

**MINUTES**  
**of the**  
**Georgia Association of FSA County Office Employees**  
**Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee and Officers of the Georgia Association of FSA County Office Employees met October 17, 2007 in Moultrie Georgia at the Colquitt County FSA Building.

Those present were: Roger D. Swain, President      Chad Scruggs, Vice-President  
Pam Wilkes, Treasurer      Denise L. Otto, Secretary  
Cliff Fussell – Past President  
District 1B – Wade Hood, Alternate and Dianne Westmoreland  
District 2 – Phil Howell and Callie Redmond  
District 3 – Barbara Jackson and Delores Hartley  
District 4 – Math Johnson and Donna Dykes  
District 5 – Wanda McCurdy  
District 6 – Keith Willis and Krista Knight  
District 7 – Monica Arnold  
District 8 – Joe Hester and Marcia Baker

The meeting began with the Question and Answers session. Those present were Mrs. Susan Holmes, SED, Harry Lee Kemp, State Committee Chairperson, Chuck Lee, STC, Ronnie Lee, STC, Mary Alice McGhee, STC, William Bagwell, STC, Ginger Rider, STO ADM, Kula Moore, STO ADM, Clark Weaver, STO Farm Programs, Mary Parker, STO Outreach Coordinator, Elaine McGarity, SED Secretary, David Laster, STO Farm Loan, Mike Gibbs, NACS, members of GACS, Robert Tyson, Leigh Wilson, Theresa Windham, and PL Jowers, District Directors, Phil Addy, Berry Laslie, Barry Alexander, Jeff Harden, Bubba Collins, John Rudowski, and Brian Stuckey and Jody Redding, Representative from Johnny Isackson's office. Mrs. Susan Holmes made a few remarks to the committee, had everyone introduce themselves and the questions began. The first six questions were from the GACS organization.

1. What is the status of the state reorganization plan?

Per letter signed by Secretary of Agriculture, and dated August 10, 2007, the consolidation of 16 Georgia offices will take effect 120 days from date of his letter. Some offices cannot be consolidated until new space is acquired. No actions are to be effective before December 8.

2. Will any Type 1 Farm Loan Offices be affected?

David Laster answered not directly, as new combinations are created some district lines will be changed for farm loan Type 1 Offices.

3. Do you anticipate the change in any FLP territorial boundaries as a result of the GA Plan?

David Laster answered same as question number 2. David made the remark that he has made some recommendations to the DD's and SED.

4. What is the latest on the potential move of the location of the State Office?

SED/STC answered that the State FAC is working with the National FAC on this.

5. Is there a chance GA may receive additional FLOT positions from the National pool in the next year or so?

Georgia presently has 3 non-ceiling FLOT positions. One was filled in August 2007, leaving 2 open non-ceiling positions to be filled.

6. Do you have a feel for the '08 funding situation?

As of now, the same as 07.

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1. What is our 08 ceiling federal and county office?

Permanent Non-Federal = 280

(levels do not reflect FY 2007 approved flexing)

Total Federal = 75

(levels do not reflect FY 2007 approved flexing; includes permanent, other, and all STC related staff years)

Total Temp Ceiling = 20

(includes COC staff years; reflects temporary staff years associated with the Agricultural Assistance Act of 2007)

SED's ability to flex or move Federal to Non Federal goes away at the end of the year and they have to ask Washington again each year for this ability.

The comment was made that when Washington cuts back they do not let anyone go they usually let it ride through attrition. Ceiling is reflected on budget.

Chad Scruggs stated that we always want to stay at ceiling or we are going to lose positions. SED and Kula agreed.

2. Are there any plans for a COT program in 2008? If so when and how many for GA?

Georgia has 3 non-ceiling COT positions. One is presently filled. We previously stated that we would advertise the other 2 positions, but since then we have requested 1 additional non-ceiling COT from DAFO. When we hear from DAFO, we will then immediately advertise either 2 or 3 COT positions.

3. There still seems to be some confusion at the county level as to what and when counties are available to advertise for openings. If it is based on a list of understaffed offices can this be provided?

The SED reviews the impact on staffing when a PT leaves. If ceiling permits and if action leaves the office .75 understaffed, the SED may then approve the request that the position be advertised.

