



“To achieve a cleaner and more beautiful community through the education and involvement of its citizens”

Keep Rome-Floyd Beautiful

Minutes

March 27, 2025, 4:00 p.m.

Rome-Floyd ECO Center

Present: Commissioner Elaina Beeman, City of Rome Commission
Hannah Bagley, Program Coordinator
Brooke Brinson, Keep Rome-Floyd Beautiful Chairman
Julie Smith, Transportation and Trails Planner
Lucy Burnes, KRFB Board Member
Pam Roberts, KRFB Board Member
Georgia Burns, KRFB Board Member
Joy Puckett, KRFB Board Member

Call to Order:

Mr. Brinson called the meeting to order. The March 27, 2025 meeting minutes were reviewed and approved by unanimous consent.

Reports:

Mrs. Bagley informed the board that she had emailed the Comprehensive Keep Rome-Floyd Beautiful 2024 Report for review. She highlighted key accomplishments since the last meeting, including the successful execution of annual events such as Bring One for the Chipper and Arbor Day. She expressed appreciation for the volunteers who braved the cold to participate.

For Bring One for the Chipper, 99 trees were collected this year. Unlike previous years, where trees were used for fish habitats, they were chipped and repurposed as fuel by International Paper. As a token of appreciation, the Georgia Forestry Commission distributed 100 White Oak seedlings to participants. These large-growth trees are expected to contribute to approximately

five acres of new tree canopy. The event was supported by seven volunteers, who contributed 21 volunteer hours.

The 2025 Arbor Day celebration was held at Covington Park, which honors Bill Covington, a Vietnam War veteran. The event drew 65 attendees, and the newly planted large-growth trees have already begun enhancing the area by providing much-needed shade, creating new wildlife habitats, and framing the landscape.

Mrs. Bagley noted that the improvements at Covington Park are part of a larger, multi-phase project. Plans include the addition of new facilities and playground equipment to further enhance the space for the community.

Mrs. Bagley concluded the report by highlighting the incredible impact of community volunteers, noting that, thanks to the dedication of 636 volunteers who contributed 1,941 hours, a remarkable 6,793 pounds of litter were removed in 2024. She expressed her heartfelt gratitude to everyone who played a role in achieving these goals, emphasizing that such accomplishments would not be possible without their hard work and commitment.

New Business:

Now that construction is complete on the Rome-Floyd ECO Center, educational programming has expanded significantly. School groups have returned, and Mrs. Bagley has incorporated sustainability and water quality lessons into field trips. As of 2025 YTD, KRFB has educated 1,385 students through structured programs, along with parents and school staff who accompany them.

KRFB has shifted from a reactive to a proactive approach to environmental stewardship. With 66.7% of efforts focused on education, the goal is to plant the “seeds” for long-term change. While the full impact of this investment may not be seen for 5-8 years, the objective is to cultivate a new generation of environmentally conscious community stewards. Hands-on learning, art, and movement-based education are key components of this initiative.

Mrs. Smith inquired about the frequency of field trips. Mrs. Bagley clarified that school field trips are held Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The ECO Center operates from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., though public hours are limited to 1p.m. to 4 p.m. to accommodate school groups, which can include up to 120 students at a time.

During the ECO Center renovations, Mrs. Bagley launched a hands-on, in-class science program focusing on sustainability and water quality practices. While these programs will continue, their frequency will decrease as more schools return to the ECO Center for on-site field trips.

Community Engagement & Environmental Initiatives

Pollinator Garden at Johnson Elementary: A hands-on educational program combining art and environmental science, teaching students about native plants and pollinators.

Envision Center Community Garden: A three-year collaboration with the Northwest Georgia Housing Authority to educate residents on plant growth and proper planting techniques. This initiative also helps address nutrition gaps in underserved neighborhoods by providing fresh produce. Many residents had never had access to certain vegetables before this program.

Rome High FFA Partnership & Garden Expansion

Commissioner Beeman discussed the first phase of the garden expansion, where Rome High FFA students provided service work to amend the soil, ensuring a more successful harvest this year. She noted that in previous years, the garden produced more vegetables than expected, and residents deeply appreciated the efforts of KRFB, community partners, and FFA students. Residents maintain the garden throughout the summer, fostering responsibility, teamwork, and sustainability.

Training & Conference Attendance

Mrs. Bagley shared insights from the Keep Georgia Beautiful Foundation and Environmental Education Alliance Conference in Jekyll Island, which has influenced KRFB's educational shift. She looks forward to attending again this year and exploring innovative ways to expand KRFB's initiatives.

Awards & Upcoming Events

Keep America Beautiful's President's Circle Award: KRFB met all required criteria in 2024, including training participation, litter reduction efforts, and educational initiatives. The goal is to achieve this recognition again in 2025.

Greatest American Cleanup: In honor of the nation's 250th birthday, KRFB aims to engage 250+ volunteers by July 4th in various community projects such as litter removal, beautification efforts, and maintenance of overgrown areas. Nationally, the goal is to remove 25 billion pieces of litter.

New Technology for Tree Tracking

Mrs. Bagley introduced Google Earth as a new tool for tracking tree installations within the City of Rome. This system will allow KRFB to map and monitor urban forestry projects, providing detailed information about tree species, planting dates, and locations.

The first locations to be tracked include the Mount Berry Trail Arboretum and the Advent Health ECO Greenway Arboretum. This approach eliminates the need for new software while enhancing public awareness and record-keeping.

Board members expressed concerns regarding volunteer safety due to law enforcement reports of potential fentanyl residue and drug paraphernalia being mixed with litter. Mrs. Bagley emphasized the importance of using proper PPE and confirmed that she has scaled back litter removal efforts as a precaution. She is also seeking certifications and training on best practices for handling hazardous materials.

Mrs. Bagley announced that the Keep Bartow Beautiful, Keep Rome-Floyd Beautiful, and Georgia Power River float events will take place on Friday, May 16th. Participants who prefer not to be on the water are invited to assist with garden installations at both boat ramps, which will include rain gardens and pollinator gardens. Georgia Power will once again provide grilled hot dogs and hamburgers for volunteers.

Mrs. Bagley reminded the board that we have moved to the Bi-annual meeting platform, with that our next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 25th in the Rome-Floyd ECO Center.

Adjourn:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Hannah N. Bagley

Hannah Bagley, Program Coordinator