

**MINUTES OF MEETING  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
9:00 AM Friday, March 6, 2020  
Ouachita Room, Ponce de Leon Center**

**ATTENDANCE**

**Committee Members Present**

Pamela Avila  
Greg Jones  
Mike Hood  
Curt Malone  
Cheri Nelson  
Bob Pettey  
Jerry Yeric  
Jim Zahnd

**Committee Members Absent**

David Childs  
David Whitlow

**Ex-Officio Members Present**

Bob Shoemaker

**Ex-Officio Board Members Absent**

**POA Liaisons**

Mike Medica, Board Liaison  
Leslie Nalley, POA CEO (absent)

**Other Board Members**

None

**Justices of the Peace**

Keith Keck, Saline County  
Larry Raney, Garland County

**School District Liaisons**

Dr. Michael Murphy, FLSD  
Melissa Speers, Jessieville SD

**HSV Area Chamber of Commerce Liaison**

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, David Whitlow.

**Agenda:** The Agenda was approved as submitted.

**Minutes:** The minutes of the January 3, 2019 meeting were approved as submitted.

**Introduction of Guests:** Cheryl Dowden, Joe Dowden, Maxine Klein, Richard McGrew.

## **GUEST SPEAKER**

### **Judge Daryl Mahoney**

Quorum Court Judge, Garland County, Arkansas

Judge Mahoney's presentation covered a number of areas including highways, various accomplishments made in the past year, coronavirus, etc.

- Highways
  - The County is working hard on infrastructure connecting Hot Springs and Hot Springs Village.
  - Improvements have been made to the back entrance to the Village off the Danville Road. There are 109 bridges over 20 feet in Garland County and five were replaced this year. This includes the bridge leading to the Danville Road entrance to the Village.
  - Judge Mahoney anticipates letting a contract in May for improvements to Beaudrey Circle, which is North of the Village, and he hopes to complete 4-5 miles of repaving this year. Even though it is a county road, State aid funds can be used on this project because the road connects to Highway 7 in two places.
  - Another project coming up for bid in the next few months are improvements from the Highway 5-7 intersection to Fox Pass. This area will be widened to three lanes, with a turn lane in the middle and bike lanes on the side.
  - Work has begun on the extension of the MLK Expressway to the Highway 5-7 intersection. Part of this project involves blasting a cut through the mountain. The cut will be 1,200 feet across at the top and will be 165 feet deep. This is reportedly the deepest highway cut in Arkansas.
  - Regarding the importance ½% sales tax extension that is coming up for a vote, Judge Mahoney said the income from that tax is \$1.18 million, which is almost equal to Garland County's repaving budget.
  - The County has purchased a hot mix machine and is now doing some road patch jobs in-house.
- Various Garland County Accomplishments

- In 2019, Garland County's sales tax revenues were up about \$700,000 over what was anticipated. In addition, because of belt-tightening, Garland County had a little over \$1 million in budgeted funds that were not spent.
- Garland County now has a state of the art detention center that has received accolades and certificates and will be going for national jail certification this summer. At the end of 2019 Garland County opened the last female pod or housing annex and last week finance committee passed the funding to open the last male pod.
- Along with physical improvements, Garland County is implementing programs to stop recidivism because the detention facility, which was opened in 2015, will probably be at capacity by the end of 2021. Judge Mahoney has scheduled meetings with the incoming circuit and district judges to consider way to alleviate the pressure on the detention facility. Starting last summer, the County was able to achieve pay parity to the deputies that work in the detention facility to pay them to same as the ones that are on patrol. As a result, as of September 2019 for the first time since the jail was open, Garland County achieved 100% staff level and we have a waiting list right to fill detention center positions. Judge Mahoney will soon ask the Quorum Court to approve four new patrol deputy positions.
- Renovations on the exterior of the Garland County Courthouse have been completed and interior renovations have started.
- Coronavirus
  - The Arkansas Department of Health is working with the Garland County Office of Emergency Management on a plan to deal with any coronavirus outbreak or any other communicable disease that comes through the County.
  - Judge Mahoney is in daily contact with state health officials.
- 2020 Census
  - Judge Mahoney emphasized the importance of getting a complete count in the upcoming 2020 census.
- Veterans Affairs
  - Judge Mahoney commended the work of Stanley Bee, who is in charge of Veterans Affairs in the County, noting that in 2019 he visited with 2,731 clients either by phone or in person and filed 211 new claims for veterans' benefits. In

addition, Mr. Bee works with other groups that are locating and renovating houses for homeless veterans or veterans just coming out of the service.

### REPORTS

- POA Board Liaison – Mike Medica  
The Make-A-Wish Foundation will be collecting donations to help a Village child on March 27. The Village Junior Golf Program needs volunteers
- Chair — Pam Avila (Announcements/Other)  
No report.
- Member Updates & Reports – as needed
  - **Metroplan – Keith Keck**  
Submitted in writing, attached to Minutes.
  - **Saline County Quorum Court – Keith Keck**  
Submitted in writing, attached to Minutes.
  - **Tri-Lakes Metropolitan Planning Organization – David Whitlow**  
Submitted in writing, attached to Minutes.
  - **Hot Springs – Jerry Yeric**  
Submitted in writing, attached to Minutes.
  - **Garland County – Jerry Yeric**  
Submitted in writing, attached to Minutes.
  - **Health Services – Cheri Nelson**  
No written report.
  - **Benton GAC – David Childs** Submitted in writing, attached to Minutes.
  - **Website – Pam Avila**  
Submitted in writing, attached to Minutes.
  - **Broadband – Greg Jones**  
No written report.
  - **Census Subcommittee – Jim Zahnd/Curt Malone/Rene Haugen**  
No written report.

