

Officials optimistic about new regional transportation organization

CAMDEN — Implementation meetings for the new Alabama-Tombigbee Regional Transportation Planning Organization have been completed with the election of officers and adoption of bylaws.

Representative from the Alabama-Tombigbee 10 county area, including Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Dallas, Marengo, Perry, Sumter, Washington and Wilcox Counties were present for the RPO meetings in Camden.

The new program is being implemented by regional councils statewide under contract with the Alabama Department of Transportation and marks the first time

such an effort has been made for rural Alabama counties. Similar planning called MPO's has been underway in urban areas for a number of years.

The RPO organizational structure is driven by three committees: The Citizens Advisory Committee, The Technical Advisory Committee, and The Policy Committee.

The Citizens Advisory Committee is composed of four citizens from each county. During their initial meeting Brain Leathers from Grove Hill in Clarke County was elected Chairman. Each county will now

elect its chairperson who in turn will be a vice-chair of the regional committee.

The Technical Committee includes county engineers from the 10 counties as well as representatives from other transportation interests such as the U.S. Corp of Engineers, trucking interests as well as transportation providers. ALDOT district engineers are also on this committee. Elected Chairman for this committee was Wilcox County Engineer Garry Grantham. Lou Wallace of ALDOT 8th Division in Grove Hill is Vice-Chair.

The Policy Committee, composed of mayor and commissioner from each county, elected Selma Mayor James Perkins as its Chairman and Chatom Mayor Harold Crouch as Vice-Chair.

The next step will be a quarterly meeting in each with the Citizens Committee members from that individual county. These will be followed up by a quarterly meeting of the Technical and Policy Committees to act on recommendations from the Citizens Committee.

RPO actions deal with state and federally funded roads and not city-county roads. The committees also will consider safety issues on these roadways.

Garbage

From page 2-A

Commissioner C.D. "Budd" Ruffin thanked Robinson and said there is no excuse for people dumping trash illegally.

"We also worked on getting a dump on Lindsey Road cleaned up, and we are working on several others," Robinson said.

"A lot of people are throwing stuff beside road," Commissioner Clyde Dixon said. "I am having problems in my district with appliances being thrown beside the roads and into ditches.

They have some monetary value. I know they can take it to the landfill. Is there any way we can offer people a place to put it?"

Terry Kelley, the manager of the local landfill, said that they accept appliances and metal objects for recycling.

"It's ugly and it takes another hole out of my budget that I should be using to do something else with," Dixon said.

Kelley suggested having an "amnesty day" once or twice a year as they do in other counties.

In Baldwin County, for example, he said that twice a year the county

takes out large dumpsters and leaves them at various places in the community for such large, non-household type solid waste.

"ADEM has a 25% recycling goal, but it generally isn't enforced because it's so expensive," he said. "We are already recycling all of the appliances and steel products that come into the landfill. We could sit down and work out something that would benefit the county. We would be very open to discussions."

"Are you saying the landfill already has a program for bringing in appliances?" Ruffin

asked.

Kelley said yes, that people can bring appliances on Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. and leave them at no cost.

"We also don't charge for limbs, leaves, and yard trash," he said. "We come out with a grinder and grind up the limbs, and at times we have given it back to the cities for landscape mulch."

Robinson told Commissioners that if they know of illegal dumps to let him know and that he will take action to find the offenders and have them clean up their mess.

Landfill

From page 1-A

"A lot of questions have to be answered," he said.

Even though May said he has found some proposals that were negotiated prior to January, 2007 to be "totally unacceptable," he does think there is hope for resolving the sale of the facility which has been in a state of confusion for more than five years.

"There appears to be some movement to come up with another proposal," he said.

May said he had reviewed every document available to him on the matter, and has consulted with the attorney regarding the direction in which the matter should be pursued.

"We have requested that the Commission, without having too issue a subpoena, audit the records of the landfill, and I was advised that there was not a problem with that," May said. "Therefore, I don't think we have to take any action until that process has been completed."

May said that he will expect the audit to be done in February with a report in the Commission's hands by March.

"This is not going to set on the burner for a long time, I assure you," he said. "There is no need

for lengthy delays."

May took issue with the fact that a number of things supposedly discussed by the Commission in the past are not mentioned in the board's official minutes.

"I understand that some members of the Commission requested last March that no action be taken on the landfill," he said. "Again, when I go back to minutes, I don't see where any direction was given to anybody, and therein lies one of the problems."

