

**SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION**  
**COUNCIL MEETING**  
**MINUTES**  
**SPORTS COMPLEX AND CIVIC CENTER, PEARSON, GEORGIA**  
**February 28, 2019**  
**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:** Chair Evans called upon James Maxwell to give the invocation and 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"/> Futch, Lace	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hutto, Andy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Taylor, Steve
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Robert Johnson	<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
<b><u>Berrien County</u></b>	<b><u>Brantley County</u></b>	<b><u>Brooks County</u></b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gaskins, Ronnie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Harris, Skipper	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Maxwell, James
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Richbourg, Michael	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Maefield, Barbara	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dennard, Nancy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Smart, Lisa	Vacant	Vacant
<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"/> Metts, Roger	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kitchens, Jimmy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gowen, Lee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kennedy, Tom	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moore, Bob
Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hardee, Willie	<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"/> Parrish, Lindsey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Corbett, Stanley	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Whitley, Joey
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Duke, Buddy		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Seale, Matt
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bennett, Derry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Garner, Cheryl	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paulk, 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"/> Fitton, John	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Payton, Anthony	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brannen, Andy
<b><u>Tift County</u></b>	<b><u>Turner County</u></b>	<b><u>Ware County</u></b>
<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
<b><u>Governor's Office</u></b>	<b><u>Lt. Governor's Office</u></b>	<b><u>Speaker's Office</u></b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lovein, Norman "Bo"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stone, Keith	Vacant
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Daughtrey, Guy		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jones, Johnathon		

**Staff Present**

Backe, Elizabeth  
Cribb, Lisa  
Strom, Chris  
Taft, Wanda  
Vining, Kim

**Guests Present**

Bennett, Latrice  
Chancey, Lee  
Deese, Molly  
Deshazior, Zurich  
Dyal, Eugene  
Ferrell, Brenda  
Grady, Peggy  
Grissom, Kevin  
Hill, Elizabeth  
James, Jaclyn  
Mikell, Nan  
Stafford, Saralyn  
Stevenson, Molly  
West, Diane  
Westberry, Diane

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF JANUARY 24, 2019 MEETING MINUTES:** Chair Evans reminded those present that a copy of the January 24, 2019 minutes had been emailed to members (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Janice McKinnon made a motion to approve the minutes. Barbara Mae field seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

**REVIEW AND ACCEPTANCE OF JANUARY 2019 REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE REPORT:** Chair Evans reminded those present that a copy of the January 2019 Revenue and Expenditure Report had been emailed to council members and included in their council packets (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Janice McKinnon made a motion to accept the January financial reports. Barbara Mae field seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

**WILD ADVENTURES THEME PARK :** Assistant Executive Director Chris Strom introduced speaker Molly Deese, VP and General Manager of Wild Adventures Theme Park in Valdosta. Ms. Deese opened by giving a brief history of the theme park. She stated that Herschend Family Entertainment (HFE) owns the park, which is the nation's largest American family-owned themed attractions company. Ms. Deese informed the council that Wild Adventures under the management of HFE has grown into 170 acres of fun and family entertainment. The venue includes a theme park, a water park, an animal park, and a popular concert venue.

Ms. Deese said that Wild Adventures Theme Park is dedicated to Southern Georgia Regional Commission's communities. HFE purchased Wild Adventures out of bankruptcy; and from 2008 to 2019 they have invested more than \$7.5 million on infrastructure improvements alone. Since the purchase, they have also invested over \$15 million in waterpark and theme park rides. Ms. Deese stressed that the goal of their investment has been to keep the park updated, new, and most importantly safe.

Ms. Deese continued her presentation by saying that Wild Adventures welcomes nearly 700,000 visitors to South Georgia each year. She explained that the park's target audience is middle-income families with young children. She stated that visitors come from all across the country,

but the majority of visitors come from north Florida. Wild Adventures is one of the top 10 employers in Lowndes County with over 800 team members during peak season. Wild Adventures spends more than \$7 million in payroll per year. In closing, Ms. Deese shared that the park is currently preparing to open for the 2019 season on March 9<sup>th</sup>. She said that they have many concerts lined up for the season, and they are introducing exciting new rides and attractions for the 2019 season.

After her presentation, Ms. Deese was asked if she knew what the daily traffic was for the park. She answered that the capacity of the park on any given day is up to 25,000 people. She also said that the one thing that controls the number of visitors on any given day is parking availability. Ms. Deese thanked the SGRC Council for the opportunity to speak about Wild Adventures Theme Park.

