

Minutes from the Meeting of the Baldwin County Watershed Coalition Steering Committee

**Baldwin County Annex II, Robertsdale
January 22, 2009**

In attendance: Cathy Barnette, Joe Bullock, Donna Givens, Commissioner Skip Gruber, Ralph Hellmich, Mayor Charlie Houser, Marion MacPherson, Representative Steve McMillan, Homer Singleton, Patrick Waller, Mayor Fred Small, Jonathon Smith, Roberta Swann, and Tom Herder

Marian MacPherson called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. Cathy Barnette made a motion to accept the minutes of the November 20, which was seconded by Homer Singleton and approved unanimously.

Ms. MacPherson called for Committee updates. Ms. Barnette said that SC members should have received Education Committee (EC) minutes via email, including logo choices and a legislative packet developed by Sara Shields of the MBNEP staff. Three variations of a logo were projected. Each included a series of four vertical waves grading from blue to green with a white clipart estuarine animal in the foreground. The waves were intended to represent movement and connectivity, and the choice of animals included a fish, a pelican, and a crab. The logos were developed by Darrelyn Bender based upon rough drafts provided by Gresham, Smith, and Partners (GSP). **The fish logo was clearly the most popular** among attendees, and Mayor Small commented that the fish is not tied to one particular municipality or other government entity and moved to accept that choice as the logo to represent the BCWC. Commissioner Gruber seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Ms. Barnette introduced the legislative packet, which included three individual information sheets with standardized format. She said that the EC would like to turn towards working with candidates for elected positions in hopes that SC members could approach them to ask them to endorse our initiative. Verbiage explaining the initiative and indicating support would be provided to supporting candidates to post on campaign websites. She asked SC members if they favored this concept and whether they approved of the content of the information sheets. She recommended SC members from the Business/Development sector to approach candidates and asked for suggestions from members. Ms. MacPherson recommended pairing members from Business with those from Environmental sectors to approach candidates. Roberta Swann commented that this would be a bit more difficult to prepare, but members agreed that we could identify candidates to decide on approaches. Commissioner Gruber felt that Mobile Bay was perhaps overemphasized in the information sheets and that somehow more mention of Baldwin County-specific receiving waters would be more effective. **Ms. Barnette instructed members to get their edits or modifications back to her or to Sara Shields as soon as possible.** Ms.

Barnette also alluded to the communication plan prepared by the Education Committee and said that no SC action was necessary at this time.

Commissioner Gruber suggested that we could use Baldwin County Commission access to cable TV to publicize activities through commission meetings. Ms. Barnette reported that Kara Lankford is investigating this opportunity and projects coverage in early- to mid-March. **Ms. Swann suggested following up with all Baldwin County municipalities by conducting another round of monthly meeting presentations to update each municipality/county on progress made to date in the development of the BCWC as well as the Baldwin County Stormwater Corporation to let them know that their investments in the initiative have been sound.** Commissioner Gruber agreed and felt that this would be a good way to assess how elected officials feel about the initiative.

Ms. Barnette again directed members to submit edits on the legislative packet, and Ms. MacPherson asked for a motion to approve the packet. Mayor Small so moved, and Joe Bullock seconded his motion.

At this time, Jonathon Smith, Planning and Building Director for the City of Fairhope and a proxy for Mayor Kant, introduced himself. Self introductions continued around the table.

Mayor Hauser reported that National Public Radio will be in Magnolia Spring next week to do a seven minute clip. He asked if the BCWC could prepare them something. Ms. Barnette replied, "Absolutely." She reported that the Baldwin Register declined to do a supporting series on stormwater issues and BCWC efforts. Editors indicated commitment to getting the word out but said that resources are too limited to commit to a series of articles. Ms. Barnette said that the EC will regroup and approach Gulf Coast Newspapers, where she expects a favorable response, as well as other media outlets. Ms. Swann reported that the Register indicated that they would provide more coverage as election time approaches.

