

GEORGIA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION *COUNCIL MEETING*

May 28, 2026

MINUTES

The GMRC Council held its regular monthly meeting on Thursday, May 28, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. at the Dawson County Junior High School located at 109 Allen St., Dawsonville, GA 30534. The meeting was hosted by Dawson County.

CALL TO ORDER

GMRC Chairman Courtney Umbehant called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. and thanked Dawson County for hosting.

WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS

Dawson County Board of Commissioners Chairman Billy Thurmond welcomed all in attendance to Dawson County and thanked them for coming. Mr. Thurmond introduced the Dawson County Manager Joey Leverette and thanked Public Relations Specialist Ehron Ostendorf for arranging the meeting. Chairman Thurmond also introduced Mandy Power, Dawson County Chamber of Commerce President-CEO; Dustin Heard, Dawson County Chamber of Commerce Tourism Director; and John Walden, Mayor of the City of Dawsonville.

INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

Vice-Chairman Ron Matheson recognized special guests Kathy Papa, Georgia Department of Community Affairs; and Mike Fisher, WGI.

INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/DINNER

Mr. David Lee gave a devotion, invocation, and followed with the Pledge of Allegiance. Dinner was catered by Sandra Bottoms.

PROGRAM

Marcie Kicklighter, Regional Tourism Manager, from the Georgia Department of Economic Development provided a program update.

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 April 30, 2026 Council meeting. Doug Wayne made

a motion to approve the minutes as written, and Stacy Fountain seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

REPORTS

Chairman's Report

Chairman Umbehant reported that he and Executive Director Feldman have been reviewing the GMRC Bylaws and discussing ways to make the proxy process more convenient to members. The Chairman hopes to have something to present to the Council at the July or August meeting.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Feldman announced that May is officially recognized as National Historic Preservation Month which was established in 1973 by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to highlight the importance of saving, protecting, and honoring America's diverse heritage. It is a nationwide celebration focusing on preserving historic sites, neighborhoods, and landmarks. If you have any questions about historic sites in your community, please reach out to Joe Rothwell, GMRC Regional Planner at jrothwell@gmrc.ga.gov.

Mrs. Feldman reported that Governor Kemp has reappointed both Kim Waters and Angela Whidby to the GMRC Council for another two-year term. Mr. David Lee was also reappointed by Lt. Governor Burt Jones.

GMRC hosted the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions (GARC) annual Economic Development Conference, which was held at Lake Lanier Islands on May 3 -5, 2026. Topics included Data Centers, Brownfields, Housing, and Disaster Recovery Funding. Laurin Yoder, GMRC Senior Project Manager, shared success stories on successful project development and management.

Executive Director Feldman had the opportunity to represent the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions (GARC) at the Georgia Small Cities Conference which was held in Gainesville. GMRC Planning Director Adam Hazell presented at the conference on a session entitled "Planning for Change – Small Communities vs Big Challenges."

The next deadline for Rural Workforce Housing Initiative program grants will be Friday, July 10, 2026. Communities can apply for infrastructure grants up to \$2.5 million per application and development to support housing initiatives. Construction finance is limited to no more than \$1 million per applicant and development. Workforce housing funds will be awarded to applicants who can demonstrate ongoing workforce housing needs as identified by a recent housing study; difficulty in satisfying workforce needs in communities with low unemployment, or a community or regional commitment to expand and improve existing housing stock.

Executive Director Feldman reported that the next City and County Managers' meeting will be held by the City of Cornelia on June 10th. If you would like to attend, please RSVP to Mrs. Feldman at hfeldman@gmrc.ga.gov.

Mrs. Feldman reminded the Council that GMRC's upcoming July Council Meeting will be hosted by Union County and the City of Blairsville, and the program will be the annual GMRC Council training.

Save the Date: The GMRC's Annual Meeting and Awards Dinner will be on Friday, December 4, 2026 at The Boathouse at Lake Lanier Olympic Park in Gainesville.

Economic Development Department Report

Economic Development Director Patrick Larson provided an update on the GMRC Economic Development Department. Should your community have any economic development needs or questions, please reach out to Mr. Larson at plarson@gmrc.ga.gov, or any member of the Economic Development staff.

OLD BUSINESS

FY27 Proposed Draft Budget

The FY27 Proposed Draft Budget was sent to all Council members on May 4, 2026 and again with their agenda packets prior to the meeting. GMRC Finance Director Alicia Page explained that the Finance Committee had met and recommended approving the proposed budget. Highlights are as follows:

- The budget is being presented as a balanced budget and therefore the revenues equal the expenditures.
- The overall Revenues and Expenditures for the proposed FY27 Budget are projected to be \$5,893,273.
- There is an overall decrease of about 3% from the adopted FY26 Budget.
- The amount required to match grants and necessary transfers is \$570,867. This is a 9% reduction due to having a county that is designated at risk by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). This changed the ARC grant match from 50/50 funding to 70/30 funding.
- The budget supports 27 positions agencywide, including 26 full-time employees and one part-time employee.
- The budget contains an up to 3% merit increase for all regular full-time and part-time employees based on their performance.

- Considering the amount of federal and state dollars to be received, the leveraging effect of local funds is significant. For every \$1.25 paid in dues, it is estimated the region will receive \$6.40 in federal and state funding.

Mrs. Page asked the Council if they had any questions about the proposed budget. Hearing none, Chairman Courtney Umbehant asked for a motion to approve the FY27 GMRC Proposed Budget. Doug Wayne made the motion to approve, and Billy Thurmond seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

None

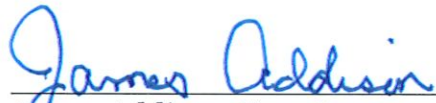
ANNOUNCEMENTS

The June meeting will be hosted by the City of Toccoa and Stephens County.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:41 p.m.


Courtney Umbehant, Chairman


James Addison, Secretary

**GMRC COUNCIL
ATTENDANCE SHEET**
2025-2026

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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	P	P	
	Todd Templeton	P	P	A	P	P	P	N-P	A	P	P	A	
	Vicki Boling Jones	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	A	A	P	
DAWSON	Billy Thurmond	A	(P)	(R)	(P)	A	A	(R)	(P)	A	P	P	
	John Walden	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
	VACANT	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	(P)	V	
FRANKLIN	Cory Pulliam	P	P	P	(R)	P	P	(R)	P	P	(R)	P	
	Courtney Umbelant*	P	P	(P)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
	Leslie McFarlin	P	P	P	E	A	P	(R)	(R)	P	P	(R)	
HABERSHAM	Kelly Woodall	A	P	A	P	A	P	N-P	A	P	(P)	P	
	VACANT	P	P	A	A	A	A	V	V	V	V	V	
	Lawrence Bridges	V	V	V	N-P	A	P	P	A	P	P	P	
HALL	David Gibbs	A	E	E	A	E	A	P	E	E	A	(P)	
	Jonathan Elliott	P	A	A	A	P	P	N-P	E	P	P	P	
	Deborah Mack	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	P	A	P	A	
HART	VACANT	A	A	A	A	A	A	V	V	V	V	V	
	VACANT	A	A	A	A	A	A	V	V	V	V	V	
	Bill Chafin	P	P	P	P	P	P	(P)	P	P	P	A	
LUMPKIN	Jeff Moran	(R)	(R)	A	P	A	A	(R)	V	V	N-A	A	
	Sam Norton	P	A	P	P	A	A	N-P	A	P	P	A	
	VACANT	P	A	P	P	P	P	V	V	V	V	V	

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