

**MINUTES OF THE
COASTAL REGIONAL COMMISSION COUNCIL
September 13, 2023
Richmond Hill City Center, Richmond Hill, GA
10:00 A.M.**

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Ken Lee called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m., provided the invocation, and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ken Lee, Jason Coley, Rosa Romeo, Rebecca Boston, Preston Dees, Dan Coty, Chester Ellis, Sammy Tostensen, Jones Hooks, Lannie Brant, Sabrina Kent, Walter Gibson, Anthony Simmons, Carter Infinger, Tammy Goober, Kristy Chance, Tom Ratcliffe, Richard Hayes, Van Johnson, Donald Lovette, Shaw McVeigh, Steven Asplund, Allen Brown, Kate Karwacki, Steve Scholar, Robert Parker, Julie Martin, and William Bland, Jr.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jonathan McCollar, Reggie Loper, Chris Blaine, Tanet Myers, Hugh Hodge, Allen Amason, Craig Root, Mary Hamilton, and Chap Bennett.

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

GUESTS: Mike Vaquer, The Vaquer Firm; Shawn Boatright, Camden County; Mike O'Quinn and Bill Twomey, ACCG; Kathy Simons, Long County; Mayor John Morrissey, and Tage McMann, St. Marys; Jennifer Fordham, DCA; and Speaker of the House Jon Burns.

STAFF PRESENT: Allen Burns, Executive Director; Dionne Lovett, Assistant Executive Director; Kameron Dickerson, Senior Fiscal Analyst; Barry James, Transportation Director; Wincy Poon, GIS Manager; Meagan Jones, Planning Manager; Chrishonda Grant, HR Transit Coordinator; and, Colletta Harper, Administrative Services Director/HR.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A motion was made to approve the August 9th meeting minutes.

Motion: Walter Gibson
Second: Chairman Chester Ellis
Vote: Unanimous

BUSINESS ITEMS

APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE REGIONAL WORK PROGRAM UPDATE: (*See Attachment 1, attached herein and made a part of these minutes.*) Meagan Jones, Planning Manager, stated the Council had previously approved the update and for its' submittal to DCA for their review and approval. DCA has reviewed and approved, and it is now time for the CRC Council to formally adopt the update. A motion was made to approve the Resolution as presented.

Motion: Commissioner Rosa Romeo
Second: Walter Gibson
Vote: Unanimous

APPROVAL OF AUTHORIZING RESOLUTION FOR A GRANT FOR TECHNICAL PLANNING ACTIVITIES ASSISTANCE FOR FY25 UNDER SECTION 5304: (*See Attachment 2, attached herein and made a part of these minutes.*) No discussion/explanation on this item since it is an annual requirement.

Motion: Shaw McVeigh
Second: Chairman Chester Ellis
Vote: Unanimous

APPROVAL OF AUTHORIZING RESOLUTION FOR A GRANT FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE UNDER SECTION 5311: *(See Attachment 3, attached herein and made a part of these*

minutes) Dionne Lovett, Assistant Executive Director, stated this is the annual application to GDOT, and this is for FY25 which is due on September 30th. She stated they are still working on the budget, but it looks like it will be \$6.6 million, in addition to the \$1.2 million that we will receive from the Transit Trust Fund. A motion was made to approve the Resolution as presented.

Motion: Shaw McVeigh
Second: Commissioner Rosa Romeo
Vote: Unanimous

PRESENTATION

Speaker of the House Jon Burns: Speaker Burns provided an update on the 2023 legislative session. A conservative “common sense” budget was adopted. Highlights from some of the Bills passed included the Property Tax Relief Grant and the Income Tax Credit. The Governor suspended the gas tax for a period of time and there was no shortfall in transportation funding. A new medical school will be available in the Fall of 2024 at Georgia Southern’s Armstrong Campus thanks to a partnership between Augusta University, formerly the Medical College of Georgia. The Savannah Convention Center is being expanded to include a 200,000-square-foot exhibit hall, two new ballrooms, a large hangar door, and 32 new customizable breakout rooms. Speaker Burns stated that in the 2024 session, some of the things they will be looking at include tax incentives to help attract businesses, public safety, literacy, and healthcare. He stated the goal is to ensure that Georgia remains the envy of every nation as the best place to live, work and play. A Q & A followed his presentation.

