

**SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION  
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
SGRC OFFICE • 1937 CARLTON ADAMS DR • VALDOSTA, GA 31601  
DECEMBER 7, 2023  
11:00 A.M.**

**CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME:** Chair Lee Gowen called the meeting to order and welcomed members and guests.

**INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Chair Gowen called upon Barbara King to give the invocation and she then led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

<b><u>Atkinson County</u></b>	<b><u>Bacon County</u></b>	<b><u>Ben Hill County</u></b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Liles, Parker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Taylor, Shane	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Taylor, Steve
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Robert Johnson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Taylor, Larry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Holt, Jason
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stone, Robbie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ellis, Kevin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dunn, Jason
<b><u>Berrien County</u></b>	<b><u>Brantley County</u></b>	<b><u>Brooks County</u></b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Griner, Robert	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Harris, Skipper	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Folsom, Patrick
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brown, Travis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Maefield, Barbara	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Morgan, Don
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Smart, Lisa	Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deshazior, Zurich
<b><u>Charlton County</u></b>	<b><u>Clinch County</u></b>	<b><u>Coffee County</u></b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Everett, James	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moylan, Henry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> O'Steen, Ted
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gowen, Lee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hardee, Willie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paulk, Tony
Vacant	Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Smith, Adam
<b><u>Cook County</u></b>	<b><u>Echols County</u></b>	<b><u>Irwin County</u></b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Robinson-McKenna, Debra	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Corbett, Stanley	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Carver, Scott
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Duke, Buddy		Vacant
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Key, Nyisha	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Garner, Cheryl	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MacKenzie, Mona
<b><u>Lanier County</u></b>	<b><u>Lowndes County</u></b>	<b><u>Pierce County</u></b>
<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"/> Brooks, Keith
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Barnes, James	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Payton, Anthony	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paul, Steven
<b><u>Tift County</u></b>	<b><u>Turner County</u></b>	<b><u>Ware County</u></b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> McBrayer, Tony	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Whiddon, Dana	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thrift, Elmer
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Smith, Julie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lumpkin, Sandra	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> James, Michael-Angelo
Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Giddens, Brandi	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> King, Barbara
<b><u>Governor's Office</u></b>	<b><u>Lt. Governor's Office</u></b>	<b><u>Speaker's Office</u></b>
Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stone, Keith	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Seale, Matt
Vacant		

will specialize in producing buildings for the housing sector and are expected to begin production in late 2025. Mr. Rubenbauer gave a detailed description of the economic impact Admares will have in our region. He then answered questions from the audience. Chair Gowen thanked Mr. Rubenbauer for his presentation.

**RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE ANNUAL CERTIFICATION OF EDA REVOLVING LOAN FUND (EDA CARES ACTS RLF) PERFORMANCE:** Chair Gowen called on SGRC Lending Director Lance Wilcher to present the Resolution to Adopt the Annual Certification of EDA Revolving Loan Fund (EDA CARES ACTS RLF) Performance. Mr. Wilcher stated that a copy of the resolution and the performance for the previous year, as required by the Economic Development Authority, EDA, were in their council packets (copy attached and made a part of these minutes.) Mr. Wilcher then explained the annual plan certification process as required by the EDA to ensure the EDA CARES Act RLF is consistent with and supportive of the area's current economic adjustment strategy. After the presentation, Chair Gowen asked for questions from the council. There being none, he asked for a motion. Jason Holt made a motion to approve the Resolution to Adopt the Annual Certification of EDA Revolving Loan Fund (EDA CARES Acts RLF) Performance. Neal Bennett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

**SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGION TIA 2 UPDATE:** Chair Gowen called on SGRC Transportation Director Amy Martin to give an update on TIA 2. Ms. Martin presented the Southern Georgia Constrained TIA Investment list that the Executive Committee of the Regional Transportation Roundtable recently disclosed (copy attached and made a part of these minutes.) The total for the investment list is \$669.9 million for TIA projects to be constructed in the Southern Georgia Region. These projects will be included in the referendum vote on May 21, 2024. Ms. Martin shared that the approval of the referendum will not be an additional tax, rather the 1% sales tax would replace the current TSPLOST. If voters pass the tax, funds will be collected starting in 2027 and will be used to fund projects contained in the list provided.

**NOTICE OF ANNUAL CENSUS BOUNDARY & ANNEXATION SURVEY:** Chair Gowen called on SGRC GIS Director Rachel Strom to give the notice of the Annual Census Boundary & Annexation Survey (BAS). Ms. Strom shared that every year, the US Census Bureau conducts the BAS to collect information about selected legally defined geographic areas and directed those present to the handout in their packets (copy attached and made a part of these minutes.) The BAS provides state and local governments an opportunity to review the Census Bureau's boundary data to ensure the Census Bureau has the correct legal boundary, name, and status information. She mentioned the following key dates: January 1, 2024 – Boundary updates must be legally in effect on or before this date to be reported in the current survey year; March 1, 2024 – Boundary updates returned by this date will be reflected in the American Community Survey and Population Estimates Program data and in next year's BAS materials; and May 31, 2024 – Boundary updates returned by this date will be reflected in next year's BAS materials.

**REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) ANNUAL UPDATE:** Chair Gowen called on Deputy Executive Director of Governmental Services Kimberly Hobbs to present the CEDS Resolution Annual update for adoption (copy attached and made a part of these minutes.) Ms. Hobbs reminded those present that CEDS was updated last year and that it is the five-year economic development plan for the region. The CEDS is part of the RC EDA Planning Grant and is required to be updated annually. Chair Gowen asked the council if anyone had questions about the CEDS Annual Update for Ms. Hobbs, there being none, he asked the council for action.

Vacant

**Staff Present**

Courson, Scott  
Cribb, Lisa  
Hobbs, Kimberly  
Horton, James  
Martin, Amy  
McConico, Marcus  
Schultz, Kelly  
Strom, Chris  
Strom, Rachel  
Vining, Kim  
Wilcher, Lance

**Guests Present**

Culberson, Mae  
Lane, Kelly  
Lee, Marty  
McConico, Shannon  
Redding, Jody  
Rubenbauer, Jason  
Valenti, Nick  
White, Charles  
Wirth, Tom  
Wright, Chris

**INSTALLATION OF NEW COUNCIL MEMBER:** Chair Gowen invited Nyisha Key to come forward and take her oath as an incoming SGRC Council Member. Ms. Key is the Private Sector Appointee for Cook County.

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 23, 2023 MEETING MINUTES:** Chair Gowen reminded those present that a copy of the September minutes had been emailed to members and included in their council packets (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Barbara King made a motion to approve the September meeting minutes. Neal Bennett seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

**REVIEW AND ACCEPTANCE OF AUGUST, SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER 2023 REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE REPORTS:** Chair Gowen reminded those present that a copy of the August, September and October 2023 Revenue and Expenditure Reports had been emailed to council members and included in their council packets (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Neal Bennett made a motion to accept the August, September and October financial reports. Vivian Miller-Cody seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

**PRESENTATION OF SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION ANNUAL AUDIT FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2023:** Chair Gowen introduced Nick Valenti of Valenti, Rackley, and Associates, LLC. Mr. Valenti began with a brief overview of the Fiscal Year Ended 2023 Audit for the Southern Georgia Regional Commission (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Mr. Valenti stated that the audit was reviewed in depth during the Executive/Audit Committee meeting, which preceded the council meeting. Mr. Valenti noted that the financial statements are materially correct and are a reliable and fair representation of the financial position of the SGRC. Mr. Valenti also stated that a few hard copies of the audit were available at the sign-in table should any council member want to review it. Chair Gowen asked for questions from the council; there being none, he called for a motion to accept the SGRC Annual Audit for the Year Ended June 30, 2023. Buddy Duke made a motion to accept the annual audit. Neal Bennett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

**ADVANCEMENTS IN WORKFORCE HOUSING:** Chair Gowen introduced Jason Rubenbauer, President and CEO of the Waycross/Ware Development Authority, to talk about the advancements in workforce housing. Mr. Rubenbauer shared that Modular Home Manufacturer, Admares, plans to construct its first US manufacturing facility in Waycross, GA. Admares expects to create over 1,400 new jobs and will invest \$750 million in Ware County. Admares will construct a 2.5 million square foot build-to-suit facility along Highway 23 in Waycross. They

Neal Bennett made a motion to Adopt the Resolution of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Annual Update. Buddy Duke seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

### **PROGRAM ACTIVITIES/UPDATES:**

**Grants:** SGRC Deputy Executive Director of Government Services Kimberly Hobbs directed council members to the project status list in their packets (copy attached and made part of these minutes). Ms. Hobbs stated that the list includes the status of current projects the Community & Economic Development department has in progress. She also advised those present to contact SGRC Community & Economic Development staff regarding projects listed on the status list or any potential projects they may be interested in for their communities.

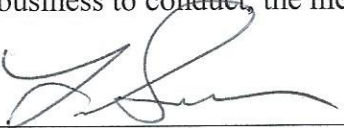
**Planning:** SGRC Planning Director James Horton referred those present to a handout listing the various plans that local governments are required to submit, as well as the deadlines for submission (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Mr. Horton encouraged council members to review the upcoming deadlines for their communities and contact SGRC Planning staff with any questions.

**Division Reports:** SGRC Executive Director Lisa Cribb referred those present to the division reports in their packets (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Ms. Cribb asked those present to review the reports to see what the RC is doing in the region each month.

### **QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- 1) **Recognition of Guests:** Chair Gowen recognized the following guests: Jody Redding, Director of Field Operations for the Office of Governor Brian Kemp; Charles White from the Office of U.S. Congressman Austin Scott; Kelly Lane, DCA Region 11 Representative; and Shannon McConnico from Wiregrass College and thanked them for attending the SGRC council meeting.
- 2) **Recognition of Representation:** Chair Gowen recognized Berrien, Charlton, Clinch, Cook and Lowndes counties for having 100% at the council meeting.
- 3) **ACCG Update:** James Everett shared that ACCG Lifelong Learning Academy Winter Session - South would be held on January 12, 2024 at the Central Georgia Tech – Macon Campus.
- 4) **GMA Update:** Jason Holt shared that the GMA Cities United Summit would be held January 26-29, 2024 at the Atlanta Hilton and Towers.
- 5) **Meeting Notice:** Chair Gowen announced that the next SGRC Council meeting would be held on Thursday, January 25, 2024 at the SGRC office in Waycross.

**ADJOURN:** Chair Gowen asked if there were any other questions or announcements. With no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned.

  
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Lee Gowen, Chair

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Keith Stone, Secretary