

GEORGIA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION *COUNCIL MEETING*

October 30, 2025

MINUTES

The GMRC Council held its regular monthly meeting on Thursday, October 30, 2025 at 6:00 p.m., at the Pinetree Recreation Center, 215 Pinetree Way, Dahlonega, GA 30533. The meeting is being hosted by Lumpkin County and the City of Dahlonega.

CALL TO ORDER

GMRC Chairman Courtney Umbehant called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS

Lumpkin County Board of Commissioners Chairman Chris Dockery welcomed all in attendance. Chairman Dockery introduced the Lumpkin County Commissioners Jeff Morgan, Dr. Bobby Mayfield, and Tucker Green. Mr. Dockery thanked Lumpkin County Manager Alan Ours and the rest of his staff.

Chairman Dockery also introduced JoAnne Taylor, City of Dahlonega Mayor, and City of Dahlonega Councilmen Ross Shirley and Johnny Ariemma.

INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

GMRC Council Vice-Chairman Ron Matheson recognized special guests Mike Fisher, WGI; Kathy Papa, Georgia Department of Community Affairs; and Luke Hetland, North Georgia Field Director for Lt. Governor Burt Jones.

INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/DINNER

GMRC Council Chaplain Deborah Mack gave the devotion, invocation, and followed with the Pledge of Allegiance. Dinner was catered by The Smith House.

PROGRAM

Melissa Armstrong, Chief Executive Officer and Elaine Harkins, Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) Director of Legacy Link provided a program update.

A copy of that presentation can be found at <https://www.gmrc.ga.gov/gmrccouncil>.

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 September 25, 2025 Council meeting. Tony Owens made a motion to approve the minutes as written and Doug Wayne seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

REPORTS

Chairman's Report

GMRC Council Chairman Courtney Umbehant reported that he would be attending the GARC Annual Conference the following week with the GMRC officers and GMRC senior staff.

Mr. Umbehant thanked Mayor John Walden for chairing the September Council meeting while he and the other officers were unable to attend.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Heather Feldman was sad to report that the former City of Gainesville Mayor and Gainesville Council Member, Danny Dunagan Jr., passed away on October 22, 2025.

Mrs. Feldman welcomed the newest member of the GMRC Council – Mr. Lawrence Bridges. Mr. Bridges will be serving as the Private Sector Representative for Habersham County.

Executive Director Feldman reported on the government shutdown. While essential services like Social Security, Medicare, and emergency response generally continue, many discretionary or grant-supported programs are affected, many of which fund the Regional Commission as well as provide grant funding for our communities. Some impacts are immediately going to be felt in areas such as grant processing, communication with agencies, and delays in program activities.

- Federal agencies are now operating with reduced staffing, and many routine functions are paused. This includes delays across grant administration and program operations.
- Grant-related impacts include:
 - Delays in new grant awards, amendments, and reimbursements
 - Possible interruptions in federal payment systems
 - Suspension of new Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs)
 - Postponement of reporting deadlines or oversight activities, such as site visits or progress report reviews
 - Programs requiring federal approvals (e.g., infrastructure clearances, environmental reviews) may be paused

GMRC is staying abreast of the situation and will continue to provide additional information as we learn more.

Mrs. Feldman congratulated the City of Hartwell and the City of Young Harris who have both been awarded grant funding through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP).

The City of Hartwell has been awarded \$3.9 million in Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant funds for preliminary engineering and construction for pedestrian improvements on Franklin Street, including a roundabout and two pedestrian crossings.

The City of Young Harris has received \$1,412,400 in Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding for preliminary engineering, right-of-way acquisition, and construction of 1.1 new miles of sidewalk, a pedestrian crosswalk, and two pedestrian bridges to connect area residents and businesses to a new park being constructed in the community.

Executive Director Feldman reminded the Council that the deadline for the Roadway Element Validation and Mapping Program (REVAMP) Phase 5 deliverables is December 31, 2025. GIS staff will be attending Phase 6 training in January and then will be able to start Phase 6 data collection and verification process.

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs is proposing new rules aimed at state reviews on Developments of Regional Impact (DRI) and data center proposals. Proposed rules would require developers of data centers to disclose information about each project's energy and water needs. Proposed data centers would be divided into urban/suburban and rural parts of the state. In urban areas, the rules would apply for data centers covering more than 300,000 square feet and in rural areas, rules would apply if they covered more than 500,000 square feet.

Public hearings were held in September and DCA will take action at their scheduled board meeting on November 20, 2025. For more information, please contact GMRC's Planning Director, Adam Hazell.

WorkSource Update

WorkSource Georgia Mountains Director Whitney Blair provided a department update. If there are any questions about any of WorkSource Georgia Mountains services or programs, please reach out to Mrs. Blair at wblair@gmrc.ga.gov.

Quarterly Finance Report

A copy of the FY26 Quarter 1 Financial Report was included in the agenda packet that was received prior to the meeting. GMRC Finance Director Alicia Page explained that the report is for the unaudited period ending September 30, 2025.

As of the period end, the year-to-date revenues total \$1,131,795 of which:

- \$892,142.81 or approximately 79% are federal and state funding
- \$162,186.31 or approximately 14% are member dues
- \$41,081.09 or approximately 4% are charges for services
- The remaining \$36,384.78 or 3% is from other revenues

Mrs. Page also explained that at the end of the period, expenditures totaled \$1,089,939.68. Total transfers and matching obligations for the period were \$130,133.23. Leaving a total surplus of \$41,855.31 for the period end.

