

Region 9 Regional Advisory Council
Strategic Planning Session
October 7, 2003

On Tuesday, October 7, 2003, representatives of the Region 9 Regional Advisory Council met in Vidalia at Southeastern Technical College Economic Development Center to set goals for the year. Pat Merritt, Manager of Community Development, Georgia Electric Membership Corporation, facilitated the meeting on behalf of Excelsior, Little Ocmulgee, Ocmulgee, Oconee, Canoochee and Satilla EMCs.

Participants

Dale Atkins	Tina Hutcheson
Gary Browning	Nancy Jones
John Clifton	Mary Ellen Massello
Dr. Elaine Connell	Quinton Mullis
Jim Crowdis	Curt Nichols
Dr. Esco Hall, Jr.	Andy Thompson
Wayne Hartley	Billy Trapnell
Lindsey Hammock	Mike Wolfe
Arnold Horton	

Agenda

- Welcome/Introductions
- Approval of Minutes
- Revisit 2002 Strategic Plan
- Accomplishments
- Issue Identification
- Goal Identification and Prioritization
- Review/Wrap-up
- Adjourn

Accomplishments

Leadership Development

Leadership Development Programs (A=Adult; Y=Youth)

Johnson, Treutlen, Tattnall have conducted first time leadership development classes. On-going programs exist in Wayne, Laurens, Toombs, Appling, Telfair Counties, and Bleckley (Y) Counties. Jeff Davis, Emanuel, Montgomery, Telfair and Wilcox have applied for funds to develop a youth leadership development program.

As the Region 9 Georgia Academy for Economic Development Class 2003 project, a minimum of \$350 per county will be available to supplement a youth leadership development program in all counties. The goal is to have all

*Georgia Electric Membership Corporation's Economic Development
A Service of Excelsior, Little Ocmulgee, Ocmulgee, Oconee,
Canoochee, and Satilla EMCs*

counties participate. Pam Wiggins and Martin Moses were elected by the Academy Class to conduct interviews to select funded projects. Interviews will occur on Nov. 6, 2003.

To date the following counties do not have an on-going program: Wilcox (A), Wheeler (A) or (Y), Evans (A) or (Y), Candler (A) or (Y) and Dodge (A) or (Y). Wheeler County would like to explore conducting a joint program with Telfair County due to proximity and population size in both counties.

The Georgia Academy for Economic Development Participation

12 of the 17 counties had participants in the 2003 class. Classes for 2004 start in February 2004 – they will meet 4 times over a period of 4 months with the first session consisting of a two-day program.

Feedback was given that would be important to the Georgia Academy for Economic Development: more information is needed regarding the benefits of attending the Academy; a better marketing effort is required to get qualified participants interested in the program and overall, we need to look “outside the box” for different participants. The Academy must answer the questions: 1) why should I care? And 2) who has the authority to make change happen?

Some of the “out of the box” suggestions include: Family Connection Representatives, School Board Members, Teachers, 4-H and Extension Representatives, etc. in addition to the usual suspects of county commissioners and staff, city council and staff, chamber of commerce and development authority board members and staff, tourism representatives, and social services representatives, etc. Discussion included the idea of adding a leadership component to the on-going summer teacher classes that are held in connection with the technical colleges through the Youth Apprenticeship Program.

Leadership Development for Elected Officials

A letter from the RAC chairman of upcoming training opportunities (could do a better job of this). Explaining the benefits of why training would be beneficial for elected officials. A resolution was passed unanimously by the RAC to support legislation to require at least a high school graduation certificate by anyone interested in running for any office in the state (currently there is no requirement as such). Johnny Clifton asked that this resolution be shared with the other 10 Regional Advisory Councils and that they be asked to adopt it as well – Jim Crowdis offered to do this. Local legislators need to be informed so they will not be “blind-sided” by the resolution. Ultimately it needs to be presented to the House and Senate and

the Governor's Rural Development Council's support needs to be obtained as well as the support of this council's Technical Advisory Council.

Filling RAC Vacancies with Academy and local leadership development program graduates

This is a challenging process – to identify “new faces” – need to increase minority participation – African Americans, Latinos, etc. as well as female and younger leaders. Need to identify those who “want” to serve but perhaps do not know how to get involved.

Idea: Perhaps there could be a regular “infomercial” talking about specific topics that are essential to economic development that could be published in local newspapers. These “Best Practices” columns could be a regular addition to the paper.

