

**MINUTES OF THE
COASTAL REGIONAL COMMISSION COUNCIL
February 14, 2024
Richmond Hill City Center, Richmond Hill, GA
10:00 A.M.**

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Ken Lee called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Invocation was provided by Commissioner Lannie Brant, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ken Lee, Rosa Romeo, Rebecca Boston, Dan Coty, Sammy Tostensen, Walter Gibson, Tammy Goober, Reggie Loper, Lannie Brant, Shaw McVeigh, Preston Dees, Tom Ratcliffe, Richard Hayes, Steven Asplund, Anthony Simmons, Jason Coley, Craig Root, Chris Blaine, Tanet Myers, Kate Karwacki, William Bland, Jr, Kristy Chance, and Lance Sabbe.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jonathan McCollar, Steve Scholar, Hugh Hodge, Donald Lovette, Carter Infinger, Jones Hooks, Karl Riles, Chester Ellis, Allen Amason, Mary Hamilton, Sabrina Kent, Van Johnson, Robert Parker, and Chap Bennett.

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT: Dorothy Glisson, Screven County and Chris Fletcher, Fort Stewart

GUESTS: Jennifer Fordham, DCA; Jeff Ricketson, LCPC; Attorney Ken Jarrard, Jarrard & Davis, LLP; and Kathy Simmons, Long County Family Connection.

STAFF PRESENT: Allen Burns, Executive Director; Dionne Lovett, Assistant Executive Director; Lena Geiger, Finance Director; Kameron Dickerson, Senior Fiscal Analyst; Barry James, Transportation Director; Aaron Carpenter, Planning & Government Services, Director; Wincy Poon, GIS Manager; Pamela Rogers, Aging Services Director; Chrishonda Grant, HR Transit Coordinator; and, Colletta Harper, Administrative Services Director/HR.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A motion was made to approve the January 10, 2024, meeting minutes.

Motion: Commissioner Rosa Romeo

Second: Walter Gibson

Vote: Unanimous

BUSINESS ITEMS

APPROVAL OF 2024 AREA PLAN AND TO CONTRACT WITH DHS FOR JULY 2024 – JUNE 2025
(See Attachment 1, attached herein and made a part of these minutes.) Ms. Pamela Rogers, Aging Services Director, provided a PowerPoint overview of the Area Plan for Aging Services. The goals were included in the Aging Services Dept. Report. The Area Plan is the roadmap for a four-year planning cycle, and July 1st begins the first year of this four-year plan. The goals come from the Statewide Plan and each year they will be updated. The FY25 budget has a decrease of \$21,000 in nutrition funding; however, we are still in a good spot overall. FY25 Fund sources include 49% Federal, 45% State, and 6% Local Match. Seventy-three percent is used on provider contracts, and 27% on CRC programs and services, which includes ADRC Counselors and Case Management staff who provide direct services to clients. ARPA funds will expire June 30th; however, there are no plans to cut services. The waiting lists look good except for in-home service. There was a brief Q & A. It was noted that Options Counseling and Case Management numbers are not included in the monthly dept. report. It was also requested that the CRC look again at getting Aging services included for Screven County since we have a political ally with Speaker Burns. Executive Director Burns reminded everyone that the reason Screven is not provided aging services through the CRC is because the State said we had to prove that we could provide additional or better services than what they are currently receiving – and we all basically

do the same thing. A motion was made to approve the Four-Year Area Plan and to contract with the Division of Aging Services for FY25.

Motion: Shaw McVeigh
Second: Dan Coty
Vote: Unanimous

APPROVAL OF CADD BOARD APPOINTMENT: *(See Attachment 2, attached herein and made a part of these minutes.)* Chairman Ken Lee referred members to the yellow handout and stated they were asking the Council to approve the appointment of Mr. Joseph Ford (Liberty County) to their Board. A motion was made to appoint Mr. Ford to their Board as requested.

Motion: Steven Asplund
Second: Commissioner Rosa Romeo
Vote: Unanimous

EXECUTIVE SESSION: *(See Attachment 3, attached herein and made a part of these minutes)* A motion was made to go into Executive Session at 10:24 a.m. to discuss or deliberate upon the appointment, employment, compensation, hiring, disciplinary action, dismissal, periodic evaluation or rating of a government officer or employee.

Motion: Tom Ratcliffe, Jr.
Second: Craig Root
Vote: Unanimous

MEETING RECONVENED AT 10:48 A.M.: The Transition Committee recommended that the Council hire Ms. Dionne Lovett as the next Executive Director with a contract mirroring the current Executive Director, with a salary at Level 21, with up to a 3% increase after six months. A motion was made to approve the hiring of Ms. Dionne Lovett as recommended, and to allow the Executive Committee to negotiate the contract as discussed.

Motion: Walter Gibson
Second: Commissioner Lannie Brant
Vote: Unanimous

PRESENTATION

First Amendment Audit: *(See attachment 4, attached herein and made a part of these minutes)* Attorney Ken Jerrard, with Jarrard & Davis, LLP, provided a PowerPoint presentation explaining First Amendment Audits and provided video examples. The objective of the first amendment audit is to determine if a government (not private organizations) respects the First Amendment and other rights of the “auditor”. First Amendment Auditors can be anyone, they are not certified or credited, and they will usually advise they are working on a story, which is you and your government. Unfortunately, people are using social media for news, and this encourages more people to do this. While auditors are videoing, they goad the police or public workers into confrontational or embarrassing moments, which could lead to lawsuits or damaging YouTube videos. The more confrontational the video, the more clicks they receive, and the more money they make. The best thing you can do is be proactive: (1) identify and mark non-public areas (2) don’t overreact (3) have a plan in place for alerting all departments (4) don’t touch the auditor and do not attempt to take their recording device. Internal cameras are great and take the subjectivity of them videoing out of it and evens the playing field. If you are uncomfortable, you can call the police to be present, but let them know you aren’t asking them to do anything, just be present to keep the peace. Also, if they aren’t requesting anything specifically, a good response is “Forgive me, I’ve got to get back to work.” He also encouraged everyone to be mindful of the four types of traditional fora which have their own judicially created rules governing how speech or assembly may be limited

(1) traditional public forums; (2) designated public forums; (3) limited public forums, and non-public forums. All of these are detailed in PowerPoint and will be emailed to all the council members. Questions and comments were allowed during the presentation.

OTHER BUSINESS

Project Status Reports - *(See Attachments 5, 6, 7, and 8 attached herein and made a part of these minutes.)* There were no questions or comments regarding the reports.

CADDA Report: *(See Attachment 9, attached herein and made a part of these minutes.)* There were no questions regarding the report.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Chairman Ken Lee stated that since the second Executive Session was informative only, due to time, it would not be done at this meeting.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- The new HVAC system is in place and operating.
- The two items that were going to be discussed in the second executive session have not come about yet, so it is not urgent.
- Please chat with Dionne after the meeting to congratulate her; I think you made the right choice.
- Encourage you to look up YouTube videos on the First Amendment Audit. The public is free to come into our lobby area, but we have posted “authorized personnel only” signs for the other portions of our office. Our council members are considered “authorized personnel”.

Chairman Lee stated that Dionne’s effective date to be Executive Director will be the day after Allen’s last day as Executive Director. Allen’s last day is March 15th.

Executive Director Elect Dionne Lovett thanked the council members for their vote of confidence and pledged to improve on the legacy Allen has left.

The retirement celebration for Executive Director Burns will be combined/after the March 13th meeting.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:09 p.m., with lunch following.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be on March 13th at 10:00 a.m. at the Richmond Hill City Center.