

MINUTES
ALABAMA FORESTRY COMMISSION
September 20, 2017

PRESIDING – Jerry Dwyer, Chairman

SECRETARY – Rick Oates, State Forester

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT – Jerry Dwyer, Stepehn May, Robert Turner, Katrenia Kier, Joe Twardy, Dr. Bill Sudduth

ALABAMA FORESTRY COMMISSION PERSONNEL PRESENT – Rick Oates, Scott Rouse, Arthur Hitt, Becky Jackson, Brandy Sponsler, Ray Metzler, Jason Dockery, Sybil Green

GUESTS – Andrew Schock, Russell Ledbetter, R. Larry Ford. Sam Duvall, William Green

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER – Chairman Jerry Dwyer called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Sybil Green conducted roll call and declared a quorum was present. She stated that the meeting had been properly advertised.

MOTION #2017-20 – Steve May made a motion to accept Jane Russell’s absence as excusable due to a prior engagement. Robert Turner seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

Robert Turner opened the meeting with a prayer.

MINUTES OF THE JULY 20, 2017 MEETING – The minutes of the last meeting were discussed.

MOTION #2017-21 – Joe Twardy made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Robert Turner seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and the motion to accept the minutes as written passed unanimously.

SAFETY REPORT – Regional Forester Jason Dockery presented a safety report for the month of August. The report stated there were 3 reported tick bites and 3 moving vehicle accidents reported during this period. All 3 MVA’s were ruled to be the fault of the other driver involved. Only one accident damaged AFC property and AFC is working with the other driver’s insurance to cover the vehicle.

Regional Forester Jason Dockery reported that the current years Fire Refresher will be within the next couple of months and the curriculum is being prepared. A review of the Motor Vehicle Accident Reporting Procedure is being incorporated into training this year which details how to report an accident, what information to obtain and record on site and how to ensure all necessary forms are in the vehicle, as well as how to properly complete those forms. The immediate supervisor should be informed at once and the information is passed up the chain from there. Paperwork for DORM (Department of Risk Management) must be submitted within 24 hours. All this information is in the Safety Manual.

Mr. Twardy asked where the three accidents occurred. Brandy Sponsler answered one of them occurred on Taylor Road in Montgomery when an AFC vehicle was rear-ended, in one of the accidents the AFC vehicle was parked and sideswiped by another vehicle, and the third accident also occurred in Montgomery when a car pulled out in front of the AFC vehicle and was t-boned.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer thanked Regional Forester Dockery for his report. He then asked Becky Jackson to give her budget report.

BUDGET REPORT FY 2017 AND FY 2018 – Becky Jackson referred attendees to the budget packet that had been distributed. She began with the internal budget that shows we expected \$21.7 million in revenue for FY17, and budgeted expenditures were expected to be \$21.1 million. That would have left us with ending cash of \$537, 000.

She continued: we are at the end of FY17 so we can project actuals. We have collected \$24.5 million in revenues during FY17, well above the \$21.7 million we had anticipated. The main reason for that is we have drawn down grants as we have earned them. The clear majority of that increase is from these grants. Since we are drawing them this year, they will not be available to draw next year. We accelerated the draws and drew \$6.6 million in grants, so that money has got to be available next year. AFC drew that money to have the cash at hand to meet a great deal of the yearly expenditures that will come due at the beginning of the next fiscal year.

Mr. Twardy asked for clarification on whether the accomplishments are equal to what we draw down, or do we draw down and then have to catch up. Becky Jackson explained it is equal to what we have done; we have actually performed the work, and the agency is on a strict reimbursement basis.

She stated another reason this is higher is because we have drawn from some FY14, FY15, and FY16 grants we had not completely drawn.

She referenced the distributed paperwork: the \$601,000 figure at the top is our cash carry-forward balance. She explained we have had issues with the Comptroller's office all year. The agency started the year being told we had \$326,000 in the bank. We argued with them about that, and now at the end of the year we have gotten it in writing from the Comptroller's office that our true balance is \$601,000.

She stated she put the \$601,000 as our beginning balance in FY17 because we had that cash available to us to pay bills for 2017. We started with \$601,000, we collected \$24.5 million during FY17, which gave us a balance of cash available to pay expenditures of \$25.1 million. We carry that forward to the expenditure page, and these are actual expenditure numbers. All the payrolls are in so the \$11 million for salaries, the \$4.5 million for fringe benefits, all are actual numbers we have paid employees during FY17.

She continued to say everything else is actual numbers that has been paid because the books are closed through the Comptroller's office, except for encumbrances set aside to pay bills for 2017 we haven't received yet. After working with the field, \$207,000 has been encumbered to pay any bills that come in related to FY17. The \$20,526, 000 does contain some estimates. It will not go over \$20,500,000 for FY17. Considering encumbrances, expenditures are \$20,526,000 for the whole of FY17. That figure is subtracted from \$25,100,000 that is available from cash and revenues, leaving a balance of cash of \$4,500,000 to roll forward into 2018, most which is from accelerated federal grants. Severance taxes are budgeted at \$5,500,000, we collected \$5,700,000, so we are \$250,000 to the good. Revenues were

exceeded for FY17 in all categories, so that increases the cash available. Expenditures were saved considerably through most categories, only two were overspent in small amounts.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer asked how we overspent in utilities. Becky Jackson explained the cell phone contract requirements through State Purchasing were changed and increased. "Push-to-talk" is available only through SouthernLinc and they have added costs.

She explained the grants and benefits column consists mainly of payments to landowners where they are meeting part of the match, cost shares, and a couple of other small grants that were done as the modifications to the grant agreements were done, thus adding more throughout the year. Rick Oates added that some VFD grants are included. Chairman Jerry Dwyer stated he thought the VFD grants were separate. Rick Oates explained the VFD line item in the budget is the \$1,100,000 the Legislature gives us. The other in grants and benefits is a program where we match grant money from VFD to pay for equipment, etc.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer asked where these budget documents show the money that the Governor put into our budget and he was told it is listed under General Fund.

Becky Jackson stated the bottom line for cash after this fiscal year is completed will be \$4,500,000. She stressed that this amount is needed to meet our obligations in FY18, and it is necessary to understand we must have that cash to meet our budget. We have collected it, we have it on hand, and we are now in a good position to meet our obligations. The expected revenues of 2018 is \$18,904,000.

Rick Oates asked if there are any questions. He thanked Becky, Arthur, all field people for controlling expenditures.

Mr. Twardy asked Rick Oates if he is going to continue his weekly check and Oates answered yes. Mr. Oates stressed we are in budget crisis, even though there is \$4,500,000 dollars to carry forward. We must stress to employees we are still in financial peril.

