POA Governmental Affairs Committee
2014-2015 Annual Review

Committee Composition
Jerry Yeric, Chair; Gerald Allen, Vice Chair; Lu Otto, Jim Harlow, Paul Pool, Dick Schmidt, Cindy Calhoun, Curt Malone and Michael Dollar, Joan Sible and Katherine Winslow.

Ad Hoc Members
George Bollier, Water
John Lands, Schools
Bob Shoemaker, Local and State officials
Dick Breckon—Tri-Lakes MPO
Paul Day—Benton Chamber of Commerce and Representative Lanny Fite

Justices of the Peace attending
Garland County, J.P. Larry Griffin
Saline County, J.P. Jim Zahnd

As has historically been the case, the Committee organized in a manner that gave each member a primary area of responsibility. This year’s assignments were:

Garland County
Garland County Quorum Court—Jerry Yeric
Hot Springs City Council and City Officials—Cindy Calhoun
Garland County Metro Planning Agency (Tri-Lakes Metro Planning Agency)—Dick Breckon (Policy) and Paul Pool (Technical)

Saline County
Saline County Quorum Court & County Officials—Curt Malone
Bryant & Benton Chamber of Commerce and Rep. Lanny Fite—Paul Day
Saline County Economic Development—Jim Harlow

General Assignments
Highway Transportation—Paul Pool
Legislative Monitoring and the 4th Congressional District Liaison—Jerry Yeric
Legislative Luncheon Coordinator and Special Events—Bob Shoemaker and Cindy Calhoun
Retirement/Relocation—Dick Breckon, Jim Harlow, Katherine Winslow and Michael Dollar
White Papers—Richard Schmidt, Jerry Yeric, Paul Pool, and George Bolliger
Demographics—Lu Otto, Michael Dollar
Candidate Forum—Dick Brecken, Bob Shoemaker and Joan Sible
The Committee's Focus

At the April, 2014 meeting Jerry Yeric was re-elected chair, Gerald Allen, re-elected as vice-chair, and Richard Schmidt as secretary. The chair reiterated the purpose of the Committee is: "To advise and assist the POA Board in enhancing the Village's relationship with area, local, state and federal agencies, elected officials, and abutting school districts." More specifically, Chair Yeric set the following responsibilities as the "focus" of the Committee's work:

- Assisting the Village in keeping abreast of developments in the public sector that could impact HSV.
- Assisting in transmitting the POA's positions on issues to public officials and governmental agencies.
- Seeking and recommending talent who would be willing to serve on strategic local and state boards and commissions.
- Sponsoring functions for local, state and federal officials.
- To develop better demographics of the Village.
- Establish a sub-committee on Utilities. This committee would focus on two areas of Village needs: Internet, and electric power.
- Develop new white papers for the 2015 Legislative Session.
- Up-date the 2010 Economic Impact Study.

Committee’s Achievements

1. Retirement/Relocation. This past year has been the most productive year we have had in this area. We have consistently met with our elected officials and heads of state departments (particularly Parks &Tourism) to move toward a greater state presence in this area. After discussions with Parks & Tourism the state committed to a new web page on Retirement/Relocation, and a statewide symposium on Retirement/Relocation was held October 7th at UALR. Through the efforts of Jim Harlow and Katherine Winslow we were able to pursue many of the areas related to these issues on a statewide basis. We continue to pursue state funding for this area. PowerPoint presentations were given to our newly elected state representatives, Governor Asa Hutchinson (through Steve Lux of his transition team), and Lt. Governor Tim Griffin. Arkansas is behind our neighboring states in pursuit of this important economic catalyst. The development of various incentives in the tax policy, and other areas need to be explored and have been presented to state officials. Currently the issue is being presented to the Governor and his staff.