May had earlier in the meeting instructed McPhearson to — in the future — make his recommendations to the board in writing so that those documents can be made a part of the public record.

"I feel that in order to resolve this matter, the Commission has got to be somewhat united and kept abreast of what is going on," May said. "I am not going to discuss these matters without all of the commissioners knowing what's going on."

And, he said, with all due respect to those who think the local news media is a "pain", he made it clear that journalists who are doing their jobs will not be barred from getting information from his office.

"The news media needs to hear these discussions, because the news media keeps majority of the people in

this county informed," he said. "I do not intend to hold anything back from the people. Obviously, we can't discuss legal strategies, but I am telling you that I will keep the news media informed, and anytime there comes a time when the Commission and the news media needs to hear something, I will not try to hide it. You will be the first to hear it."

May reiterated that he does not intend to allow the landfill to continue to sit "dead in the water".

"I am looking to future, looking to resolve this matter in a timely manner," he said. "The people of Choctaw County can depend on the fact that I have read the documents and I know where we are."

May said that, at this time, he is requesting that the Commission wait for the results of the audit before any further action is taken.

My time line is moving forward in February and in March we are going to look at it," he said. "I want to see some progress. If we reach a point that we feel like we can't go any further, then we will let someone else solve the problem."

McPhearson agreed that it would be a smart thing to let an independent auditor go over the books to see what the landfill's financial situation really is.

County employees who drive trucks must have CDL

By Tommy Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

BUTLER — The Choctaw Co. Commission on Monday voted to allow Commissioner Dandy Brown to adjust the pay of his equipment operators, provided the raises come from his District One budget and not the county's general fund, and agreed that all employees who drive or operate county trucks and machinery must have a CDL.

"I have three employees but I have slots for five," he said. It is hard to find and keep operators for what we pay an hour. I'd just like to be able to keep the three I have."

Commissioner C.D. "Budd" Ruffin said the board talked about raises during budget discussions last year, but were asked to wait on a decision until the new administration was in office.

"In District Two, my men come in on their own time to watch educational training videos on safety issues and how to operate equipment properly," he said.

Brown said that unless the county pays its operators more, they are eventually going to move on to other jobs where they can earn more money.

"I'd just like to compensate them and try to keep them," he said.

Commissioner Clyde Dixon said he is faced with the same predicament.

"The men have worked hard and they are long overdue for some type of adjustment," he said. "They say we need a personnel policy. I say, let's classify these people, based on their experience, time, safety and other things, but how do we come together and reach common

See CDL, page 4A

Remember when exercising meant you were really just out having fun?



It's time to recapture the fun of it all!

Lunch & Learn
Thursday, February 15, 2007
featuring
Betsy Adams, Wellness Center Director

Betsy will help put a spark back into your exercise routine with practical tips for fun, heart-healthy exercises at Noon in the BWWMH Classroom. A buffet luncheon is provided at a cost of \$5 per plate.



Tombigbee Healthcare Authority

Call Chrissy Brooker at
334-287-2626 for reservations.

334-289-4000
105 Highway 80 East
Demopolis, Alabama 36732
www.bwwmh.com

Stafford Contract Services
COMMERCIAL & RESIDENTIAL SERVICES
• Appliance Repair • Electrical Services
• General Home Repair • Plumbing & Gas Fitting

TIM STAFFORD

STATE CERTIFIED

MASTER PLUMBER/GAS FITTER

Maintenance Service Contracts Available for

Commercial Property Owners

Local Phone

(205) 459-2687

Cellular Phone

(334) 341-1279

DURO
Standard Products Company, LLC

Paper Converting Mechanics

Duro Bag Mfg. Co. is seeking Paper Converting Mechanics with at least 20 years experience with paper converting equipment (operations and maintenance). Supervisory experience is a plus. Paper Converting Mechanics are responsible for performing all machine set-ups and maintenance as well as supervising employees. Duro offers competitive wages, excellent benefits, and relocation expenses. Contact Jason Wiehe, HR Manager, Florence Plant, at 1-800-879-3876, ext 708. Serious enquires only. Or send resume to: Duro Bag Mfg. Co., ATTN: Human Resources, 7600 Empire Dr., Florence, KY 41042, fax to 859-371-5943 or email to jwiehe@durobag.com.

Equal Opportunity Employer
M/F/H/V