4. What is the state office going to do about staffing in understaffed offices that have nothing to do with office closings? And when?

SED answered that the SED and STO had the ability to do direct reassignments. They are waiting on workload to use for staffing before doing any direct reassignments.

5. What is the status of the State Office being moved or not being moved?

See GACS Question #4

6. Will the number of DD's remain the same after the closing of COF's?

SED answered that the number of DD's will remain the same.

7. Training is still a big concern with employees. Does it appear that the 2008 budget will allow for more training? County Office are losing employees due to retirement and gaining new employees that need training, also the remaining PT's are doing programs that they have never done in the past.

Since we are under a Continuing Resolution, it is hard to predict what our full 2008 budget will allow. There are numerous ways to pursue training with little or no cost. DD's and State Office specialists can conduct net meetings/training or teleconferences. Within districts or areas, DD's and CED's can arrange for intense training of new PT's with experienced PT's similar to COT training.

Chad Scruggs ask why we can't hire a temporary when a vacancy is opened to get them trained for that permanent position. Kula stated that EEO and HR problems would occur from this because more people would apply for the permanent position than the temporary position.

Monica Arnold suggested to have your District PT's get together and get together questions for the whole district then send them or have a teleconference with the STO to get the questions answered to help with training PT's.

8. If Shared Managed County Offices are closed what happens to the county that receives a LARGE amount of farms that had nothing to do with the combination.

Example:

County A closes and combines with County B. The clerks from Co A are moved to County B. But for some strange reason a Large amount of farms are transferred to Co C -Which had nothing to do with the closing. How will the staffing needs be met? You could have County B with more than required staff and Co C with inadequate staff.

Directed reassignments.

Also, we will have grade 8's and 9's that will no longer be in Shared-Management offices. With the complexity of the programs and the stress levels we are working in today we all should be 8's or 9's. How will this be handled?

NASCOE has presented DAFO with their opinion on disposition of COF PT positions. DAFO anticipated there will be some further work on this. This will most likely be a working group made up of several folks from DAFO, the field and HRD.

9. If we are budget minded, How do we have 11 grade 8's, Lead PT's in the State and 3 grade 9's, PT in Charge in the State and we have 2 Chief PT's in the State. If we don't have CED's in a county and the office has been vacant for over 3 months- even more- why is the position not advertised when other counties are advertised automatically?

The Lead PT positions are the result of shared management and are considered temporary personnel actions. When shared management is abolished, the grade 8 lead PT positions will

revert to their former grade and will be eligible for pay retention if they served 52 weeks at the higher grade.

CED vacancies are advertised after COC requests STC for approval to advertise and STC approves. There is no automatic advertising of CED vacancies.

10. What is the status of having a District Administrative PT to do purchasing and travel for the District? Some PT's are for this and some not. How does the STO feel about this?

The State Office will review with DAFO if this is what districts want. Does each district want one Administrative PT performing purchasing and travel for the district? Keep in mind that taking on this work will not increase a PT's grade. If districts agree, then I would suggest doing one function at a time – either purchasing or travel, see how that goes, and then the other function.

Below is feedback from other State Offices:

- Each of our Admin PT's in our offices has a purchase card. We thought about the District thing but when we put it out to the field the CED's did not like the idea nor did the DD's. I would like to go this route but haven't been able to convince everyone that having 1 or 2 in a district doing something more often (becoming more effective, efficient, etc.) would be better than having someone stumble around trying to make a purchase every once in awhile and then getting the wrong product or quantity or at the high price, etc. or having to call the STO for help, etc. My goal is to have 1 or 2 per district doing the purchasing but not the travel.
- NASCOE may not look kindly at us for doing this as we would be taking away work from the Administrative PT's in many of our offices.
- We tried the district approach for purchase cards, but it didn't work well for us. Part of the problem was the general pain associated with implementing the new purchasing requirements in COF's. Another issue was that the district purchasers usually put their own admin or program work before the work for other offices. This led to delays, miscommunication, griping, etc.
- We have been doing travel, T & A's and Purchasing by DD district for years. We started with T & A's and that worked so well we added travel and when purchase cards came we only trained on PT per district and issued only one purchase card per district. It works great. We have a different PT handling each process within each district.
- Yes we have them and it is working out GREAT!!

