

**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 19, 2005 at the USDA Service Center in Moultrie, Georgia.

Those present were: Cliff Fussell, President Roger D. Swain, Vice-President
Pam Wilkes, Treasurer Denise Otto, Secretary
Jay Arnold, Past President
District 1A - Glenn Forrester
District 1B – Chris Camp and Dianne Westmoreland
District 2 – Lavern Pate and Callie Redmond
District 3 – Jo Cook
District 4 – Martha Kent and Julia Sharpe
District 5 – Gary Wilson and Wanda McCurdy
District 6 – Ty Godfrey and Cindy Brown
District 7 – Chad Scruggs and Monica Arnold
District 8 – Elaine Sherrod and Marcia Baker
Others Present – Barbara Webb and Kaye Walker

The President, Cliff Fussell, called the meeting to order. President Fussell introduced and welcomed the new and all returning Executive Committee members.

A change in the by laws was voted upon and approved that Article III, Section 4 would change to read “The immediate Past President will serve as an ex-officio member on the executive committee following the completion of his or her term as President until the next President takes office.”

The minutes from the last meeting were approved by the committee. The Treasurer, Pam Wilkes, gave the financial report. Roger motioned that the bill for the new website be approved and paid. The new website is up and running. The new webmaster would be Denise Otto- Secretary of GACOE.

Cliff stated that it was motioned and approved at a NASCOE meeting that NASCOE officers shall not attend State functions.

Election of Officers – Elections were held as follows:

The floor was open for any nominations for Secretary. Monica Arnold 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 open for any nominations for Treasurer. Roger Swain 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 then open for any nominations for Vice-President. Monica Arnold nominated Chad Scruggs for Vice-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 Vice-President by acclamation. All motions passed. Chad Scruggs was elected Vice President.

Cliff Fussell opened the floor for any nominations for President. Jay Arnold nominated Roger Swain for President. It was motioned and seconded that all nominations be closed on the said one name. It was motioned and seconded that Roger Swain be elected President by acclamation. All motions passed. Roger Swain was elected as President.

After the elections, there were brief remarks made by the new officers.

At this time Roger Swain, new President of GACOE presented Cliff Fussell with a plaque and pin in appreciation of all his hard work and dedication to GACOE.

We then went on to discuss old business with Denise Otto bringing up the filing cabinets that Barbara Jackson has of GACOE for Secretary and Treasurers' use. Roger Swain and Cliff Fussell said they would get the cabinets as soon as possible. Pam Wilkes then stated that transmittals are all paid at one time. She stated that she tries to wait until all are in for that meeting and then she pays. Barbara Webb stated that she has a drawer full of items for the new Awards Chairperson.

New Business was discussed. Cliff Fussell discussed our travel and meeting authorization. He stated that everyone there was authorized travel time to the meeting and back home but leave had to be taken for those who attended the Ag Forum on the 18th. For the people who are staying over in Albany, we would use the M&IE for Moultrie and the Lodging for Albany.

Roger Swain continued on with the agenda discussing the dues next. It was motioned that the associate member's dues continue to be \$25.00 and the dues for regular members stay the same at .002 times salary starting with PP1. It was seconded and approved. It was discussed if we could get a list of paying members getting JM Marketing benefits because Pam had a list of people in which she did not know who were still getting benefits and had not been members in awhile.

The Scholarship Program was discussed. Glenn Forrester stated that he would like to see the scholarship amounts increase. It was then motioned that we give a total of four scholarships of \$1000.00 each and approved. Cliff Fussell made a motion to establish a Robert F. Williams Jr. Memorial Scholarship in honor of Robert F. Williams Jr. every year in addition to the Vicki Cannady Memorial Scholarship. He also motioned that the first two \$1000.00 Scholarships be sent to the children of Robert F. Williams' Trust Funds in honor of their dad. This issue was approved by the committee. Jay Arnold

added that this needed to be revisited every year according to the funds we have raised at the convention for this fund. The committee approved.

It was voted on and approved to continue the dues with the GA Agribusiness Council of \$125.00. Monica Arnold mentioned that they donated \$100.00 to us for the convention so we really only end up paying them \$25.00.

2006 GACOE Committees were discussed. Roger said he would be making contact with a few people to see if they would be interested in being chairpersons and would let us know the results in an email.

Cliff Fussell, Past President mentioned the importance of NAFEC in Georgia. He made a proposal that we do an incentive program for County Committee members joining NAFEC. He said the incentive will be a cap in which he has talked to Era Jarrod about. She said she could get up a cap for \$4.00 each. Cliff stated that payroll deduction would be the best way to go with NAFEC because it would be ongoing and you would not have to try to collect a check every year. Jay Arnold said that everyone could make an organized effort to push NAFEC by Christmas. It was mentioned that we do this at the January meeting. Pam Wilkes said that she would get up a list of the total County Committee members and advisors. The incentive program was approved by the committee.

Each 2005 committee reported as follows:

Legislative – Chad Scruggs, Chairperson

Chad mentioned that another full legislative conference would go on in 2006. We needed 6 to 8 people to volunteer to go. Monica Arnold, Callie Redmond, Marcia Baker, Kaye Walker, Elaine Sherrod, Pam Wilkes, Lavern Pate, Chad Scruggs and Roger Swain all raised their hands on volunteering. It was also mentioned that if we could get two County Committee people to go it would be a great idea.

