

GEORGIA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING

November 14, 2024

MINUTES

The GMRC Council held its regular monthly meeting on Thursday, November 14, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. at The Vault at the National Conference Center located at 109 Green Street, Gainesville, GA 30501. The meeting was hosted by the City of Gainesville.

CALL TO ORDER

GMRC Chairman Ken Schubring called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. and thanked those in attendance for coming.

WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS

City of Gainesville Mayor Sam Couvillon welcomed all in attendance and thanked them for coming. The mayor recognized the City of Gainesville staff that were present; Denise Jordan, City Clerk; Alisa Grayson, Deputy City Clerk; Christina Santee, Public Relations Director; Angela Sheppard, Assistant City Manager; as well as City Council members Zach Thompson, Julie Hayes, and Abigail Guzman.

INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

Vice-Chairman Courtney Umbehant recognized special guests Mike Fisher, WGI; Kathy Papa, Georgia Department of Community Affairs; and Cheryl Smith, Georgia Department of Agriculture.

INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/DINNER

GMRC Council Chaplain Deborah Mack gave the devotion, invocation, and followed with the Pledge of Allegiance. Dinner was catered by The Vault.

PROGRAM

Clay Pilgrim from Ruston presented the FY24 GMRC Financial Audit Report.

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

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES AND ATTENDANCE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

GMRC Secretary Bruce Palmer asked for any comments or a motion regarding the minutes and attendance report for the October 24, 2024 Council meeting. JoAnne Taylor made a motion to approve the minutes as written and Doug Wayne seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

REPORTS

Chairman's Report

Chairman Ken Schubring reported that the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions (GARC) conference was very informative. The chairman along with Vice-Chairman Umbehant, Secretary Bruce Palmer, and Council member Kevin Herrit joined members of the GMRC staff in attending the conference. During the conference GMRC Planning Director Adam Hazell presented in a session on transportation, and Executive Director Feldman was re-elected as Secretary of GARC.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Feldman welcomed the new Lumpkin County Private Sector Representative, Mr. Tony Owens. Mrs. Feldman and Ms. Kessler met with Mr. Owens, earlier that day, to provide him with New Council Member Orientation. Mr. Owens owns the Fudge Factory in Dahlonega and was very excited to be joining the Council. Mr. Owens introduced himself to the Council and thanked them for having him.

Heather Feldman congratulated the City of Gainesville and the City of Hartwell for being designated to the Georgia Exceptional Mainstreet (GEM) program for their exceptional downtowns.

Lumpkin County hosted the City and County Managers Meeting on November 5, 2024 at their new recreation center. The next City and County Managers Meeting will be in mid-February 2025 and will be hosted by the City of Dawsonville.

Mrs. Feldman announced that the Georgia Transportation Infrastructure Bank (GTIB) application cycle is now open and accepting applications through January 14, 2025. Costs can be related to preliminary engineering, right-of-way, or construction. Communities should reach out to GMRC's Economic Development Director Patrick Larson or Planning Director Adam Hazell if they have a project in mind or want more information.

Executive Director Feldman explained that over the last couple years GMRC has seen about a 32% reduction to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Planning Grant. The RCs have been operating on 2010 funding levels from the State Planning Contract with DCA. Those funds are used for the RC's planning and GIS efforts. GARC is asking legislators to approve funding back to at least pre-pandemic levels. Commissioner Nunn is supportive, but the funding must be an approved line item in the governor's budget. Mrs. Feldman will be reaching out for letters of support and encouraged the Council to talk with their local legislators to help gain support.

OLD BUSINESS

Annual Meeting and Awards Dinner

Executive Assistant Gina Kessler reminded all in attendance that the GMRC Annual Meeting was only three weeks away. Ms. Kessler thanked the sponsors of the event that were present at the meeting. At the time of the meeting there were still tickets available for purchase through Friday, November 22, 2024. Ticket sales had picked up, so Ms. Kessler encouraged all to purchase their tickets as soon as possible, if they had not already. Ms. Kessler also thanked the communities that donate door prizes to the event.

The Annual Meeting is being held at the Boathouse at Lake Lanier Olympic Park on Friday, December 6, 2024 with a reception starting at 4:30 p.m. with dinner and awards to follow starting at 6:00 p.m.

Selection of GMRC Secretary

The GMRC Nominating Committee met on September 17, 2024 and nominated Cliff Bradshaw to fill the GMRC Secretary position that will become vacant on January 1, 2025 through the end of the term period ending on June 30, 2025.

Chairman Schubring asked for a motion to open the floor for any additional nominees that might be named by the full Council. Denise McKay motioned to open the floor, and Kevin Herrit seconded the motion. Hearing no additional nominations, Mitch Griggs made a motion to close the floor and Doug Wayne seconded the motion. Both motions passed unanimously.

Chairman Schubring asked for a motion to accept Cliff Bradshaw as the GMRC Secretary for a term of January 1, 2025 through June 30, 2025. Bill Chafin made the motion and JoAnne Taylor seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Acceptance of the FY24 GMRC Audit Report

GMRC Finance Committee Chairman Bill Chafin thanked the GMRC Finance Department staff for the job well done in having a clean audit report and made a motion to accept the FY24 GMRC Audit Report as presented by Rushton. JoAnne Taylor seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS


The December Council meeting is the Annual Meeting and Awards Dinner on Friday, December 6, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. at The Boathouse at Lake Lanier Olympic Park.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.



Ken Schubring, Chairman



Bruce Palmer, Secretary