

## **Minutes from the Meeting of the Baldwin County Watershed Coalition Meeting**

**November 20, 2009**

In attendance: Marion MacPherson, Bob James, Sen. Trip Pittman, Casi Callaway, Ashley Campbell, Homer Singleton, Leslie Lassiter, Joe Bullock, Cathy Barnette, Roberta Swann, Larry Chason, Commissioner Skip Gruber, Mayor Charlie Houser, Patrick Waller, Mayor Tim Kant, Ralph Hellmich, Donna Givens, David Pyzoha, John Ferris

Marian MacPherson called the meeting to order at 9:20 a.m. Participants introduced themselves around the table. Patrick Waller motioned the minutes be accepted as presented and Leslie Lassiter seconded. Motion approved.

Cathy Barnette presented the Steering Committee with an overview of Education Committee activities. Ms. Barnette said that the Education Committee had not met since the last Steering Committee meeting. In the interim, Ms. Barnette said that Sara Shields and Roberta Swann had been working to develop a series of stories that will hopefully be featured in the newspaper, as they had been in discussion with Russ Henderson and the Press Register. Ms. Barnette anticipated that the series would be run after the Thanksgiving holidays. She said that the Education Committee would develop a canned tag line so there is a cohesive theme among the articles in the series. She expressed the concerns of the Education Committee that they are not sure how to promote this issue without having the ability to answer questions directly. She stressed that the committee was not waiting for Steering Committee developments to continue with their charge, and that the stormwater series would make the Education Committee more proactive. The next Education Committee meeting, according to Ms. Barnette, is tentatively scheduled for Dec 10, 2009. Dave Pyzoha expressed an interest in attending the meeting to talk about fishing trends over the years. Ms. Swann stated the NEP can also help answer that question, as Dr. John Valentine at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab has written a report on long term fisheries data. Ms. Swann asked Ms. Barnette if Russ Henderson seemed committed. Ms. Barnette answered yes, but said he is waiting for the word to write the articles to trickle down from the top.

Leslie Lassiter then provided an overview of Technical Committee activities. Ms. Lassiter said that the Technical Committee has compiled a list of projects from Foley, Fairhope, Daphne, Silverhill, Magnolia Springs, Elberta, Robertsdale, and all County Areas. According to Ms. Lassiter the total dollar amount of the projects is approximately \$20 million so far, although reports for the beach area were not yet contributed. Ms. Lassiter said that the Technical Committee would also compare and compile projects to see what the problems are and what the solutions are to those stormwater problems. Ms. Barnette also commented that the Education Committee has been working with the Technical Committee to develop the newspaper series to educate Baldwin residents based on the gathered data. Ms. Barnette mentioned that the Magnolia Springs community had come together over the protection of water resources and it is important to tell these stories.

Ms. Swann shared with the Steering Committee that she had participated in a lunch meeting with the mayors of Perdido Beach, Orange Beach, Loxley, Summerdale, Gulf Shores, Daphne and Spanish Fort. She told the Steering Committee that at that lunch she stressed that more participation is needed from the Baldwin County mayors and municipalities. According to Ms. Swann, the concerns of the mayors were: cost, project choice, and equitable distribution. She said that the mayoral group was in favor of webinars regarding technical committee's data and that they were willing to increase their participation. The mayors of Perdido and Orange Beach both gave great feedback during city council meetings after meeting with Ms. Swann, according to Ms. Lassitter. The Committee was also notified that the new mayor of Perdido Beach would be Mayor Houser's proxy.

David Pyzoha then addressed the Steering Committee, pointing at that the level of support from Steering Committee members has made it easy for his group to move forward. Mr. Pyzoha said that Gresham Smith & Partners had met with all the committees during the last month. He also told the Committee that the financial cost of service and how it will be billed has been discussed at length. Mr. Pyzoha said that his meeting with Mike Thompson and Kenny McIlwain had raised the idea that the county maybe best equipped to handle the billing. He said that there is a database for the entire county and that Gresham Smith & Partners would interrogate that database to get a count of residents versus non-residents to determine how much revenue can be generated. The Steering Committee agreed that it would not be interested in modifying tax bills as a way to collect the fee, but rather that the public corporation would have a separate account. Mr. Pyzoha mentioned that it may be feasible to have a part-time technical person at the county or to have a technical person on the staff of the corporation to coordinate the billing. Currently, Mr. Pyzoha said, there is a good understanding of the corporation planning structure and status. He said that he would have an update on service charges at the next meeting.

It was noted by the Committee that there was not a quorum present. Ms. MacPherson asked if a resolution could be drafted during the current meeting and emailed to the absent members.

Ms. MacPherson stated that she would no longer be representing Mobile Baykeeper on the Steering Committee. She said that she does represent other environmental non-profits and would like to remain active on the Steering Committee. Ms. Callaway was invited to the meeting to represent Mobile Baykeeper for the purpose of the discussion. Participants were provided a copy of the bylaws and asked to refer to the section regarding the Steering Committees structure.

Ms. Callaway stated that the board of Mobile Baykeeper voted and they feel she, Ms. Callaway, is the best person to represent the group. Ms. Callaway felt that although she lives in Mobile, Mobile Baykeeper also represents 1500 members in Baldwin County. Ms. Callaway said that Mobile Baykeeper feels that balance is good and is not looking for exclusivity. She added that Mobile Baykeeper has worked on stormwater issues in the past and knows them well. She also stated that her group has a large education program and feels as though they can help, rather than hurt the stormwater effort. Ms. Callaway felt that Mobile Baykeeper wants to help push forward and that being a part of the Baldwin County Stormwater Coalition along with the home builders at the same meeting was productive. Ms. MacPherson and Ms. Callaway then left the room. The Committee entered executive session at 10:15 a.m.

