

GEORGIA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION
COUNCIL MEETING

August 28, 2025

MINUTES

The GMRC Council held its regular monthly meeting on Thursday, August 28, 2025 at 6:00 p.m., at the Habersham EMC located at 6135 GA-115, Clarkesville, GA 30523. The meeting is being hosted by Habersham County.

CALL TO ORDER

GMRC Chairman Courtney Umbehant called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m.

WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS

The Habersham County Manager Tim Sims, on behalf of the Habersham County Board of Commissioners, welcomed all in attendance and thanked them for coming.

INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

Vice-Chairman Ron Matheson recognized special guests Mike Fisher, WGI; Kathy Papa, Department of Community Affairs; Cheryl Smith, Department of Agriculture; and Connor Land, Field Representative for Congressman Andrew Clyde.

INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/DINNER

GMRC Council Chaplain Deborah Mack gave the devotion, invocation, and followed with the Pledge of Allegiance.

PROGRAM

Stephanie Stuckey of the Stuckey's Corporation shared her success story with the group.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES AND ATTENDANCE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

GMRC Secretary James Addison asked for any comments or a motion regarding the minutes and attendance report for the July 31, 2025 Council meeting. Doug Wayne made a motion to approve the minutes as written and Ron Matheson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

REPORTS

Chairman's Report

GMRC Chairman Courtney Umbehant reported that he recently attended the GARC Policy Official's meeting in Macon with Executive Director Feldman. Mr. Umbehant will also be attending the GARC Annual Conference in November with fellow GMRC Officers, Ron Matheson and James Addison, as well as GMRC Department Heads. Information Services Director Faith Bryan will be speaking at the conference.

Chairman Umbehant asked all Council members to seek out sponsors for the Annual Meeting and Awards Dinner.

Mr. Umbehant also thanked Vicki Boling Jones for providing the meeting attendees with Stuckey's Pecan Logs and thanked Stephanie Stuckey for her presentation.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Feldman announced that Brandon Carlock, who currently serves as GMRC's GIS Technician, has been promoted to GIS Analyst. GMRC will merge its Planning and GIS Departments.

Mrs. Feldman reported that Keep Georgia Beautiful has a funding opportunity available through their BRACE Grant Program. The purpose of the program is to reduce litter, blight, and illegal dumping on public property and encourage code enforcement efforts. Funded through the Solid Waste Trust Fund (SWTF), the grant program is designed to aid Georgia communities to address these challenges. Applications are due October 10, 2025. If any community is interested in applying, please contact the GMRC Economic Development Department.

The Georgia Academy for Economic Development will have an Advanced Topic of Local Solutions for Georgia's Housing Needs on October 21, 2025 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at The Boathouse at Lake Lanier Olympic Park. For registration information please visit dca.georgia.gov/departments/cpi.

Executive Director Feldman reported that the Georgia Department of Community Affairs will also be hosting the Community Planning Institute October 28 – 29, 2025 at Brasstown Valley Resort. The Institute provides information about planning for land use, growth and development. For more information, please reach out to Adam Hazell, GMRC Planning Director or Kathy Papa with DCA.

The quarterly Region 2 meeting of the City and County Managers was held on August 20th. It was a great day networking and sharing best practices. GMRC appreciates that its partners at GMA, DCA, and GCCMA attended and provided important updates to the managers of this region. Mrs. Feldman thanked the City of Dahlonega for hosting the meeting.

Executive Director Feldman reported that Rushton began work on the annual financial audit and only spent a day and a half in the office doing field work. Mrs. Feldman thanked the Finance Team for their work and helping the auditors in collecting samples and documents.

The Georgia Association of Regional Commissions (GARC) is hosting their annual professional development conference November 5th through November 7th in St. Simons. If you are interested in attending, please reach out to Executive Director Feldman.

SAVE THE DATE: Faith Bryan will be retiring in early December. Please join us for a drop-in retirement celebration on Thursday, November 20th between 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. at the GMRC office, 1310 W Ridge Road, Gainesville, Georgia.

SAVE THE DATE: GMRC’s Annual Meeting and Awards Dinner is scheduled for Friday, December 5th at The Boathouse at Lake Lanier Olympic Park beginning with a reception at 4:30 p.m. followed by dinner, awards, and door prizes beginning at 6:00 p.m. Ticket sales and sponsorship opportunities can be found at gmrc.ga.gov/annualmeeting.

Mrs. Feldman advised the Council to let Executive Assistant Gina Kessler know if they need a name tag.

Information Services Update

Information Services Director Faith Bryan provided an update from GMRC’s Information Services Department. Any community with GIS needs or questions should contact Faith Bryan at fbryan@gmrc.ga.gov or Brandon Carlock at bcarlock@gmrc.ga.gov.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Health Insurance Plan Change

Executive Director Heather Feldman explained to the Council that GMRC was notified that Cigna would not be offering small group health plan renewals; therefore, GMRC’s current plan would no longer be available after 01/31/2026. GMRC would like to offer a similar plan through a level funded Cigna Open Access Plan.

The plan being presented is a level funded POS 80/20 plan with a \$2,500 deductible and would also remove the age-banded rates that GMRC is seeing with the current plan. Changing plans now will allow GMRC to lock in these rates until 10/01/2026 instead of a high probability of increasing when the current plan expires in January 2026. The Cigna Level Funded plan would go into effect beginning on October 1st.

Chairman Umbehant asked for a motion to approve GMRC changing healthcare plans to the Cigna Level Funded Open Access Plan. Kevin Herrit made the motion, and Bill Chafin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

401(k) Trustee

Executive Director Feldman explained that GMRC has two trustees for the 401(k) Plan – herself and Faith Bryan. Due to Ms. Bryan’s upcoming retirement, GMRC will need to name a secondary trustee on the plan. GMRC would like to name Adam Hazell as the secondary trustee.

Chairman Umbehant ask for a motion to approve the resolution removing Faith Bryan and adding Adam Hazell as a trustee on the GMRC 401(k) Plan. Craig Bryant made the motion, and Bill Chafin seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The September meeting will be hosted by White County and the City of Cleveland.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.


Courtney Umbehant, Chairman


James Addison, Secretary

GMRC COUNCIL
ATTENDANCE SHEET
2025-2026

COUNTY	COUNCIL MEMBER	July 25	Aug 25	Sept 25	Oct 25	Nov 25	Dec 25	Jan 26	Feb 26	March 26	April 26	May 26	June 26
RABUN	Scott Crane	A	P										
	Stacy Fountain	P	P										
	Douglas Wayne	P	P										
STEPHENS	Tara Simmons	P	P										
	Ron Matheson**	P	P										
	James Addison***	P	P										
TOWNS	Cliff Bradshaw	(P)	P										
	Andrea Gibby	A	A										
	Michael Courey	N-P	P										
UNION	Harold Collins	P	A										
	Buddy Moore	P	P										
	Kristen Bentley	N-P	(P)										
WHITE	Craig Bryant	P	P										
	Nan Bowen	P	P										
	Lauren Williams	P	P										
GOV APPT.	Kim Waters	P	P										
	Angela Whidby	(P)	P										
	VACANT	V	V										
LT. GOV APPT.	David Lee	P	P										
SPEAKER APPT.	VACANT	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