

Minutes
Board of Natural Resources
Savannah Economic Development Authority
906 Drayton Street
Savannah, GA 31401

Tuesday, October 24, 2023
9:00 a.m.

Board Members

Dwight Davis, Chair
Joe Hatfield, Vice Chair
Nancy Addison
Randy Dellinger
Patrick Denney
Charles DePriest
Dan Garcia
Mark Hennessy
Kevin Jackson
Duncan Johnson
Ray Lambert
Tim Lowe
Lesley Reynolds
Paul Shailendra
Bodine Sinyard

Guests

Bryan Tolar, GA Urban Ag Council
Mary Landers, The Current
Beth Remmes, Georgia Interfaith Power and Light
Ben Kirsch, Ogeechee Riverkeeper
Jen Hilburn, One Hundred Miles
Rena Peck, Georgia River Network
Alicia Keyes, One Hundred Miles
Justin Taylor, The Current
Karen Robertson, RobMark
Anna Edmondson, Robbins Government Relations
Monet Murphy, Georgia Conservancy / Savannah St. Univ.
Royce Johnson, Jack Hill State Park

Staff Members

Walter Rabon, Commissioner
Thomas Barnard
Trevor Santos
Kyle Pearson
Cathy Barnette
Artica Gaston
Mike England
Steve Friedman
Doug Haymans
Angie Johnson
Ted Will
Taylor Brown Fisher
Jaynie Gaskin
Ray Smith

Jeff Cown, Director
James Boylan

The October 24, 2023 Board of Natural Resources meeting was called to order by Chairman Dwight Davis.

Chairman Davis thanked the Georgia Ports Authority for providing a very informative tour of the Port of Savannah, which is known to be the single largest and fastest growing container terminal in America.

Chairman Davis thanked the staff at the Old Fort Jackson for hosting the board and staff at their beautiful historic site on Monday evening.

Chairman Davis thanked Nancy Addison and Doug Haymans for a wonderful afternoon and evening.

Chairman Davis introduced the Employee Spotlight speaker, Jaynie Gaskin, Wetlands Biologist, Coastal Resources Division.

Chairman Davis thanked Ms. Gaskin.

Chairman Davis adjourned the Board meeting to move into the Committee meetings.

Chairman Davis called the meeting of the Board of Natural Resources to order.

Chairman Davis called for a motion to approve the minutes of the Board of Natural Resources meeting on September 26, 2023.

A motion was made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Shailendra, to approve the minutes of the Board of Natural Resources meeting on September 26, 2023.

Chairman Davis called on Jeff Cown, Director of the Environmental Protection Division, for his report.

Director Cown updated the Board on Georgia's Fish Tissue Monitoring Program, Air Protection Branch awarded AAPCA's 2023 Best Practices in Air Pollution Control, and River's Alive South River cleanup.

Director Cown stated this concluded his report.

Chairman Davis called on Walter Rabon, Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources, for his report.

Commissioner Rabon began his report by thanking Nancy Addison, Director Doug Haymans, and the staff at Old Fort Jackson for a nice visit and dinner on Monday evening.

Commissioner Rabon stated that it was announced at the last board meeting that Colonel Thomas Barnard has been promoted to Deputy Commissioner of Operations, which left a vacancy at the Law Enforcement Division. He further stated that on October 12, it was announced that Lt. Colonel Mike England was promoted to Colonel Mike England as the new Director of the Law Enforcement Division. He added that Colonel England began his career with the Law Enforcement Division over 30+ years ago, where he started as a game warden in Richmond County and rose through the ranks being promoted to Corporal, Sergeant, and Captain. He further added that at one time Colonel England worked in the license and boat registration unit and crafted the unit into much of what you see today. He stated that Colonel England formally served as Major over Special Operation in 2019, and he was named Assistant Director to the Law Enforcement Division in 2021, under Colonel Thomas Barnard. He further stated that he has full confidence in Colonel England and knows he will do an excellent job in this position.

Commissioner Rabon stated that this appointment does require a vote from the Board, and he recommends the Board approve the appointment of Mike England to Director of the Law Enforcement Division.

Chairman Davis asked for a motion to approve.

A motion was made by Mr. Sinyard, seconded by Mr. Jackson, as carried unanimously to approve the appointment of Mike England to Director of the Law Enforcement Division.

Commissioner Rabon called on Doug Haymans, Director of the Coastal Resources Division, for his report.

Director Haymans provided an update on reef deployment, 2018 Shrimp Fishery Disaster and the \$1.2 million in payments to qualified Georgia shrimpers, a new state saltwater record catch of a 2 lb. 3.52 oz. Florida pompano on St. Simons Island, and the October 2023 edition of Georgia Coastlines.

Director Haymans stated this concluded his report.

Commissioner Rabon called on Colonel Mike England, Director of the Law Enforcement Division, for his report.

Colonel England provided an update on pistol optic transition, Special Operations Group Inservice, end of summer boating stats, 2023 CIRT Investigation Overview (boating), SEAFWA award, and the Line of Duty Death of K-9 Rio on October 19.

Colonel England stated this concluded his report.

Commissioner Rabon called on Angie Johnson, Director of the State Parks and Historic Sites Division for her report.

Director Johnson provided an update on the PHSD Managers Conference, PHSD Leaf Watch 2023, Your State Parks Day, Georgia Park Ranger Academy Class #05, PHSD at the Georgia National Fair, grand opening of the Amicalola Falls Visitor Center, Historic Sites events including Indigenous People’s Day activities, U. S. Forest Service employees at New Echota, and the 53rd Annual Kolomoki Mounds Festival, and the 2023 Association of Southeastern State Parks Directors Conference in Baton Rouge, LA.

Director Johnson stated this concluded her report.

Commissioner Rabon called on Ted Will, Director of the Wildlife Resources Division, for his report.

Director Will began his report by remembering Jon Ambrose for being a gentle and quiet force, a champion for wildlife conservation, his DNR family, and the outdoors. He stated that Jon’s dedication and service in his life’s work are an outstanding testament and legacy for the future of this state and its natural resources.

Director Will provided an update on outreach materials for Sprewell Bluff WMA, fishing access in Georgia and the annual sampling of Georgia’s fish populations, the opening of youth firearms season, primitive weapons, and general firearms season, and the strong support among hunters for the Chattahoochee-Chestatee Bear Dog Hunt.

Director Will stated this concluded his report.

Chairman Davis called on Ray Lambert, Chair of the Environmental Protection Division, for his report.

A motion was made by Mr. Lambert, seconded by Mr. Shailendra, and carried unanimously to approve the Proposed Grant Criteria for Georgia Diesel Emissions Reduction Program, Chapter 391-3-21-.15.

Mr. Lambert stated this concluded his report.

Chairman Davis called on Tim Lowe, Chair of the Land Committee, for his report.

A motion was made by Mr. Lowe, seconded by Mr. Shailendra, and carried unanimously that the Board approve via Executive Order to demolish a group shelter on A.H. Stephens State Park, Taliaferro County.

Mr. Lowe stated this concluded his report.

Chairman Davis announced the appointment of the Nominating Committee for the 2024 Officers of the Board of Natural Resources: Ray Lambert, Chair, Nancy Addison, Bill Jones, and Bodine Sinyard.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Dwight J. Davis, Chairman

ATTEST:

Gary Vowell, Secretary