

Local Elected Officials (LEO) Board Meeting October 30, 2025 3:00PM

Minutes

The Local Elected Officials (LEOs) met on October 30, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. The meeting was held virtually by zoom at
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84054399276?pwd=vPbWaWqtbb6bZJcgE7eYOanlm5thgQ.1>

CALL TO ORDER

Greg James, Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEO), called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for attending. A quorum was not established. Due to the lack of a quorum the meeting started with the reports to allow more time to establish a quorum. The following were present:

Members Present

Greg James, CLEO (Rabun County)
Tara Simmons (Stephens County)
Travis Turner (White County)
Taylor Griffith (Banks County)
Courtney Long (Franklin County)
Harold Collins (Union County)
Travis Turner (White County)

GMRC Staff

Heather Feldman, Executive Director
Gina Kessler, Executive Assistant
Whitney Blair, WorkSource Director
Diane Jackson, Administrative Assistant
Danielle Avelar, Adult/DW Supervisor
Chris Highland, Outreach Coordinator

Guest

John Walden, Mayor of Dawsonville

Reports / Announcements:

Whitney Blair, WorkSource Georgia Mountains (WSGM) Director, provided an update on the activities for WorkSource. The Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs funding for PY24 was \$2.3 million, and for PY25 the funding decreased to about \$2.2 million. WSGM have planned for these decreases and actively seeks other funding sources.

The Adult, Dislocated, and Youth programs served 665 occupational skills training participants during PY24 and enrolled 316 new participants. Participants in occupational skills training received assistance with tuition, books, childcare, and transportation. Director Blair was happy to share that WSGM spent \$925,873 of the funding for occupational skills training. The median wage for the participants that completed training was \$22.00 per hour, and 91% of the participants were employed one year after they

completed their training. SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) participants made up 19% of the individuals that WSGM worked with, and 40% were unemployed. The participants primarily went to our local technical schools, Lanier Tech, and North GA Technical College (NGTC). WSGM also works with UNG, Piedmont, and Brenau College.

The youth program partners with NGTC, and Lanier Tech for adult education and Mountain Education to provide GED training. Director Blair informed the Board that the lease for the Youth Center was not renewed this year which allowed WSGM to reallocate the funds back into the Youth Program. WSGM had a training room available to provide the services.

WSGM launched an online screening tool and application so that people can now apply online. Individuals complete the screening tool, and they will receive a call from WSGM staff, usually within 24 hours, to talk about what they want to go to school for and their training plans. The screening tool has helped WSGM get more quality applications. While the number of applications has gone down, the number of participants that are eligible and suitable has gone up. The process has increased our efficiency for intake and for case managers.

WSGM continues to have a lot of short-term training. Interest in short-term training continues to increase, with many participants attending Dalys or other providers to earn their CDL-A. In response to the demand for short-term training from job seekers and employers, WSGM has actively sought and promoted available short-term programs.

WSGM has continued our partnerships with the Arrendale Transition Center, NGTC, and Kubota. To better meet the needs of Kubota, the most recent training was focused on manufacturing instead of welding. The women from Arrendale Transition Center were again able to begin working at Kubota full-time during training, and once they earned certifications, were eligible for raises.

Another program that launched this year was in Stephens County. WSGM called it our Mountain Manufacturing Challenge. It was primarily made up of students that recently graduated from Stephens County High School. The students attended NGTC to earn manufacturing certification. All 6 students were hired by various employers. The Electrical Mechanical program that WSGM has been offering since 2020 is a partnership with Lanier Tech and the Georgia Poultry Federation. This year WSGM had 9 individuals complete that program. On the final day of classes, the companies for the Poultry Federation were on site and all 9 of the individuals were hired the same day.

The SAIL and Lead programs continue this year. WSGM had individuals from banking, and government participate and all found it to be extremely helpful. WSGM also had participants graduate from quality control training. Both trainings were designed by employers from the WSGM region to meet specific needs. Kings Hawaiian requires their employees that want a promotion to attend the Leadership class, and if they want quality control, they are required to attend the quality control apprenticeship.

WSGM is one of the few areas in Georgia that provide most of our services in-house. Director Blair stated that she genuinely believes that the case managers' connection to the participants they serve is one of the most significant reasons for our success. The staff truly care about the lives they are touching and about the success of this region, cities, and counties. Director Blair informed the board of her appreciation for all that the board does to support WorkSource and the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission. Director Blair stated that if WSGM can assist in any way or if the board would like more information about the work we are doing, to please reach out.

To verify if there was a quorum, Diane Jackson, Administrative Assistant, conducted a roll call, and a quorum was established.

Consideration of Minutes

Chairman James asked for consideration of minutes from October 24, 2024, October 26, 2023, October 27, 2022, and September 29, 2021. The minutes were included in the agenda packet and emailed prior to the meeting. A motion was made by Travis Turner to approve the above stated minutes. Chris Dockery seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Nomination for Vacant Mayor Seats

Chairman James asked for a nomination for the vacant mayor seats. Chris Dockery nominated Dawsonville Mayor John Walden. Tara Simmons seconded, and the nomination carried unanimously. Chairman James asked if there were any nominations to fill the second vacant mayor seat. Travis Turner nominated Cleveland Mayor, Josh Turner. Tara Simmons seconded, and the nomination carried unanimously.

Adjournment

Chairman James asked for a motion adjourn. Tara Simmons made a motion to adjourn. Travis Turner seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Greg James, CLEO