

**SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING
MINUTES
SPORTS COMPLEX AND CIVIC CENTER, PEARSON, GEORGIA
April 26, 2018
11:00 a.m.**

WELCOME MEMBERS AND GUESTS: Chair Joyce Evans called the meeting to order and welcomed members and guests.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Ms. Evans called upon Jason Davenport to give the invocation and lead those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

<u>Atkinson County</u>	<u>Bacon County</u>	<u>Ben Hill County</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Futch, Lace	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hutto, Andy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Taylor, Steve
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Johnson, Robert	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Murphy, Peggy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Puckett, Jim
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> McKinnon, Janice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coley, Lisa	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dunn, Jason
<u>Berrien County</u>	<u>Brantley County</u>	<u>Brooks County</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sumner, Doc	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Harris, Skipper	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exum, Myra
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Richbourg, Michael	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Johns, Diane	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dennard, Nancy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Studstill, Janet	Vacant	Vacant
<u>Charlton County</u>	<u>Clinch County</u>	<u>Coffee County</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Everett, James	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> McClaine, Kenton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dovers, A.J.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gowen, Lee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kennedy, Tom	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moore, Bob
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Malin, Dawn	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hardee, Willie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Smith, Adam
<u>Cook County</u>	<u>Echols County</u>	<u>Irwin County</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Purvis, Dwight	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Corbett, Stanley	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Whitley, Joey
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Duke, Buddy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Garner, Cheryl	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Seale, Matt
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bennett, Derry	Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paulk, Mona
<u>Lanier County</u>	<u>Lowndes County</u>	<u>Pierce County</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fender, Dennis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Evans, Joyce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bennett, Neal
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Darsey, Bill	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Miller-Cody, Vivian	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Larson, Dick
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fitton, John	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Payton, Anthony	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brannen, Andy
<u>Tift County</u>	<u>Turner County</u>	<u>Ware County</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thompson, Grady	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Denham, Nick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nelson, Carlos
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Smith, Julie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lumpkin, Sandra	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Knox, John
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Marlowe, Brian	Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> King, Barbara

<u>Governor's Office</u>	<u>Lt. Governor's Office</u>	<u>Speaker's Office</u>
Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stone, Keith	Vacant
Vacant		
Vacant		

Staff Present

Cribb, Lisa
 Davidson, Sherry
 Godwin, Ariel
 Hobbs, Kimberly
 Lovett, Roberta
 Schultz, Kelly
 Strom, Chris
 Taft, Wanda

Guests Present

Bennett, Latrice
 Davenport, Jason
 Hanks, Gwen
 O'Meara, Jill
 Wilcher, Lance
 Wilcher, Sandra

INSTALLATION OF NEW COUNCIL MEMBER: Chair Evans invited Mr. Stanley Corbett to come forward and take an oath as a new SGRC council member. After taking the council member oath, Ms. Evans congratulated Mr. Corbett and thanked him for his commitment to serve.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MARCH 22 MEETING MINUTES: Chair Evans reminded those present that a copy of the March minutes had been emailed to all council members (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Janice McKinnon made a motion to approve the minutes. Nancy Dennard seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

REVIEW AND ACCEPTANCE OF MARCH 2018 REVENUE AND EXPENSE REPORT: Chair Evans referred those present to a copy of the March 2018 Revenue and Expense Report included in their member packets (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Barbara King made a motion to accept the March Revenue and Expense Report. Janice McKinnon seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

PRESENTATION OF EARLY EDUCATION EMPOWERMENT ZONES: RC Assistant Executive Director, Chris Strom introduced speaker Jill O'Meara, Early Education Empowerment Zone (E3Z) Community Coordinator for Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL). Ms. O'Meara thanked the council for the opportunity to present and began her presentation by recognizing that the work she does with E3Z covers many of the counties in the Regional Commission 18-county area. She explained that DECAL was created in 2004 to put education efforts for children birth to age five under the authority of one agency and shared the mission of DECAL as her on-screen presentation illustrated (copy attached and made part of these minutes). Ms. O'Meara highlighted the many programs that DECAL administers. Among those listed were Georgia's Pre-K; Childcare Licensing across the state; and Quality Rating services for daycares in the State of Georgia. Ms. O'Meara briefly explained the Quality Rating system for daycares in Georgia and shared that by December 2020 any daycare receiving subsidies will be required to have a quality rating by DECAL.