**REGIONAL MAPPING RESOURCE FOR WEATHER EMERGENCIES:** SGRC Assistant Executive Director Chris Strom began by giving an introduction to the new RECOP (Regional Emergency Center of Operations) tool that is being offered by the SGRC. RECOP is a web based application that the SGRC will provide to all of its local governments for free.

The need for RECOP became apparent when the SGRC realized that local governments needed a way for first responders to report damages and issues, in real time, during an emergency; and for 911 centers and/or base of operations to be able to access those reports immediately. The tool works across county boundaries and shares information in a live fashion, so users will be able to see the details of incident reports as they are made, changed, and/or updated. In addition, RECOP illustrates damage reports made to GEMA. This gives cities and counties using RECOP the ability to see damage reports even if they were not submitted by their local responders during a disaster.

Mr. Strom explained that RECOP is accessible to first responders in the field by an app downloaded on their phones or handheld tablets. In the office at the base of operations, RECOP is accessed by existing computers and the internet. Mr. Strom said that all SGRC local governments will receive an email with the website URL and tips for use. Mr. Strom encouraged those present to contact the SGRC GIS department for a demo of RECOP.

**REPORT ON CENSUS PSAP:** SGRC Assistant Executive Director Chris Strom referred those present to a handout on the Census PSAP (Participant Statistical Areas Program) included in their member packets (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). As part of the PSAP, the Census Bureau shares with local governments their plans for adjusting census tract and block group boundaries.

Mr. Strom told the council that the SGRC's GIS department is the liaison between the Census Bureau and the region's local governments. He stressed that in the coming weeks, the cities and counties in the region will be receiving maps of their areas, showing the proposed adjustments. He explained that each city and county will need to pay special attention to the adjustments proposed by the Census Bureau, as these boundary adjustments may affect local governments' eligibility to apply for grants, tax credits, or other government programs based on the population and/or socioeconomic make-up. He asked that counties and cities call the SGRC GIS department when they receive these maps from the Census, so that together they can review and modify them accordingly.

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

**Grants:** SGRC Executive Director Lisa Cribb referred those present to a copy of the project status list included in their member packets (copy attached and made a part of these minutes). Ms. Cribb stated that the project status list shows projects that have been funded and projects that have been applied for in our region, grouped by county. She told the council that the SGRC Community and Economic Development staff were in full swing this CDBG season. Ms. Cribb stressed to the council that everyone needed to maintain their QLG status, Quality Local Government status, throughout the entire application process. The review date will begin April 1<sup>st</sup>. If a city or county applicant does not maintain their QLG status through the entire review process of April 1 through August 1, their application will be rejected. She then emphasized that the end of March will be a very busy time for SGRC staff finishing up CDBG grant applications, and they will have to be in contact with county Chairmen, Mayors, and/or their clerks for final signatures. She asked all county Chairmen, Mayors, and their clerks to contact their grant writer if they will not be in the office or available the last week of March. She also advised those present to contact SGRC Community and Economic Development staff in regards to projects listed in the packet, or any potential projects that they may be interested in for their communities.

**Planning:** SGRC Planning Director Elizabeth Backe 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). Ms. Backe stated that now is the time to submit success stories for DCA. PlanFirst communities are required to submit success stories each year. For success stories, a project has to have been completed in the applicant's community within the past 5 years and be mentioned in the community's Comprehensive Plan preferably in the work program section of the plan. She asked that those interested in submitting a success story contact the SGRC Planning department. She also mentioned that DCA has recently updated their website for the Broadband Ready Communities Program. She reminded those present that the SGRC Planning department staff are available to help and answer questions for those interested in the Broadband Ready Communities Program. Ms. Backe then encouraged anyone with questions regarding upcoming deadlines for communities to contact SGRC Planning staff.

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

- 1.) **ACCG Update:** Chair Evans stated that a majority of the county council members were in Atlanta at the Capital Connection Conference. She reported there were no other ACCG updates at this time.
- 2.) **GMA Update:** Chair Evans Called on Lee Gowen to give an update on GMA activities. Mr. Gowen stated that registration will open on March 12<sup>th</sup> for the GMA Annual Convention being held in Savannah June 21<sup>st</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup>.
- 3.) **Recognition of Guests and Representation:** Chair Evans recognized Saralyn Stafford from the Carl Vinson Institute, Kevin Grissom – newly elected Mayor of Blackshear, and Zurich Deshazor – newly appointed private sector representative for Brooks County. Chair Evans announced that Atkinson, Brooks, Cook, and Echols Counties had 100% representation at the council meeting and thanked them for their attendance.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

Chair Evans called upon Willie Hardee to bless the meal.

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



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Joyce Evans, Chair



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Peggy Murphy, Secretary