

**MINUTES OF THE BLACK BELT COMMISSION  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING  
September 16, 2014  
South Central Alabama Development Commission  
Montgomery, AL**

The Black Belt Commission Executive Committee met Tuesday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014, at the South Central Alabama Development Commission in Montgomery with Tyson Howard, Executive Director, hosting the meeting. The following were in attendance:

Ron Sparks, Director, Alabama Rural Development Office  
David Hooks, Chair, Manufacture Committee  
John Zippert, Chair, Agriculture Committee  
Dr. Daniel Boyd, Education Committee  
Donald Mills, Chair, Small Business Committee  
Dr. Ken Tucker, Workforce Committee  
Bobby Jon Drinkard, AIDT (for Ed Castile)  
Tyson Howard, South Central Alabama Regional Commission  
Oscar Berry, Liaison, Congresswoman Terri Sewell's Office  
William Scott, Co-Chair, Infrastructure Committee  
Robert Lake, West Alabama Regional Commission  
Ginger Stewart, Project Manager  
Thomas Moore, Project Manager  
Candy Capel, Project Manager  
Emily Law, BBC Executive Director  
Gene Fuller, CEO REMTECH  
Bill Deery, TimeMAPS

**Ron** welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked **Tyson Howard** for hosting the meeting and talked about how much he appreciated everything the Regional Commissions do. He reported that we should see the most aggressive legislative sessions in a long time.

Ron stated he had been in a meeting in Birmingham regarding small business and international trade and heard Gene Fuller and Bill Deery talk about their program.

He introduced the guest speakers today, **Gene Fuller** and **Bill Deery**, who did a presentation for the Commission called **TimeMAPS**. Gene Fuller stated he had been an aerospace engineer in the past before developing this program. He then turned it over to Bill Deery who did a presentation on TimeMAPS, an Online Financial Literacy Curriculum for Personal Finance and Career Education. TimeMaps stands for time mangement for achievement and success. It is an interactive educational web application developed to enhance the teaching and learning of personal money management and life skills. It is for students, teachers, administrators, parents and business professionals who were all instrumental in the development of the online digital textbook and curriculum. It is comprised of 12 major units using 54 lessons that meet National Financial Literacy

Standards as well as many individual State Personal Finance Standards and provides enough content and materials for an entire High School class or early college level course.

When put in perspective, getting your education is only 5% total life's time. Spending some amount of time getting your education, that reaps benefits the rest of your life. Talked about cost of owning auto versus dollars spent on education.

Get businesses to pay for program. Locate sponsor for schools such as banks and other similar type businesses.

Set up fee is \$250 to get school on system. Cost is \$5 per year per student. The program is not limited to education. Could be used by Human Resources for businesses.

**Dr. Ken Tucker** asked if the program is marketed directly to high schools or if they partnered. **Gene** stated they went through the Alabama Council on Higher Education. Regions Bank is a partner. He says it is not limited to education. This program can be done on an individual basis; one on one. Can be used for homeschool programs. This will be presented to the Superintendents' Coalition Dr. Hale stated he could see this being used in Rehab and Reentry programs.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

##### **AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE – John Zippert, Chair, reported –**

- Tuskegee has acquired the building on Highway 80 and thirty acres previously discussed with plans for refurbishing the building. They feel this is a better location for the Fruit and Vegetable Marketing Center that is to be built on Highway 80 as a marketing outlet for farmers.
- Building would meet the needs of the project.
- Have not been able to get Dr. Hill, but will continue to try to have face-to-face meeting with him. Ron is going to reach out to Dr. Hill.
- Coop of farmers has been selling watermelons to Walmart this summer.

