

**MINUTES OF MEETING
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
9:00 AM Friday, January 3, 2020
Ouachita Room, Ponce de Leon Center**

ATTENDANCE

Committee Members Present

Pamela Avila
Greg Jones
Mike Hood
Curt Malone
Cheri Nelson
Bob Pettey
David Whitlow
Jerry Yeric

Committee Members Absent

David Childs
Jim Zahnd

Ex-Officio Members Present

Bob Shoemaker

Ex-Officio Board Members Absent

POA Liaisons

Mike Medica, Board Liaison
Lesley Nalley, POA CEO

Other Board Members

None

Justices of the Peace

Keith Keck, Saline County
Larry Raney, Garland County

School District Liaisons

Dr. Michael Murphy, FLSD (absent)
Melissa Speers, Jessieville SD (absent)

HSV Area Chamber of Commerce

Executive Director (Position Vacant)

Press

Lewis Delavan, Village Voice

OPENING OF MEETING

Call to Order: Chair Pam Avila called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

Notified Absences: David Childs, Jim Zahnd.

Agenda: The Agenda was approved with a single change that Mike Hood was present.

Minutes: The minutes of the December 6, 2019 meeting were approved.

Introduction of Guests: Renee Haugen, Teri Jackson, Gary Belaire.

GUEST SPEAKER

Hon. Jeff Arey, County Judge, Saline County, AR

- Jeff Arey served as the Mayor of Haskell, Arkansas before assuming his present position as Saline County Judge in 2016. Judge Arey and his wife are property owners in the Village and his Mother is a Village resident. Judge Arey's comments focused on several significant pieces of legislation passed in last legislative session.
- Act 660 provided for 911 reform. Under this Act, \$750,000 was transferred from the State's General Fund to the 911 Fund to supplement funds paid by fees on landline telephones and cell phones. The Act set minimum standards for 911 centers and reduced the number of 911 centers from 120 to a target number of 77 by January 1, 2022. The reduction in the number of centers help reduce the need to transfer 911 calls in decrease response time. A jointly-funded study is being conducted to assess the feasibility of consolidating the Benton, Bryant and Saline County 911 call centers.
- Act 808 permitted use of \$8.3 million from the Secretary of State budget to be used to replace voting equipment. Saline County has replaced all of its voting machines at a cost of \$1 million, with about one-half of that money coming from the State.
- Act 1018 is a proposed constitutional amendment that would make permanent a ½% sales tax that was set to expire in 2023 for road and bridge repair. At present, 70% of the funds collected go to ARDOT, with the remaining 30% being split between counties and cities. Judge Arey said failure to continue the tax would be a game-changer as Saline County receives 25% of its \$5 million road budget from the tax. To put this in perspective, Judge Arey noted that there are 700 miles of roads in Saline County and it costs \$125,000 to overlay a single mile or roadway.
- A \$27 million contract has been let for construction of the Career and Technical Campus, which will be a 134,000 square foot facility located at Mountain View Road and the I-30 Service Road. When complete the facility will provide job training in ten different career pathways for high school students. When not in use for high school courses, the facility can also be used for adult job training. The facility will be used by six different school districts and will be funded by a temporary 3/8th of 1% sales tax, which terminate once construction costs are paid. Operating expenses will be paid by the school districts.
- A \$100 tax is now being levied for electric and hybrid cars to make up for the loss of gas tax revenue.
- Saline County's Complete Count Committee is in place and working with the Village Committee and others to ensure a correct census county for the county. In 2010, the County's population was 107,000 and the current estimate is that the 2020 census will show a population of 124,000.

REPORTS

POA Board Liaison – Mike Medica

- Three new members were appointed to the Comprehensive Master Plan Advisory Committee.

- The initial estimate of the cost to repair a major culvert that impacted ingress and egress for 30 homes in the Village was approximately \$100,000. The job was actually completed at a cost of \$42,000.