OTHER BUSINESS

Project Status Reports - *(See Attachments 4, 5, 6, and 7 attached herein and made a part of these minutes.)* Shaw McVeigh encouraged members to look at the details on the white transit analysis and see if they have any suggestions that can make the system better. Executive Burns stated we are in better shape than expected and estimates we will have approximately \$4 million in our reserve fund. Transportation’s deficit was approximately \$28,000.

CADDA Report: *(See Attachment 8, attached herein and made a part of these minutes.)* There were no questions regarding the report. Executive Director Burns stated that Craig Root wanted him to announce that there will be a CADDA outreach event at Danny Norman’s Tea Grove Plantation on October 24th from 2:00 – 5:00 p.m. and everyone is invited.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

- Our insurance on our buses and agency vehicles received a 2% increase and our facilities insurance increased 14%.
- For those not at our meeting last month, I announced my retirement effective March 2024. The Chairman appointed a Transition Committee, which will meet during lunch, so please bring your lunch back into this meeting room. Those not on the committee, please take everything with you after this meeting.
- Hope everyone did well during the hurricane. The Governor has announced financial aid for several counties; if you need grant assistance, please let us know.

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- Last month was Don Masisak's last meeting; he is now retired. Please talk with and get to know Barry, our new Transportation Director.
- Our office will be closed on October 9th for Columbus Day.
- Our Chiller went down the week of the hurricane and we were delayed getting parts. Most employees worked from home with a skeleton crew in the office. The unit is 30 years old, and we are working to get a replacement cost. This will not be cheap since it heats and cools approximately 60,000 sq. ft.; however, revenues are in good shape, so now is a better time than we've had in the past if we need to replace it.
- We will be facilitating Liberty County's annual county-wide retreat on Thursday and Friday at the King and Prince on St. Simons. All the of the municipalities, the school district, and the development authority work together for the betterment of their citizens and they do a great job. The agenda will be sent to all the Council members. If anyone would like us to facilitate a retreat for your county, please let us know.

Shaw McVeigh requested Allen to provide a written institutional recap of what has gone on (good and bad) during his past 16 years and how issues have been handled. Chairman Lee suggested he also add what challenges he thought we might face. Burns stated he would be glad to do so, and reminded everyone that he is not disappearing once he retires, and he would be accessible by phone.

Chairman Lee stated that Herb Jones is not doing good; however, he was able to attend the Rincon City Council meeting and he presented him with his plaque recognizing his service to the CRC Council. Chairman Lee thanked Dan Coty, Reggie Loper, Rebecca Boston, and Allen Burns for attending and representing the CRC Council.

Chairman Lee stated he attended a meeting with GDOT last Wednesday that Chairman Ellis initiated for Chatham, Effingham, Bulloch and Bryan counties that was very informative. Chairman Ellis stated that GDOT had conducted a Coastal Empire Study which focused on moving freight due to Hyundai and various subsidiaries, and the Savannah Ports which is going to increase traffic. GDOT is asking the state for \$1.7 billion dollars to make improvements on about 20 different projects. Chairman Ellis encouraged anyone along the I-16 & I-95 Corridor to get with GDOT to look at their plans to see what they will be doing in your area. They will be road widening, extensions, intersection, and railroad crossing improvements.

Ann Purcell, Vice Chairman, Georgia DOT Board, will be the guest speaker at our October meeting.

Shaw McVeigh stated the Georgia Association of Regional Councils (GARC) Conference will be held on St. Simons and the King & Prince in November. He stated it is a very informative Conference and encouraged members to attend. Information will be emailed to council members.

Executive Director Burns stated that the DCA Deputy Commissioner will be the guest speaker at our November meeting, and he will be attending the GARC Conference as well. Their big thing right now is housing.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:42 p.m., with lunch following.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be on October 11th at 10:00 a.m. at the Richmond Hill City Center.