

# GEORGIA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION *COUNCIL MEETING*

July 31, 2025

## MINUTES

The GMRC Council held its regular monthly meeting on Thursday, July 31, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. at the Union County Community Center located at 129 Union County Rec Road, Blairsville, Georgia 30512. The meeting was hosted by the City of Blairsville and Union County.

### CALL TO ORDER

GMRC Chairman Courtney Umbehant called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

### WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS

The City of Blairsville Mayor Buddy Moore welcomed all in attendance and introduced Harold Collins, Union County Sole Commissioner; Tony Hughes, Union County Manager; Rhonda Mahan, City of Blairsville Councilwoman; Mary Ruth Cook, City of Blairsville Councilwoman; Kayla Hemphill, City of Blairsville Councilwoman; Jim Conley, former City of Blairsville Mayor; Zach Edmonds, Blairsville Downtown Development Authority Chairman; and Kristen Bentley, Blairsville Downtown Development Authority Executive Director. Mayor Moore extended a special thank you to Kaye McCann, City of Blairsville Clerk and Jennifer Mahan, Union County Executive Assistant, for their part in organizing the meeting.

### INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS

Vice-Chairman Ron Matheson recognized special guests Jesus Rubio, Northeast Georgia Outreach Representative for U. S. Senator Raphael Warnock; Susie Leggett, Northeast Georgia Outreach Director for U. S. Senator Raphael Warnock; Luke Hetland, North Georgia Field Director for Lt. Governor Burt Jones; Connor Land, Field Representative for Congressman Andrew Clyde; and Hope Iglehart, Outreach Coordinator for U.S. Senator Jon Ossoff.

### 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 Sawmill Place in Blairsville, Georgia.

### 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 June 26, 2025 Council meeting. Doug Wayne made

a motion to approve the minutes as written and Deborah Mack seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

## REPORTS

### Chairman's Report

GMRC Chairman Courtney Umbehant stated that he was honored to serve as an officer alongside GMRC Vice-Chairman Ron Matheson and GMRC Secretary James Addison.

### Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Heather Feldman was pleased to announce that GMRC had once again received three National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Impact Awards for the following projects:

- **Workforce Development Department:** *Empowering Employers Through Apprenticeships: A Georgia Mountains Works Webinar Initiative*
- **Economic Development Department:** *Flowery Branch Bay Park Trail*
- **Planning Department:** *City of Young Harris Master Plan*

Mrs. Feldman congratulated and thanked the staff responsible for assisting with the projects.

On July 17, 2025 the GMRC issued a Request for Proposals for the Aerial Photography and LiDAR acquisition project that is to be completed for 10 counties and three cities. Proposals are due on August 22, 2025.

Executive Director Feldman reported that she is scheduled to speak at the University Economic Development Association (UEDA) Summit in Huntsville, Alabama in October. The UEDA Summit will bring together national experts in leveraging college and university resources for greater economic development and community impact by working within higher education, the private sector, economic development organizations, government agencies, and research centers. Mrs. Feldman will be speaking on GMRC's GA-AIM project.

Executive Director Feldman thanked the Economic Department for putting together 11 Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) project applications in a very short, unexpected time frame. The following communities applied for grant funding through ARC: City of Baldwin, City of Blairsville, City of Cleveland, Dawson County Development Authority, Franklin County, City of Franklin Springs, City of Gainesville, City of Hartwell (applied for two projects), City of Lula, and the City of Sky Valley.

### Quarterly Finance Report

Council members received a copy of the FY25 Quarter 4 Financial Report prior to the meeting. GMRC Finance Director Alicia Page explained that the report is for the unaudited period ending June 30, 2025.

- The Open Records Officer will notify The Gainesville Times as the legal organ of this designation.
- Designate Gina Kessler, Executive Assistant, to serve as the GMRC's official Open Records Officer.

Chairman Courtney Umbehant asked for a motion to approve the resolution and designate Gina Kessler as GMRC's Open Records Officer. Craig Bryant made the motion, and JoAnne Taylor seconded the motion. The motion passes unanimously.

#### Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Plan Update

Council members received a copy of the updated Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) plan in their agenda packets. Senior Project Manager Laurin Yoder explained that the RLF Committee had made changes/updates to the plan and that the Economic Development Administration (EDA) required several additional edits as well. Ms. Yoder went over the updates with the Council and reported that the updated plan had been approved by both the RLF Committee and EDA. Ms. Laurin Yoder also thanked the RLF Committee for all of their input and assistance with the plan updates.

Chairman Umbehant asked for a motion to approve the RLF Plan updates and to submit the plan as presented to EDA for final approval. Kevin Herit made the motion, and Tony Owens seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### PROGRAM


In lieu of a program, GMRC provided Council Member Training as outlined in its bylaws.

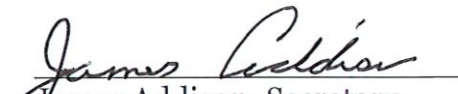
#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

The August Meeting will be held in Habersham County, and the program speaker will be Ms. Stephanie Stuckey of the Stuckey's Cooperation.

#### ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

  
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Courtney Umbehant, Chairman

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
James Addison, Secretary

Mrs. Page went on to report that as of the period end, the year-to-date revenues total \$4,921,570.29 of which:

- \$4,009,221.01 or approximately 81% are federal and state funding
- \$634,506.44 or approximately 13% are member dues
- \$125,164.82 or approximately 3% are charges for services
- The remaining \$152,678.02 or 3% is from other revenues

At the end of the period, expenditures totaled \$4,797,838.98. Total transfers and matching obligations for the period were \$566,469.03. Leaving a total surplus of \$123,731.31 for the period end.

Factors that contribute to this surplus include:

- \$63,855.08 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 accept the FY25 Quarter 4 Financial Report. Bill Chafin made the motion, and Kristen Bentley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### OLD BUSINESS

None

#### NEW BUSINESS

##### Open Records Officer

Executive Director Feldman explained that GMRC does not currently have a designated individual for receiving requests for open records. The proposed resolution would allow for the following:

- All requests for open records going forward shall be directed, in writing, to the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission's designated Open Records Officer.
- The Open Records Officer will ensure that the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission website prominently displays this designation.

## Page 1

Page 1

GMRC COUNCIL  
ATTENDANCE SHEET  
2025-2026

Page 2

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

P = PRESENT      A = ABSENT      (R) = REPRESENTED      (P) PROXY VOTE      V = VACANCY      E = EXCUSED      N = NEW MEMBER      X = NO MEETING  
 \* Chairman  
 \*\* Vice Chairman  
 \*\*\* Secretary