Idea: Hold topic specific forums open to the general public with an ad in the local newspaper on a quarterly basis. Topics might include: leadership, diversity, Latino/Hispanic issues, etc.

Telecommunications

DSL: exists in Tattnall, Toombs, Montgomery, Wilcox, Wayne, Laurens, Treutlen, and Appling Counties.

Cities must ask for it; widespread coverage in rural areas may have to come in a different form – such as wireless, satellite launches, etc.

Idea: identify potential users, make contacts with providers, support alternatives to DSL for rural areas; encourage local governments and legislators to classify telecommunications as an integral item of infrastructure just like water, sewer and electricity.

There was also a discussion about the loss of tax revenue caused by Internet purchases with no sales tax attached.

The “Power Alley” project was also discussed. This Hwy. Former Gov. Roy Barnes established 280 corridor.

Communication with legislators and state/federal agencies
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Hold an additional two meetings per year to include strategic communication with legislators

This was not done due to Gov. Perdue's delay in appointing state agency department heads. The group decided that it was worth revisiting now that the department heads have been named.

A fact sheet about the region and its priority issues would need to be developed to share with legislators.

Economic Development

Showcasing the region to state department heads and legislators

This goal was not accomplished due to Gov. Perdue's delay in appointing state agency heads. Magnolia Midlands Travel Association Tourism Representative suggested that since most of the items the RAC had planned to highlight were tourism that the RAC should at least adopt Tourism as one of their formal initiatives for economic development.

Ideas:

Place more emphasis on truly supporting entrepreneurs (a new focus of state government)

Develop a regional lake project as a recreational development and residential/commercial development

Utilize agriculture and tourism resources

Support retirees and early out attraction with resources such as wireless communication and DSL

Support tourism positions in each county: Many counties in the region do not have official tourism representatives who can provide tours that are coordinated through the Magnolia Midlands Travel Association.

Utilize local resources like the developers of the Millwood Plantation project for ways to co-op marketing efforts

Support agriculture and value-added agriculture as economic development strategies.

Leadership Development

**RAC 9 Committee: Dr. Elaine Connell and >
(Votes)**

Goal:

- Continue to encourage all counties to implement adult and youth leadership development programs (7)*

Other brainstormed goals:

- Filling RAC vacancies with diverse candidates and new faces (2)
- Get involved with teachers summer programs and add leadership and economic development to their training programs (2)
- Continue to help recruit diverse Academy participants – need benefits sheet (1)
- Best practices: a regular news column; forums held quarterly, sponsored by the RAC (0)
- Improve getting notice to elected officials of upcoming training and why they should attend (0)

Telecommunications

RAC 9 Committee: Arnold Horton and Dr. Esco Hall, Jr. and >

Goal:

- Focus on the impact of the loss of sales tax due to e-commerce (7)*
- Continue to pursue high-speed Internet connection for all counties in the region by pressuring governments to invest in alternatives to DSL including how to best utilize and support the “Power Alley” Hwy. 280 initiative (5)*

Communication with legislators and state/federal agencies
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RAC 9 Committee: Nancy Jones, Johnny Clifton, Dale Atkins and >

Goal:

- Now that agency heads are appointed, revisit meeting idea to communicate regional issues (9)*

Other brainstormed goals:

- Publicize to legislators and other RACs the resolution requiring a high school degree to hold any elected office; take to legislators in 2004 session (0)

Economic Development

RAC 9 Committee: Billy Trapnell, Curt Nichols, Gary Browning, Andy Thompson and Wayne Hartley

Goals:

- Adopt support of entrepreneurs and existing industries as an economic development strategy (11)*
- Adopt support of tourism – both regional tourism initiatives such as the Magnolia Midlands Travel Association, the Altamaha River Partnership and the Golden Isles Parkway as well as heritage tourism as an economic development strategy (11)*
- Adopt support of agriculture and value-added agriculture as an economic development strategy (7)*

Other brainstormed goals:

- Support planned housing developments – workforce and retiree housing (0)
- Support the attraction of retirees and early outs / returnees with technology (0)
- Partner with and utilize regional resources such as the developers of Millwood Plantation (1)
- Make sure each county in the region has an accurate and well-maintained website (0)

- Support the development of a recreational lake with planned housing (mixed use development) (2)