



## HSVPOA GAC Committee Meeting April 2022

### Description

The Hot Springs Village Governmental Affairs Committee (GAC) discusses short-term rentals, the formation of a new ad hoc committee, upcoming utility evaluations and improvements, broadband, hiring employees, and various other topics.

This is not a transcription.

According to the [Explore the Village](#) website the purpose of the Governmental Affairs Committee is to advise and assist “the POA Board in enhancing Village relationships with the area, local, state and federal government agencies, elected officials, and abutting schools districts.”

At the Governmental Affairs Committee meeting on April 1, 2022, the members elected new officers for 2022/2023. Bob Pettey was elected to the Chair position and the committee chose Sam Sacco to be the Vice-chair. The new committee secretary is Stephanie Heffer.

Click here to read “[Hot Springs City Manager Shares Short-Term Rental Info With HSVPOA GAC](#)”.

### Board Chair Corry Updates GAC on Newly-Formed Ad Hoc Committee

Joanie Corry, HSVPOA Board Chair, reported on the newly-formed ad hoc committee. This committee was developed to look at the CCI properties that are available for sale and to evaluate each piece of property. Corry said the Board receives a lot of emails about the CCI-owned property, specifically the land where trails exist.

“The Board felt it would be best to name an independent committee to take a look at what Cooper has for sale and if it is of any interest to us as a Village. The caveat is that the Board will not be buying any land. I want to make sure I am very clear on that. The Board will not be buying any land because the money from our assessment increase is going to infrastructure, as we all know. But there may be other ways. There may be a special assessment. They may suggest that which is a one-time, in and out. Maybe get donations. Maybe a conservancy. I don’t know what they will find out. But they are going to study that. I think they are set up for a field trip next week. I think it was important to name a committee, just so maybe we can put this to bed for the future because we are always getting

questions about it.”

Corry answered, “Each property has a price on it. What I am envisioning, and I may be wrong, is I see a spreadsheet with the property listed.” Corry envisions this spreadsheet containing information such as price, acreage, and if the property is located in a flood zone.

This newly-formed ad hoc committee is comprised of members who are already serving on standing committees and also one Board member.

### **J. P. Keith Keck Updates GAC on Broadband**

J. P. Keck said that with Greg Jones going away, he doesn’t know who will pick up the broadband issue. The Garland County side is problematic right now as they have had difficulty finding a vendor willing to put in a grant request for this section of the Village. One of the Garland County broadband vendors is receiving a lot of complaints.

Corry asked whether First Electric will turn on some of its fiber-optic services as it is being installed. Keck said he thought they would. He said, “The sooner they can turn it on, the sooner they can get some money back.”

### **GM Kelly Hale’s Report to GAC**

GM Hale said the staff and Board will be discussing the short-term rental issue, but the main focus is on the infrastructure repairs.

#### **Plans to Improve Water and Sewer Plants**

Hale said we are passing the state’s water-treatment inspection, but he is working to “get us in a better light with the state and keep us more compliant.” An engineering firm will be coming in to give us an assessment for both the Water Treatment and Sewer plants and let us know what our long-term plan should be to remain compliant. This is a process that Hale envisions occurring over five to seven years.

The GAC Committee Chair told the GM that the committee “is standing by to help in any way they can”.

J. P. Keck said, there was previously a “water plant” expert on the GAC committee and there may be people in the community who are experienced in water and sewer plant areas and willing to lend their expertise.

#### **Hiring Issues**

“Two months ago we were down 82 people and now we’re down 46, with two-thirds of those being seasonal employees that won’t come on deck until May or June. We are closing the gap on that.”

*Kelly Hale, Hot Springs Village POA General Manager*

“We are increasing the communication in the community with the two school districts. We have

meetings set up next week with National Park College...We've devised an internship/mentorship type program between Public Works, Park and Rec, and the Golf Department." This program is aimed to help young men and women who are not college-bound, enter a career path. Hale explained, "This could be something they could grow into. We can show them there are other opportunities besides just mowing grass. We want to make sure they know it is entry-level."

#### **Progress in Infrastructure Repairs and Showcasing Employees**

The Friday E-blasts have been showcasing the POA employees at work. "We want to be able to take the Friday E-blast and put it up on different sites with the same information.

Hale stated, "I want the employees to get recognition and I want the Members to see the employees with their names. We want the employees to feel valued. I am a firm believer in a family approach and that it is a team effort."

The POA has started publishing a dashboard every month in the Friday E-blast that will show the amount of money spent on infrastructure and where it was spent. The monthly dashboard report may be moved to the top of the E-blast so it is not buried under other items.

#### **Problems with Inflation**

"We are getting bids with 40% to 50% increases in costs over prices from two years ago." We are looking at whether purchases are a need or a want. "We are making strategic purchases and lease agreements...We are fixing what we have to get through [the inflationary times]."

#### **Is the Board/POA Going to Dramatically Increase Woodland's Rental Prices?**

Hale said this is a rumor. "Here is a fact. Everything is on the table [for evaluation] with me right now, to know the true cost of what it is to do business here within the fenceline. Woodlands, Coronado Center, Pickleball, everything is up for grabs [evaluation] right now. You can't manage something if you really don't know what the true cost is to keep it going."

