



# Small Cities Council Meeting Summary

Wednesday, June 28, 2023 | 9:00 AM  
Pulaski County Regional Center | Little Rock  
*Approved August 23, 2023*

Meeting PowerPoint slides available at <https://metroplan.org/small-cities-council>

## SCC Members Attending

- |  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1. Mayor Mike Kemp, Chair              | City of Shannon Hills |
| 2. Mayor Charles Gastineau, Vice Chair | City of Ward          |
| 3. Mayor Sammy Hartwick                | City of Greenbrier    |
| 4. Mayor Crystal Herrmann              | City of Alexander     |
| 5. Mayor Danny Hester                  | City of Mayflower     |
| 6. Jennifer Hill                       | City of Haskell       |
| 7. Mayor Butch House                   | City of England       |
| 8. Mayor Derrick Rainey                | City of Wrightsville  |
| 9. Mayor Terry Don Robinson            | City of Wooster       |
| 10. Mayor Stephanie White              | City of Keo           |
| 11. Brady Zweifel                      | City of Vilonia       |

## Additional Attendees

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 12. Mayor Allen Scott | City of Bryant                           |
| 13. Amy Williams      | Arkansas Economic Development Commission |
| 14. Matt Twyford      | Arkansas Economic Development Commission |

## Metroplan Staff

- |                           |                    |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 15. Mr. Casey Covington   | Executive Director |
| 16. Ms. Bernadette Rhodes | Community Planner  |

## 1. Call to Order

Mayor Kemp called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. He welcomed participants and asked participants to introduce themselves.

## 2. Introductions & Announcements

Participants introduced themselves. Several participants indicated their cities were affected by recent storms.

Mayor Hester shared an update about the planned work on Lake Conway, which will be drawn down by 99% starting September 2023 over 6-8 weeks. Water and fish will flow down Palarm Creek and to Arkansas River. It will remain drawn down for 5 years. Flood gates will be replaced with a spillway and additional flood gates. Sediment will be compacted into a dry bed and 2-3 feet of water depth will be

gained. Boat ramps will be expanded to 2-4 lanes and new ramps and piers added. Restrictions on fishing have been removed until drawn down. Cost is \$8-12 million.

Brady Zweifel shared that a cryptomining facility has applied for a conditional use in Vilonia. There are existing facilities in Bauxite, Bono, and Morrilton, and another under development in Harrison. Cities have concerns about the noise level caused by computer cooling fans and energy and water usage caused by cryptomining computers and cooling methods (electricity use equivalent of 1,300 homes). Act 1799 of the Arkansas legislature posed restrictions on how cities and counties can regulate cryptomining facilities. The Arkansas Municipal League will provide guidance on navigating the law and options for regulating any negative impacts within city limits, such as noise near residential areas or excessive water use.

Mayor Rainey shared that the City of Wrightsville has launched its summer youth work program. 6 youth were hired and given work sites around the city. They are working in Public Works, Building and Grounds, and within Summer Youth Program. Mayor Kemp shared that Shannon Hills also hires high school students (16+ years old) to mow grass over the summer. The City makes sure the workers get breakfast and lunch through the Summer Feeding Program.

### **3. Summary of Previous Meeting**

Ms. Hill made a motion to approve the summary of the April 26th, 2023 meeting. Mayor Rainey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **4. Community Spotlight: Keo**

Mayor White spoke about Keo (pop. 207), located in SoLoCo (South Lonoke County), 20 miles east of Little Rock. Keo's commercial district was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2011. Keo is known for pecans, including the Nut House.

Mayor White's message for community development was, "wherever you see a need, do something about it." Keo started working on flower beds, which led to a yard of the month club sponsored by a local business. The City used a \$75,000 FUN Park grant to install a park and playground on Main Street, which has created a space for birthday parties and community events. FUN park grants are first-come, first-serve and geared towards small cities.

Partnerships are key. Keo has partnered with the high school's EAST (Education Accelerated by Service and Technology) Initiative to paint a decorative crosswalk, and EAST is working on a QR code to link to music for an augmented reality experience in the crosswalk. EAST has GIS-mapped water lines, created presentations, decorated Main Street, and livestreamed community events. Engage Arkansas donated a box for a book lending library.

Keo is serious about being a Bicycle Friendly Community and has partnered with Recycle Bikes for Kids to donate bikes and helmets for kids, create a bike rack out of old bike frames, and donate bikes for a small bike share in the community. Keo collects bikes through its community cleanup to donate to Recycle Bikes for refurbishment. Many cyclists come to Keo to park and ride. Keo is hosting a rest stop for Recycle Bike's charity event, the Wampoo Rodeo. Charlotte's Eats and Treats will be making a Wampoo Pie for the occasion.

The City is focusing on its 3 P's: People, Partnerships, and Pecans. Keo has declared itself the Pecan Capital of Arkansas! It's squirrel mascot is Keodore. Its 2023 Arkansas Pecan Festival is on Saturday,

December 2nd. The City is looking to purchase property for a Center of Excellence for pecans in partnership with the University of Arkansas. Currently pecan growers have to go out of state to get education and nursery stock.

Keo is establishing a Planning Commission and considering adopting parts of the UDO, as well as working on major sewer, water infrastructure, and fiberoptic projects.

## **5. Metroplan Update**

Ms. Rhodes introduced Sydney Dozier, Metroplan's new Public Engagement Planner. Sydney will be elevating Metroplan's message, engaging the public, and highlight Metroplan member communities.

Additional Metroplan updates will be made at the board meeting to follow at 10:00 AM.

## **6. Partner Updates**

Ms. Rhodes highlighted grant resources that were shared during the Arkansas Municipal League's Winter Convention. Resources included on back of agenda. She encouraged cities to contact Central Arkansas Planning and Development District (CAPDD) with grant writing needs.

Ms. Rhodes encouraged participants to contact representatives from the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, who were in attendance, with any economic development needs.

## **7. Member Q&A**

None.

## **8. Preview of Upcoming Meetings**

Included on the agenda. Meeting location will remain the Pulaski County Regional Center (Metroplan office) in future months.

## **9. Adjourn**

Ms. Hill made a motion to adjourn. Mayor Hartwick seconded. Mayor Kemp adjourned the Small Cities Council meeting at 9:50 AM.