Steve May commented it must be stressed to the Regional Foresters. Rick Oates reiterated even though we now have \$4,500,000 rolling forward, instead of \$83,000, we must still be very careful with our spending.

Becky Jackson added part of the reason the expenditures are so low is we have had Purchase Orders set aside for large items we haven't had to exhaust. At the end of the year that money is cleared by closing out the POs so it increased what we have available to spend, and decreases our actual expenses.

Steve May asked for an example of these large items and was given the answer of fuel. The cost for fuel was overestimated and the field had been very good about saving fuel.

Becky Jackson stated we will begin with \$4,500,000 in cash to pay bills, and expect to collect \$18,900,000 in revenue for FY18. That totals to \$23,500,000 in revenues and cash to pay the anticipated expenditures. FY18 revenue is only \$18,900,000, so we could not make it without the cash carry forward. The FY18 expenditure budget is \$22,300,000. If we were zero based budgeted we would be in the hole in FY18. With the \$4,500,000 carry forward, the revenue expected, and the expenditures expected, there will be an estimated cash balance at the end of FY18 to carry forward into FY19 of \$1,100,000. We are being very conservative about our payroll, (up to 80% of our expenditures). We

have set aside enough cash at the beginning to meet 25 payrolls because we must meet a payroll on October 1. It is necessary to carry that amount forward from the previous year because there will not be enough time to bring in that amount. This is to guarantee we meet payroll.

Steve May asked Rick Oates how he determined the FY18 budget. He also asked why travel amounts differ from FY17. Rick Oates stated these numbers came from requests from Phoenix. The counties and the Regional Foresters sent requests that determined the beginning point. Steve May stated that it would not make sense to exceed what you were able to survive with the current year. Rick Oates stated he did not intend to spend that much.

Steve May asked that Pelham Range be explained to him again. Rick Oates stated on the income side of the budget you will see the same amount, that it is basically a wash. The agency has contracted with the State Military Department to manage this area, we have 2 employees on that range that do prescribed burning, a lot of mowing, and maintain the property. They pay us to have those employees there, they pay us for building rent, and to have an office there. Steve May asked how long this arrangement will last. Rick Oates told him that he thinks the arrangement is year to year and it does not cost us any money. Jason Dockery added those employees are available for use by AFC when the need arises.

Steve May encouraged Rick Oates to try to keep the numbers the same as the FY17 budget as much as possible. Rick Oates stated he intended to do so, even though some areas are up a little in the budget. Division Directors and Program Managers have been told they can take one out of state trip if it is at least half paid for by a grant. Travel will be very limited.

Steve May stated the whole process is what he means, and all the increases he has built in do mean dollars. Rick Oates added all expenditures will be closely monitored.

Steve May said he would also encourage him to not wait so late to do the budgets, and this whole process that he just went through should have been done a month or two ago. Rick Oates assured him we will be much further ahead next year. Arthur Hitt added the transition to STAARS has hindered the process.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer added that he also wanted to stay as close as possible to FY17 numbers. Joe Twardy asked if the FY18 payroll divided by 25 periods is \$467,500 and if there were 25 pay periods in the FY17 budget. Becky Jackson answered no, that was done for the FY18 budget only. Rick Oates added that some of the difference is everyone eligible to retire is budgeted to work the whole year, and their retirement payout is included, approximately \$770,000.

Rick Oates stated he wants to bring back a portion of merit raises. A two-step raise is standard. What he proposed, and what is included in the budget, is half of that, a one-step raise for everyone eligible. That will cost roughly \$250,000, and is included in this budget. Brandy Sponsler explained everybody that would have had their raise in July can get their one step raise, but cannot get the money back they missed. The annual raise date for whomever was scheduled in July, August or September will be October 1, instead of July.

Rick Oates added he has also budgeted for 3 interns next summer by reaching out to Auburn and AUM. He would like to get an intern in Forest Management, Forest Protection and one in Communications to help write some articles and work on our magazine. He has budgeted \$20,000 to cover this.

Katrenia Kier asked about budgeting for new hires. Rick Oates added that 233 employees are budgeted, right now we are down to 223. He would like to get back up to 233.

Ms. Kier asked about FY19 and FY20 budgets and the effect of the severance tax law on those budgets. Rick Oates answered we will get some grants for 2018 that are not in the budget, probably around \$2,000,000. The new tax went into effect on July 1 but it is unknown how the revenues will be impacted. Scott Rouse added they start collecting the new tax on October 1, so we will shortly be able to see the impact.

Steve May asked if that is being tracked closely. Scott Rouse answered it will be; the collection for that hasn't begun so there is not yet any data. Rick Oates stated we budgeted for a \$690,000 loss in severance tax.

Steve May asked if we have a way to set up the trends of what has been in the past so we can see what is going to happen. Scott Rouse answered we can compare data from the past.

Steve May wanted to know the base number for severance tax. Rick Oates answered it will never go below \$5,700,000, the number showing on this budget. Scott Rouse explained that we don't know what the actuals will be until we get them, as has been discussed in previous meetings, the data is not really there to know the impact. Steve May asked where the money will come from that will make the adjustment and Rick Oates stated an automatic adjustment is in the law. Steve May asked how far in arrears it falls, and Rick Oates answered it is about a quarter.

Rick Oates stated it may take up to 6 months to get it adjusted. Scott Rouse explained the amount we collected in FY17, the \$5,700,000 is going to be the comparison point. And beginning in FY18, if collection falls short of that \$5,700,000 number, the rates will be adjusted upward to make that correction in future fiscal years. The danger is there may be a hole in FY18.

Robert Turner asked how much cushion is built into the FY18 budget, because of what Rick just mentioned, such as the interns. Becky Jackson answered the interns are budgeted and there is some cushion in payroll because she counted insurance for every employee for every month, etc., roughly \$90,000 cushion in that alone. There is a little bit of cushion in utilities because we are still seeing savings coming in based on the energy audit.

Arthur Hitt added that \$20,000 is already budgeted for the interns. Becky Jackson added there will be no overtime this year, and \$50,000 was budgeted there. There will be cushion in salaries as we have people retire because their salaries are figured for the whole year. Rick Oates added the Assistant State Forester is budgeted for the whole year, and that position is vacant. The Forest Management Division Director is budgeted starting in the middle of the salary range so there may be some cushion there.

Joe Twardy added there are several new startup operations that he is aware of, lots of new capacity coming online. He asked what will happen if these mills close in 2018 and the ones left operating have to make up the severance tax. He added he believes the budget as presented is very conservative.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer asked what would happen if the legislature granted a pay raise. Scott Rouse answered that pay raise would take effect in 2019.