2. Garland County Highways. There are two areas addressed in the 2015-2016 White Papers pertaining to Garland County. The first is the construction of a by-pass from SH 5 and SH 7 to I270. After an initial allocation of some federal funds the by-pass received less attention by the policy-makers in Hot Springs and Garland County. However, this past year there has been a renewed interest in this project. Currently, the Hot Springs Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (Tri-Lakes), and the Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce has this ranked as their number one priority on their list of highway projects. The proposed road is a limited access that would run along the previous planned corridor and several major hurdles have already been passed. It has met the environmental impact study criteria, and there is support from the National Park Services. We will need to keep monitoring this development. The Highway Department has agreed to include it on its next STIP recommendations. The city and county are working a method for their funding contribution to the project. A second area is the improvement to SH7 and SH5 in Garland County. The Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) has allocated money toward
improvements from the SH7 & SH5 junction to Gulpa Gorge. This project is in its first of three stages. It does not detract from the by-pass.

3. Saline County Highways. The AHTD has completed its study on the SH 5 project. Based on the traffic analysis there appears to be two areas of immediate concern. The first is from the Benton City limits to Kenwood Road (1.84 miles). "The traffic volumes and crash rates...justify widening and improving the horizontal curve at Salt Road...." The second is Highway 298 to the Benton City Limits. The traffic volumes and crash rates between Highway 298 and the Benton City limits justify resurfacing the existing pavement, adding shoulders and improving the horizontal curves at Log Miles 16.42 and 16.94." While any improvement is welcomed, these do not address the areas closest to HSV. "Because of the low traffic volumes and crash rates, constructing passing lanes or widening to four lanes is not warranted at this time. However, pavement texturing, resurfacing the existing pavement and adding shoulders, and/or improving the geometrics have been approved. There is a meeting set with the Highway Department to address curves in the existing road. County Judge Jeff Areys, JP Jim Zahnd, Paul Pool, and David Twiggs have a meeting set to address this and other problems. We need to focus on the safety aspect of SH5. There are separate safety funds that are available for such projects. We learned last week that available demographic data will strengthen our case for safety funds and the GAC has transmitted this information to the AHTD. There are several things that can be done with these monies to improve this end of SH5 and the GAC is pursuing these.

4. Garland and Saline Highway 70. The AHTD held a public meeting on widening of SH 70 from I-30 to SH 128. The project is scheduled to begin this year. Of most concern to HSV is the intersection of SH 128 and SH 70. The present plan has a stop light at this intersection.

5. Support for Local Solutions to Wastewater Management. It is our position that watershed management is best achieved by the shareholders working in alliance for improvements. We believe that there are sufficient environmental controls in place for the Saline River Watershed. The Village is blessed to have a number of highly qualified people in the area of water and many are being used to help develop policy and monitor the water. We need to continue our vigilance in this critical area.

6. Demographics. The GAC last year began the most complete analysis of the demographics and population data of HSV. Under the leadership of Lu Otto and his group we will have the most actuate baseline from which to develop reliable longitudinal trends in the village. These data are not only enormously helpful to the Board, the residents, but also commercial entities. One of the by-products for this investigation is the location and analysis of creditable data sources. One outcome of this investigation has been a renewed estimate of the village population base on a refinement of water meters. We have supplied the Board with our new matrix and it has been accepted. This area has many important aspects and Lu and his group are continually working on refines and updates to our data on the Village.

7. Data Bank—As the committee has continued to use and refine data the committee is in the initial stages of establishing a data bank for its resources. The intent is to: 1. Establish a uniform base of data that is used for the village, 2. Provide frequently used data in an easy and understandable format, 3. Provide an archive for the reports and studies that derived from these data, and finally 4. Provide a section for projects under investigation for ease of access to those working a project.

8. Utilities—A subcommittee under the leadership of Gerald Allen has been exploring the two vital issues to the POA and the area: (1) Entergy Power—we are in the process of collecting and assessing data on the outages and exploring with the company how these can be remedied. (2) Internet—the GAC has sponsored a public forum on the issue for the residents. The comments from residents proved to be very helpful and the subcommittee is now pursuing several avenues for better and more reliable services. Both of these areas will be in the forefront of the committee as we move into the year.
9. Economic Impact Study—The GAC is currently in the initial stages of the planning for an updated Economic Impact Study. Initial conversations have been held with Professor Wayne Miller of the University of Arkansas. We are looking at expanding the study to provide a greater social component to booster the economics.