POA CEO – Lesley Nalley

- The “Fifty for the Future” and Hot Springs Chamber Boards are gearing up to capitalize on tourism with major emphasis on roads, the Majestic Hotel site and the Oaklawn development.
- The CEO’s report to the POA Board was presented at the Board’s December 2019 meeting. The report noted several items accomplished by the POA in 2019 including the following:
 - Since 2017, work has been underway to bring all 66 of the wastewater lift stations brought up to full capacity. Only seven of Village’s 66 list stations were fully functional in 2017 and, as of last November, all 66 are operating at capacity. Work is continuing to resolve odor issues at several stations.
 - WIFI accessibility was added to the Ponce de Leon Center, Grove Park and the Coronado Center.
 - There was a 30% increase in visitor golf in 2019 and the Golf Department is posting a 4% bottom line improvement over 2018 despite a challenging year.
 - Existing home sales are outpacing the last five years by 9% and the POA has just signed seven brokers for the new realtor partner program.
- While John Cooper, III will remain Chairman of the Board, Kent Berger, the current CFO, has been named President and CEO of Cooper Communities, Inc. Plans are underway to arrange a meeting between Mr. Berger and the POA Board.

Member Updates and Reports

Broadband Services and Grant – Greg Jones

- A survey is being prepared to get detailed information from Villagers regarding availability, speed and cost of existing broadband services. This information will be used to support efforts to obtain state and federal grant money to improve broadband service in the Village.
- Mr. Jones reported that he had a good working relationship with various broadband providers, including Suddenlink, and in many cases is able to resolve service issues expeditiously. While he is happy to help, whenever possible, he cautions that intervention with the providers should be limited to broader-scale problems rather than those that affect individuals. The GAC Broadband sub-committee should not be viewed as a substitute for Suddenlink’s customer service department.

Hot Springs/Garland County – Jerry Yeric

- Submitted in writing, attached to Minutes.

Highways (Tri-Lakes MPO) – David Whitlow

- Submitted in writing, attached to Minutes.

Elections/Special Election for District 22 – Jerry Yeric

- Submitted in writing, attached to Minutes.

Saline County – Curt Malone

- No written report submitted.

Website – Pam Avila

- Submitted in writing, attached to Minutes.

2020 Census Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee – Curt Malone

- Curt Malone and Renee Haugen reported that in previous census counts, some areas in the Village in Garland County were not included in the Village census tract because they were located in an area designated by the Census Bureau as Fountain Lake. Progress has been made in having these areas correctly included in the Village count.
- The Village Census Sub-Committee has been embraced in the Garland and Saline County Full Count Committees.
- Advertising is underway to hire census takers for the 2020 Census, which will begin in April 2020.
- The census response rate in Hot Springs Village is approximately 73%, which is one of the highest in the State.

Benton – David Childs

- No written report submitted.

JP Comments

Larry Raney (Garland).

- No report

Keith Keck (Saline).

- The Highway 5 remediation project contracts that were to have been let in January have been delayed.

School District Representative Comments

Dr. Michael Murphy (Fountain Lake S.D.).

- Absent - no report.

Melissa G. Speers, Ed. S. (Jessieville S.D.).

- Absent - no report.

OLD BUSINESS

• **Organization chart of state and local government structures.**

Mike Hood has completed a first draft of the state and county government organizational chart and it has been shared with some committee members. Work on the project is continuing.

- **Difference between corporation and municipality.**
Teri Jackson prepared a draft paper outlining the differences between private corporations and municipalities. The contents, form and substance of proposed document and the rationale for embarking on this project were discussed. Work will continue on this project.
- **Update on Health Services Directory.**
Efforts are continuing to locate the previous directory that was started several years ago, but never completed.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Economic Impact Study.**
Previous economic impact studies were prepared by the University of Arkansas at Little Rock at a cost of about \$25,000. Work on the new study can begin once the census is complete. Action items for this project include contacting the university and including funding for the project in the 2021 POA budget.

REMINDERS & CALENDAR

Next POA Board Meeting: 9:00 a.m., Wednesday, January 15, 2019, Ouachita Room, Ponce de Leon Center.

Next GAC Meeting: 9:00 a.m., Friday, February 7, 2020, Ouachita Room, Ponce de Leon Center.
Speaker: Garland County Judge Darryl Mahoney, sponsored by Jerry Yerick.

GAC Committee Reports for January 3 Meeting

Tri-Lakes Metropolitan Planning Organization Report – David Whitlow

The Tri-Lakes MPO Policy Board did not meet in December of 2019. The next scheduled meeting will be Thursday, February 20, 2020 in Hot Springs.

