

**MINUTES OF MEETING-
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
9:00 AM Friday, May 1, 2020
Ouachita Room, Ponce de Leon Center**

ATTENDANCE

Committee Members Present

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

POA Board Members

Diana Podawiltz
Lloyd Sherman

Justices of the Peace

Keith Keck, Saline County
Larry Raney, Garland County (absent)

School District Liaisons

Dr. Michael Murphy, FLSD
Melissa Speers, Jessieville SD

Committee Members Absent

David Whitlow

HSV Area Chamber of Commerce Liaison

John O'Brien, Executive Director

Ex-Officio Members Present

Bob Shoemaker

Press

Lewis Delavan, Village Voice

OPENING OF MEETING

Call to Order: Chair Pam Avila called a video conference meeting of the Committee to order at 9:10 AM.

Notified Absences: None

Introduction of Guests: Diana Podawiltz, Lloyd Sherman, John O'Brien

Agenda: The Agenda was approved as submitted.

Minutes: The minutes of the April 3, 2020 meeting were approved as modified with the correction of the date of the March 6, 2020 meeting minutes.

GUEST SPEAKER

John O'Brien, Executive Director, HSV Chamber of Commerce.

Background

Because of corona virus, Mr. O'Brien has not been able to meet many of the Chamber members during his first eight weeks on the job, but he has been able to do a deep dive into Chambers financials, structure and mission, which has allowed him to cover up with

some cost-savings ideas and some ways to better serve the members. O'Brien's outsider's view of the Chamber was that it had mission that sounded good, but was unclear and not actionable. Believing that a chamber of commerce needs to focus on commerce, maybe a little less on social activities and more on building business, O'Brien put together a survey to determine where the chamber should focus its resources: on current member revenue building and traffic; on training workshops for Chamber members; on new or missing businesses in the area; on an education campaign encouraging residents to buy local; on community service coordination; on the next generation and their understanding of commerce; on the business expo; on social events and fund-raising. Initial results from the survey from Chamber Board members showed that people were very excited about focusing the Chamber's resources on educating and offering workshops for current members, were not so excited about hosting social events. That being said, O'Brien noted that some social events and fund raisers were necessary because members' dues won't cover all of the Chamber's expenses. The survey has now been expanded to get input from members.

In order to grow our micro-economy, we need more than substitute money; we need incremental funds. The sale of an existing home in the Village does not add to the Village's economy, while the sale of a new home is an example of incremental funds. Similarly, new businesses will allow money now being spent in Hot Springs, for example, to be spent here. Therefore, one of O'Brien's goals is to add new businesses that currently don't exist in the Village.

The Chamber currently has 353 active members, which includes retail and service groups and community groups and individuals. Only 17% of members are brick and mortar businesses. Approximately 70-75% of members businesses are still open despite the pandemic.

O'Brien agrees the Chamber should be an advocate for its members with the POA and with state and county governments, should be looking at pending legislation and should provide other resources to its members.

REPORTS

- Chair – Pam Avila (Announcements)
No report.
- POA Board – Vacant at this time
Lloyd Sherman attended the meeting as interim POA Board representative.
- POA CEO – Lesley Nalley
CARES Act – The POA received a \$3,089,000 loan under the CARES Act Payroll Protection Plan. Seventy-five percent of the funds have to be spent on payroll within an 8 week period. At the time the loan was applied for, the POA has 445 employees and a weekly payroll of \$1.2 million. If the POA meets the 75%/25% parameters, the loan will be fully forgiven, otherwise it bears interest at 1%.

Ms. Nalley reported on a phone call with Dr Lowery, who heads up the telemedicine department at UAMS, and County Judges Arey and Mahoney to see how HSV could participate in their efforts to obtain federal and state grant money for broadband improvements.

- **Broadband Service – Greg Jones**
Greg is working with the POA to map data taken from the broadband survey so it can be determined if there are particular problem areas in the Village. AT&T now offers fixed wireless internet service in the Village. The availability of this service is dependent on the quality of cellular reception at a particular location.
- **Garland County/Hot Springs – Jerry Yeric**
Written report attached to minutes.
- **Tri-Lakes Metro Planning Organization - David Whitlow (absent)**
Written Report attached to these Minutes.
- **Legislative Affairs - Jerry Yeric**
No report.
- **Hot Springs - Jerry Yeric**
Written Report attached to these Minutes.
- **Garland County - Curt Malone**
Written Report attached to these Minutes.
- **Saline County - Curt Malone**
No report.
- **Census Subcommittee – Jim Zahnd/Curt Malone**
Written Report attached to these Minutes.
- **Health Services – Cheri Nelson**
It is anticipated that telemedicine will be more widely used for routine evaluations and follow-up appointments, thus underscoring the need for broadband improvements.
- **Benton GAC and Hot Springs Downtown Association – David Childs**
The coronavirus pandemic has hurt businesses in Hot Springs both because the usual influx of visitors did not occur and because local businesses had built up inventories in anticipation of the horse racing meet at Oaklawn. Similarly, Ms. Nalley reported that the POA estimates a loss of approximately \$1.9 million in revenues from visitor golf, the RV park, etc. as a result of the pandemic.
- **Website – Pam Avila**
Website is up to date.

