

Governmental Affairs Committee Reports

February 2, 2018

Tri-Lakes MPO – David Whitlow

The Tri-Lakes Metropolitan Planning Organization policy board did not meet in January 2018. The next scheduled meeting of the board is February 22, 2018.

ARDOT will hold an open house and a public involvement meeting on Tuesday, February 27, 2018 at Fountain Lake School between 4&7 pm. The forum is part of the environmental assessment for the more than 5 mile, two lane extension that will connect the Highway 70 east interchange to the junction of Highways 5&7. This project is part of the 54.6 million dollar bond issue Garland County voters approved in a special 2016 election.

A constitutional amendment that would authorize three casinos in Arkansas has been proposed by a private group. Most of the net gaming receipts tax revenue would go to roads. It is estimated that 45 million dollars would be generated annually for ARDOT. Attorney General Leslie Rutledge has rejected the proposed constitutional amendment because of ambiguities in the wording. Attorneys for the proposing group will be resubmitting the proposal.

Healthcare and Medical Services Report – Richard Johnson

According to Janet Grace, RN, Infection Preventionist for Saline Memorial Hospital in Benton, says that the flu outbreak in Saline County and Garland County has been much worse than in previous years. Healthcare facilities are required to report all flu cases to the Arkansas Department of Health. Since September 2017, Saline Memorial Hospital alone has reported 348 flu cases with 110 of those occurring in January. This compares to only 37 cases reported for the entire year of 2016. There are two types of Influenza that are circulating, type “A” and type “B”. Type “A” seems to be the worse, however, patients have been hospitalized with both types.

The CHI St. Vincent Convenient Care Clinic located just outside of the Hot Springs Village West Gate on Hwy 7 North has reported 37 positive cases of type “A” influenza and 35 positive cases of type “B” during January, 2018.

Effects of the flu are usually worse for the older population and anyone who has any type of underlying illness such as diabetes, COPD, and heart disease. People age 65 and older are at a higher risk for developing complications of the flu. Complications include pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus infections and ear infections. Flu complications can lead to hospitalization and even death. This year’s flu has caused death even in young healthy people.

The best preventive measures to take are to:

- Get a flu shot. No, it is not too late. Although reports are saying that this year’s flu shot is not that effective, it will still help and then if you do end up with the flu, the flu symptoms will be less severe. The flu shot is never 100 % effective but it is the best prevention. Also, the flu shot does NOT give you the flu. It is developed using a dead virus. It does occasionally bring about mild side effects like a low grade fever and feeling achy. It also takes 2 weeks to become totally effective so you could get the flu between the time you get the shot and the period of effectiveness. High dose flu vaccine seems to most effective in adults age 65 and older. A flu shot is needed every year.

Governmental Affairs Committee Reports

February 2, 2018

- Use good hand hygiene. You can't always wash your hands so alcohol foams and gels are helpful. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects. So please clean off the grocery buggy or the shopping cart in Walmart.
- Practice good health habits. Cover your cough and sneeze and avoiding people who are sick.
- Seek medical advice quickly if you think you have the flu. Signs and symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some have vomiting and diarrhea. There are medications to help lessen the symptoms if the flu is caught early enough. Tamiflu is most effective if started within 48 hours of symptoms.

Ms. Grace indicated that the flu season is normally from October to the end of March, however, this varies year to year. Last year the flu season was extended into April because we were still seeing cases. It is anticipated that the 2018 flu season might last through May. Flu activity usually peaks between December and February.

Hot Springs—Jerry Yeric

- The Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (HTC) was preserved at its 20% rate in the Federal Tax Reform Bill passed by congress. This is particularly important for Hot Springs.
- The City of Hot Springs will line Ouachita Avenue with bike lanes in each direction.
- Hot Springs continues to be recognized as a destination traveler's visit when then need to relax and recharge. Both *Bravo Network* and *Expedia* noted Hot Springs as the place to escape in Arkansas.
- Arkansas Securities Commissioner B. Edmond Waters issued a cease-and-desist order against Arkansas Air Waves Inc., which lists its principal place of business as 1500 Central Ave., Suite C, in Hot Springs, and William E. Langston, a resident of Hot Springs and the organizer and president/CEO of Arkansas Air Wave. The release said the order details serious omissions and misstatements of material facts AAW and Langston made these at the time of the sale of the securities, including the multitude of risks involved in the business and misuse of investor money to pay for personal expenses. The order notes Arkansas Air Waves status as a corporation was revoked by the Arkansas Secretary of State on Jan. 1, 2014.
- A record high number 41 of new businesses opened downtown in 2017. 30 commercial properties sold for over \$30 million. \$23 million invested historical properties, new construction, and businesses.
- Hot Springs Board of Directors adopted ordinances authorizing two improvement districts to levy annual maintenance taxes of their constituencies. The Central Business Improvement District III and Central Crossing Municipal Property Owners' Multipurpose Improvement District No. 05-1 to respectively levy maintenance assessments of \$22,300 and \$5,335.

Garland County—Jerry Yeric

- Garland County Chief Deputy Prosecutor Joseph P. Graham filed to run for Division 1 Garland County District Court judge. Graham is seeking election to the first two years of the late David Switzer's term.

Governmental Affairs Committee Reports

February 2, 2018

- February 27 there will be an open house at Fountain Lake School as part of the environmental assessment for the 5 mile plus, two lane extension that will connect Highway 70 east interchange to the junction of highways 5 and 7.
- The Garland County Quorum Court discussed using the income generated by the Ouachita Memorial Hospital Sale Fund to pay the county's half of the APERs retirement fund.

The Hot Springs Village Area Chamber of Commerce – Michael Dollar

The Greater Bryant Chamber of Commerce Winter Banquet was held at Bishop Park with 400 attendees. Scott Inman emceed the event. Recognition awards were given to many deserving community contributors.

The HSV Chamber and Jessieville School officials, teachers, and staff, were given an inside look, interviews, and tours of the Junior and Senior High Schools at nationally recognized Mountain Home High School to review an academy concept of student learning which they implemented 15 years ago. The program carried components of highly integrated business interactions within many levels of participation.

The HSV Chamber Annual Membership Meeting was held on JAN 31st at Chef Joanna's at the DeSoto Club where Chamber members heard about activities, major milestones, and financial growth from its new 2018 Chair, Jennifer Allen, and Treasurer DeeDee Autry. The 2018 Board was introduced, and new members joining this year were welcomed.

New members for January are:

- Arbonne – Jennifer Rivera Independent Consultant
- Arkansas Asset Protection Group
- Breathing Room
- Cooperative Christian Ministries & Clinic
- Fairway Mortgage Corporation
- HSV Audubon Society
- Melinda's Coffee
- Northwestern Mutual
- Brian G. Wilson Photographer

A video montage being created with drone footage along Highway 5 & N Highway 7 will be used by the Chamber to highlight retail commercial and Visitor Center activity to approximately 4000 walk-in visitors this year.

A Chamber Economic Development lunch at Ouachita Baptist University including Garland, Hot Springs, and Clark Counties was used to plan further progress in updating the Garland County Metropolitan Statistical Area. A conference call with the Office of Management and Budget, and the US Census Bureau, are being scheduled for FEB. The education, transportation, housing, and economic interactions between these counties, including Pike and Montgomery Counties, are being tabulated for an MSA population of approximately 195,000.