MOTION #2017-22 – Steve May made a motion to accept the AFC budget as submitted. Joe Twardy seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION #2017-23 – Joe Twardy made a motion to proceed with a 1-step merit raise effective October 1, 2017. Steve May seconded the motion. Joe Twardy and Katrenia Kier added the Commissioners asked that all employees be commended for their sacrifice and for improved business practices that have helped to curtail expenses. The motion passed unanimously.

11:05 five-minute break

Reconvened at 11:12

REORGANIZATION – Chairman Jerry Dwyer recognized Steve May. Mr. May stated the minutes say very clearly there will be 3 regions and he wants to know where the plan is for 3 regions. He wants to see that plan before the Commission discusses going to 4 regions. He says the instructions are clear in the minutes that the plan will be structured around 3 regions and he is not aware of any deviation from that plan as he was not contacted about any change from that plan.

Rick Oates answered he worked very hard with the Regional Foresters to come up with a plan for 3 regions, but a 4 region plan worked much better. He stated he evidently misinterpreted the minutes to mean he should move forward with the development of a reorganization plan, and it was not held to 3 regions, but to develop what would work best for the agency.

Robert Turner stated that at the previous meeting he asked Rick Oates if he was comfortable with 3 regions. He stated he also said if we need more, then we need to do that.

Steve May asked if it was in the minutes that he said that. Mr. Turner answered he did not know.

Steve May said this addresses another issue, that the minutes don't reflect that, so it is not an honest representation of what was said.

Katrenia Kier stated she believes the discussion at the last meeting gave Rick Oates the latitude to work up and present what he believed would be the best plan for the agency.

Steve May stated he did not have a problem with that, he is only stating there is no record of it.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer asked Steve May if he believed there should be a motion to change the minutes to reflect such. Ms. Katrenia Kier stated that she did not think so.

Steve May stated he did not agree with what Rick Oates has done but he believes we need to move forward with discussion of the 4 region plan since Mr. Oates has presented it to the Commission.

Rick Oates stated he is willing to go back to the drawing board, although to do so would certainly delay the changes.

Steve May stated the minutes are really important to him and this is a good example of it not being done right. He stated none of the side discussion is included in the minutes and if you are on the outside and you read the minutes, you do not understand the whole story.

Katrenia Kier stated she understood Mr. May wanted the minutes to be verbatim and she did not agree it needed to be that way. She continued to say there was a lot of discussion on the reorganization and the Commissioners need to give Rick Oates the opportunity to present his plan to the Commission.

Steve May stated he is not denying Mr. Oates that opportunity, but he wants reflected in the minutes what he said in regards to this situation.

Mr. Turner asked if those minutes can be amended. Rick Oates stated once those minutes are approved, they must stand, although you can add something to the current minutes to address that.

Rick Oates explained the decision to move to 4 regions was reached after much discussion with Regional Foresters, Division Directors, and the Leadership Team. Employee situations were discussed, such as fitting existing employees into regions without uprooting their lives.

Scott Rouse asked the Chairman if he could interject his thoughts on the motion from the previous meeting and the way it is worded in the minutes. Chairman Jerry Dwyer granted him the floor. Scott Rouse stated the minutes read that Mr. Twardy made a motion to continue to develop the initial plan to go the 3 regions with emphasis on developing a sound plan for the Work Units. The motion was to "continue development" of the initial plan to go to 3 regions and he sees continued development led to seeing a need to go to 4 regions.

Steve May said that would be a far stretch and only an attorney would come up with that observation.

Rick Oates referenced the reorganization packet distributed to each Commissioner, with the same number of employees we have currently. He reminded the Commission they had previously discussed having a Staff Forester and a Fire Specialist in each region when the plan was for 3 regions. His recommendation now is to have one of each position in each region, as the Regional Foresters will have a little less to manage with the 4-region plan, allowing one position to be eliminated.

He pointed out the State Office personnel information and said his recommendation is to cut 3 positions and move those into the field. A plan for each region is included that shows where the offices would be located, number of people in each region, number of acres, number of counties. He referenced another chart which shows the number of people in each county, each work unit and each region.

Rick Oates asked the Commissioners for their questions concerning the reorganization plan. Steve May asked him to tell him again what he decided about the Management Specialist and the Fire Specialist for each region. Rick Oates told him again that one or the other would be located in each region.

Steve May stated he looked at some numbers recently and fire protection seems to have become inconsequential, that it is meaningless and it has always occupied a big role in this organization. He stated it is time for that to change. He stated he sees no reason to even think about a Fire Specialist except in maybe 1 region. Mr. Oates stated he did not disagree and the emphasis would be on management, but the agency has to be ready to fight fire.

Rick Oates stated he wants to discuss with Chairman Dwyer and the Regional Foresters possibly placing a Fire Specialist in one of the North regions and a Staff Forester in the other, and the same in the South regions. These positions would be shared between regions.

Steve May asked if the work load was looked at in these regions, as a much heavier work load falls in some regions than in others. Mr. Oates answered they looked at the number of acres per person and pointed out the SW region has more people. Steve May stated arguably you could have both in the SW Region because of the workload, both on management and fire.

Rick Oates told the Commissioners the packet mailed to them contained more detailed information, including names, but because some personnel may be relocated it is his request that the Commissioners keep that confidential at this time.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer asked if the Commissioners had any questions. He stated he and Jane Russell, as Vice-Chair, would like to sit down with Rick and hash out some of the details but the overall structure shown here is sound and time will tell if there is a need to move a county into another region, etc.

Katrenia Kier stated as long as Rick had developed this with input from his other managers, we should give him time to put this plan into action and see how it works. She continued to say it may need to be tweaked, but the State Forester needs the latitude to work this plan and make changes as necessary.

Rick Oates asked North Regional Forester Jason Dockery to speak on his feelings about the reorganization plan. Jason Dockery stated he believes this plan tries to hold Work Units together that have been together, but with retirements and the placements of people, often it didn't hold. So some of the lines have been re-invented, but he believes they will be more functional now than what they had become since the state was broken into Work Units and lost so many people.

Joe Twardy asked Jason Dockery if there are things he does not like about this reorganization plan. Jason Dockery stated it will stretch him a little more, he will go from 12 counties to 20, so he will have a percentage less involvement in each county. But that just puts more responsibility on the Work Unit Managers, which is fine.

Steve May asked how close this plan replicates the previous 4 region plan. Rick Oates stated he had not looked at that. Steve May asked how long the agency had previously operated under the 4 region plan. Chairman Jerry Dwyer estimated 15-20 years. Steve May stated AFC operated on a 4 region plan for many years. Rick Oates stated the key to making this work will be the Work Unit Managers. Joe Twardy asked Jason Dockery if he had the Work Unit Managers to make this plan work. Jason Dockery stated he has 2 open positions but he believes he will have adequate, competent staff to make this work.

