



**Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Business Resources Committee
March 14, 2024, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce**



Minutes

In Attendance

Eliska Morgan, Thompson Engineering
John Barton, TC Boiler
Aimee Christensen, Christensen Global Strategies
Sara Lichtenberg, Christensen Global Strategies
Pamela Wellner, Christensen Global Strategies
Lynne Chronister, University of South Alabama
Michael Capella, University of South Alabama
Christina Wassenaar, University of South Alabama
Jennifer Denson, Partners for Environmental Progress
John T. Bender, McFadden, Rouse & Bender
Todd Greer, Innovation Portal
Chandra Wright, The Lodge at Gulf State Park
Colette Boehm, Gulf Shores & Orange Beach Tourism
Steve Stewart, SCS Engineers
Liz Freeman, Long's Human Resources
Beth Thomas, Alabama Power
Jennifer Tremayne, Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce
Rusty Grice, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant
Casey Gay Williams, Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce
Joey Nunnally, Austal
Catherine Reaves, Alabama State Port Authority

Staff

Roberta Swann
Henry Perkins
Cody Aloï
Vanessa Romero

The meeting was called to order at 10:07AM. All attendees introduced themselves and their organizations, and afterwards last meeting's minutes were passed without discussion.

Old Business

CCMP Rewrite

Roberta discussed the charge of the MBNEP as bringing constituencies to the table to execute the CCMP, and that the MBNEP is a backbone organization designed to support CCMP efforts across many partners. She provided further context for what the NEP is and how the management

conference guides the actions of the organization. The task of the BRC is to develop a vision for the role of economy in the new CCMP.

New Business

CGS

Roberta introduced Aimee Christensen as an asset for the BRC to use in developing the CCMP and to help envision a path for climate-forward private sector development in coastal Alabama.

Aimee presented on her professional background, and how assets, needs and opportunities can be matched. She identified opportunities in the Port, in energy, in textiles, smart communities, green steel, and agrifuel.

An open discussion was held. BRC members spoke on the challenges of communication between would-be partners, the need for systemic support, and the need to identify existing resources.

Specifically, participants identified the need for:

- A mapping of existing assets to support a resilient business community.
- Communication efforts to drive greater awareness of what is already happening; and
- Interest in leaning into circular economy opportunities by turning waste to value, including among industries, for small businesses, and the management of sediment for its beneficial use.

To support these areas of interest, the BRC participants kicked off three areas of initial effort:

Asset Mapping:

1. Summary: this subcommittee will identify and catalog the assets supporting continued resilient business opportunities in the Mobile region. This may include infrastructure, educational and training programs, policies, and corporate best practices.
2. Initial Members (all are welcome):
 - Jennifer Tremayne of the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce
 - Beth Thomas of Alabama Power
 - Catherine Reaves of the Mobile Port Authority
 - Todd Greer of the Innovation Portal

Communication Education, and Engagement:

1. Summary: Participants noted there is a need for more communication of the value of Alabama's estuaries and coasts and what business is already doing and wants to do in support of our natural environment. This subcommittee seeks to inform and engage business, government, and individuals such as by developing talking points, branding, storytelling and leveraging The Mobile Area Chamber's thebusinessview.com and all of the regional chambers' reach through their membership and beyond.
2. Initial Members (all are welcome):
 - Colette Boehm
 - Casey Gay Williams of the Eastern Shore Chamber

Waste to Value: Building a Circular Economy:

1. Summary: Waste to value or "trash to treasure" was identified as an area ripe for turning risk into opportunity, including:
 - Partners for Environmental Progress has been working with industry to identify byproducts

and the inputs others need in order to match supply and demand. Assistance is needed to make this more comprehensive, and suggestions included an interactive website and resources to support information collection;

Small businesses including retail and restaurants seek help with packaging waste and/or solutions, gray water, and grease reuse; and

Mobile Bay sediment that must be removed to keep the shipping channel functioning can be a solution to protect and rebuild the shorelines. The MBNEP is working with the Army Corps of Engineers to move their sediment to places where it is needed, and the Corps has a requirement for at least 70% of sediment to be beneficially used by 2030.

Initial Members (all are welcome):

Lynne Chronister, University of South Alabama
Steve Stewart, SCS Engineering
Terri Graham, Baldwin County

Finally, participants discussed other areas of interest, including:

- Further deepening of relevant knowledge, such as innovative industries, or successful approaches taken by other regions.
- Tapping into MBNEP expertise to ensure optimal development, whether housing or industrial siting.
- Collaborating to access financial resources (local, state, federal, carbon credits) for projects large and small; and
- Inviting others missing at the table from key industries and with expertise.

The MBNEP is working with PEP to organize the first learning session which will focus on the opportunity for carbon capture in Alabama given the geology and industrial expertise and chemical company engagement, and the interest of those with greenhouse gas emissions to tap into this opportunity to mitigate them. Like the Port's leadership on electrification and shore power, this too can be a business differentiator for the region.

Please let us know if you are interested in working on any of the subcommittees above, and/or on learning programs.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05.