



# Small Cities Council Meeting Summary

Wednesday, April 24, 2024 | 9:00 AM  
Pulaski County Regional Center | Little Rock  
*Approved May 22, 2024*

Meeting PowerPoint slides available at [www.metroplan.org/small-cities-council](http://www.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. Mr. Jeff Arey                       | City of Haskell       |
| 4. Mayor Bernie Chamberlain            | City of Austin        |
| 5. Mayor Sammy Hartwick                | City of Greenbrier    |
| 6. Mayor Crystal Herrmann              | City of Alexander     |
| 7. Mayor Butch House                   | City of England       |
| 8. Mr. Keith Keck                      | Hot Springs Village   |

## Additional Attendees

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| 9. Mr. Mark Stodola  | Barbara Law Firm,<br>Representing Arkansas Municipal League |
| 10. Mr. Matt Twyford | Arkansas Economic Development Commission                    |
| 11. Mr. Mike Watson  | Half Engineers  |

## Metroplan Staff

- |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| 12. Ms. Lynn Bell         | Graphics Specialist                      |
| 13. Mr. Casey Covington   | Executive Director                       |
| 14. Mr. Hans Haustein     | GIS Analyst/Planner                      |
| 15. Mr. Jonathan Lupton   | Senior Planner for Publications          |
| 16. Ms. Bernadette Rhodes | Senior Regional Planner for Partnerships |

## I. Call to Order

Mayor Kemp called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. He welcomed participants and asked participants to introduce themselves.

## 2. Introductions & Announcements

Participants introduced themselves. Mayor Hartwick shared that Greenbrier was ranked #1 for safest city in the state. Austin was ranked #4 and Vilonia #7.

Mr. Stodola shared that he is attending the SCC and Metroplan board meetings as a liaison with the Arkansas Municipal League. He is available as a resource to cities. Mr. Covington echoed his support for close partnership and coordination with the Municipal League and welcomed Mr. Arey back on the Metroplan board as a representative of Haskell.

Mr. Twyford of the Arkansas Economic Development Commission announced its Rural Development

Conference, taking place May 21-23 in Hot Springs. He encouraged attendees to register. Dawson, a UA Little Rock student and intern in the England Mayor's office, introduced himself. The solar eclipse was discussed as a good exercise in planning, even if attendance was lower than expected.

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

Mayor Gastineau made a motion to approve the summary of the January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024 meeting. Mayor Hartwick seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **4. Community Spotlight: Hot Springs Village**

Mr. Keck gave an overview of Hot Springs Village (HSV), which is a private development with Property Owners' Association (POA) which functions as a city government, but is not a city.

- HSV has been in existence for over 50 years, is 26,000 acres and over 15 miles from east gate to west gate.
- 34,000 platted lots, only 26% developed. Could develop to 50% with existing infrastructure.
- In foothills of Ouachita Mountains. 15,861 population, split fairly equally between Saline and Garland Counties.
- Approx. 1,500-2,000 part-time seasonal residents from all over the country. 800 children spread throughout community. 1,900 rooftops, mainly single-family homes with some townhouses and condos. About 100 new builds per year. Lack of builders slows development.
- Governed by private corporation with bylaws and 7-member board.
- Full-time general manager.
- A large number of volunteer committees assist the GM in everything from financial affairs to lakes and trails. Over 500 residents volunteer on a regular basis.
- HSV maintains its own roads and operates its own water treatment plant and 2 wastewater treatment plants. 99% of HSV on this sewer line.
- 654-seat auditorium with performances almost every week. Community center and independent library, and e-book access.
- 23 full-time police officers. 3 patrols at any time. 4 manned fire stations. 6 FT firefighters on at any one time with ladder truck. 3 ambulances with extra ambulance from Hot Springs when needed.
- Code enforcement through POA.
- Amenities: Trails, parks, benches. Full-time fitness center. 3,800 registered boats. 9 ½ golf courses with 230,000 rounds per year. Growing Pickleball complex with 2<sup>nd</sup> complex being built. RV park. Full-time Animal Control with robust Animal Welfare League and no-kill shelter.
- Average villager is 69 years old, 74% born outside of Arkansas. 76% receive Social Security benefits. Higher than average median income.
- Influx of residents from California and Texas.
- Economic impact study (UALR) showed that HSV has a \$397 million economic impact on Arkansas. Residents contribute large amounts of the millage for its two school districts (Jessieville and Fountain Lake) and property taxes to Saline and Garland Counties.
- As a private entity, HSV is not eligible to receive federal/state/county funding; all its funding comes from POA assessments. Assessments adjust every three years by board, and slightly each year based on CPI Southern Region.
- Roughly \$40 million annual budget.
- Water district is classified as public water authority.

- Tornado caused a great deal of damage, with many utility lines covered with downed trees.

## **5. Act 605 and Cryptomining Updates**

Mayor Kemp highlighted resources at the bottom of the agenda for water training providers as required by Act 605.

Ms. Rhodes shared that the state legislature is considering bills to allow local governments to regulate cryptomines and clarified noise regulation and foreign ownership issues. An article about the bills under consideration were included in the agenda packet. The Metroplan Model Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) will be revised to include regulation of cryptomining facilities.

## **6. UDO and Best Zoning Practices**

Ms. Rhodes shared information from the American Planning Association's National Planning Conference, which recommended that zoning regulations should include robust public involvement prior to adoption, but, once adopted, should limit subjectivity/variability and include more uses/development types by right in order to minimize the need for special approvals and public hearings at Planning Commission. Special approvals and public hearings can lead to subjectivity and unpredictability, allowing the loudest and most privileged voices outsized influence. Clear regulations that allow many permits to be approved administratively can be more predictable and equitable.

Mr. Covington gave an overview of the UDO, which can be customized to a city for full-scale adoption or used in pieces to incorporate into existing regulations. The UDO identifies which types of permits are issues administratively versus after Planning Commission/City Council approval.

## **7. Metroplan Update**

Mr. Covington shared that planning for the 2025 Board Factfinding Trip will begin soon. He has also been meeting with board members individually to visit projects and discuss how Metroplan can be of assistance.

## **8. Member Q&A**

Mayor Herrmann discussed challenges related to having two water service providers. LRWRA and Saline County Waterworks. Alexander fire chief inspected fire hydrants and found many inoperable. It is unclear whose responsibility it is to repair/maintain hydrants and repair lines – the city or Saline County Waterworks. Participants were not aware of laws dictating who has maintenance responsibility. It was recommended to partner with water district on a mutual agreement.

Alexander is also limited on sewer taps in the area serviced by LRWRA. The Regional Water Alliance or Rural Water Association could be resources. Mayor Kemp suggested that we provide an update on this issue at the next Small Cities Council meeting.

## **9. Preview of Upcoming Meetings**

- April Board of Directors meeting at 10:00 AM following the SCC meeting
- May SCC & Board of Directors Meetings: Wed., May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024

## **10. Adjourn**

Mayor Gastineau made a motion to adjourn. Mayor Chamberlain seconded. The motion was approved unanimously. Mayor Kemp adjourned the Small Cities Council meeting at 9:53 AM.