

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

Friday, August 21, 2009

In attendance: Ralph Helmich, Larry Burnette, Homer Singleton, Larry Chason, Cathy Barnette, Marian MacPherson, Patrick Waller, Leslie Lassitter, Julie Batchelor, Joe Bullock, Roberta Swann, Donna Givens, Sen. Trip Pittman, Steve McMillan, Brenda Lowther

Agenda #1: Call to Order The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Marian MacPherson at 9:10 a.m. Cathy Barnette stated that a quorum was 2/3 of the group and asked if there was a quorum present. There was not. Ralph Helmich motioned that the quorum bylaw be reviewed. After much discussion the topic was tabled.

Steve McMillan apologized in advance for needing to leave this meeting early.

Ms. MacPherson asked for a moment of silence for Stan Mahoney. After a moment of silence it was announced that a celebration of Stan Mahoney's life will be held September 26, 2009 from 3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Ralph Helmich stated the City of Foley will proclaim September 26, 2009 Stan Mahoney Day. Senator Pittman said the state will also recognize September 26 as Stan Mahoney Day.

Ms. MacPherson welcomed Leslie Lassitter as the Technical Committee Representative. Chair MacPherson asked for introductions around the table.

Agenda #2: Review/Discussion /Approval of Minutes of 6.19.09

Roberta Swann asked Senator Pittman if a review of the quorum bylaw was in order. Senator Pittman commented that a high turnout is necessary to move this issue forward. He said that a review of the members might be more in order so that people committed to attending would be on the committee. Ms. Swann noted mayors seemed to be the least able to attend. Cathy Barnette asked if phone-in attendance would be a solution. Roberta Swann commented that each mayor can have a proxy. Actual attendance is preferable to phone-in. Larry Chason asked if mayors could be ex-officio members. Roberta Swann answered no, as a public corporation needs to be formed, there must be buy-in from the cities and the county. Senator Pittman affirmed that this issue is serious, making mayors an integral part of the process. In fact, the initiative came from the mayors in the first place. Councilman Helmich discussed his appointment to the committee as proxy for the city of Foley by Mayor Koniar, acknowledging other mayors need to be encouraged to do the same. Representative McMillan announced two meetings of the Mayors and Commissioners scheduled to be held on September 23 and October 21, 2009 at the Robertsdale Central Annex as a possible way to catch everyone in the same room. Ms. Swann asked if it is possible for her to present a power point at one of the meetings. Representative McMillan will look into it.

Ms. MacPherson stated that she was no longer a member of the Board of Directors of the Mobile Baykeepers and asked if the committee would consider asking Director Casi Callaway to replace her on this committee. Ms. Swann stated that both Daphne Mayor Fred Small and former Mobile Bay NEP Director David Yeager thought it would be a good idea to have Ms. Callaway on the committee. Councilman Helmich thought that she may bring balance to the committee, but wondered about the public

perception of making her the Chair. Senator Pittman asked if Ms. Callaway lived in Mobile. Ms. MacPherson confirmed that she does. Senator Pittman stated that, because Ms. MacPherson is still a member of Mobile Baykeepers while not on the Board of Directors, he saw no issue with her remaining on the committee. He went on to say that if she felt she needed to withdraw, his preference would be to see another member of Mobile Baykeeper be appointed who is also a resident of Baldwin County. Cathy Barnette asked if Ms. MacPherson left because of philosophical reasons. Ms. MacPherson stated that she did not agree with one initiative being supported by Mobile Baykeeper, but still believed in their overall mission. In the interest of full disclosure, Patrick Waller with the Baldwin County Homebuilders Association stated that he is currently living in Mobile for six months until his new home is constructed in Baldwin County. Ms. MacPherson thanked everyone and said she would think about it further before making a decision.

Agenda #3: Committee Reports

Homer Singleton is filling the position representing Wolf Bay Watershed left vacant by Stan Mahoney's passing.

Education Committee Report-Cathy Barnette

Tom Herder is working with Chris Brown from Southern Insights, the company that will conduct the Baldwin County cross sample phone poll regarding this initiative. The poll will include 300 random households throughout Baldwin County and will be conducted after Labor Day. Generally, the survey only takes days to complete. During the last meeting, the Education Committee spent a considerable amount of their time wordsmithing the questions. The questions put forward for the Steering Committees review are as follows:

1. Would you like to reduce flooding problems and protect the quality of our drinking water, fishing and swimming areas?
2. Did you know that stormwater that runs off our yards, roads, and properties carries pollution and mud that impacts the quality of our drinking water, fishing, and beaches?"
3. Would you be willing to pay 20¢ per day as a stormwater management fee for the purpose of protecting the quality of drinking water, **protecting** fishing and swimming areas **and protecting** property from flooding?
4. Would you like more information about protecting the quality drinking water, property, and fishing and swimming areas from the impacts of stormwater?