Steve May asked Chairman Jerry Dwyer to explain what the 4 regions looked like previously. Chairman Dwyer said it consisted of a Regional Forester, Regional Secretary, initially 2 Assistant Regional Foresters in each region because there were 11 districts, so there were 6 extra people. Some regions had 1 Assistant Regional Forester, but most had 2. The Management Specialist and Fire Specialist were retained in the structure.

Steve May stated there were no Work Unit Managers previously and it worked well for 20 years. Chairman Jerry Dwyer said it worked, but he may not say it worked well.

Joe Twardy asked if the Regional Forester managed all of those people directly. Chairman Dwyer said the County Supervisors were reviewed by the Regional Forester. It was restructured without getting rid of any employees. Rick Oates stated that is the same thing he is trying to do and the Work Unit Managers will be key to making it successful. He stated the Regional Foresters and Work Unit Managers will gather for a meeting immediately and he will instruct them as to what will be expected of them. They will understand a lot more management will take place on the county level, meaning we may have to move everyone into one county for a couple of days to get something done there. But the Work Unit Managers will have a lot of expectations on them to get the work done on a county level.

Joe Twardy asked how many Work Unit Managers will be employed throughout the state. Rick Oates stated 18. Joe Twardy asked if the agency had 18 employees strong enough to handle that position. Rick Oates told him we have 16 now, and there a couple of Foresters ready to move up. Everyone will be told of their expectations and will have a chance to prove themselves.

Joe Twardy stated to Jason Dockery that he will become more of a manager to meet goals, expectations, targets. Robert Turner stated accountability will be key, and Rick Oates said he is requiring accountability of the Work Unit Managers and until this is operational it is impossible to know, but his accountability of his people will show how this is working.

Katrenia Kier stated we have a new Commission, a new State Forester. She said she thinks he has done an outstanding job bringing the agency out of a crisis situation, he has an entirely different leadership and management style. She stated this is entirely different situation from when current Commissioners were employees of the agency and this is the time to make significant changes. She said she feels Rick Oates needs to unleash his strategy, not anybody else's. He needs to build his team to be what it needs to be. He needs the opportunity to put consistent procedures in place with each Work Unit Manager and they should all have the same job description. Build a strong top level first so they can carry that out to every employee they supervise. She stated she thinks Rick Oates needs to be given the latitude to train these employees and bring a different kind of thinking. She said she thinks the AFC needs to be shaken up. If this is the organization that Rick Oates seeks, then he needs to get his team online and be given the opportunity to fulfill his vision.

Steve May stated but at the same time Rick Oates should not be offended if they ask him hard questions. He stated it is important that Rick succeed. Mr. Oates said he appreciated the counsel and guidance and he expects hard questions.

MOTION #2017-24 – Chairman Jerry Dwyer made a motion to accept the framework Rick Oates had put together and allow him to move forward. Steve May seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer recognized newest Commissioner Dr. Bill Sudduth and asked him to introduce himself. Dr. Sudduth stated he is an Orthopedic Surgeon, said his father passed down to him an interest in forestry. He stated he looks forward to serving.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer adjourned 30 minutes for lunch at 11:45 a.m.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer reconvened the meeting at 12:18 p.m.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer asked Rick Oates to address the next agenda item: Personnel.

PERSONNEL – Rick Oates discussed the Assistant State Forester position. He stated the Commission hires that position. Steve May stated the announcement is in error. Rick Oates stated this is a copy of the announcement that had been previously used. Steve May said it was in error then as well. Chairman Jerry Dwyer pointed out the announcement says the Assistant State Forester works at the pleasure of the State Forester; and that is incorrect. Steve May then stated the Assistant State Forester is not required by law to be a registered forester as this announcement says, and asks if it is too late to redo this. Rick Oates told him it has not been disseminated. Steve May said they need to get those errors cleaned up. Rick Oates told him they will be corrected, and asked Chairman Dwyer how the Commission would like to handle filling this position. Chairman Dwyer stated that Rick Oates needs to build a team to help him move forward and the Commission's role is to support him in that effort. He suggested that Rick Oates conduct the interviews and then bring his candidates to the Commission to perhaps make a 15 to 20 minute presentation. He feels that a Selection Committee is not necessary as this person should be someone Rick Oates is comfortable working with.

Steve May agreed that Rick Oates should make the decision, subject to review by the Commissioners.

MOTION #2017-25 – Steve May made a motion to give Rick Oates authority to move forward with the Assistant State Forester selection, subject to a review of the person by the Commission. Robert Turner seconded the motion.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer asked for discussion and Joe Twardy asked if the motion means an individual or a couple of candidates. Chairman Jerry Dwyer stated that would be up to Rick Oates. Scott Rouse stated the statute is plain that the Commission has the appointment authority. He stated to Steve May he understood his motion to be that the Commission is asking Rick Oates to bring to them a recommendation. Steve May answered yes. Rick Oates stated he thinks this position should be filled from within the agency, bringing their experience and knowledge to the table. He said he would begin looking within and go from there. He asked the Commission for their feelings. Chairman Jerry Dwyer encouraged him to look inside and outside the agency. Steve May stated it does not hurt to bring new blood into an organization that is as inbred as this one. Bill Sudduth asked what pool is within the organization at this time that qualifies for this job description. Rick Oates and Brandy Sponsler answered the Work Unit Managers and up. Steve May stated on paper there may be many people within the organization who qualify but performance-wise may be different.

MOTION #2017-25 – Chairman Jerry Dwyer called for a vote on the motion. The vote passed unanimously.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer informed Rick Oates a special meeting can be called for this and Rick Oates informed him that waiting until the January meeting should be fine.

Rick Oates moved to the next agenda item: Forest Management Division Director position. Applications were due on Monday. Seventeen were received with a lot of good candidates. He stated he hopes to get the register and put together a committee of two Regional Foresters and two Division Directors, along with himself to sort through those applications. He plans to do an extensive interview process. He intends to give them some questions ahead of time and ask them to come in and make a presentation on those questions and issues. He may videotape this as this position may have some media interaction.

Steve May asked Rick Oates if anyone inside the organization applied. Brandy Sponsler answered that 5 from inside applied and 13 from outside the agency.

Steve May stated this is a good chance to bring in a strong Forestry Management person from outside, get some fresh blood in the organization. He stated when reading the minimum qualifications he wonders what will happen if an applicant has all his credits in fire management, and he wonders how that got in there.

Brandy Sponsler explained to Steve May this application is written by State Personnel. Forestry Management Division Director and Forestry Protection Division Director are the same classification. Katrenia Kier asked if we are allowed to tweak the job description. Brandy Sponsler explained we cannot, as it is a merit position set by State Personnel. Steve May stated Rick Oates and Brandy Sponsler should know how to handle it. Chairman Jerry Dwyer asked if the agency is the subject matter expert on the position and Brandy Sponsler explained this is a continuous announcement already out and the only way it can be redone is to close the classification. But State Personnel has Admin in the same classification. State Personnel announces the classification as a whole, then the agency is allowed to select based on the individual position.