11. DD's were informed of the SED and STC's plan to reward all permanent federal and non-federal employees (excluding employees who have been on board less than six months or on extended LWOP or Sick Leave) with a monetary award for FY 2007. We are aware that some employees that are on LWOP or extended sick leave received an award and we would like to know why? Couldn't this money have been split among employee's that were working and deserved the award?

Per GA Notice PM-1602, due to the extraordinary demands that the Department of Agriculture farm and farm loan programs placed on Georgia's employees, the SED and STC recommended the granting of a Spot Award to all permanent Georgia FSA employees. If you know of a non-permanent employee who received an award, please notify the State Office.

Ginger Rider made the comment that new regulations from Washington on Performance Appraisals were coming down.

12. What is the status of the Office closings? Where are we on this and who will be sending out the notification letters about the closing? The County Office or the STO. Counties on the closure plan need clear directions on how to proceed, who is responsible for this at the state office?

No actions are to be effective before December 8. The Administrative Section is creating a checklist/procedure for office restructuring. Checklist will be out on October 22.

13. In the letter sent from the Secretary of Agriculture to Harkin about office closures it stated there was a cost analysis done for the state of Georgia by the SED? What was used to determine the cost analysis and can we have a copy of this analysis?

Harry Lee Kemp stated he did not know of any cost analysis (money per say) being conducted. Office closings were not done by SED or STC.

14. With the money that is allocated from the Disaster Bill to hire temps. How many temps will Georgia be getting and who will be deciding the county offices that will be able to hire these temps? The District Director or the STO?

10 temps for disaster. Recommendations from District Directors and the State Office Specialists will determine where these temps are placed.

The question was asked will there be comp time or overtime for Disaster Program. It was answered that no money was allocated in the bill for this only for temps.

15. Is direct reassignment in effect?

Per 27-PM, paragraph 336, STC's may direct the reassignment of an employee to correct imbalances between overstaffed and understaffed offices. SED's shall identify overstaffed and understaffed County Offices and notify affected CED's. CED's in understaffed County Offices have either of the following options: accept reassignment of an employee for a permanent position or handle the workload with the current staff. Employees from an overstaffed office within the local commuting area shall have the first opportunity to volunteer to transfer to a similar position. If no employee volunteers from within the local commuting area, employees from other identified overstaffed County Offices within the State must be notified of vacancies available in the understaffed County Offices and may volunteer for reassignment. If no volunteers are received from an overstaffed County Office, SED shall determine which County Office will have an employee reassigned and which County Office will receive the reassigned employee. When CED in an overstaffed County Office is notified that an employee needs to be reassigned, the losing CED shall select and document which employee is to be selected for reassignment. After CED determines which employee shall be reassigned, STC shall issue a letter of directed reassignment to the employee. If an employee chooses not to accept the reassignment, the employee will be separated.

16. We understand that we are currently 4 under ceiling why aren't we filling these positions in the county offices?

As of September 2, 2007, non-Federal presently on board was 281. Non-Federal ceiling is 283 (after flexing). Holding one position until Thomas CED vacancy was filled. Currently advertising PT position in Dooly County.

17. Who is responsible for leasing space, the handbook refers to the state office but county offices are being asked to do this?

CED's are responsible with assistance from Kathy Shepherd and Washington realty specialists. Per National Notice PM-2124, County Executive Directors (CED's) will be designated as the Realty Specialist's designee to continue to carry out the normal responsibilities of acquisition of real property (that is, market surveys, solicitations, negotiations, etc.), up to the point of award. The remark was made that there are only 2 people in Washington that sign off on all leases for the whole USA.

The SED made a few closing remarks and the Question and Answer session ended at 10:40 p.m.

The Vice President, Chad Scruggs, called the GACOE meeting to order at 11:00 am and he welcomed any new GACOE committee persons. Monica Arnold gave the invocation. The minutes from the last meeting were approved by the committee. The Treasurer, Pam Wilkes, reviewed the financial report and mentioned that the audit was done on the books and had everything check out fine. There were two checks that were outstanding in the amounts of \$18.00 and \$1.50. The committee voted to take the checks off the books. Also Pam mention that she checked on a price for being bonded and the price she was quoted was \$500.00 per person. It was voted that we shop around for a better price before committing to anything. Chad went over our authorization to the meeting. He stated that we are authorized travel and lodging from the STO but we must take annual leave for the GACOE meeting.

