

MINUTES

**HOUSE AND SENATE COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
LEGISLATIVE ARKANSAS BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE ON LOCAL 911 SYSTEMS
Meeting Jointly**

Wednesday, August 26, 2015

The Senate and House Committees on Agriculture, Forestry and Economic Development and the Legislative Arkansas Blue Ribbon Committee on Local 911 Systems met jointly at 1:30 p.m., August 26, 2015, at Arkansas Northeast College, 2501 Division Street, Governor's Ball Room-Statehouse Hall Building, in Blytheville, Arkansas.

Committee members present: Senators Ronald Caldwell, Chair (Agri); Linda Chesterfield, Chair (Local 911); John Cooper, and Blake Johnson; Representatives Dan Douglas, Chair (Agri); David Hillman, Vice Chair (Agri); Scott Baltz, Vice Chair (Local 911); Charles Armstrong, Rick Beck, David Branscum, Andy Davis, Douglas House, Lane Jean, Mark McElroy, Ron McNair, Stephen Meeks, Mathew Pitsch, James Ratliff, and David Whitaker.

Other legislators present: Senators David Burnett and Keith Ingram; Representatives Nate Bell, Charlotte Vining Douglas, Deborah Ferguson, Monte Hodges, Frederick Love, Milton Nicks, and Sue Scott.

Senator Chesterfield called the meeting to order.

Remarks by Chairs

Senator Caldwell, Representative Douglas, Senator Chesterfield, and Representative Baltz welcomed committee members and guests to the meeting.

Consideration of a Motion to Authorize Chairs to Approve Special Expenses Incurred by the Committees

Without objection, a motion was made authorizing the Chairs to approve Special Expenses incurred by the House and Senate Agriculture, Forestry and Economic Development Committees.

Welcome to Blytheville

Mayor James Sanders was unable to attend the meeting.

Remarks by Area Legislators

Representative Monte Hodges and Senator David Burnett welcomed everyone to Blytheville and provided a brief overview of the agricultural and industrial development in Mississippi County:

- Mississippi County is the largest row crop producer in the country
- Produces 50% of the nation's soybeans and corn
- County will be the largest steel producer in the country upon completion of Big River Steel (BRS)
- Currently, BRS has invested \$400 million with a projected cost of \$1.3 billion to complete

Overview of Local 911 Systems

David Lendennie, 911 Coordinator, presented an update on the local E911 system and provided the following information:

- E911 Coordinator's position was created in 1989; system went online in 1990 - received 6,000 calls
- Received 62,000 calls in 2014 - 55,000 wireless and 7,000 landlines
- Two Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) for E911 system: Mississippi County Sheriff's Department and the Blytheville Police Department; operates on analog and digital
- E911 Office is responsible for the budget/salaries, equipment, planning, organizing and operation of the system; GIS digital map updates; 911 address grid-map preparation and verification of addresses.
- Equipment is leased from AT&T on a five-year cycle

Senator Chesterfield noted each area of the state has unique needs and the Local 911 Committee will continue to meet and review PSAP services across the state to ensure that in the event of a natural or manmade disaster, the state will be able to respond in a timely manner.

Update on the Big River Steel Project

Dave Stickler, Chief Administrative Officer, and Lenore Trammell, Chief Compliance Officer, Big River Steel, presented a progress report on BRS. Mr. Stickler assured committee members that the project will continue to move forward as envisioned by Mr. John Correnti, CEO, who passed away on August 19, 2015. The report included the following information:

- 650 construction workers currently onsite (58% are minorities); 2,000 construction workers by end of year
- Only one lost-time accident
- Upon completion, BRS will be largest steel producer in the country
- Invested \$400 million so far with a projected cost of \$1.3 billion to complete
- Will produce 1.6 million short tons of steel each year; has pre-sold 25% of the steel expected to be produced over the next seven years to three different customers at market price; vast majority will be domestic sales
- Anticipates a \$3 billion impact on the region's economy
- Suppliers are investing \$100 million and will employ at least 250 people (45% are Arkansas companies)
- Arkansas Steel Processing: \$35 million investment to create 50 jobs
- SMS Millcraft: \$30 million and plans to hire 70 employees
- Mid-River Terminal: \$40 million investment and hired 130 employees
- Sales tax revenue up 17% in Mississippi county
- BRS and Arkansas Northeastern College working together to train workers and host job fairs
- Hiring will begin in first quarter of 2016 and BRS will begin moving steel in third quarter
- Committed \$60 million for employee salaries; \$55,00 per year starting salary for specific employees

Job Training Programs Offered by Arkansas Northeastern College

Dr. Jim Shemwell, President, Arkansas Northeastern College (ANC), spoke on the programs offered by ANC:

- ANC staff is dedicated to customized training - delivered on client's schedule; bills by hour, not per person no minimum class sizes and college credit awarded when appropriate
- 97% of graduates are minorities (96% African American and 1% Hispanic)
- Over 70 different clients; 1.5 million trainee contact hours logged; \$6 million of customized training provided
- Grant funding to support new Certificate of Proficiency in construction technology related to BRS and other new companies
- Launched Arkansas' only steel industry technology degree in 2000 - internship programs with Nucor-Yamato Steel and Tenaris-Hickman; partnered with SMS group of Germany to deliver training for BRS
- Provides machine and process specific training; basic workplace skills training - 60 clock hours over 8 weeks

Mr. Shemwell stated that ANC has partnered with the Arkansas Delta Training and Education Consortium (ADTEC) and from 2005-2013 acquired approximately three dozen grants totaling over \$65 million.

Update on Agriculture in Northeast Arkansas

Mr. Brandon Veach, a fourth generation farmer, was recently elected President of the Mississippi County Farm Bureau. Mr. Veach welcomed committee members and provided a brief overview of the impact of agriculture in the county. In 2014, the following crops were planted and valued at \$315 million:

soybeans: 292,000 acres
cotton: 82,000 acres
rice: 54,000 acres
wheat: 52,000 acres
corn: 24,000 acres
sorghum: 4,000 acres

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.