### JP COMMENTS

Larry Raney (Garland)

- No report

Keith Keck (Saline)

- The March 16 meeting of the Saline County Quorum Court will be held in the Village.

## **SCHOOL DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE COMMENTS**

Dr. Michael Murphy (Fountain Lake)

- Brief report and comment on millage appearing on the election ballots even when no increase is being requested.

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

- No report.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

- **Organization Chart.**  
The current draft of the Organization Chart was discussed. All suggestions for additions and revisions should be submitted to Mike Hood in writing.
- **Economic Impact Study.**  
Item deferred.
- **Saline County Quorum Court.**  
(See JP Comments by Keith Keck.)

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- **Candidate Forums for 2020 Elections.**  
A sub-committee will be formed to work on the Candidate Forums for the 2020 Elections. Participation will be formally requested at the April meeting.

**Meeting Adjourned**

## **REMINDERS & CALENDAR:**

- Next POA Board Meeting: 9:00 a.m., Wednesday, March 18, Ouachita Room
- **Next** GAC Meeting: 9:00 a.m., Friday, April 3, Ouachita Room.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS – MARCH GAC MEETING**

### **METROPLAN – Keith Keck**

Metroplan Board of Directors met on February 26 to approve a major decision impacting the future direction of MetroPlan Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Fund awards. The Board passed a Resolution 20-05: Adopting as a Strategic Target the commitment of Fifty-Five Million (\$55,000,000) dollars, over the next ten years for the purpose of planning, development, and construction of a Regional Multi-Use Path Network in Central Arkansas Regional Transportation Study Area.

This resolution places half of the available MetroPlan TIP funds towards this initiative. This initiative is modeled after what MetroPlan learned on trips to Bentonville, Arkansas and Greenville, South Carolina to see how these metro areas had energized the development of multi-use transportation routes.

In other MetroPlan actions, the Board approved FY2020 Funding for the additional work on the Bryant Parkway and a corresponding multi-use path.

Benton Mayor Tom Farmer has requested Rock Region Metro conduct a feasibility look at a potential Express Bus running from Benton/Bryant I-30 Corridor to Little Rock. This bus would have a limited number of pickup locations in Saline County and a limited number of drop off locations in Little Rock.

### **SALINE COUNTY QUORUM COURT – Keith Keck**

The Quorum Court approved and funded a new position of a County Comptroller.

Due to excessive wet weather, the groundbreaking for the Saline County Career and Technical Education Building was rescheduled to Monday March 9 at 09:30.

Saline County is investigating potential initiatives to reduce utility costs in conjunction with potential infrastructure improvements in Saline County buildings.

### **TRI-LAKES METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION – David Whitlow**

Hot Springs hosted one of twelve meetings being held across the state by the Arkansas Highway Commission to discuss a proposed constitutional amendment that would make permanent Arkansas' 0.5% sales tax to maintain roads and highways. Voters approved the tax in 2012 for a ten-year period. The tax is to expire June 30, 2023. It is projected that the one-half cent tax will raise \$205 million a year for highways and \$44 million per year for cities plus an additional \$44 million for counties.

### **HOT SPRINGS—Jerry Yeric**

Hot Springs Memorial Field will receive a \$1.02 million grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation for work on an airport lighting vault and for runway pavement sealing. New revenues and a nine-figure capital investment in the tourism and hospitality industry highlighted 2019, City Manager Bill Burrough reported in his state of the city address to the Hot Springs Board of Directors. He reported a 6.4% year-over-year gain

in collections of the city's 1.5% sales tax, which he said is expected to raise \$21.5 million for the general, police and fire funds after all 2019 collections are remitted to the city.

The city said it expects to move into the former Entergy Arkansas Inc. business office at 324 Malvern Ave. by late May or early June, relocating more than 40 employees from the Bill Edwards Center on Airport Road. The Hot Springs Board of Directors approved funding to renovate the 18,000 square feet of vacant office space that will be the new home of the finance department, utility billing services and the city attorney's office. The \$1,357,700 the city will finance over five years includes \$500,000 to install a new HVAC system.

The classic music venue, The Vapors, is open for business again.

### **GARLAND COUNTY —Jerry Yeric**

The sheriff department confirmed that all eight housing units at the 168,000-square-foot Garland County Detention Center are occupied.

The county has made a purchase offer for two West Grand Avenue parcels it intends to convert into parking for the Garland County Courts Building on Ouachita Avenue. County Judge Darryl Mahoney told the Garland County Quorum Court that parcels at 518 and the backside of 510 W. Grand Ave. would provide more parking for the busy courts building, which houses both of the county's district court divisions and Division 2 of circuit court.

National Park College broke ground on two new science labs, an expansion college officials say, will enable it to offer bachelor degrees in partnership with Southern Arkansas University in Magnolia.

International Mountain Bicycling Association Trail Solutions began construction on the bike trail connecting Pullman Avenue to the Northwoods Trails System on Feb. 10<sup>th</sup>. Weather has "slowed things," and the trail is expected to be completed by late March or early April. The six-tenths of a mile bike trail that will traverse through Hot Springs National Park is being funded through a \$104,000 grant from the Walton Family Foundation.

### Early Voting

Both Garland and Saline Counties had an increase in early voting of 8.4 percent and 9.1 percent respectively compared to the 2016 presidential primary election. Garland voters cast 10,538 early votes and Saline voters cast 11,362 in this year's primary election.

### **HEALTH SERVICES – Cheri Nelson**

Nothing to report

### **BENTON GAC – David Childs**

Nothing to report

### **WEBSITE – Pam Avila**

Website is up to date. Roster has been changed to text only – no head shots. Will need 10-15-word professional bio from each GAC member. Details to follow.

### **BROADBAND – Greg Jones**

No written report submitted