

Mobile Bay NEP

Financial Committee Meeting Minutes

Alabama Power Conference Room, second floor
and virtually via Zoom Meetings

Wednesday, October 27th, 2021 at 10:00AM

In Attendance: Roberta Swann, Henry Perkins, Tiffany England, Jennifer Denson, Lynne Chronister, Ralph Hellmich, Patti McCurdy, Ronald Cink, Chip Brown, Jimmy Lyons, & Beth Thomas

The meeting started at 10:15

1. Welcome and Introductions

Individuals introduced themselves and their organizations, briefly.

Roberta Swann mentioned that since so many members were spread out geographically, having these meetings virtually more often might be prudent.

Jennifer Denson suggested that they be virtual in general with one in person meeting a year.

Jennifer Denson made a motion to approve the minutes from last meeting, Chip Brown and Ralph Hellmich seconded. There was no discussion of the minutes and they were approved at 10:18.

2. Non-Federal Match Discussion

Roberta Swann gave updates on the non-federal match budget.

ADCNR reduced the amount given due to a reduction in lease space.

Daphne approved the amount asked for, correcting what was reflected in the meeting packet.

Roberta said we needed a growth plan to engage other state agencies, besides just ADCNR.

ALDOT of state agriculture, for instance.

Roberta Swann continued through the list of approvals.

Saraland, Satsuma, and Dauphin Island are all giving money, and this is the first time those communities have donated. Satsuma and Saraland were both enthusiastic about the Western Shore Plan and to be involved.

3. Annual Breakfast

Tiffany England discussed the annual breakfast, discussing the budget in general, then noting that we've already achieved our fundraising goals.

Roberta Swann discussed that the money went into an agency fund, which we have more spending freedom with than we generally do with EPA funds and grants.

The summer social was well received to the point that we will consider hosting one again. We may identify a single sponsor for alcohol if we host it again, and we will still charge tickets for that event.

4. Coastal Alabama Fisheries Fund

Henry presented on the Coastal Alabama Fisheries Fund, a revolving loan fund for oyster farmers.

- Need for updated fishing fleet identified in the CCMP drafting process,
- Need of oyster farmers for microloans confirmed through comprehensive market analysis and one-on-one interviews with farmers.
- General terms of fund discussed
- MARBIDCO is Maryland Loan Fund used largely as a template for the CAFF, has been instrumental in growing aquaculture in Maryland
- Partners with the MBNEP are Alabama Power, whose foundation provided a grant for this project, and 22nd State Bank who serves as the MBNEP's financial partner
- The Steering Committee is formed and in position to review and approve applications
- An eventual goal is for this committee to be formed largely of peers, i.e. oyster farmers managing the fund. Roberta Swann spoke on this with her experience in Gloucester, MA and a similar program maintained there.
- Auxiliary services are provided through the fund to support the financial and business literacy of the farmers
- This is a pilot program and will seek funding to expand to additional industries and grow the total loan amount size through other sources
- Documents are ready, the money is in an account ready to go, the program is essentially ready to launch.

There was discussion on the politics between oyster farmers and oyster catchers, and whether or not it might be wise to extend this fund to both groups initially and avoid one side feeling slighted. Chip Brown and Roberta Swann were supportive of this idea. Henry is to explore it and see what changes would need to be made to what exists now, and to determine if it is feasible at this time.

Chip Brown spoke on a house bill he pre-filed to support the seafood industry in Alabama, House Bill 10-2022. It essentially treats seafood production the same as agriculture in the state.

Mentioned the Sweet Grown Alabama as an organization to partner with. They host an annual event at the capitol in Montgomery where Alabama farmers distribute their product. Oysters should get involved or do something similar.

Roberta Swann mentioned again the need for the development of a strategic plan for the Financial Committee. At the federal level, MBNEP benefits from ANEP, at the local level the MBNEP can represent itself, but at the state level the organization has little advocacy. The financial committee may be able to play that role. This is to be developed in 2022.

Adjourn

Jennifer Denson adjourned the meeting at 11:49.