

Governmental Affairs Committee Reports

June 1, 2018

Tri-Lakes MPO – David Whitlow

The Tri-Lakes MPO Policy Board met on Thursday, May 24th, 2018 at 10:00 am in Hot Springs.

Emily Tianpati was presented as the new Study Director for Tri-Lakes MPO. She had been with ARDOT.

The ARDOT report was presented by Mark Headly, district engineer. The status report highlighted the following projects:

- Highway 290 to Ouachita River Bridge – 53% time used, 45% complete
- Hot Springs 70 East to I-30 - 95% complete (see ribbon cutting information).
- MLK Extension to highways 5 and 7 intersection – Design and rights-of-way discussions are underway.

The Tri-Lakes staff report was presented by Linda Justice. It included discussions and updates on: the Public Participation Plan, the 2019 Unified Planning Work Program, and a Memorandum of Agreement between the MPO, City of Hot Springs and ARDOT. All three were approved by board action. A special meeting of the MPO will be required on July 19th to meet deadlines in order to include new state projects with our local MPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

In addition to the ARDOT status report, *The Sentinel Record* reported that \$78.5 the million expansions of Highway 70 East from Hot Springs to Benton is estimated to be completed by May 25th. A ribbon cutting is in the process of being planned for June 1st, 2018, 11:00 am, at the Highway 70 East rest area. The roadway will be four lanes with a center turning lane. The speed limit will be 60 mph.

A public involvement meeting was held on Tuesday, May 8, 2018 at the Fountain Lake School in Safe Room A. The purpose of the meeting was to get public input on the safety improvement project from Highway 7 east to Deerpark Road on Highway 5, approximately 2 miles. It is scheduled for completion in 2020.

Broadband Report - Greg Jones

Residential Broadband:

I continue to receive emails and phone calls from residents in HSV expressing frustration with the availability of Broadband service. I have received letters from several residents of Pinocha Way. This effort was launched by one of their residents who had transferred his phone line from AT&T to Verizon and then AT&T disconnected his DSL service (the only broadband available). Once he determined they had disconnected his Internet, he immediately called AT&T to get back his service. Unfortunately, AT&T told him that the only thing he could order was 1.5 MB DSL. As you know, this is not fast enough for any sort of reasonable service.

The 35 residents of Binefar/Fenix Subdivision are also signing similar letters. This may be harder to cover as it is 1.2 miles up the mountainside from the Suddenlink connection. I should receive those letters this week and will also give them to the Suddenlink representatives during our meeting. Many of the Binefar residents have no access to Broadband service. This neighborhood would be a good test case for a wireless broadband service operated by HSV if we are unable to get Suddenlink to cover.

A meeting is being organized by the Regional Director from Suddenlink (Ruthie Evans) with her marketing and operations teams to discuss these and other broadband issues in HSV. The meeting is in the planning stages, but I am hopeful that it will be scheduled for late next week.

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Village WIFI Service:

I have had the Coronado Center complex (Coronado Center, Library, Fitness Center and Tennis Center) and the Woodlands Complex (Auditorium, Meeting Rooms, Card Club and Grove Park) surveyed for potential high speed WiFi service. I hope to have budgetary estimates I can give to the POA next week. I already have firm quotes from Suddenlink for the backhaul from these locations. This potentially would be a very quick installation and at fairly low costs. The service would be able to provide Internet at approximately 150 Mbps via wireless.

Hot Springs—Jerry Yeric

The CEO of Priceline named Hot Springs the No.1 emerging travel destination in the United States during a “CBS This Morning interview.” A representative for Priceline said this information is based on booking data between January 2013 and March 2018. The list was released as part of Priceline’s 20th-anniversary celebration.

The Hot Springs Advertising and Promotion Commission has made a claim for damages in a case involving back taxes allegedly owned by Hotel.com and 11 other online travel companies. The case was granted class-action status in 2013. There are 40 P&A agencies in Arkansas.

Eleven unoccupied residential structures were condemned as part of the city’s ongoing campaign against blight. There have been 149 properties condemned since 2012.

Garland County—Jerry Yeric

Laura Miller, currently the acting superintendent of Buffalo National River in northern Arkansas, will assume the position in Hot Springs in August.

The Quorum Court appropriated \$606,611 in unprojected 2017 revenues to pay out more than 10,000 hours of 2018 compensatory time off that four departments accrued through May 7 and fund overtime expenses through the end of the year. The appropriation funds the new overtime policy justices of the peace adopted, giving the county employees time-and-a-half pay for hours earned in excess of the regular workweek instead of paid time off that accrued at a rate of one and a half hours for every hours of overtime.

The Hot Springs Village Area Chamber of Commerce – Michael Dollar

Joining the Hot Springs Village Area Chamber of Commerce in May were:

- Cypress Bayou Specialty Meats, LLC – 3958 N Hwy 7, HSV - Grand Opening June 2nd
- McGhee Insurance Agency – 1126 Malvern Ave, Hot Springs
- Progressive Massage Therapy, LLC – Village Square Shopping Center, HSV

The Chamber’s Business EXPO, sponsored by National Park Medical Center, was a sold-out with 450 attendees and 77 vendor booths. The “May The 4th Be with You” Theme was carried throughout the Coronado Center Main Hall and side rooms with Galaxy Connection of Hot Springs providing full costumed Darth Vader, Lord Sith, and others for photo opportunities and mingling among the crowd.

Diamante Country Club hosted and catered the Chamber’s Partner Up Luncheon this month. A Housing and Construction Panel made up of Gloria Huntley – Vacation Rentals, Clara Nicolosi – Board of Realtors, and Bryan Lambert – Advantage Title & Escrow discussed trends, customer value, and innovation in their industry. Afterwards Diamante Country Club celebrated new ownership and extensive updates with a Chamber Ribbon-Cutting and putting contest.

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Grillin' Up II will take place June 9th from 11am until sold-out at the Chamber Visitor Center Parking Lot in conjunction with the West Gate Market (8:30am – 2:30pm) presented by Century 21 HSV Realty. Burgers, brats, and shopping.

Scheduled ribbon cutting celebrations:

- Hickory Hill Quilts – June 1st
- JDog Junk Removal & Hauling Hot Springs – June 5th
- Beehive Neighborhood Hangout – June 7
- Cypress Bayou Specialty Meats – June 15th