Planning and transportation information below should be of interest to residents of Hot Springs Village:

- According to a report in the *Hot Springs Sentinel Record*, the Hot Springs City Board of Directors awarded a \$1,951,000 contract to Diamond Construction Company of North Little Rock to move water and sewer lines out of the right-of-way in order to enable the 4.17 mile widening of Park Avenue (State Highway 7) from Fox Pass Cutoff to the junction of Highway 5 and 7.
- ARDOT indicated that it was in possession of 37 of the 102 tracts needed for the project scheduled to be put out for bid by early summer 2020. The estimated \$11.8 million project will include a large round-about at the junction of Highway 5 and 7.
- Arkansas Act 416 of 2019 has imposed an additional vehicle registration fee on hybrid and electric motor vehicles. This fee will aid in the repair and maintenance of highways and bridges in the state. It is designed to offset losses of gasoline taxes paid by these types of vehicles which nonetheless use state highways. As of January 1, 2020, an additional \$100 fee will be imposed for owner registration of a hybrid vehicle and a \$200 fee for a vehicle that is totally electric. These fees will be in addition to all other registration fees.

Hot Springs—Jerry Yeric

The Hot Springs Board of Directors awarded 10% end-of-the-year bonuses to the city manager and city attorney for their stewardship of long-term capital projects. According to the employment agreement Burrough signed last December, he receives a \$165,000 base salary for the current year. The agreement includes a \$7,800 annual vehicle allowance and \$100 monthly cellphone allowance.

Albright receives \$142,996 in base salary, according to information provided by the city. His employment agreement includes a \$7,800 annual vehicle allowance and \$100 monthly cellphone allowance.

Garland County—Jerry Yeric

Garland County is considering joining the ambulance services agreement Hot Springs is negotiating with LifeNet. The franchise agreement granting LifeNet exclusive rights to emergency and nonemergency ambulance services inside the city expires at the end of the year. The city intends to renew the agreement for another five-year term but is waiting for the county to decide if it wants to be included.

Licensing ambulance service had been reserved exclusively for cities prior to a 2017 law that extended the authority to counties. They, too, can now grant exclusive rights and stipulate standards and rules equal to or greater than those mandated by the state.

Judge Mahoney said the county is looking into whether an interlocal agreement would allow it to join the contract the city and LifeNet are negotiating.

Elections—Jerry Yeric

The November finance report Division 2 Circuit Judge Wade Naramore filed Monday listed a \$42,479 campaign fund balance through the end of last month, giving the incumbent an almost six-to-one cash advantage over his closest fundraising competitor in the March 3 nonpartisan election for the Division 2 bench.

Special Election for District 22 – Jerry Yeric

In the special election to fill the remaining term of Mickey Gates (Dist. 22), Richard McGrew defeated Jack Wells in the Republican Primary 770 to 657. A closer look inside the numbers provides greater detail to McGrew's win. First, of the 22,438 registered voters nearly 75 percent are residents of Garland County and 25 percent reside in Saline. Second, when people cast their votes, it provides greater insight into the results. In Garland County McGrew received a majority of votes on election day, compared to Wells who received his during early voting. In Saline County both candidates received a majority of their votes during early voting. Third, the turnout was exceedingly low with only 5.8 percent voting in Garland County and 8 percent in Saline County for an overall turnout of 6.4 percent.

In the May 3rd Primary, there will be two elections associated with District 22. One, Justice of the Peace Richard McGrew, who won the Dec. 10 primary for the Republican nomination, will be on the ballot in the March 3 special election. In the second, he will also be competing against Jack Wells and Richard Alvin Midkiff for the party's nomination in the Nov. 3 general election, meaning his name will appear twice on Republican primary ballots.

The governor's Oct. 21 proclamation put the special election on the same day as the March elections.

Website – Pam Avila

The website is up to date with Meeting Minutes and Committee Reports. Photos (headshots) are still needed from the following people:

Greg Jones

Bob Pettey

Mike Hood

Cheri Nelson

David Childs

Mike Medica

Bob Shoemaker
JP Raney