

GEORGIA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION  
*COUNCIL MEETING*

March 26, 2026

MINUTES

The GMRC Council held its regular monthly meeting on Thursday, March 26, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. at the Bridge Creek Inn located at 60 S. Main Street, Clayton, Georgia 30525. The City of Clayton hosted the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

GMRC Chairman Courtney Umbehant called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. and thanked the City of Clayton for hosting.

WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS

City of Clayton Mayor Pro Tem Stacy Fountain welcomed all in attendance and introduced Roy Quilliams, City of Clayton Mayor; Colt Woodall, City of Clayton Councilman; and Scott Crane, Rabun County Commissioner. Mr. Fountain also introduced the City of Clayton Manager Trudy Crunkleton and thanked her for making all of the arrangements for the meeting. Mr. Fountain announced that he is being deployed on military duty and that Colt Woodall will represent him on the GMRC Council while he is away.

INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

Vice-Chairman Ron Matheson recognized special guests Cheryl Smith, Georgia Department of Agriculture; Luke Hetland, North Georgia Field Director for Lt. Governor Burt Jones; and Connor Land, Field Representative for Congressman Andrew Clyde.

INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/DINNER

GMRC Council Member David Lee gave the devotion and invocation. Chairman Umbehant led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Vandiver Restaurant at Bridge Creek Inn catered dinner and dessert was provided by Henri's Bakery.

PROGRAM

Chairman Umbehant advised all in attendance that the speaker for the evening was unable to attend for personal family reasons and would be rescheduled for a future meeting.

## CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES AND ATTENDANCE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

GMRC Secretary James Addison asked for any comments or a motion regarding the minutes and attendance report for the February 26, 2026 Council meeting. Doug Wayne made a motion to approve the minutes as written, and Sam Norton seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

## REPORTS

### Chairman's Report

Chairman Courtney Umbehant reported that he attended the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) and the Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA) Conference along with the Vice-Chairman Matheson, Secretary Addison, Executive Director Feldman, Patrick Larson, and Laurin Yoder. During the conference the group visited Capitol Hill to meet with the Congressional Representatives of the GMRC service area. Chairman Umbehant felt that what he learned in the sessions, the networking opportunities, and discussions with legislators during the conference will benefit the communities of the region as well as him in his roles as Mayor of Lavonia and Chairman of the GMRC Council. Mr. Umbehant thanked all the council members for their service to the GMRC Council.

### Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Heather Feldman reported that Chris Dockery had resigned as the Lumpkin County Board of Commissioners Chairman to pursue his campaign for State House and welcomed Jeff Moran, acting Lumpkin County Chairman, to the GMRC Council. Mr. Moran will be representing Lumpkin County until a new Chairman is elected.

Executive Director Feldman, GMRC Officers, as well as GMRC staff members Patrick Larson, and Laurin Yoder attended the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) and the Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA) annual conference in Arlington, VA. It was an informative conference with topics on housing, infrastructure, and transportation. Patrick Larson presented on creative placemaking for communities while Laurin Yoder served as a moderator for his session.

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission received a SEED grant from the Georgia EPD to support regional water planning in the Upper Savannah River Basin. As currently proposed, it will include 10 or more counties spread across three regional commissions (GMRC, NEGRC, CSRA) and would help organize a voluntary partnership among utility managers to facilitate coordination of water resource planning. For the GMRC Region – this would include Banks, Franklin, Hart, and Stephens County. The partnership would be similar to the existing North Georgia Water Partnership that serves 18 counties in the Coosa, Etowah, and Chattahoochee basins. The SEED grant is for \$75,000 and will be matched by funds already pledged by several participating governments. The GMRC will receive approximately \$27,000 for its participation in the project, which would revolve around data collection and analysis.

Executive Director Feldman explained that WorkSource Georgia Mountains is required to have a One-Stop Operator that coordinates with the Georgia Department of Labor, Technical College System of Georgia, Vocational Rehab, The Legacy Link, and local technical colleges within its office. On March 9, 2026 GMRC – WorkSource Georgia Mountains issued a Request for Proposals for the One-Stop Operator for WorkSource. Proposals are due on April 9, 2026 and the opening of proposals will occur on April 14, 2026. The Workforce Development Board will approve the One-Stop Operator at their April meeting.

The Georgia office for the Appalachian Regional Commission will host a second special round of ARC infrastructure funding in FY26. Pre-applications for funding are due June 19, 2026, and full applications are due July 10, 2026. The funding limit is \$2,000,000 per project. The following types of projects are eligible:

- Water system expansions, improvements, new construction
- Wastewater system expansions, improvements, new construction
- Stormwater management systems
- Road realignment, especially in industrial areas/employment centers
- Sidewalk improvements, expansions, construction, especially in downtown areas or those areas walkable to a commercial/industrial district/employment center
- Bike paths and trails must show a significant economic impact such as:
  - Providing access to a commercial or employment center
  - Data showing number of businesses/citizens served

Executive Director Feldman reported that the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions (GARC) will once again be hosting the annual Economic Development Conference at Lake Lanier Islands Resort on May 3-5, 2026. Sessions on data centers, housing, brownfields, and disaster recovery will all be highlighted during the conference. Those interested in attending should reach out to Mrs. Feldman.

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs' PlanFirst Program is now accepting nominations from interested communities. PlanFirst is DCA's program to recognize and reward communities that clearly demonstrate an established pattern of successfully implementing their local Comprehensive Plan. Nominations are due by May 15, 2026 and any community interested in applying may request the GMRC write their application at no cost. Please contact Adam Hazell at 770-538-2617 or [ahazell@gmrc.ga.gov](mailto:ahazell@gmrc.ga.gov).