We then proceeded to the Election of Officers for the 2007-2008 year.

**Election of Officers** – Elections were held as follows:

The floor was open for any nominations for Treasurer. Denise Otto nominated Pam Wilkes for Treasurer. It was motioned and seconded that all nominations be closed on the said one name. It was motioned and seconded that Pam Wilkes be elected Treasurer by acclamation. All motions passed. Pam Wilkes was elected Treasurer.

The floor was open for any nominations for Secretary. Joe Hester nominated Denise Otto for the Secretary position. It was motioned and seconded that all nominations be closed on the said one name. It was motioned and seconded that Denise Otto be elected Secretary by acclamation. All motions passed. Denise Otto was elected Secretary.

The floor was then open for any nominations for Vice-President. Delores Hartley nominated Barbara Jackson for Vice-President. It was motioned and seconded that all nominations be closed on the said one name. It was motioned and seconded that Barbara Jackson be elected Vice-President by acclamation. All motions passed. Barbara Jackson was elected Vice President.

The floor was opened for any nominations for President. Monica Arnold nominated Chad Scruggs for President. It was motioned and seconded that all nominations be closed on the said one name. It was motioned and seconded that Chad Scruggs be elected President by acclamation. All motions passed. Chad Scruggs was elected as President.

After the elections, Chad made a few comments about what needed to be done and for anyone to call him if they had any questions about anything.

We then went on to discuss old business mentioning that we had NAFEC hats and visors left for any office needing to sell them or sign up their new County Committee persons when elected. Chad made the comment that Georgia was number one in nation with NAFEC membership. Cliff Fussell's idea of a hat incentive was a success. Membership was discussed. Pam Wilkes said that membership was at 233 payroll deduction and 3 new members; we are at 89% membership. It was mentioned that we need to send out notification to the Associate Members reminding them to pay their yearly dues. Pam also asked that the membership chairperson send out these notifications.

Chad mentioned that he will be calling people to set up the committees for the new term. There were no committee reports at this time.

Plans for the 2008 ALL SOUTH RALLY in St. Simons Georgia were discussed.

It was decided by the SEA and SWA Executives that they will be changing the meeting style at the Rally so that you could spend more time enjoying your vacation. Chad mentioned that he has talked with a man on doing some benefits planning meetings at the Rally. Chad spoke about the speakers he had in mind for the convention and will be working on getting. The agenda was discussed a little. It was decided that on Thursday night we would not have a dance or anything that night so that the people could do some sight seeing on there own. For Thursday evening we are going to try to get some tours set up one being a Savannah Tour and one being a Casino Cruise. We are going to try to get the STC meeting on Thursday or Friday. On Friday we will be having the General Session in the AM with committee reports in the back of room written up and printed on tables for people to pick up and read and then having Q & A after lunch. Friday evening will be the Auction with heavy hors d'oeuvres' and a dance with DJ following. On Saturday morning having the breakout meeting with SEA and SWA. In the evening we will have the banquet with a band following.

Transportation to bring people from the airport to the hotel and back was discussed and will be provided. The committee voted on a \$20.00 Registration Fee for anyone registering before February 26, 2008 and \$25.00 after that date. Golf will be provided for anyone interested at \$75.00 to play. This will be listed on the registration form to get an accurate number. It was decided that a tournament will not be held on Golf just playing. The banquet fee was voted on and set at \$35.00. Roger and Phil are working on getting President Jimmy Carter to come speak at the banquet. We discussed the raffle and getting our tickets sold. Denise and Callie are ordering 250 more of each and will be mailing some to the other states to sale. Chad discussed the importance of getting sponsorship and donations. He is working on a letter to be mailed out asking for donations. It was discussed about the importance of getting up door prizes. With all these things in mind Chad said we needed to get busy on these items and that he would be calling on people to be on certain committees.

On a last note Barbara Jackson motioned that we use the same form NASCOE will be using for the Scholarship application this year. There is a new form being placed on the NASCOE website. It was voted on and seconded to use this new form.

They're being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Denise L. Otto  
GACOE Secretary

