

GEORGIA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING

May 30, 2024

MINUTES

The GMRC Council held its regular monthly meeting on Thursday, May 30, 2024 at 6:00 p.m., at the Board of Education Professional Development Center, located at 28 Main Street, Dawsonville, Georgia 30534. This meeting is being sponsored by Dawson County.

CALL TO ORDER

GMRC Chairman Ken Schubring called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS

Dawson County Board of Commissioners Chairman Billy Thurmond welcomed all in attendance to Dawson County and introduced County Manager Joey Leverette. Mr. Leverette expressed his appreciation of all Dawson County staff and introduced their new Public Relations Specialist Mr. Ehron Ostendorf. Mr. Leverette was excited to announce that in the recent election, the citizens of Dawson County approved the TSPLOST, which will generate an estimated \$70 million over the next five years in revenue to the county and city at a 65/35% split. The county will be constructing a new E911 center and obtain a new radio system. County Manager Leverette thanked everybody for coming.

INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

Vice-Chairman Courtney Umbehant recognized special guests; Kathy Papa, Department of Community Affairs; Mike Fisher, WGI; Katrina Cochran, Outreach Representative for Senator Raphael Warnock; David Lee, Jackson EMC; Margaret Ryder, UGA Small Business Development Center; and Deb Cantrell, Georgia's Rural Center.

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 Catering Company.

PROGRAM

Betsy McGriff, Associate Project Manager for Georgia Tech Enterprise Innovation Institute, provided a program on Future Impact Model for Housing.

A copy of the presentation 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 April 25, 2024 Council meeting. Courtney Umbehant made a motion to approve the minutes as written and Deborah Mack seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

REPORTS

Chairman's Report

Chairman Ken Schubring reported that GMRC was host to the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions (GARC) annual Economic Development Conference earlier this month, which was held at Lake Lanier Islands. Topics included housing, an update from our federal and state partners, and an update from the Georgia Department of Agriculture Commissioner. The Chairman felt that it was a very informative conference.

Mr. Schubring also reported that at the January meeting, Kay Sibetta with AARP presented plaques to the 12 counties that make up the GMRC Region designating them as Age Friendly Communities. Chairman Schubring formally presented the plaque to Billy Thurmond, Dawson County BOC Chairman.

Executive Director's Report

GMRC Executive Assistant Gina Kessler gave the Executive Director's report in Heather Feldman's absence.

Ms. Kessler thanked GMRC Chairman Ken Schubring and GMRC Council member Mitch Griggs for attending the GARC's annual Economic Development Conference.

Executive Assistant Kessler reported that a Georgia Opioid Crisis Abatement Trust (GOCAT) application was submitted on behalf of the Appalachian Wellness and Harm Reduction Coalition in Union County. The application outlines a request for \$214,345.72 in GOCAT funds to combat the opioid crisis in Northeast Georgia by increasing access to substance use disorder (SUD)/Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) recovery support services. Ms. Kessler congratulated Ms. Maggie Smith on completing and submitting her first grant application.

Ms. Kessler also congratulated Senior Financial Assistant Nona Turk who recently received her Level II Local Government Finance Officer Certification from the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government.

Adam Hazell and Patrick Larson recently completed Facilitator Training from the Fanning Institute. The four-day series focused on effective facilitation of meetings, facilitating meetings with difficult audience members, and learning about different styles.

WorkSource Georgia Mountains (WSGM), Hall County Salvation Army, and Good News at Noon have joined forces to offer eight shelter residents a chance to participate in a three-week welding program. To address transportation challenges, the training facility, a mobile welding lab provided by Workforce Innovators of America, will be situated on Good News at Noon premises, with both organizations providing classroom space and computer access for the students. This initiative represents a significant step towards addressing homelessness by providing valuable skills training and opportunities for stable employment.

On May 22nd, GMRC hosted an Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Workshop. Participants heard from ARC staff on the basics of ARC, priority projects for Georgia, and the overall application process. Ms. Kessler reminded the council that the next deadline for ARC applications is in mid-July. Anybody interested in applying should reach out to GMRC's Economic Development staff.

Ms. Kessler also reminded the council that the next deadline for Rural Workforce Housing Initiative program grants is Friday, July 12th. 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. Please reach out to GMRC's Economic Development staff for more information or to apply.

