

MINUTES

ALABAMA FORESTRY COMMISSION January 15, 2014

PRESIDING – Tommy Thompson, Chairman

SECRETARY – Dan Jackson, Assistant State Forester

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT –Tommy Thompson, Salem Saloom, Johnny McReynolds, Ken Real and Irvin Eatman.

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT – Don Heath and Jerry Smith.

ALABAMA FORESTRY COMMISSION PERSONNEL PRESENT – Dan Jackson, Scott Rouse, Jason Dockery, David Kelley, Julie Shiyou-Woodard, Bruce Springer, Gary Cole, Hank McKinley, Otis French, Walter Cartwright, Kelvin Daniels, Elishia Ballentine and Regina Miller.

GUESTS – Stephen May, Rick Oates, Sam Duvall, Jerry Dwyer and Ellory May.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER – Chairman Tommy Thompson called this regular meeting of the Alabama Forestry Commission to order at 1:15 p.m. on January 15, 2014 in the Alabama Forestry Commission's State Office Executive Conference Room located at 513 Madison Avenue, Montgomery, Alabama 36104.

Regina Miller called roll and announced that a quorum was present. Miller announced that the meeting had been properly advertised.

Tommy Thompson made a motion to excuse the absence of Don Heath (conflict when meeting time changed) and Jerry Smith (injury) with the motion seconded by Ken Real. Vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 15, 2013 MEETING – Salem Saloom made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 15, 2013 meeting with Ken Real seconding the motion. Vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT/ELECTION OF OFFICERS – Ken Real reported on behalf of the nominating committee (he and Jerry Smith) and proposed that Salem Saloom serve as chairman and Tommy Thompson serve as vice-chairman. Irvin Eatman made a motion to approve the committee's report with Johnny McReynolds seconding the motion. Vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Salem Saloom presided over the remainder of the meeting.

NEW STATE FORESTER – Scott Rouse, General Counsel, reported that Governor Bentley had approved the appointment of Greg Pate as State Forester effective February 1, 2014. He stated that the State Personnel Board and the Department of Finance approved the salary of the new state forester earlier in the day.

Rouse informed Commissioners that the State Personnel Board's Class and Pay Division stated that an increase in the salary for Dan Jackson, Assistant State Forester, will need to be presented after Greg Pate is employed.

Salem Saloom stated that all requirements had been met with the hiring of Pate except that he must become a registered forester in Alabama according to state law prior to becoming State Forester. He stated that the exam can be conducted through an oral or written examination.

Saloom stated that he invited Stephen May, Chair of the Alabama Board of Registration for Foresters to address the Commission. Saloom stated that David Perry, Governor Bentley's Chief of Staff, had given him the assurance that he had talked with Mr. May to ensure that Mr. Pate would have the opportunity to take the registered forester examination and become registered in order to begin employment as state forester on February 1.

Mr. May stated that Greg Pate had submitted his application and necessary documentation to the Board of Registration for Foresters. He stated that the Board's agenda for the January 2014 meeting was already full and that the appropriate ground work cannot be accomplished prior to the meeting to approve Greg Pate taking the exam, either written or oral.

Tommy Thompson asked that the Board consider the time frame and the agency's request to ensure that Greg Pate become registered so he can begin employment on February 1. May stated that the process is more cumbersome than one would think. He also stated that he is rescuing himself from the process.

Saloom thanked May for addressing the Commission. He stated that he thought the Board will do the right thing and administer the oral exam to Pate and that he will be registered in Alabama by February 1.

LEADERSHIP AUTHORITY – Scott Rouse recommended that the Commission formally authorize Dan Jackson, Assistant State Forester, to administer the business of the agency. Tommy Thompson made a motion to authorize Dan Jackson to serve as the agency head and conduct the day-to-day operations of the agency being retroactive from January 10 until Greg Pate is in office. Johnny McReynolds seconded the motion and the motion carried by unanimous vote.

OIG REPORT – Julie Shiyou-Woodard reported that an indirect cost plan will be submitted to the U.S. Forest Service in mid-February. She stated that the Commission is waiting for official acceptance of the offset plan that had been submitted to the Forest Service.

Irvin Eatman made a motion to ask the Examiners of Public Accounts to conduct an audit of the agency due to key employees leaving. Ken Real amended the motion to draft a letter of request and to ask that the audit be conducted after July 1 but prior to the end of the year. Tommy Thompson seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION – Jackson presented Julie Shiyou-Woodard with an Outstanding Service Award Coin and a Letter of Commendation for her leadership in establishing a grants management system, OIG resolution and continued grants issues.

He also recognized Bruce Springer with a Letter of Commendation for his work in creating the grant management database as well as his contributions toward the OIG resolution and continuing grant and budget items.

Jackson next recognized those employees that will receive Letters of Commendation. In addition to their regular work, these employees assisted in numerous timber sales across the state which will have/will produce needed revenue for the agency. (See Attachment #1 for list of employees receiving the Commendation letters.)

BUDGET UPDATE – In the absence of Chief Financial Officer Heather Oates, Jackson reviewed the budget stating that at the end of December the agency had spent a quarter of our budget. He explained that the large disbursement of \$326,599 is a payment to Risk Management to cover insurance costs for the agency for the year.

CHOCOLOCOCO STATE FOREST UPDATE – Jason Dockery, NE Regional Forester asked Commissioners for approval to continue communication with the Calhoun County Soil and Water Conservation District Board (CCSWCDB) stating that the Conservation District Board will need to own the land to obtain a loan to construct a facility and therefore cannot lease land from the Commission. The Board is requesting twenty-two acres to construct a building and hiking trails and eventually would like to construct an AG center. The Board will pay for the construction of a building for the AFC. We will retain the 2 acres in the corner of the property where the shop is located. Ken Real stated that the CCSWCDB should pay costs for surveys, architectural costs, etc.

There was a consensus to proceed in discussions regarding the possibilities of this venture between entities.

ASSET SALES – David Kelley reviewed asset sales and provided updates on properties. Since the Commission will not need to pay back funds to the USFS, Commissioners expressed concern about selling properties and the need to retain forestland.

Irvin Eatman made a motion to withdraw the sale of Hauss Nursery. Johnny McReynolds seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote. David Kelley will contact the Department of Conservation and let them know the decision.

Tommy Thompson made a motion to halt the sale of the Stauffer Nursery property and to proceed with the cleanup of Miller Nursery property. Irvin Eatman seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

It was noted that the Lauderdale County office property could only be sold to the city of Florence but due to deed restrictions, the city was no longer interested in purchasing the property.

The Alabama Wireless Commission has asked the AFC to retain towers with the possibility that they might need the towers to mount repeaters which will be used by various entities.

Other properties that had previously been approved by the Commissioners were discussed but no vote was taken regarding specific properties.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY UPDATE- Elishia Ballentine and Kelvin Daniels reviewed the final report of the 2013 Customer Satisfaction Survey stating that 383 people took part in the survey. Ninety-four percent rated the Commission and services provided with a satisfactory or above rating. The Leadership Team will determine resolutions/responses to concerns raised and will make presentations to regions.

DATE AND LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING - Commissioners scheduled the next meeting of the Commission at 10:00 a.m. on March 18, 2014 at the Commission's state office in Montgomery.

ADJOURNMENT – Ken Real made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:28 p.m. with Johnny McReynolds seconding the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.