Scott Rouse explained these are the minimum qualifications for the position but that does not restrict the agency from looking at the particular job and the particular applicant.

Rick Oates stated he hopes to have this filled in November. Chairman Jerry Dwyer publicly thanked Ray Metzler for filling in. Rick Oates introduced him and thanked him as well.

Rick Oates discussed other vacant positions and stated he wanted to get the agency back up to approximately 233 employees. With the Commission's approval from the last meeting, he intends to start filling positions due to retirements, resignations, etc., as there are some positions that need to be filled quickly.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer added the caveat that vacancies need to be moved where they are most needed. Rick Oates stated he understood this and agreed.

Joe Twardy asked how many employees are in the budget presented and approved. Rick Oates answered that budget included 233 employees.

Steve May said it occurred to him that the commute distance using state vehicles needs to be looked at.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS / SCORECARDS – Chairman Jerry Dwyer moved to the agenda item: Score Card and Goals.

Rick Oates referred to the documents in the distributed packet. He asked the group to refer to the Score Card goals. He stated the Regional Foresters started this information gathering and he added to it. They first looked at the goals that may not be necessary to list as goals. One goal is that all employees attend a monthly safety meeting. He said that will happen and he decided to remove that as an accomplishment. The number of lost time accidents is hopefully zero. Wild fire acres don't have a goal number, other than zero.

Steve May asked how you know if an employee missed a safety meeting. Rick Oates stated he did not know how that was done in the past. Steve May stated you have to apply numbers, and the same thing applies with the lost time accidents and it might not be a bad idea to put these items back in the accomplishments. Chairman Dwyer stated that Rick Oates needs to have a way to know if this was accomplished. Steve May stated if it is not in there you don't have a way to check it. He asked Jason Dockery why that was pulled out. Jason Dockery stated from his standpoint those numbers look artificially inflated because no county plans only one a month. Plus, every prescribed burn meeting that takes place includes a safety meeting, so there are many opportunities to do that. He said he thinks it looks odd if you have 48 listed at the end of the year. Steve May stated then your next year goal is 50, as that is the whole purpose in your score card.

Jason Dockery stated for instance he holds a Regional Meeting, how do you count that? Is that one or one for each county that has someone there? If everybody goes back to their county and puts that in the score card, it becomes many more. If 4 counties come together to do a prescribed burn and they all go back and enter it as a safety meeting, it looks like there were 4 safety meetings, not one.

Rick Oates stated he would rather handle this outside of the accomplishments with the Regional Foresters and Work Unit Managers sending him a monthly report of everyone that attended a safety meeting.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer stated it should be part of each employee's evaluation process. It would be graded there, relying on the Work Unit Managers and Supervisors to do so. Rick Oates stated he will have the Work Unit Managers take attendance and send him a report.

Jason Dockery stated there is a monthly AFC Safety Report covering number of safety meetings and number of lost time accidents, so you have already got it covered somewhere else besides in the accomplishments.

Steve May asked Rick Oates to go over the other items and tell him why they should come out of the accomplishments. Jason Dockery stated it is hard to set a goal for cost share; we do every one that comes to us. And you may not get cost share in every county every year. Rick Oates stated he wanted to evaluate this. He said he has spoken to Ryan Peek about this and wants to discuss it further.

Rick Oates stated he did not see where we need to do the acres of tree planting, he is not sure why that is in there. The VFD 40-hour Basic Firefighting Training should be on a county level, may be Work Unit or a Regional goal. And how do you come up with a goal for how many wildfires you want. And the same with lost time accidents: the goal is zero.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer asked Joe Twardy how lost time accidents are tracked in industry. Mr. Twardy stated it is tracked and he believes it should be zero, and his worry about the safety meeting is that doesn't like the word attend, he would rather have it read participate as he expects the employee to have an active part. Rick Oates said he needed to look into that. Jason Dockery said it varies, it may be a presentation meeting or an active training.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer stated to Rick Oates it is important the he understands and stresses to the Regional Foresters that the scorecard is what the Commission expects him (Oates) to get done. How it is divided up is his prerogative and it is understood there is a lot more that goes on than what this scorecard shows and that has to be reflected somewhere.

Bill Sudduth asked if the federal grants are tied to the scorecard. It was answered parts of this are included in the grant process but it is not shown to apply for the grants. Steve May told him that it trickles down to the field and what they do not do affects the State Forester in the end. Chairman Jerry Dwyer explained that the employees need to understand the scorecard is a focus area but there are still other things that must be done and accomplished.

Rick Oates asked if the Commissioners want the safety numbers on the scorecard. Steve May told him there might have to be adjustments but he thinks there needs to be something there. Chairman Jerry Dwyer said just like the number of wildfires cannot be projected, the more relevant number is prescribed burning, example being how many landowners did we reach out to impact getting that number of acres, as opposed to the actual number of acres. We might also need a number of landowners we contacted to tell us how we reached that number of acres.

Rick Oates stated prescribed burning totaled 499 landowners. Chairman Jerry Dwyer stated that number is as relevant to him as the total number or acres. And it is important we know that new landowners are involved too.

Rick Oates stated we can walk through each of these numbers, it is divided up by Work Unit and by county, and we pulled the average for the last three years, and included an annual goal for each of the items. There are 517 Treasure Forest recertifications scheduled for this year, and he is not sure if that is possible. He will speak to Allen Varner about that. Steve May asked how the number went from 32 to 517. Chairman Jerry Dwyer explained that is due to changing from a 5-year cycle to a 10-year cycle, so there is a 5-year gap and recertifications may involve a whole new plan. Rick Oates answered that Allen Varner gave him these numbers and it does not look reasonable but there may be an explanation.

Steve May stated it looks peculiar, the 3 year average is 7 but you're asking them to do 148. Rick Oates stated he will get with Allen Varner about that. Joe Twardy stated these numbers reflect what Allen Varner is aware needs to be recertified. Rick Oates stated these may be what needs to be certified but doing it is not reasonable and he will adjust that number. Joe Twardy asked if you can go outside and get some industry help. Jason Dockery answered a lot of the problem is getting with that landowner, it takes a lot of effort there and this drives their other work because you may have another landowner adjacent, or land has changed ownership and you write another plan.

Rick Oates stated he thinks there are about 2000 landowners in the database. A lot of those have changed hands and about a 1/3 of those addresses are invalid. He wants to focus on that database, get it updated and try to get one Treasure Forest per county. This will also get landowners interested. Katrenia Kier asked if we are contacting landowners that are not Treasure Forests for potential new Treasure Forests, and do we have a database for that. Rick Oates answered we have a database under Stewardship, which is kind of a step below and the goal is to eventually move them into Treasure Forests.