Ms. Barnette projected the BCWC Facebook page, triggering a discussion on the popularity and effectiveness of social networking. The discussion included questions about controlling or filtering input, and Ms. Shields has reported that anyone has the ability to access the page but that input is subject to removal, any non-stormwater related input will be removed, and that the website will be checked/monitored twice each day. Ms. MacPherson asked if one has to be a Facebook member to access the page. Ms. Barnette answered affirmatively, reporting that Mike Shelton – not a Facebook member - was unable to access the page. Further discussion ensued on the value of this social networking site which will be overseen by BCWC EC members. **Mayor Small moved to allow the EC to go live with the Facebook page,** Donna Givens seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Moving onto a Technical Committee (TC) update, Ms. MacPherson introduced Jay Dickson from Volkert to display his geospatial map of Baldwin County populated with 107 problem areas/projects submitted by the County and its municipalities. **All municipalities have submitted data except for Spanish Fort, Summerdale, Gulf Shores, and Perdido Beach.** He provided some statistics on the submitted data and reported that project costs total \$21M to \$31M, with around twenty in the \$500K range. He spoke with GSP staff yesterday, and they concluded that we will have to give serious consideration to safety categorizations. He provided some statistics related to frequency of different safety categories among the submitted problem areas/projects. Ms. Swann asked how many of the projects are capital projects, and Mr. Dickson responded that only a few (two?) are not. He said that they want to map infrastructure as well as problem areas to facilitate effective planning. **Ms. Swann asked if the TC will develop prioritization protocols, and Mr. Dickson responded that he thought they would.**

Mr. Dickson pointed out that the interactive GIS map provides a good tool for the EC as well as the TC. He used one Magnolia Springs problem area/project to demonstrate the utility of the map and the different types of data available, including street address, hydraulic category, property category, damage category, frequency of occurrence, and quick text summaries of issues with cost estimates.

Ms. Swann addressed Representative McMillan stating that Representative Randy Davis is looking for specific cost numbers in anticipation for another round of stimulus funding. Rep. McMillan reported that it increasingly looks like that could happen. Ms. Swann offered that 20% of economic stimulus money has to be directed to green infrastructure, and while we were not ready for the first round, we need data necessary to seek capital infusion from stimulus funds. Mayor Small asked what the utility could expect to generate in a year, stimulating some conversation among SC members. Ms. Swann commended that if user fees generated \$3M, 80% would go to “on the ground projects,” and we would have to be aggressive about seeking other funding sources. She noted that this amount does not include county or municipal surcharges. **As soon as the TC can provide cost, need prioritization protocols, and a timetable, we can use these for generation of a fee structure.** A question was raised about how services would be prioritized throughout the county (watershed, location in the watershed, cost, political districts, etc.). Comm. Gruber recommended political boundaries should be avoided and that priorities should be based on the different sub-watersheds.

He also commented that Mobile Bay was perhaps overemphasized in the legislative packet. Some discussion followed, and there was general agreement about deemphasizing the largest of local receiving waters, opting for more identification about individual watersheds to instill ownership. Ms. Swann asked if it was possible to tie candidates to their individual watersheds. Ms. Barnette said that the EC would go back and fine tune the legislative packets. She again

asked SC members to provide input and edits, assuring them that EC members are “not sensitive.”

Ms. Swann asked Mr. Dickson if the GIS map included a layer for 303(d)-listed streams. He said “Not yet,” but that they are in hand and will be added. **Comm. Gruber moved that watersheds be used as the guiding principle for prioritization**, Ralph Hellmich seconded the motion, and it was approved. Mr. Hellmich asked if impairment should be considered a priority. Ms. Swann responded that the EPA wants us to balance protection with improvement, and SC members agreed. More discussion followed on pollution, its relationship to stormwater, and erosion. Mayor Hauser noted that a single stormwater (slumping) event in Magnolia Springs produced a greater impact than two normal years of sedimentation.