Factors that contribute to this surplus include:

- \$12,479.30 in investment income from the Regional Commission's two revolving loan funds. This income is invested back into the RLFs to grow the funds for future available lending.
- The remaining surplus is due to recognized savings from interest earnings and conservative spending to facilitate the RCs ongoing operational needs.

Chairman Umbehant asked for a motion to approve the FY26 Quarter 1 Financial Report. Tony Owens made the motion and Doug Wayne seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

CEDS Annual Update

GMRC Economic Director Partrick Larson explained that the Economic Development Administration (EDA) requires that, as part of its planning program, recipients develop a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that is rewritten every five years with annual updates on the progress of goals and objectives outlined in the document. The GMRC CEDS and Regional Plan was last rewritten in 2022 and 2025 serves as the most recent annual update for the 2022-2026 document.

The document was e-mailed to the GMRC Council on September 29, 2025 for review and was also included in their agenda packets.

Mr. Larson went on to explain that the update provides EDA with progress made in each of the seven (7) goal areas: Natural and Cultural Resources; Land Use; Community Facilities and Services; Economic Development, Business and Industry; Workforce Development; Housing; and Pre-Disaster Mitigation.

The CEDS Committee met on September 3, 2025, and approved moving the CEDS and Regional Plan Annual Update to the GMRC Council for review and approval.

GMRC Chairman Courtney Umbehant asked for a motion to approve and submit the updated CEDS Regional Plan to EDA. Kevin Herrit made the motion, and Bill Chafin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Aerial Photography/LiDAR RFP

GMRC Information Services Director Faith Bryan reported that a Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued on July 17, 2025; due on August 22, 2025 for the Aerial Photography and LiDAR Acquisition Project in 2026.

GMRC received four proposals. The proposals received were from Aardvark, Sanborn, Kucera, and NV5 Geospatial and were opened on August 25, 2025. All proposals were evaluated and graded by the RFP Review Committee

NV5 Geospatial met all qualifications set forth in the RFP and offered the best price.

- 3" Resolution Photography – Provided for Individual Municipalities
- 6" Resolution Photography - \$92 per square mile
- QL2 LiDAR - \$172 per square mile
- QL1 LiDAR - \$226 per square mile

It was also noted that the costs for the project would be funded by the participating cities and counties.

Chairman Umbehant asked for a motion to approve NV5 Geospatial as the chosen vendor to acquire aerial photography and LiDAR for the interested participants. Bill Chafin made the motion to approve, and JoAnne Taylor seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

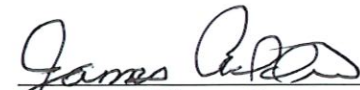
ANNOUNCEMENTS

The November meeting will be held in Towns County and will be moved to November 13, 2025 so as to not conflict with Thanksgiving.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.


Courtney Umbehant, Chairman


James Addison, Secretary

**GMRC COUNCIL
ATTENDANCE SHEET
2025-2026**

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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
BANKS	Chris Ausburn	P	A	A	P								
	Sandra Garrison	P	P	A	P								
	Vicki Boling Jones	A	P	P	P								
DAWSON	Billy Thurmond	A	(P)	(R)	(P)								
	John Walden	P	P	P	P								
	Kevin Herritt	P	P	P	P								
FRANKLIN	Cory Pulliam	P	P	P	(R)								
	Courtney Umbehant*	P	P	(P)	P								
	Leslie McFarlin	P	P	P	E								
HABERSHAM	Jimmy Tench	A	P	A	P								
	Stephanie Almagno	P	P	A	A								
	Lawrence Bridges	V	V	V	N-P								
HALL	David Gibbs	A	E	E	A								
	Sam Couvillon	P	A	A	A								
	Deborah Mack	P	P	P	P								
HART	Jeff Brown	A	A	A	A								
	Dan Leard	A	A	A	A								
	Bill Chafin	P	P	P	P								
LUMPKIN	Chris Dockery	(R)	(R)	A	P								
	JoAnne Taylor	P	A	P	P								
	Tony Owens	P	A	P	P								

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RABUN	Scott Crane	A	P	P	A								
	Stacy Fountain	P	P	P	P								
	Douglas Wayne	P	P	P	P								
STEPHENS	Tara Simmons	P	P	E	P								
	Ron Matheson**	P	P	E	P								
	James Addison***	P	P	A	P								
TOWNS	Cliff Bradshaw	(P)	P	P	A								
	Andrea Gibby	A	A	(R)	A								
	Michael Courey	N-P	P	P	P								
UNION	Harold Collins	P	A	P	P								
	Buddy Moore	P	P	P	P								
	Kristen Bentley	N-P	(P)	(R)	(R)								
WHITE	Craig Bryant	P	P	P	P								
	Nan Bowen	P	P	P	P								
	Lauren Williams	P	P	P	P								
GOV APPT.	Kim Waters	P	P	P	P								
	Angela Whidby	(P)	P	P	(P)								
	VACANT	V	V	V	V								
LT. GOV APPT.	David Lee	P	P	P	P								
SPEAKER APPT.	VACANT	V	V	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