10. Saline County Economic Development Commission—The Committee has focused a great deal of its time and effort on working with the economic development sectors of each county. In Saline County the Committee has worked closely with the Saline County Economic Development Corporation (SCEDC) and the MetroPlan to insure the Village is an integral part of future planning. This has resulted in HSV being on their Web page.

11. Census Measure. A new formula was developed that provides a better approximation of the population of Hot Springs Village.

**Sponsored Events**

With 2014 an election year, the GAC has had an active year. Beginning with the primaries and through the general election, the committee has been heavily involved in aiding the community.

**Public Forums**

1. Hosted an Internet Forum, October 7, 2014 at the Coronado Community Center.
2. September 11, 2014 Garland County Candidate Forum co-sponsored with the HSV Chamber of Commerce at the Coronado Community Center.
4. September 16, 2014 Saline County Candidate Forum co-sponsored with the HSV Chamber of Commerce, Ouachita Room in the Woodlands.
5. Legislative Luncheon in Little Rock (canceled due to inclement weather)
7. State Census Bureau Luncheon February 10, 2014 with Phyllis Porche, Associate Director of the Institute for Economic Advancement at UALR, Sunny Farmham, Director, and Alison Wiley, Demographics Research on HSV demographics.

**Assisting in transmitting the POA’s positions on issues to public officials and governmental agencies**

- The Committee engaged in continual briefings and question and answer sessions with numerous state and county officials. Most notably were discussions related to our highway transportation issues with Senators Bill Sample, along with Representative Lanny Fite, county judges Jeff Areys and Rick Davis and including discussions with senior staff of the Arkansas Department of Highway Transportation (ADHT). These efforts were led by Paul Pool.
- With the assistance of Representatives Lanny Fite, Mickey Gates, Senators Bill Sample and Alan Clark, the Committee was able to continue its pursuit of a state wide Program on Retirement and Relocation.
- Two bills were presented to help aid in the new state alcohol legislation as it pertains to the Saline County and Hot Springs Village. Representative Julie Marberry’s HB 1375 would allow Saline County to allow Saline Count Quorum Count to ask its residents to vote on an alcohol tax. Senator Bill Sample’s SB215 allows a property owner’s
association of 5,000 or over to authorize the sale of alcoholic beverages for on premise consumption. The senate bill became law and the house bill is the process at this time.

Seeking and recommending talent who would be willing to serve on strategic local and state boards and commissions

The following Village residents served on county boards and commissions during the past year:

- Tom Arwood served on the executive committees of the Hot Springs Metro Partnership and Hot Springs' Fifty for the Future.
- Bob Brandt served on the Saline County Board of Equalization.
- Tom Bryant served on the Garland County Board of Equalization, and was HSV's representative to the Metro Plan.
- Roy Lang served on the Saline County Airport Commission.
- Gerald Allen served on the Hot Springs Water Facility Committee.
- Jim Harlow served on the executive committee of the Saline County Economic Development Commission. Mary Nielsen served as the coordinator of the sister cities program with Hot Springs and Hanamaki, Japan.
- Steve Lux—Governor Asa Hutchinson's Transition Team (Economic Development).

The Governmental Affairs Committee (GAC) operated smoothly with members providing written reports prior to the meetings, thus enabling the meetings to focus on areas of concern, and to provide a detailed public record of committee's work.

It should be noted that other residents have had an active role in providing their expertise to specific projects of the GAC. Dennis Simpson, Robert Tillotson, and Hayden Fusilier were of tremendous assistance in helping the sub-committee on the Internet. Earl Babbie and Sharon Prislipsky assisted in the demographics project. While not members of committee their contributions to the committee were substantial.

Finally, as you will note, many of the achievements harvested this year are the result of years of cultivation and work. Therefore, it is appropriate and necessary, I believe, to note that they would have not been accomplished were it not for the work and diligence of the past Governmental Affairs Committees.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jerry Yeric, Chair
HSV POA Governmental Affairs Committee