Chris Brown felt no reference to a specific organization should be made as to not skew the data.

(Steve McMillan left at 9:40 a.m.)

Senator Pittman asked about the use of the word stormwater in question 4. Cathy reported Chris Brown recommended against the term "run off". Councilman Helmich asked if 300 surveys was the appropriate number. Senator Pittman stated that cost is an issue. Beyond 300 calls, the data received is not equivalent to the cost of the service.

Cathy further stated that the questions will be released to the Chambers of Commerce on the eastern shore for their use in polling local businesses after the polling is complete. The Education Committee has all the educational materials on the Mobile Bay NEP website and is branching out to social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. They have also implemented a presentation tracking matrix. Councilman Helmich asked when schools will be involved. Ms. Barnette stated this topic will be discussed at the next meeting.

Technical Committee Report – Leslie Lassitter

The Technical Committee is looking into database alternatives to identify areas of need. Ashley Campbell will try to identify capital projects from the County. The Technical Committee realizes the need to meet with towns and cities without public works departments to identify their needs. Ms. Swann asked if the committee should actively recruit more engineers. Senator Pittman feels detention should be a focus. Ms. Lassitter stated Fairhope, Daphne and Foley have all recently updated their codes and are looking at detention pond issues. Senator Pittman suggested Frank Fugue may be a good source of information as he was in charge of inspecting and approving detention ponds on farms in the past. Joey Koptis, Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District has been in contact with Ms. Lassitter and will be sharing information going forward.

It was noted that all committee minutes are located on the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program website at www.mobilebaynep.com.

Discussion Items

Roberta Swann led a discussion on the need for professional assistance as the committee moves forward to ensure the project is brought to fruition in a responsible manner. Because many communities are experiencing financial difficulties at this time, the NEP will pay for this assistance if there is support from the cities and the county. It was discussed that the members of the committee need to contact the mayors who are not currently participating and do not have representatives.

The NEP will draft a letter of support that can be presented to mayors and commissioners. This letter will be available immediately. Senator Pittman stated that an RFQ is good, but he felt a need to iron out this group's vision before paying someone to listen. Ms. Swann pointed out a need for professional guidance as the steering committee moves forward.

Ralph Helmich, Cathy Barnette and Leslie Lassitter volunteered to visit city and county officials to deliver the letter of support.

Recovery Act Funds for Water Infrastructure Projects in Alabama

More than \$63 Million will be going through ADEM for projects throughout Alabama. According to the EPA, at least 20% of the funds provided under the Recovery Act are to be used for green infrastructure, water and energy efficiency improvements and other environmentally innovative projects. Cathy Barnette said a contact she has with the state believed that the state can ask for a waiver from the Governor to divert the 20% back to the State Revolving Fund. Senator Pittman will discuss this with ADEM as it is believed by this group that a waiver is not possible.

Financial Structure

Ms. Swann expressed the need for this group to consider alternative financing options. Senator Pittman acknowledged the EPA money would be able to offset costs of the first few years if it were obtained. CIAP funds may also be available. Julie Batchelor spoke about the CIAP money. \$6.1 million is slated for Baldwin County and the projects will be approved by the Mineral Management Service, MMS. MMS is looking predominately to flooding and land issues, looking for projects that have data to support the need for the project. Also, keep in mind, CIAP money could take up to two years to become available.

Patrick Waller, Lawrence Burnette, Ralph Helmich, Trip Pittman and Cathy Burnette volunteered to review the RFQ's.

Discussion ensued about the need to continue moving forward. Ms. Swann recognized her background in community development and stated her belief that this is the time and the place to affect a change. General comments from around the table show the commitment to action from this group and the groups awareness that others have started this initiative in the past without follow through. Larry Chason stated that cynicism can not rule the day, that this group can learn from the past to make positive change in the near future.

Comments from the Floor

Richard Thompson commented that this meeting is an echo of past meetings and stated that democracy has no continuity. Larry Chason responded that cynicism cannot rule the day: we have a learning curve and have to keep trying. Larry stated that we have learned a lot from the past and can use that information to keep moving forward. Roberta Swann, with a background in community development, feels this is the time and the place for this initiative to succeed.

With no other business, Ms. MacPherson adjourned the meeting at 11:00 a.m.