Steve May asked if these goals will be assigned to individuals in counties, down the line, and how do you account for the State Office? He said there have been no goals, and there is nothing here for State Office personnel. Rick Oates said he has not figured that out yet.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer stated part of the accountability is that it is the Fire Divisions' responsibility to make sure all this stuff under Forest Protection gets done. And Management Division's Director

responsibility to ensure tasks are done and Education, whomever you have over that area is responsible to make sure it is handled to the level you feel is adequate and satisfies the Commissioners.

Steve May stated everybody has got to have some level of performance you expect them to meet, every single employee. And those people who answer directly to the State Forester, Rick Oates should be able to write them a good plan and expect them to do that. Rick Oates answered he will do so.

Steve May stated some of that will affect how the Commissioners will grade Rick Oates and asked him how he will go about creating that sort of a set-up in the administrative division with all the personnel he has and how many different jobs they do. Steve May stated that some punch numbers, some do purchase orders, and asked how Rick Oates go about creating a score sheet like that.

Arthur Hitt answered that is already set-up and they are doing their particular job. Steve May asked how we go about measuring performance of State Office people and individual people in your division. Arthur Hitt answered by their performance goals. Steve May asked if those goals were ever stretched or how are those goals set. Arthur Hitt added those goals are stretched quite a bit.

Steve May answered that he is not getting a hard number as an answer. Arthur Hitt answered that you are not going to get a hard number because we are one or two people short now in the accounting section.

Steve May said if you had a full staff how do you go about it, that he needs a measurable accomplishment in each division. Chairman Jerry Dwyer stated that has always been a difficult task as you cannot measure how many phone calls a secretary answers during a day.

Steve May asked how you go about deciding somebody meets standards, somebody exceeds standards, how do you go about making that decision.

Katrenia Kier answered there should be some job performance appraisals for the administrative staff. Typically, that is up to the Supervisor or Manager or higher up to say this function in accounting, Rick wants to see Becky accomplish these particular goals because it is set for her specific job. There has to be an instrument in place, if there is not, there should be. We are counting all the seeds, but should we be micro-managing all the seeds? She stated she thinks the scorecard is good. A Work Unit Manager should be able to look over and see some of this stuff is not relevant, then they need to make a different scorecard. And the State office needs to be measured by what comes out of Rick's leadership and insist he has those tools in place to evaluate those kinds of jobs.

Arthur Hitt stated the jobs in the state office are more defined than they are in the field.

Steve May stated it is easy for Regional Foresters to set what we are talking about. He asked Arthur Hitt how he can know when somebody exceeds performance or is just performing, what tool does he use. Chairman Jerry Dwyer offered Accounting deadlines as an example of things that must meet deadlines, and there are implications if the employees don't do this. The supervisors measure the staff to be sure they are meeting these deadlines.

Steve May asked Chairman Jerry Dwyer if he recalled the specific numbers required by previous State Forester Linda Casey. Chairman Jerry Dwyer answered she generally had broad statements, such as the accounting division would function properly, and the Division Director would ensure that.

Steve May stated he wanted to see how these numbers fit and how it affected Rick Oates, as he (Oates) has the State Office and the people in the Executive Division to grade fairly. Chairman Jerry Dwyer stated he understood.

Rick Oates stated he will work with Brandy Sponsler to make sure all people are graded fairly.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer asked why Urban Technical Assistance is so low. Rick Oates answered that he will take another look at those numbers. Ray Metzler stated the vast majority of the technical assists come from the field staff. Steve May asked him if the field is doing less of that, as reflected by these numbers. Ray Metzler stated that is correct, the statewide people do as much as they can, but the goals presented in this paperwork are at the Regional level.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer pointed out Fire Prevention presentations decreased and Fire Management presentations increased. He asked for explanation. Rick Oates stated he questions the numbers that came out of Phoenix, as they do not make sense.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer asked if there were any more questions. Rick Oates reiterated the Regional Foresters had not seen these numbers until today and he needs feedback from them.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer stated everyone needs to remember goals are only tracked at the county level, where things are accomplished and client needs are met.

Katrenia Kier stated it seems to her that the Commissioners are still micro-managing the State Forester. She stated the Commissioners need to allow him the opportunity to work out the details.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer stated the first attempt at the numbers was weak. Katrenia Kier asked him to explain. Chairman Jerry Dwyer stated numbers across the state cannot be the same for all counties. We have to make sure the landowners have services in all counties and the scorecard gives us the ability to do so and the scorecard gives the Commissioners the ability to see these things are getting done. The Commissioners need to come up with more broad things they are going to hold Rick Oates accountable for outside of this scorecard.

Steve May asked for the thought process in shutting down offices in some of the counties. He stated he has a real problem with having nobody in a county. Rick Oates answered he does not feel a county should have only one person working, he does not feel that is productive or safe. People in a Work Unit will function to serve a county. The goal is to have at least two people in each county.

Steve May stated they want to be sure a county is not overlooked, particularly on the political side of things. Rick Oates stated he took that into account, some of the counties have had no personnel for quite a while. Steve May stated we have to be sure we don't leave out any counties.

Joe Twardy stated that is where the Work Unit Manager will come in. Rick Oates agreed the Work Unit Managers are critical to make this work.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer stated the Commissioners need to discuss a broader view of what the State Forester should be doing. He referenced long term goals that Rick Oates brought to them in May. Joe Twardy stated goals and objectives are general, the job is an executive managing position and if he can

accomplish these goals that would be remarkable. Chairman Jerry Dwyer agreed. Mr. Robert Turner stated that Rick's plate is full.

Katrenia Kier stated the Commissioners owe the State Forester a responsibility to do a performance scale at the top executive level. The Commissioners have to agree on the direction we want him to move. For instance, when he came in we were in a budget crisis. He tackled that. We need to have some organized criteria on which we are rating the executive director.

Steve May stated a measurable scale is needed. Katrenia Kier stated we need to know the plan to accomplish these goals and we can rate it, so we keep some kind of running scale on him. She stated she did not see any kind of workforce development. There is no common message and no way to deliver it. Even his training of Work Unit Managers, how does he plan to pull that together? To change the culture you have to add workforce development. That is a big piece that has been missing from the AFC for a number of years. We have to give him a measurable tool, so that the Commissioners see some movement in the right direction.

Steve May asked how we do that without the usual, Meets Standards, Exceeds Standards, is there another way of doing that. Chairman Jerry Dwyer answered the Commissioners can set up their own metrics for measurement for the State Forester.

Katrenia Kier said we need to make sure he understands what we are asking him to do, so we can fairly evaluate this position and the Assistant State Forester's position. That is what has been missing. We have the scorecards for everybody below.

