

Minutes from the meeting of the Steering Committee (SC) of the Baldwin County Watershed Coalition

Friday, March 20, 2009

In attendance: Sen. Trip Pittman, Rep. Steve McMillan, Commissioner Skip Gruber, Mayor Fred Small, Carolyn Doughty, Stan Mahoney, Marian MacPherson, Joe Bullock, Donna Givens, Larry Chason, Bob James, Cathy Barnette, Roberta Swann

Agenda #1: The meeting was called to order by Roberta Swann at 9:10 a.m. and it was noted that a quorum was present. Ms. Swann gave a summary of the previous meeting and informed the committee she would assist with facilitation of meetings in an effort to extend the life of the current contract with AMEC (Andy Reese) who will assistances as defined by the committee.

Agenda #2: Minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed and it was agreed per suggestion of Sen. Pittman that minutes would be used for informational purposes.

Agenda #3: Cathy Barnette nominated Marian Macpherson as steering committee Chair. Sen. Pittman seconded the nomination of Ms. Macpherson, saying that a citizen-driven committee would be a valuable asset. Ms. Macpherson expressed a willingness to serve as Chair but expressed concern that a member with a higher stature in the community should take the position. Stan Mahoney suggested that a mayor or other representative would carry more weight in representing the Watershed Coalition to the community. Ms. Swann informed the committee that while the Chair would guide the committee, the NEP would do most of the legwork in administering it. Motion passed.

Fred Small nominated Larry Chason as a potential committee Vice Chair. Bob James seconded. Motion passed.

With regard to adoption of the By-Laws, Ms. Swann pointed out the need to fill the empty seats on the committee. The SC agreed that the Army Corps of Engineers, Geographical Survey of Alabama, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service would all be added to the Technical Committee. Mr. Mahoney suggested adding a representative from the Baldwin County Soil and Water Commission to the Education Committee. It was agreed that Rep. McMillan would solicit participation from the Perdido Bay Foundation and the Stockton Civic Association to represent East and North Baldwin Counties, respectively. Sen. Pittman reported that he had not yet received a response from ADEM on whether or not they would join the SC, but would follow up with them. Sen. Pittman made a motion to adopt the By-Laws. Stan Mahoney seconded. Motion passed.

Agenda #4: Ms. Barnette conveyed the eagerness of the Education Committee to the SC but expressed concern that there should be public relations oversight to ensure that their messages were effective. She stated that the Education committee had been in discussions with an independent Public Relations firm and they suggested conducting a baseline survey to capture where the voters were in terms of stormwater understanding. The firm suggested at least two surveys over the course of the next year at a cost of \$7,000 each. This baseline would provide a starting point for measuring progress. The Education Committee members are ready to begin the education process with community presentations of "Stormwater 101" which would raise awareness about the impact of runoff without addressing the proposed organization under development. The SC agreed that a baseline survey would be a constructive way to guide the education process. Trip Pittman stated that he would investigate other alternatives for gathering this information in an affordable way. Roberta Swann stated that MBNEP may be willing to fund this first survey. The Education Committee will discuss further at their next meeting (March 27, 2009).

Agenda #5: Ms. Swann opened discussion on the “Road Map” provided by AMEC at the last meeting. This road map outlines the various components of decisions that the steering committee will have to make to develop a watershed management agency. She informed the committee that the NEP would research other organizational structures and histories of other stormwater groups as examples to guide the process. Mr. Chason proposed deciding the organizational structure first in order to be prepared for funding opportunities. Mr. Mahoney suggested an interim session for newer members of the committee to understand how the decision making process had evolved up to the current meeting. Ms. Swann stated that she would be willing to organize a “webinar” where Andy Reese can provide an overview of the feasibility effort conducted initially. Cathy Barnette suggested that the webinar should provide background on how the recommendations of the feasibility study were developed. This webinar will take place before the next steering committee meeting.

Sen. Pittman proposed dealing with the program components and organizational structure first and then to address funding. Bob James stated that as the program components are developed, the committee should include recreation in its mission. He stated that recreation would provide greater opportunities for future funding. Ms. Swann stated that the next meeting would focus on defining the mission of the SC including a definition of its purpose, goals and objectives.

Ms. Swann suggested that one of the first activities to be undertaken by the Technical Committee might be a needs assessment to illustrate where the problems are and what needs exist throughout the county. There was general agreement of this by the members of the committee, Trip Pitman stated that a needs assessment would be helpful in selling this concept to the constituents. The committee agreed that a needs assessment would be helpful in educating the public and prioritizing actions. A motion was made by Mr. Mahoney and seconded by Mr. James to charge the technical committee with the creation of a needs assessment. Motion passed.

Trip Pitman stated that as the committee develops the program components it will need to be mindful of “not biting off more than it can chew”. He stated, with agreement from the committee, that they needed to keep this organizations mission simple and doable. He had concerns that the work program as currently outlined was very ambitious and somewhat unrealistic. He suggested that the organization focus on detention- in new construction, common detention, and future detention needs. This issue will be discussed at the next meeting.

Ms. Macpherson asked what the protocol would be for public access to the Steering Committee meetings. It was agreed that every third meeting would be open to the public. Trip Pitman requested that a press release be prepared to inform the community that this process is moving forward. Ms. Swann agreed. The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 a.m.