The executive session ended at 10:35 a.m. Actions taken in executive committee:

- Motion passed to maintain the Steering Committee structure, with first priority given to the affiliation,
- Motion passed to maintain the Steering Committee structure with second priority given to the person
- Motion passed to limit steering committee membership to residents of Baldwin County.
- Motion passed to give current Steering Committee members a six month period of time to either become Baldwin County residents or resign from the committee (this clause speaks to a member who recently moved to Mobile while their Baldwin County home is being constructed).

Ms. MacPherson and Ms. Callaway were asked to rejoin the group. Larry Chason explained that the Steering Committee had decided to maintain membership as it exists. Ms. Callaway stated that Mobile Baykeeper must chose its own spokesperson or not be included at all. Ms. Callaway asked that Mobile Baykeeper be removed from the current Steering Committee list. Ms. Callaway also stated that Mobile Baykeeper would not commit to staying on the Education Committee because she felt that it would be hard for her organization to educate on an initiative that it cannot vote on. She said that she would bring the subject to the Mobile Baykeeper Board of Directors for discussion. Ms. Callaway also committed to attending public meetings of the Baldwin County Watershed Coalition . Ms. Barnette pointed out that Bethany Kraft from Alabama Coastal Foundation serves on the Education Committee without having representation on the Steering Committee; she encouraged Ms. Callaway to reconsider her decision to leave the Steering Committee. Ms. Callaway stated that Mobile Baykeeper is not the type of organization that will “accept what is thrown their way.” Mr. Waller offered that the Steering Committee is an interim committee and hopes that the BCWC will work with Baykeeper in the future. Sen. Pittman stated that the Steering Committee felt the need to maintain continuity in its membership.

Ms. Callaway left at 10:43.

Mr. Pyzoha gave a presentation of activity since the previous meeting. Mr. Pyzoha stated that the Baldwin County model would be a first for the United States and will be highly googled because there is nothing else like it currently. Mr. Pyzoha said that the Steering Committee members would provide legacy and experience to the new corporation, and should be the advisory committee to the public corporation, kept at a conceptual level.

Mr. Pyzoha shared that the organizational subcommittee has been working to draft rules, regulations and policies needed to form bylaws. According to Mr. Pyzoha, the group is working on the details this month and will present them to the Steering Committee in January 2010. Mr. Pyzoha explained that the memorandum of understanding can include general information, can be the bylaw preamble, or, as a group in Chicago does, members can be required to sign this document showing that they are committed. My Pyzoha said that members can be removed if they don't follow the concepts spelled out in the document. Mr. Pyzoha then presented an analysis by Gresham Smith & Partners of the needs of the public corporation. The components included:

1. An Open and Diverse Membership

2. A Watershed Advisory Group
3. A Scientific/Technical Group
4. A Policy & Rules Group
5. An Education Group

Mr. Pyzoha added that these components are not vastly different from the current structure, which needs more clarity. Mr. Pyzoha also added that the Mobile Bay NEP should be a key player in the future structure due to their abilities to secure funds, to analyze and consult on scientific matters, etc. Larry Chason wondered why the components outlined lacked a financial group. Swann clarified that the Steering Committee will be advisory once the corporation is formed, which will handle the finances.

Mr. Pyzoha then gave an overview of each group and its role:

- The Watershed Advisory Group will work in concert with the Mobile NEP and the municipalities to achieve holistic watershed management. This group will also determine and prioritize regional projects.
- The Science/Technical Group would address local flooding and smart growth, and will also work in concert with the NEP.
- The Policy Group would help define the corporation's fundamental principles, day to day operations, monitoring, and working with the corporation on financials.
- The Education Group will head up public education and take a leadership role on educational summits. Besides special projects, this group will only need to meet twice a year.

Senator Pittman stated that the Executive Committee will take more than an advisory role. Ms. Swann added that the Executive Committee will also decide equitable distribution of funds.

Dave Pyzoha said there were two schools of thought for the coalition:

1. Coalition membership can behave as a deciding body, driving initiatives to the Executive Committee and the public corporation.
2. Executive Committee oversees initiatives, sending information to group chairpeople, then to the coalition membership.

Mr. Pyzoha asked the Committee which of these they would prefer to pursue.

Ms. Barnette stated that the Committee's intention is to recommend as an entire body, and would therefore prefer the second structure.

Senator Pittman felt that the Committee should pursue a combination of both options. He felt that public and environmental groups should work as the membership, and then information could be funneled to the Executive Committee. Sen. Pittman added that the structure used may look similar to what is currently in place, although the Executive Committee would ultimately decide priorities. He mentioned that each group would need to be defined as well. Ms. Swann agreed, but felt that the bylaws should be overhauled to accommodate growth and that the procedures should be flushed out. She added that special attention should be given to the makeup of the membership, the creation of guidelines for defining how members are chosen, and the possible addition of membership slots.

Ms. Swann stated that a bylaw committee webinar would be held in December and that volunteers are needed for this committee. Mr. Hellmich, Sen. Pittman, Ms. Barnette, Mayor Houser and Ms. Givens volunteered.

Mayor Houser made a motion to adjourn at 11:15. Ms. Lassiter seconded. Motion carried.

Next meeting: Friday, January 22, 2010.