Steve May stated the Commission has talked for a very long time about creating one for that position but it has never been done.

Katrenia Kier stated the tools exists to evaluate an Executive Director, the Commissioners need to pick one and fit these tasks within that tool. The Commission has not talked about the Strategic Plan as long as she has been here.

Steve May stated we need a new Strategic Plan. Katrenia Kier offered kudos to Rick Oates for his leadership and the moves in the right direction.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer asked Katrenia Kier to present in January an annual performance appraisal process for Rick Oates.

Katrenia Kier stated he has told us what his thoughts are for the AFC, we just have to agree that we like this or we want to add to it. Steve May stated we have got to have some way to measure him.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer asked Katrenia Kier to pull that together.

Scott Rouse added as you have probably seen in the news lately, the Superintendent of Education resigned and what was driving that was his evaluation process by the board. He stated as he understood it there was a list of his primary duties and each member of the board rated him on a scale of 1 to 3 and it doesn't need to be overly complicated, just a subjective feedback on key areas.

Steve May asked Scott Rouse what he would recommend the Commissioners do in regard to his (Rouse's) appraisal. Scott Rouse answered that his evaluation is done by the State Forester.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer stated that next year Rick Oates should be a lot better at the budget process, doing the accomplishment process, etc. He came in midstream with other issues to work out. He recommended bringing an appraisal process to the Commissioners in January to be voted on to be put in place at that point. Rick Oates noted that he would like to see it before January so he would be prepared to answer any questions the Commissioners may have. Katrenia Kier stated that is why she is trying to get the Commissioners in agreement now.

Scott Rouse stated the process needs to be discussed to make sure it is done correctly. Katrenia Kier asked if it needs to be done in Executive Session and Scott Rouse answered he did not believe that is necessary. Scott Rouse asked if Katrenia Kier will work with him on developing that process so it can be shared with individuals to make it work and stated Brandy Sponsler needs to be included.

Steve May stated one thing that is missing is Employment Development, and that needs to be added. Rick Oates stated he has stressed that in his Regional meetings.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer thanks Katrenia Kier for volunteering to spearhead this project.

FOREST MANAGEMENT AWARD – Chairman Jerry Dwyer recognized Ray Metzler, who presented to the Commissioners the idea of having an annual award given to an employee in honor of Walter Cartwright, recently deceased Forestry Manager Division Director. Rick Oates has spoken with Walter's widow and she has given approval for his name to be associated with the award. He stressed recognition of employees is important for morale. Criteria for the award has not been discussed at the time. He stated a nomination process and a selection committee need to be established. Joe Twardy asked if this would be limited to Management Division or open to the entire AFC. Ray Metzler stated they wanted the award to focus on Management, but open to all employees and not be limited to Foresters.

Katrenia Kier stated this should be a part of the Workforce Development plan, incentives. Chairman Jerry Dwyer stated he feels it should be limited to Forest Management. Rick Oates stated the Management Division will continue to work on this.

LEGACY GRANTS – Chairman Jerry Dwyer stated the next agenda item, Legacy Grants, will be tabled until the next meeting, as Allen Varner was not able to attend today.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE – Chairman Jerry Dwyer asked Scott Rouse to present the Legislative Update. Scott Rouse referred to documents that were handed out. Chairman Jerry Dwyer said the Employee Leave and Outside Employment discussion will be tabled until the next meeting. Steve May asked if this can be done as a promulgated rule. Scott Rouse told him it could not because it is already addressed in the statute. Steve May says then a promulgated rule will change the statute to suit the Forestry Commission, and Scott Rouse told him that is incorrect. The statute will continue to apply to all state employees. Scott Rouse said there have been some discussions and there may be some resistance.

Joe Twardy asked why this is necessary, and if state employees are ignoring the statute. Scott Rouse says he thinks the statute has been ignored for a long time. Joe Twardy stated he would like to hear some debate on this. Scott Rouse said he has done some research and no one has been able to tell him why the statute is this way.

Steve May stated it is immaterial what the Commission thinks if other state agencies do not agree. Scott Rouse stated the statute basically allows employees to use approved leave for a second job. He thinks if an agency has an objection, they simply do not approve the leave and they maintain a level of control. If AFC has someone with comp time on the books and he/she wants to use that time to earn extra income, it is their time, so why not let them use it. He stated more work will be required on this before it is ready to introduce.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer stated the dilemma is this statute will impact every state agency. Steve May stated if you give a little leeway, a lot of people will take advantage of it. He asked if there is any way to write an act that will exclude all agencies except Forestry. Rick Oates stated he planned to talk to State Personnel about this.

Steve May stated he would like to see this act promulgate a rule, that way we could change it if it didn't work out. Scott Rouse stated since this a statute that applies to everybody, we would have to have our own statute that would not even reference this statute since it would be a later Legislative act. But we need something that gives us that specific authority, it could be presented in terms of a regulation, if you want to do it that way.

Steve May stated if it is in the code, it is the law, and he would rather do something that can be easily removed if we feel like we are being taken advantage of.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer asked that we move on to the next agenda item.

Scott Rouse moved on to discuss the Emergency Fire Fund. The Legislature will continue to add \$180,000 to it each year, and it is capped at \$1,000,000. When there is a heavy fire season we request permission from the Governor to use this money. He stated that statute has not been changed in many years, and \$1,000,000 in today's money doesn't last long in a major fire season. He stated Rick Oates has discussed this issue with Governor Ivey, and he feels our proposal concerning an increase has broad support. We will propose the cap be increased to \$2,000,000 and the annual appropriation from the legislature be increased to \$300,000. Chairman Jerry Dwyer stated we will probably ask the annual appropriation be increased to \$250,000. Scott Rouse explained that there is a major fire season every 6 or 7 years. If you do the math, you will hit the cap of \$2,000,000 every 6 or 7 years, so the funds are constantly replenishing. He stated no matter the amount we request to increase, it is necessary that we put in more on an annual basis.

Scott Rouse also added that we will be asking for a one-time infusion of \$100,000 to replenish the fund, as it currently has a low balance. The legislative appropriation will come to us on October 1, and at this time we are in the range of \$250,000. Both Rick Oates and Scott Rouse assured the Commissioners there is widespread support for this. Rick Oates reminded the Commissioners this money is earmarked for Emergency Fire use, and recent fires have increased awareness of the need to be prepared.

Scott Rouse asked the Commissioners for their general approval to move forward, explaining details may change as the process moves along. In general, we are asking to expand the cap, the annual allocation, and for a one-time infusion of funds. Chairman Jerry Dwyer stated the Commission asks Scott to continue his efforts.