##### **COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE – Dr. David Hale, Chair, Ginger Rue.**

###### **Project Manager, reported –**

- In process of mapping the state for broadband project which will be completed at the end of September. So far we have identified about forty miles of dead zones.
- Also working with the State Tourism Commission and ADECA on outdoor trails and lodging.
- Working with Emily Law on website design for Rural Development Office and Black Belt Commission. Meeting with her after BBC meeting

##### **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE - Felecia Jones, Chair, Thomas Moore, Program Manager-**

- Since last meeting, the committee partnered with TruFund and Norm Davis. Trying to develop Small business academies

- Working on the South Central Alabama Broadband initiative

**CULTURAL AND YOUTH – Dr. Carol Zippert, Chair, Thomas Moore, Project Manager, reported –**

- Carol is absent today but John reported she has been appointed to the School Board in Greene County and had associated work with that today.
- Talked about the upcoming Folk Root’s Festival.
- Also talked about the Black Belt Arts collaboration with the State Council on the Arts for community-based arts projects as being the focus of the committee.

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE – Dr. Daniel Boyd, Chair, Ginger Rue, Project Manager, reported-**

- The committee met September 15 with the focus of the meeting being to update members on the past year and to set goals for this year.
- In the past, we have used surveys of Black Belt Superintendents and allowed them to identify their top priorities: those include funding, professional development and summer programs for students.
- Grants have been applied for, some successfully and others not so.
- A recent proposal has been submitted regarding teen pregnancy and character education.
- There have been five education summits over the past five years which have impacted approximately 1,300 educators statewide.
- Provided scholarships to the University of Alabama’s Student Introduction to Engineering summer program.
- Worked with character education summer camps.
- Committee wants to conduct new survey of Black Belt superintendents to see what their major concerns are. After looking over these, the committee will see if new goals need to be set.
- Talked about the building Davita Dialysis has acquired for a clinic in Hayneville.

**FAMILIES COMMITTEE – Dave Dagostino, Chair – Ginger Rue, Project Manager, reported:**

- One new member has been steered to the committee, Angela Hurst, who has been a guest at one of our meetings.
- In July, ran a free basketball camp with University of Alabama Men’s basketball team at Selma High School where 234 kids from Selma and surrounding areas and their families were treated to free basketball instruction, an achieve in school message, anti-bullying message, anti-drug and alcohol message, a healthy mind and body message and of course, listen to your parents/teachers/coaches message.
- First is a series of events through the use of sports to draw out families in the Black Belt to discover additional ways to assist in their efforts and find out what they need from the Commission.
- Suggestions as to which of the Black Belt communities would be best suited to target next would be welcome.

**HEALTH COMMITTEE — Congresswoman Terri Sewell and Chad Nichols, Co-Chairs, Oscar Berry reported:**

- Oscar Berry with Congresswoman Sewell’s office discussed related issues:
  1. Status of health care
  2. Collaboration.
  3. Infrastructure, transportation and broadband
  4. Outreach for Education and workforce Development
- Talked about the lack of students applying and being nominated to attend military colleges.
- Up to ten students per year to the Air Force Academy, West Point Naval Academy, the Coastguard, Merchant Marine Academy
- Will be traveling across the district getting the word out that there is over \$400,000 in education funds available for scholars.

**INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE – Noopie Cosby, Chair – William Scott, Co-Chair, and Thomas Moore, Project Manager, reported:**

- William Scott reported he had been busy networking.
- Discussed how we can help (ground) infrastructure projects.

**MANUFACTURING COMMITTEE – David Hooks, Chair, Candy Capel, Project Manager, reported-**

- The committee has not met.
- Friday the 26<sup>th</sup> is conference call.
- Talked about BP and river dredging
- Focus will be on **existing businesses**.

**MARKETING & TOURISM –Wimberly Comer, Chair, Thomas Moore, Project Manager, reported –**

- Reported the committee has seventeen projects but talked about the top four or five, which are.....
- The Alabama Bicentennial planning of events in the Black Belt.
- Alabama Black Belt Heritage Area audio tours are in final stages of being implemented in communities across the Black Belt.
- Alabama **Black Belt Heritage Area and Alabama Black Belt Adventures** are co-funding a **market research project** to identify current and potential visitors to the Black Belt region to enhance outreach and attract more visitors to the region.
- Other tourism successes include the implementation of the **Black Belt Birding Trail, Black Belt sites on the National Geographic website, Alabama River Trail projects and the Black Belt Treasures Outreach initiative to promote arts education and tourism in the Black Belt.**
- Talked about planning of the **Civil Rights** festivities.
- Also working on **designation for Black Belt area.**

**SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE – Donald Mills, Chair, Ginger Rue, Program Manager, reported:**

- Discussed plans for the second Home grown Small Business Conference September 26, 2014 at Shelton State Community College in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Talked about the programs being presented and the keynote speaker, Moziah Bridges, of “Mo’s Bows” fame.
- Students will be coming from American Christian Academy and public schools in the area.
- Had a problem with one of the public schools backing out.
- Dr. Boyd talked about the liability that’s presented for the public schools.
- Assisting with Tuskegee’s Booker T. Washington Summit’s business plan contest.
- UWA is also working with Nisa Miranda of UA to identify businesses with a recreational focus.

**SKILLS TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT – Ed Castile, Chair/Dr. Ken Tucker, Co-Chair, Candy Cappel, Project Manager, Bobby Jon Drinkard reported-**

- The committee met on August 29<sup>th</sup>.
- On the training programs in the Black Belt for the unemployed.
- On the programs available such as AIDT Fundamentals: getting candidates ready.
- It will be done through existing locations on web page.
- Discussed the brief from the Workforce Regional Liaisons, Lisa Rollan, Judy Graham and Darlene Thompson.
- About the finalization of the Workforce strategy.
- Gadsden State has a resource on Branding expo.
- Dr. Ken Tucker reported they were in the final stages of finalizing strategic plan.
- Reported \$150,000 for an automotive technician program and \$25,000 welding \$100,000 in DRA funds for welding. Twelve people were offered jobs on the spot.

**TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE – Shirley Worthington, Chair – Candy Capel, Project Manager, reported -**

- **No report**

**John Clyde Riggs, Alabama-Tombigbee Regional Commission:**

- It’s a busy time with the fiscal year end and beginning funding year for different programs such as Medicaid which will be in upcoming legislative session.
- Talked about marketing tourism in Camden and the need for lodging.
- About three years ago a local young man was killed and a scholarship fund was set up in his name and they started a “Hog Hunt Rodeo” to raise funds. The first year they had 16 hunters, second year 38 hunters and third year 75 people came to hunt.
- This equates to 105 room nights, food was provided and entertainment by Jess Meusse.

Ron talked about the history channel story on world record alligators at Miller's Ferry to Selma. Alligator was 15 feet and over 1,000 pounds. It's interesting that people will pay to hunt wild hogs and alligators. These are just two of the unusual attractions found in the Black Belt on which the town should capitalize.

**Tyson Howard, South Central Alabama Development Commission:**

- Talked about the Regional Councils' representatives meeting with the Governor about three weeks ago and reported the Governor enjoyed his visit to Thomasville.
- Funding will be rough. Urban areas are still trying to take money away from the rural areas for the lunch program.
- Medicaid waiver- working with it next, a new industrial type activity.

**Bob Lake, West Alabama Regional Commission:**

- Reported same for our region. The goal is to recruit industries.
- \$800,000 does not go very far when divided twelve ways and this money is used to get ARC and DRA funds.
- Water and Sewer- \$1.2 million has been approved for grant use money to match programs with.

**Tyson** added there is **Technical Assistance funds** in the amount of \$50,000 that we get for the Aging Program. The **Meals on Wheels** program was discussed with Governor Bentley. The Increase in funds given to urban areas is taking money away from rural areas and the three agencies that receive these funds could not serve the meals. As Neal Morrison stated, "They do not have the need that we have."

**Gene Fuller** has a son and daughter in law who worked with the Rural studio and he asked about the studio. It was discussed that it was alive and well. Ron suggested organizing a tour of homes.

**Ron** gave closing remarks and talked about telemedicine project in Washington County/Mobile/Chatom- Project would...

1. Keep from moving senior citizens
2. Save \$26,000 per year on transportation

He reported there are eighty presentation sites across Alabama and that Lloyd Sirmons who has been working with telemedicine in Alabama is leaving.

The meeting adjourned for a delicious lunch provided by Tyson Howard and South Central Alabama Development Commission.