Ms. MacPherson moved the SC to the next item on the agenda, Draft By-Laws, Procedures, and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Ms. Swann reported that GS&P took the BCWC By-Laws and migrated them into permanent BCWC By-Laws and wondered if SC members had enough time to review them. She hoped that the defined fiscal year correlated to that of the County, and noted that the BCWC would be an advisory body to the Baldwin County Stormwater Corporation. The BCWC – a broad-based stakeholder group – will work with identified project possibilities and make program recommendations, and the utility will identify what can be accomplished in a given year. Membership in the BCWC is open to anyone willing to sign the MOU. She asked if it should be enough to just sign the MOU or if approval/acceptance by the BCWC should be necessary. Consensus was to leave membership open based upon MOU signature.

The principal office should be established at the discretion of the BCWC Executive Committee.

The discussion turned to quora, which has always have been an issue and continues to be. Ms. MacPherson said that there are two ways to look at quora: 1) expect greater participation at the outset, or 2) expect lesser participation and people will understand that they have to participate. Ms. Swann said that presently 2/3 is considered a quorum for the Executive Committee. Several ideas were discussed, ranging from 50% plus one to 2/3 for attendance to 2/3 for attendance and voting purposes. There was general agreement that higher standards should be applied for changes in by-laws. Email voting was discussed, and Ms. Barnette commented that it provided some utility, but Mr. Hellmich said that open meeting laws precludes email votes. Patrick Waller reiterated that changes in by-laws should require 2/3 for quorum and for votes. **Ms. Swann suggested that we will make changes and send them to SC members so that they can be voted upon at the next SC meeting.**

Ms. Barnette suggested that Section 11 needs clarification, asking what constitutes a waiver of notice. She agreed to work on this section to define why notice might be waived. She

mentioned recording devices, but it was generally agreed that this was not addressed in the by-laws.

Mr. Bullock indicated some confusion over BCWC membership and quora, but Mr. Hellmich and Ms. Swann clarified that only the Executive Committee is subject to quorum conditions. The Executive Committee will be defined with a definite number of participants as is described in the Policy and Procedures..

Regarding Media Relationships, Ms. Swann stated that the chairperson is the primary media source, and SC members concurred. **Ms. Swann said that she will make changes for final approval of by-laws for the February meeting of the SC, scheduled to be public. The next meeting is scheduled for February 19**, which falls during the Mardi Gras break. After some discussion SC members agreed to schedule the open meeting for 9 a. m on February 19th at the County Central Annex in Robertsdale or in Commission Chambers at Daphne City Hall. Ms. MacPherson asked whether the by-laws draft should be published and Mayor Small thought that was unnecessary but that the **agenda should be advertised seven days in advance**.

Ms. Swann and Ms. Barnette agreed that the May public meeting should be scheduled in the evening to facilitate public participation.

Committee members agreed to continue the discussion past 11 a. m. to resolve issues related to Executive Committee membership. In terms of municipal representation, Mayor Small suggested three to four mayors as appropriate. Mayor Houser said that with 14 on the Committee, five mayors should be the maximum. In terms of environmental groups, the MBNEP was mentioned. Ms. Swann said that they have served as facilitators of the effort and would like to continue to participate. Ms. MacPherson discussed the range of environmental groups from local (Little Lagoon Preservation Society and Wolf Bay Watershed Watch) to more broad groups (Alabama Coastal Foundation and Mobile BayKeeper). Mr. Waller asked which environmental group is most representative, and the MBNEP was mentioned because of its broad Management Conference.

After further discussion, Ms. Swann tallied **Executive Committee assignments** as such:

Seven Elected Officials

One from the State Senate
One from the State House
One from the County Commission (President or Proxy)
Four from municipalities (appointed by Mayoral Assoc)

Six from Environmental Community

Two Regional organizations (MBNEP plus one)

Two from Baldwin County community groups members (to be appointed by Watershed committee)

Two larger Baldwin County watershed groups (to be appointed by MBNEP Community Action Committee)

Six from the Business Community

One from a Chamber of Commerce

One Board of Realtors

One Home Builders Association

One Road Builders Association

Two at large

For a total of nineteen on the Executive Committee.

With that issue tentatively resolved, Ms. MacPherson distributed a draft of a GS&P press release for members to review. **SC members were asked to read the press release and provide any comments to Roberta Swann by COB Wednesday, January 27.**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a. m.