Scott Rouse brought up Enforcement of Regulations on State Forests as we have some promulgated regulations that have the rules for those state forests, much like the rules for state parks. The problem is we no longer have the means to enforce those regulations. All the statutes place the authority with Law Enforcement Officers, which we no longer have. An issue arose at Geneva State Forest and we didn't have the mechanism to put any teeth into our own regulations. He stated he researched and used language from existing statutes used by other agencies, adapted them to AFC, and would make violations of regulations on State Forests a misdemeanor and would empower our State Forester and whomever he designates to issue citations for violations of rules. There are fines that would go into AFC funds.

Joe Twardy asked if all this was in place before, but we lost the authority with the ALEA merger, and Scott Rouse told him that was correct, although our statute was a little different because we had Law Enforcement Officers within our agency.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer stated per the current statute we still have the authority to have officers. Steve May stated we have such a hard time getting timber or equipment thefts investigated. He asked if there is ever any thought about hiring law enforcement around the state. Chairman Jerry Dwyer answered that we would probably have challenges to doing that. Steve May stated we need at least one in every region.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer stated he had doubts ALEA was going to serve our Commission and the landowners when the merger took place. Scott Rouse answered he has looked at ALEA's statute and it basically took our resources for law enforcement and moved it into their agency. Our statute to allow us that authority is still there but all the means we had for doing it got channeled to another agency. He stated he thinks ALEA's response to that would be very negative. Rick Oates stated he thought that statutory authority would be taken away pretty quickly.

Joe Twardy asked if a band aid effect is needed for the field people to know how to contact the right authorities when needed. Chairman Jerry Dwyer answered the real shortcoming is that the things AFC needs to have investigated are not glamorous and are low on their priority list. He stated the Communications Center tracks calls we forward to ALEA and follows up on them.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer thanked Scott Rouse for the information and asked Rick Oates to address the next agenda item.

STATE LANDS / PARKS UPDATES – Rick Oates stated the company we were talking to about managing Little River has backed out but he has talked with the Escambia County Commission and they want to move forward with opening back up. They promised to pay the salary of one person to be there at the park; they offered to help us get together a grounds crew to mow. They also took someone out to look at the bridge that needs to be fixed over to the RV Site. They are also going to meet with someone from Monroe County Commission to see what kind of interest they may have in helping.

Rick Oates stated we have moved Mark Miller to Monroe County and Gary Cole is working hard in the area to get things going as he feels the people that gave us the property will want to take it back if we do not do something with it.

Rick Oates stated for now he is thinking only day use of the park, and open Wednesday through Sunday as inmate labor could be used for grounds maintenance on Monday and Tuesday.

Katrenia Kier asked if the bridge repair will allow for revenue sharing. Rick Oates answered we would keep the revenue. Rick Oates stated there is a lot of clamoring in the area to get the park back open. He hopes to get Escambia County to finance one person, Monroe County to finance half the salary for a person and we could put in the other half. Mark Miller will oversee them, we can probably open it at a very minimal cost. The plan would be to open the park for six to nine months and generate some data to see if RRM is interested in coming back.

Scott Rouse stated they were looking at making a capital investment but had no usable data to predict the market. Rick Oates stated he is interested in getting the park to a point where someone would be interested in running it.

Steve May stated we could do a hunting lease and get a lot of money out of it. Katrenia Kier asked about partnering with Conservation and was told by Jerry Dwyer they backed out of it. Rick Oates stated his goal is to interest someone in managing the park. Katrenia Kier asked if that would satisfy the owner and Rick Oates told her he thought it would. He said he called the editor of the Monroe Journal and they ran a good article about the AFC and the steps we are taking to reopen the park.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer referred to Steve May's comment about leasing the property for hunting. Rick Oates answered the park area is separate from the forest land so it may be possible to do both. Steve May stated you could get a minimum of \$10 an acre. Rick Oates stated he would look into that but we will have to make sure that meets the requirements of the deed.

Steve May asked Scott Rouse to enlighten him on the deed. Scott Rouse answered it is a series of deeds for the entire State Forest area but the stipulation is it should remain as a State Forest or a State Park.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer asked if it is still subject to water quality specifications. Scott Rouse said he thinks we have continued to do that to maintain the permit. ADEM does the monitoring.

Rick Oates brought up Flagg Mountain and said Regional Forester Bruce Springer has taken the lead with that, he has meetings set up with local groups about what we can do with the property.

UPDATE ON NEW DISPATCH CENTER – Chairman Jerry Dwyer asked Rick Oates to give an update on the new dispatch center.

Rick Oates stated at the last meeting it was discussed to move one dispatch center to Gardendale. AFC has bought a lot of equipment and software and the plan is to open it in early January.

Steve May asked if the tower had been removed and Rick Oates answered no, the tower is still here. Chairman Jerry Dwyer asked why it is going to take that long. Rick Oates answered the personnel issues are taking time.

Steve May asked if it was to be a stand-alone unit. Rick Oates answered yes, and will operate 7 to 5 or maybe 7 to 6, 5 days a week, and everything will be diverted back to Montgomery for nighttime and weekends.

Rick Oates stated the Emergency Management System is building a new 911 Center in Loxley and they have offered us space for dispatch there. It will be next summer before that is operational so that may be something to look at.

Steve May stated it would be to our advantage to put another stand-alone system at Loxley because you would have electricity all the time as it is designed for the storms.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer asked if there may be an opportunity to contract with them to provide the service out of that facility as opposed to having an employee. Rick Oates answered there may be.

Katrenia Kier asked if that would be an additional dispatch and she was told there would be three, one in Montgomery, one in Gardendale and the one in the south.

Rick Oates passed out fire numbers for May 1, 2016 and May 1, 2017, showing there is a significant difference.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer asked Robert Turner and Steve May to be on the nominating committee for Chair and Vice-Chair of the Commission next year.

Joe Twardy stated he attended the Macon County Volunteer Fire Department grant check presentation and said he got the feeling counties in need of equipment and resources should be prioritized. He said he understood there have been some miscommunications about equipment.

Steve May stated a good example of that is Wilcox County. Chairman Jerry Dwyer recommended to Joe Twardy that he speak to Greg Wood about the process in place. Scott Rouse said that we do not know if some of the applications were properly submitted and received.

Joe Twardy stated he believes those counties with the most need should be prioritized. Steve May stated the State Association will have to agree with that.

Joe Twardy stated he is not speaking of grant money, but equipment, services, whatever we can do to help them. Rick Oates stated he will ask Greg Wood to come to the next meeting.

Chairman Jerry Dwyer stated if Rick Oates is able to accelerate the process of hiring an Assistant State Forester a special meeting will be called.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING – The next meeting is scheduled for January 11, 2018 at the State Headquarters in Montgomery.

ADJOURNMENT – Meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.