In concluding the list of DECAL services, Ms. O'Meara pointed out that in 2014, Georgia was awarded a "Race to the Top Early Learning" Grant and E3Zs were created as a part of that project. She explained there are four E3Z zones throughout the state and "South" zone contains five counties: Brooks, Colquitt, Cook, Echols, and Lowndes. The purpose of E3Z zones, she shared, was to build relationships in support of early learning, promote community awareness of early childhood learning systems, and to share resources that support early learning. To further address her last point about resource sharing, Ms. O'Meara stressed the importance to rural areas of locally-delivered professional development to childcare professionals.

Ms. O'Meara shared that each month the E3Z leadership team meets to further their progress in bridging gaps in the early learning process. This leadership team consists of many organizations across the communities within the E3Z area, and the member list was illustrated in her presentation. As an example of innovation coming out of this leadership, Ms. O'Meara highlighted work by the Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber to encourage participation in the Quality-Rated system. She also mentioned Colquitt Regional Medical Center's "Talk with me baby" initiative and the "well-read, well-fed" initiative in Cook County that delivers locally-grown produce and books to children in rural Cook County. She also noted that Mayor Gayle and Mayor Duke were both participating in reading programs with children in their communities.

Moving on, Ms. O'Meara illustrated a bulleted list in her presentation of the various resources available to citizens and leaders in the E3Z area. To conclude her presentation, Ms. O'Meara shared with everyone that early care and learning is important to successful workforce development. She shared an example to illustrate how employers struggle to find and keep employees because of the challenges they face with childcare for their families. Finally, she shared there are over 400,000 children in Georgia today below three years of age, and by the year 2050, many of those same children will be in the workforce and leading our communities and state. So, she stated, the work being done today for these children will prepare our state and businesses to be successful in the future.

Ms. O'Meara addressed a question from Mr. Jason Davenport regarding the quality ratings of childcare facilities in the state and how one may review those ratings. Mrs. O'Meara shared an internet address with the audience they could visit to see these ratings, as well as licensing and reports for specific childcare facilities. In response to another question, she explained that the formation of the E3Z in South Georgia area was a result of analysis to determine where the most need, and opportunity for improvement, was located. Two council members requested copies of her presentation and Assistant Executive Director, Chris Strom indicated he would email a copy to each of them. Ms. O'Meara offered to be available after the meeting to answer any other questions of the council.

PRESENTATION ON STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION:

RC Assistant Executive Director, Chris Strom introduced the next speaker Sandra Wilcher, Director of Student Support Services, Lowndes County Schools. Ms. Wilcher shared her background with the council and began her presentation (copy attached and made part of these minutes) by pointing out the contrast between the historical, educational perspective and the perspective of today. Ms. Wilcher emphasized a balancing act beyond academics that schools and students strive to sustain. Often, she explained, there are issues such as mental health, homelessness, grief, health care and many other challenges that students face outside of the

classroom. These challenges can significantly impact their success in the classroom. She explained that to address all of these needs with limited resources within the schools, the Student Support Services program maintains partnerships with specialists and service providers in the community to address needs of students properly. Ms. Wilcher referred to a grant received by the Lowndes County Board of Education from the Division of Family and Children Services known as the "second-step" program. She explained that Lowndes County Schools will be implementing this program next school year and that any community might pursue this at no cost to them. The purpose of this program she described is to deliver personal curriculum aid to students as an enhancement to the existing, general curriculum planning already provided by school counselors.

Ms. Wilcher then referred to a graphic in her presentation illustrating the services that her program also provides. She then shared the challenges of guiding students that have had experience in the juvenile justice system. She explained that often the source of risky behavior is in the mental health realm. She explained that successfully addressing these and other challenges that students face can only be accomplished with the help of the entire community of resources. In the case of Lowndes County Schools, she mentioned that they have partnerships with several organizations to perform in-home assessments and clinic-based assessments as well.