Membership – No Report

Benefits – No Report

Awards – Barbara Webb, Chairperson – No Report

Emblems – Marcia Baker, Chairperson

Marcia mentioned that all of her inventory was sold at the convention. She will start off with a new inventory this year.

Elections-Monica Arnold, Chairperson

Monica sent out an email with the election results. This email is attached to this session of minutes and will be kept for further use. Also it was mentioned that this information be put on the website. Denise Otto will see that it is put on the website.

Publicity- Denise Otto, Chairperson

Denise reminded everyone that the deadline for the December Gazette News would be November 25th.

Archives- Ruby Postell, Chairperson –No Report

Scholarships-Glenn Forrester, Chairperson – No Report

Parliamentarian- Jay Arnold-No Report

Cliff Fussell gave NASCOE news. The All South Rally will be held in San Antonio, Texas for 2006 on March 8-12, 2006. The National Convention will be held in Cleveland, Ohio. The exact dates were unknown at this time.

Plans for the 2006 GACOE Convention were discussed. Roger stated that he would get up a Convention Committee and get them to be getting up some ideas and pricing for the 2006 GACOE Convention. This will be discussed in more detail later.

The selection of delegates was decided upon at this time. They are Roger Swain and Chad Scruggs for the All South Rally and the National Convention with the Treasurer Pam Wilkes and Secretary Denise Otto as backups.

We then reviewed over the questions we were presenting to the State Committee. It was voted that we would ask the questions as they were.

After a break the State Committee Members, Duke Lane-Chairperson, Dr. Harry Kemp, Ronald Lee, Charles Lee, and Mary Alice McGee, State Executive Director-Mr. Steve Newton, District Directors, Phil Addy, Berry Laslie, Barry Alexander, Leon B. Collins, John Rudowske, David Nichols, Charles Stuckey, COR's- Ronnie Morris and Virginia Lovering, Clark Weaver-State Office Chief, David Laster-State Office Chief, Ron Carey-State Office Chief, Cynthia Portalatin joined the meeting. Also GACS officers Leigh Wilson, Jane Hobbs, and Robert Tyson joined in. Also Jody Redding a Representative from Johnny Isakson's office.

Duke Lane made a few comments and then the SED, Steve Newton made comments on FSA Tomorrow and that it had been set aside for the time being. The main issue he talked about was how we need to come up with a plan for the understaffed offices. As of November 3rd we will be 26 employees shorter and numerous offices will have half or no employees. He stated that they have got to identify those offices that need help providing service to the community and make a plan to help them. He asked the State Committee and District Directors to get together soon on this issue. He also asks for comments on how we can help Georgia get service to the farmers. Phil Addy, District Director, stood up and said we have got to come up with a solution to provide service in every county. Jay Arnold was concerned about the offices that are providing services for 1 cent or 2 cents being closed compared to the offices that are paying 30 cents or 40 cents not being closed. He stated that Washington needed to look at this also. Not just mileage and workload. Newton agreed on the comment. Jay Arnold was also concerned with the CED process and said that they needed to come up with a plan to protect the CED's.

GACS representative Robert Tyson was asked to start the questions session.

Question 1: Can we get a list of employees that got the buyout?

Answer: Newton would have to check on this and see. It may interfere with Privacy issues.

Question 2: FLP PT to Farm Program side or Farm Program to FLP PT side?

Answer: Newton said that after the plan is in place this would be a case by case basis.

This ended the questions and comments for the GACS Association. Robert Tyson stated that he appreciated the State Committee and Mr. Newton listening to their questions and responding to them.

The floor was turned over to GACOE to address their questions. Roger Swain then proceeded in asking the questions leaving the FSA Tomorrow questions out for the time being.

Question 9: Will the 12 current CO Employees that are working FLP be converted to GS as was discussed by John Chott, DAFO at the convention?

Answer: Newton said that this would only be a temporary fix and would not be permanent. It would be revisited every year. Cliff Fussell made comments on needing this to be done.

Question 10: With PT's being offered a buyout and with the PT being from the Farm Program side (at which was previously understaffed at 1 person) when will additional help be moved from the Farm Loan side (at which is currently 2 people overstaffed) back to Farm Programs?

After the PT leaves it will leave the Farm Program side 2 understaffed!

Answer: Mr. Steve Newton stated that they will find ways to address this issue as soon as they come up with a plan.

Question 12: If FSA Tomorrow is halted can we hire in the understaffed offices?

Answer: Mr. Newton said not unless ceiling rises. The State Committee and Mr. Newton sent up a request to hire.

Question 13: The new web based programs are supposed to update us out of the dark ages, so why does it take 30 minutes to do a 5 minute job?

Answer: The State Committee has been made aware of this issue. Mr. Newton offered a suggestion for all PT's, CED's, and District Director to keep a log of all errors and problems every day. He will add this in his report to Washington.

Question 14: The system 36 is up and running 99% of the time. The web base programs are down, and too hard to get in due to the volume of people on at one time. Is this being addressed to FSA Management?

Answer: See Question 13 answer.

Question 15: When can a CED be hired in Bulloch County?

Answer: Mr. Newton has referred a request for approval up to DC.

Question 16: When are the sections at the state office going to start numbering email and posting them on the website? Administrative and Stephanie Brown are doing a good job of it.

Answer: Mr. Newton stated he would have a meeting at the state office on this issue.

This concluded the questions and Roger Swain stated that we appreciated the time and opportunity to meet with the State Committee and the State Executive Director. Mr. Newton made some final closing remarks.

They're being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Denise L. Otto
GACOE Secretary