JP COMMENTS

- Larry Rainey (Garland)
No report.
- Keith Keck (Saline)
MetroPlan met via Zoom and the following matters were discussed. MetroPlan is going forward with request for proposal to set up a regional trail initiative. Amazon is building a new facility at the Little Rock Port. Issue 1, the one-half percent sales tax extension which comes up for a vote in November, will have a direct impact on the amount of money available for highways across the State. MetroPlan voted to amend the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Plan to take the I-30 Crossing bid from the original amount of \$631.7 million up to \$981.7 million.

In a phone call with Saline County elected officials and business leaders, Congressman French Hill reported that there has been a \$7 trillion the influx of money into the economy from the Federal Reserve, the Treasury and other government agencies and, as a result, the US now has a 100% GDP to debt ratio, which is the highest since 1945. The CARES Act provided \$570 billion to the States. Arkansas' share of the CARES Act monies was \$1.25 billion.

The Saline County Quorum Court did not meet in April, but will meet electronically in May. Saline County is less dependent on sales tax than Garland County, but it anticipates losing \$1 million in State-funded road money. While the Quorum Court did not meet, it approved a \$15,000 grant to HSV Animal Welfare League to continue the spay and neuter clinic.

SCHOOL DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE COMMENTS

- Dr. Michael Murphy (Fountain Lake)
The Fountain Lake School Board held a virtual board meeting in April. The District was not able to sell bonds in March because of instability in the market. A plan to refinance \$10 million in bonds at a lower interest rate will be presented to the Board on May 12.

The District is planning to hold a traditional graduation ceremony on July 31.

Resort Cable has partnered with the District to bring four months of connectivity to approximately 70 addresses in the District. This is part of Fountain Lake's effort to lessen the disparity between households that have broadband and those that don't. Approximately 30% of Fountain Lake's 1,400 students have no internet connectivity.

During the pandemic, the District is looking at food insecurity first, social and emotional well-being second and academics third.

- Melissa G. Speers, Ed.S. (Jessieville)
To assist the large number of students that do not have internet or wireless access, Jessieville School District has purchased some additional mobile hot spots for use in homes and has set up a larger hot spot in one of the churches in the area.

Jessieville is continuing its food distribution program. Two days of meals are distributed on Mondays and three days of meals are distributed on Wednesdays. This program will continue through the month of May. If the District is able to hold summer school, the feeding program will be picked up during summer school for those students who attend.

Jessieville has tentatively scheduled a traditional Graduation Ceremony on July 25.

Ms. Speers thanked the members of the GAC who have reached out to the District to offer assistance.

OLD BUSINESS

- Economic Impact Study status.
Jerry Yerick has contacted Wayne Miller at the University of Arkansas Little Rock we are on his list. Will be waiting until 2020 census is complete. Last study was in 2016.
- Candidate Forums for 2020 Elections.
A subcommittee composed of Curt Malone, Mike Hood, Pam Avila and Leslie Nalley was appointed to coordinate the Candidate Forums
- Health Services Directory status – Cheri Nelson.
There was further discussion as to how the Health Services Directory would be distributed or made available.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

Meeting Adjourned.

Reminders & Calendar: GAC election of the Chair and Vice Chair will take place

- Next POA Board Meeting: 9:00 a.m., Wednesday, May 20, Viewing Info TBD
- Next GAC Meeting: 9:00 a.m., Friday, June 5, 2020, location TBD.

COMMITTEE REPORTS FOR MAY GAC MEETING

5.1.20 GAC REPORT

Hot Springs—Jerry Yeric

Hot Springs Chief and Assistant Chief of police, Jason Stachey and Assistant Chief Walt Everton, announced they plan to retire May 29th. Both have over 25 years with the department.

Police chief Chris Chapmond of Bluffton, S.C. has applied for the police chief's job at the Hot Springs Police Department, where he previously served as assistant chief.

Garland—Jerry Yeric

Garland County is among the highest rate in the state for COVID-19 testing. It has exceeded both Benton and Washington Counties, the states 2nd and 3rd largest population in the state.

There are 5 drive thru testing sites in the County

1629 Airport Road

4419 Highway 7 North (HSV)

124 Hollywood Avenue

100 McGowan Court

4517 Park Avenue