponsorship level opportunities are the same as last year and are very important to help make this a successful event. The deadline for sponsorship is Monday, November 27<sup>th</sup>.

##### GDOT Transit Contract Resolution

GMRC Planning Director Adam Hazell explained that as it pertains to the GMRC's annual contracts with GDOT, the resolution is a standard resolution that is required by GDOT for any agency participating in their 5304 program on behalf of rural transit services. This particular resolution concerns GMRC's application for the FY25 contract

and would be in support of update to rural transit assessments. The GMRC has passed the same resolution in previous years regarding the same contract.

It is the recommendation of GMRC staff to approve the resolution authorizing the filing of an application with the Department of Transportation, United States of America, and Georgia Department of Transportation, for a grant under Title 49 U.S.C., Section 5304.

Chairman Schubring asked for a motion to approve the resolution. Courtney Umbehant made the motion and Bill Chafin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### CEDS/Regional Plan Update

GMRC Economic Development Director Patrick Larson explained that the Economic Development Administration (EDA) requires that there is an annual update to the CEDS/Regional Plan. A copy of the proposed updated document was sent out with the agenda packet to be put on the table for the required review period and approval of the document will be put to a vote at the October meeting. Some things included in this year's update include:

- Recreation Projects
- Electric Vehicle Charging Stations
- Increasing Broadband Connectivity
- Artificial Intelligence Technology

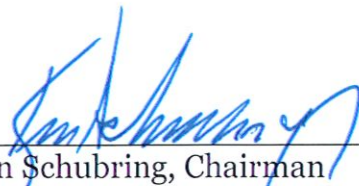
Mr. Larson thanked the GMRC CEDS Committee Chairman John Sell, as well as all the committee members for their work on getting the updates completed. Should anyone have questions about the update please contact Patrick Larson at [plarson@gmrc.ga.gov](mailto:plarson@gmrc.ga.gov).

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Schubring announced that the October Council Meeting will be held in Lumpkin County.

#### ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

  
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Ken Schubring, Chairman

  
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Bruce Palmer, Secretary

**GMRC COUNCIL  
ATTENDANCE SHEET**  
2023-2024

COUNTY	COUNCIL MEMBER	July 23	Aug 23	Sept 23	Oct 23	Nov 23	Dec 23	Jan 24	Feb 24	March 24	April 24	May 24	June 24
RABUN	Kent Woerner	(R)	A	A									
	Althea Bleckley	P	P	P									
	Douglas Wayne	P	P	A									
STEPHENS	Tara Simmons	P	A	P									
	David Austin	P	P	(R)									
	James Addison	P	E	P									
TOWNS	Cliff Bradshaw	P	P	P									
	Liz Ordiales	P	(R)	(R)									
	Denise McKay	R	P	P									
UNION	Lamar Paris	P	P	A									
	Jim Conley	P	P	(P)									
	Mitch Griggs	P	P	P									
WHITE	Travis Turner	(P)	(P)	P									
	Nan Bowen	P	P	P									
	Susan Cromer	A	P	P									
GOV APPT.	VACANT	V	V	V									
	Angela Whidby	P	A	P									
	VACANT	V	V	V									
LT. GOV APPT.	VACANT	V	V	V									
SPEAKER APPT.	VACANT	V	V	V									

P = PRESENT      A = ABSENT      (R) = REPRESENTED      (P) PROXY VOTE      V = VACANCY      E = EXCUSED      N = NEW MEMBER      X = NO MEETING

\* Chairman  
\*\* Vice Chairman  
\*\*\* Secretary