GMRC's Clerks' Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 15, 2026 beginning at 9:00 a.m. to noon at the GMRC's WorkSource Office. This is a great opportunity for the region's clerks to network with each other and discuss topics of mutual interest and benefit. This year's topic will be the new annexation portal. Please contact Gina Kessler prior to April 8, 2026 to RSVP.

Executive Director Feldman was pleased to report that GMRC is now fully staffed, as the open positions at WorkSource Georgia Mountains have been filled.

Mrs. Feldman wished GMRC Council Member Stacy Fountain strength, safety, and peace as he heads out on deployment, as well as a safe return home.

### OLD BUSINESS

None

### NEW BUSINESS

#### Surplus of GMRC's 2006 Ford Explorer

Executive Director Feldman explained that one of Georgia Mountains Regional Commission's Fleet Vehicles, a 2006 Ford Explorer, is inoperable and holds no retaining value. The vehicle is not in good condition and has a history of oil leaks, as well as burning oil. It also requires other known maintenance repairs, including but not limited to the rear brakes and rotors. Greene Ford has advised donating or junking the vehicle based on its age and mechanical history. GMRC has researched places like Cash for Cars, Peddle, and Cash for Clunkers and received initial offers of \$300 to \$500 for the vehicle that would include pick up.

Mrs. Feldman also explained the one penny from every local dues payment goes into the GMRC Vehicle Fund and any proceeds from the sale of the Ford Explorer would also go into that fund. At this time, GMRC would not require a replacement vehicle.

Chairman Umbehant asked for a motion to sign a resolution allowing the disposal of the vehicle either by sale or salvage and to authorize Executive Director Feldman to execute any title transfers and bill of sale on the 2006 Ford Explorer. Kevin Herrit made the motion, and Stacy Fountain seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### Organization of Ethics Recertification

Executive Director Feldman reported that GMRC was first certified as an Organization of Ethics in 2014 by the Georgia Municipal Association, and that recertification is on a four-year cycle. GMRC was recertified in June 2018 and June 2022. GMRC would like to submit for recertification in 2026 as an Organization of Ethics.

Chairman Umbehant asked for a motion to sign the resolution recertifying the GMRC as an Organization of Ethics by the Georgia Municipal Association. Doug Wayne made the motion, and Bill Chafin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

The April meeting will be hosted by the City of Gainesville and will be held at The Boathouse at Lake Lanier Olympic Park.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

  
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Courtney Umbehant, Chairman

  
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James Addison, Secretary

GMRC COUNCIL  
ATTENDANCE SHEET  
2025-2026

COUNTY	COUNCIL MEMBER	July 25	Aug 25	Sept 25	Oct 25	Nov 25	Dec 25	Jan 26	Feb 26	March 26	April 26	May 26	June 26
BANKS	Chris Ausburn	P	A	A	P	P	P	A	A	A			
	Todd Templeton	P	P	A	P	P	P	N-P	A	P			
	Vicki Boling Jones	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	A			
DAWSON	Billy Thurmond	A	(P)	(R)	(P)	A	A	(R)	(P)	A			
	John Walden	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			
	Kevin Herrit	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			
FRANKLIN	Cory Pulliam	P	P	P	(R)	P	P	(R)	P	P			
	Courtney Umbehant*	P	P	(P)	P	P	P	P	P	P			
	Leslie McFarlin	P	P	P	E	A	P	(R)	(R)	P			
HABERSHAM	Kelly Woodall	A	P	A	P	A	P	N-P	A	P			
	VACANT	P	P	A	A	A	A	V	V	V			
	Lawrence Bridges	V	V	V	N-P	A	P	P	A	P			
HALL	David Gibbs	A	E	E	A	E	A	P	E	E			
	Jonathan Elliott	P	A	A	A	P	P	N-P	E	P			
	Deborah Mack	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	P	A			
HART	VACANT	A	A	A	A	A	A	V	V	V			
	VACANT	A	A	A	A	A	A	V	V	V			
	Bill Chafin	P	P	P	P	P	P	(P)	P	P			
LUMPKIN	VACANT	(R)	(R)	A	P	A	A	(R)	V	V			
	Sam Norton	P	A	P	P	A	A	N-P	A	P			
	VACANT	P	A	P	P	P	P	V	V	V			

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RABUN	Scott Crane	A	P	P	A	P	A	E	A	P			
	Stacy Fountain	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			
	Douglas Wayne	P	P	P	P	A	P	A	P	P			
STEPHENS	Tara Simmons	P	P	E	P	A	P	P	P	P			
	Ron Matheson**	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	P			
	James Addison***	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	P			
TOWNS	Cliff Bradshaw	(P)	P	P	A	(R)	P	(P)	P	P			
	Jay Chastain	A	A	(R)	A	A	A	N-A	P	P			
	Michael Courey	N-P	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	P			
UNION	Harold Collins	P	A	P	P	A	P	P	P	P			
	Buddy Moore	P	P	P	P	A	P	A	P	A			
	Kristen Bentley	N-P	(P)	(R)	(R)	P	P	P	P	A			
WHITE	Craig Bryant	P	P	P	P	(P)	P	P	P	P			
	Nan Bowen	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			
	Lauren Williams	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			
GOV APPT.	VACANT	P	P	P	P	A	P	P	V	V			
	VACANT	(P)	P	P	(P)	(R)	P	P	V	V			
	VACANT	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V			
LT. GOV APPT.	David Lee	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P				
SPEAKER APPT.	VACANT	V	V	V	V	V	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