In closing, Ms. Wilcher mentioned that the most valuable support school systems could provide to their students is accomplished through a partnership with resources in the community. She added that changing the perspective of mental health assistance in schools is also very important. She explained to change this perspective; her program has taken steps to motivate fellow students to be pro-active in identifying problems and being part of the social support network that their peers need. Ms. Wilcher then addressed a question regarding the category of challenges that were most prevalent. She stated that without a doubt, mental health was one of the biggest challenges schools face these days. To illustrate, she quoted a statistic of over 1500 referrals in the last year, many of which were mental health issues. With no further questions, Ms. Wilcher informed those present that she would be available after the meeting to answer any questions and thanked everyone for their interest.

REVIEW AND CONSIDERATION OF CURRENT YEAR BUDGET AMENDMENT

RC Executive Director, Lisa Cribb referred those present to the pages in their packets (copy attached and made part of these minutes) that detailed budget amendments and reminded everyone they received these in their email earlier in the week. Ms. Cribb reminded the council that the RC prepares a budget ahead of the fiscal year, but changes obviously occur throughout the year. Examples of this, she stated, may be a grant award for a different amount than anticipated, and timing of contracts. The latter example she explained is the case with the majority of the budget amendment presented that day. Other factors influencing the budget amendment include staff retirements and turnover, and therefore it impacts forecasted salary expenses. Ms. Cribb stated that one of the other significant changes in the RC budget was a decrease in expected health insurance costs. In this category, she explained that the RC anticipated a 17% increase (as in previous years). Fortunately, health insurance costs only rose by three percent and therefore an adjustment to reflect that decrease in expenses was necessary. To summarize, Ms. Cribb explained that an annual budget amendment reconciles our expected revenues and expenses from the start of the fiscal year with the reality of what has happened throughout the year. The

total adjustments she explained, reflects a \$15,000 decrease in excess revenue. With an overall budget of approximately \$16 million that adjustment is relatively small. Ms. Cribb mentioned that while some of the line item adjustments were rather large, these decreases in revenues also had a corresponding decrease in expenditures to offset them. At that point, Ms. Cribb asked for any questions from council members. With no questions, Mr. Lace Futch made the motion to adopt the budget amendment and Mr. Carlos Nelson seconded. With no other discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

REVIEW AND CONSIDERATION OF DUES SCHEDULE FOR FY 2019

RC Executive Director, Lisa Cribb referred those present to the page in their packets (copy attached and made part of these minutes) that illustrated the dues schedule for FY 2019. She explained the Department of Community Affairs requires that RCs use the latest population figures from the Census Bureau for computation of dues. So, she explained, every year at this time, we acquire the latest population estimates and present this material to the council. She explained that per-capita dues will remain at \$1.25 and that the overall population change across the region was only 1,285 people over the previous year. Ms. Cribb then asked for questions. With none, Ms. Janice McKinnon made a motion to approve the FY 2019 dues schedule and Ms. Barbara King seconded. With no other discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION TO ENTER CONTRACT FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF A REGIONAL SENIOR HUNGER COALITION

RC Aging Program Director, Wanda Taft greeted the council and introduced herself. She informed the council that in 2016, a survey based on the prevalence of food insecurity in older adults was conducted across the U.S. and all states were ranked accordingly. Ms. Taft stated that Georgia, unfortunately, ranked 9th in this survey. Ms. Taft stated that as a result of this ranking, the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) Commissioner had targeted this condition as a priority for improvement. One activity in this area is the development of a state plan to address senior hunger. One recommendation of this plan, she explained, is to use local area agencies on aging to establish senior hunger coalitions. She further explained that funding was available from DHS for \$5,000 to assist with efforts to establish this coalition. To enter into this contract and receive funding, Ms. Taft explained that a resolution by the council was necessary. On that note, she referred those present to the resolution document in their packet (copy attached and made part of these minutes). In closing, Ms. Taft also asked those present to feel free to pass along this information to any groups or businesses in their communities that may be a good addition to this coalition. These may be local grocers, churches, restaurants, or others. Chair Evans called for a motion, and a motion was made by Ms. Janice McKinnon and then seconded by Mr. Michael Richbourg. With no other discussion, the motion to adopt the resolution passed unanimously.