Executive Assistant Kessler reported that her and Executive Director Feldman had met with Hope Iglehart, Senator Ossoff's new Outreach Coordinator for North Georgia. It was a great meeting of learning and sharing information. Ms. Iglehart looks forward to attending a GMRC Council meeting soon.

Ms. Kessler announced that GMRC Council member Susan Cremering, White County Private Sector Representative, will be coming off the GMRC Council as she will be moving out of White County. Ms. Kessler expressed appreciation for Susan's support of the GMRC over the last two years and wished her the best.

Executive Assistant Kessler was excited to announce that the GMRC's Annual Meeting and Awards Dinner is scheduled for Friday, December 6th beginning at 4:30 p.m. The Annual Meeting Committee has already met several times, and this year, the meeting will be held at The Boathouse at Lake Lanier Olympic Park in Gainesville.

Economic Development Department Update

GMRC Economic Development Director Patrick Larson provided an update from the Economic Development Department regarding grants submitted, awarded, and administered during the last year.

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

OLD BUSINESS

None

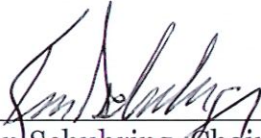
NEW BUSINESS

None


ANNOUNCEMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:24 p.m.



Ken Schubring, Chairman



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
BANKS	Chris Ausburn	P	(R)	A	(R)	P	P	P	P	A	(R)	P	
	Sandra Garrison	(P)	P	A	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
	Vicki Boling Jones	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	
DAWSON	Billy Thurmond	P	A	P	P	P	A	A	P	A	E	P	
	John Walden	(P)	P	P	A	A	P	N-A	P	P	(P)	P	
	Kevin Herrit	A	P	P	P	P	P	A	P	P	A	P	
FRANKLIN	Robert Franklin	P	A	A	A	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	
	Courtney Umbehant**	P	P	P	P	(P)	P	P	P	P	P	P	
	Leslie McFarlin	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	A	P	P	
HABERSHAM	Bruce Palmer***	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	P	P	
	Ray McAlister	P	P	A	A	V	V	N-P	P	A	E	P	
	Ken Schubring*	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	A	P	P	
HALL	Richard Higgins	A	A	A	A	P	P	P	A	P	A	P	
	Sam Couvillon	P	P	P	P	R	A	E	A	E	E	(R)	
	Deborah Mack	P	P	P	P	P	A	N-A	P	P	P	(R)	
HART	Jeff Brown	A	P	A	A	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	
	Dan Leard	P	P	A	A	P	A	A	A	(P)	P	P	
	Bill Chafin	P	P	P	A	P	A	P	P	A	A	P	
LUMPKIN	Chris Dockery	(R)	(R)	A	P	R	R	A	A	P	P	A	
	JoAnne Taylor	P	A	A	P	P	A	E	A	(R)	E	A	
	Amy Booker	N	A	P	A	A	P	P	A	A	E	A	

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RABUN	Kent Woerner	(R)	A	A	(R)	(R)	A	A	(R)	A	E	A	
	Stacy Fountain	P	P	P	A	A	P	A	A	N-P	P	A	
	Douglas Wayne	P	P	A	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	A	
STEPHENS	Tara Simmons	P	A	P	P	A	P	P	E	P	E	A	
	Ron Matheson	P	P	(R)	A	A	A	V	P	P	(R)	P	
	James Addison	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	E	E	E	P	
TOWNS	Cliff Bradshaw	P	P	P	(P)	(P)	P	P	(P)	P	(P)	P	
	Andrea Gibby	P	(R)	(R)	A	A	A	N-E	(R)	P	(R)	(R)	
	Denise McKay	R	P	P	P	P	A	(R)	P	P	P	P	
UNION	Lamar Paris	P	P	A	P	A	P	P	P	P	E	A	
	Jim Conley	P	P	(P)	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	A	
	Mitch Griggs	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	
WHITE	Travis Turner	(P)	(P)	P	(P)	A	P	(P)	A	A	(P)	(P)	
	Nan Bowen	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
	VACANT	A	P	P	P	A	P	A	P	P	P	V	
GOV APPT.	Kim Waters	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	N-P	P	A	P	
	Angela Whidby	P	A	P	P	A	P	P	P	(R)	P	A	
	VACANT	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	
LT. GOV APPT.	VACANT	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	
	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