The organizations use the shows to raise money. "We are here to support that. No two ways about it. When the POA puts a show on, we put about \$5,000-\$8,000 cash back into the bank account. When we have a group that does it, they pay a certain fee to the POA. We are actually losing about \$3,200 [per event]." This is because of electricity, water, and labor. "This has been going on for a long time. It is nothing new."

We need to communicate these numbers and then make decisions as a group.

#### **Karen Crowson Reports on the Cooper Land Ad hoc Committee**

The ad hoc committee chair is Jeff Lofgren. Janet Rowe is the Vice-chair. Karen will be serving as Secretary. Additional members as well as the Board member will be announced soon.

The first order of business for this brand new committee is to take the next couple of weeks to look at the CCI properties that are available for purchase and the prices being asked for the properties.

Lofgren has asked the committee “to look at what the needs are for Hot Springs Village and to not just look at today, but to think about future generations and the fact that Hot Springs Village will be an ongoing, hopefully thriving community fifty years from now.”

Crowson said that hopefully, her 35 years of experience in real estate will help her bring something to the table on this committee.

### **Fountain Lake School Superintendent, Dr. Murphy Provides Updates**

Dr. Murphy reported zero COVID-19 cases. Enrollment remains a constant. There are 1,330 in grades K through 12 and 60 Pre-K students.

#### **Fountain Lake School District is Looking at Money-Saving Options and Plans to Accommodate Growth**

The school district looked at some short-term goals to meet its financial constraints. “First and foremost, see how we can modify schedules within the school day without negatively impacting instructions. We are looking at revamping our schedules. We are looking at possibly limiting or eliminating elective programming that does not have a high enrollment threshold...We are looking at basically all options. Some of those have greater negative impacts on student learning than others. But the objective is trying to devise a short-term and long-term strategic plan for the school district, based on the failed millage increase.” FLSD is looking to expand partnerships in both Garland and Saline Counties. with other entities.

“We do have a level of interest with an excavation company.” Dr. Murphy is exploring the option of a three to a five-year lease agreement with an excavation company. This company would excavate the mountain behind the football field at no cost to the school district. “What we get out of the deal is usable land and roughly a cost savings of probably \$4 Million.”

“At this point in our evaluation, we need roughly three 24’ x 70’ or 75’ modulars to possibly accommodate the space constraints that we have. We can only find locations on campus to place two of them without negatively impacting recess for elementary school or traffic flow patterns...At this point in time, the Board has not made a commitment to anything other than reviewing all options on the table.”

“Really what I am trying to do is see if I can stretch our enrollment to roughly 1,450 students K-12 before we would have to go back to the voters. That would give us a little bit of breathing room.”

“We’ll be looking, short term, at exhausting our cash balances to the degree that we feel any comfort level, possibly \$1 Million in cash balances, roughly a \$1 Million in federal funds, and then possibly borrowing up to \$2.5 Million if we were to do a six classroom addition on the Saferoom to get us enough space to weather the storm to get to this new enrollment number.”

#### **School Districts May Partner With Garland County Library**

“Mrs. Speers [Superintendent of Jessieville School District] and I have been in communication with North Garland County Library Association. They are writing a grant to potentially provide a resource center in North Garland County, which would be extremely exciting if we can pull that off. They are interested in doing a partnership with the school districts on the property that we own jointly – Boys and Girls Club.” FLSD and Jessieville School Districts are moving forward with the initial phases of the application. “This will be something that can serve the entire Village.”

### **J. P. Larry Raney Expansion of Broadband Along Hwy 128**

There was a \$12 Million Grant for broadband service that runs along Hwy 128, between Hwy 5 and 7. It will cover that corridor and also some corridors coming out of Hwy 7. There will still be some broadband gaps, “but at least it expands broadband. Resort TV Cable will be performing the installation which will not be completed until the end of 2023.”

“It is a good start, but it doesn’t answer everything.”

### **J.P. Keith Keck Gives Updates to GAC**

#### **Saline County 911 Consolidation**

Benton and Saline County consolidated their 911 systems. Bryant did not. “There is a future problem coming down the pike there when they go to one [911 call center for the county]. “The bigger impact that the Village needs to be aware of, sitting in two counties, is how we are dealing with a 911 call.”

“When you make a 911 call here [in Hot Springs Village] you get bounced around. We need to be aware of that. The police are aware of it. Being in two counties is challenging.”

Saline County Quorum Court will be reviewing two proposals. The first proposal is from American Rescue Plan. They will be installing new towers, one of which will be in western Saline County. That will help in our areas.

The second proposal before the Saline County Quorum concerns the Saline County Jail. The Sheriff is 18 jailers short. “We have overflow crowds at the jail. They are banging to get in. There will be a proposal to expand the jail.”

#### **Republican Primary Candidates Forum**

Keck said they considering holding a General Election Candidate Forum and the date needs to be decided soon.

Keck thanked GAC members, Sam Sacco, Steve Rittenmeyer, and David Childs for arranging for the Republican Primary Candidate Forum held on March 31 at Coronado Community Center in HSV.

By Cheryl Dowden, Hot Springs Village Gazette, April 5, 2022



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