KNOW YOUR REGION; DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

Chair Evans called upon Local Government Services Director, Sherry Davidson to present demographic statistics for the Southern Georgia region. Ms. Davidson greeted the council and introduced Ariel Godwin, Regional Planner with the RC. She reminded the council that each year the RC staff reviews statistics and projections for many demographic categories. Mr. Godwin then noted that in the past years, Georgia Trend magazine was a sole source for many of the

statistics in demographic reports. Due to slight changes in Georgia Trends' approach to presenting information this year, the source for much of the information reported to the council this day was the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. At that point, Ms. Davidson referred those present to the demographic report in their packets (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Ms. Davidson stated that eight counties in the region gained population and the remaining ten lost population. Following this information, she quoted many other population statistics featured in the report including senior population statistics. To clarify some of these statistics, Mr. Godwin noted that Hispanic/Latino ethnicity in the demographic section is represented across all races in the charts illustrated and that in total, this particular sector of the population was growing across the region. Mr. Godwin also referred everyone to the housing section of the report and referred to a chart illustrating that housing construction had steadily increased from 2012 to 2016. Ms. Davidson followed to quote some of the report statistics regarding new developments in Ben Hill, Cook and Ware Counties and the City of Valdosta. Ms. Davidson concluded the presentation by encouraging those in attendance to re-view all of the statistics in the report, and if there were any questions, they should contact her or Mr. Godwin.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES/UPDATES:


Planning: RC Local Government Services Director, Sherry Davidson referred those present to a page in their packets that illustrated plan-related timelines for comprehensive plans, service delivery strategies, transit plans and hazard mitigation plans (copy attached and made part of these minutes). Ms. Davidson reminded the council that SGRC is here to assist communities in completing those required plans. She stressed the importance of counties and their municipalities working together to negotiate service delivery strategies and that if necessary, an extension may be filed with DCA to prevent the loss of qualified local government status.

Grants: RC Community and Economic Development Director, Kim Hobbs directed those present to turn to the grants report in their packets (copy attached and made part of these minutes). She let the council know that RC staff had worked very hard to prepare 19 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) applications for communities in the region this year. Ms. Hobbs informed the council that a total of 105 CDBG applications were submitted statewide this year and that this total was down slightly from last year. Ms. Hobbs stressed to those present that the allocation of CDBG funds from the federal government did not change. However, Department of Community Affairs has increased the limit of funds that may be applied for. Specifically, this amount was raised from \$500,000 to \$750,000. With this in mind, she explained to the council that this made the process even more competitive. Therefore, it is imperative for any community intending to apply for CDBG, to start as early as possible. Beginning this process as soon as possible ensures that a quality application can be assembled, and therefore improve the chances of a grant award. She encouraged those present that it is never too early to begin a discussion and preparation of a grant application and stated that she is already in discussion with a couple of communities about grant applications for 2019.

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- 1.) **Presentation of New Council Member Certificates:** Chair Evans called upon Mr. Bennett, Mr. Larson, Ms. Dennard and Mr. Fitton to congregate at the front of the room to receive their new member certificates. After the presentation of certificates, Chair Evans thanked them for their service to the SGRC council.
- 2.) **ACCG Update:** Chair Evans reminded the council of the upcoming ACCG conference in Savannah beginning the following day.
- 3.) **GMA Update:** No update provided.
- 4.) **DCA Update:** No update provided.
- 5.) **Other Announcements:** Chair Evans announced to the council that there would be a change to the manner of distribution of meeting minutes to council members. She reminded those present that in the past, meeting minutes had been mailed to each council member via USPS for review. In the future, she stated, meeting minutes will only be distributed via email. She encouraged anyone that may still require receipt of these minutes in hardcopy to contact Lisa Cribb or Chris Strom and accommodations will be made.

ADJOURN: As there was no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned.



Joyce Evans, Chair



Peggy Murphy, Secretary