



METROPLAN



METROPLAN
SMALL CITIES
COUNCIL

SMALL CITIES COUNCIL

May 28, 2025 • 9:00 AM

AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Introductions & Announcements
3. Summary of Previous Meeting
4. The Small City Spark →
5. Metroplan Update
6. Grants & Capital Improvement Opportunities
7. Member Q&A
8. Preview of Upcoming Meetings
9. Adjourn



SCC MEMBERS

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Alexander | 10. Keo |
| 2. Austin | 11. Lonoke |
| 3. Bauxite | 12. Mayflower |
| 4. Cammack Village | 13. Mount Vernon |
| 5. England | 14. Shannon Hills |
| 6. Greenbrier | 15. Traskwood |
| 7. Guy | 16. Vilonia |
| 8. Haskell | 17. Ward |
| 9. HS Village | 18. Wooster |
| | 19. Wrightsville |





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INTRODUCTIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Projects
- Updates
- Successes
- Challenges



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SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS MEETING

April 30, 2025



**Small Cities Council
Meeting Summary**

Wednesday, April 30, 2025, | 9:00 AM
Pulaski County Regional Center | Little Rock
DRAFT

Meeting PowerPoint slides available at www.metroplan.org/small-cities-council

SCC Members Attending

1. Mayor Mike Kemp, Chair
2. Mayor Charles Gastineau, Vice Chair
3. Mayor Bernadette Chamberlain
4. Mayor Derrick Rainey
5. Mr. Jeff Arey
6. Mr. Keith Keck
7. Mayor Sammy Hartwick
8. Mayor Crystal Herrmann
9. Mr. Brady Zweifel

City of Shannon Hills
City of Ward
City of Austin
City of Wrightsville
City of Haskell
Hot Springs Village
City of Greenbrier
City of Alexander
City of Vilonia

Additional Attendees

10. Mr. Ben Reynolds
11. Mr. Mike Watson
12. Jamie Collins

SCS
Hall



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THE SMALL CITY SPARK

- New Expert Forum Addition to the SCC
 - **Inviting Industry Experts:**
 - Economic Development, Business & Entrepreneurship
 - Planning and Infrastructure & Community Development, and Other Allied Fields.
 - **Purpose:**
 - Idea-Sharing and Innovation
 - Highlight Real-World Practices and Experiments
 - **Goals:**
 - Inspire Small Cities to Explore and Adopt New Strategies
 - Tailor Successful Approaches to Local Needs
 - **Format:**
 - 10-15 Min. presentations followed by discussion and Q&A

STRATEGIC PLANNING

ECONOMICS-

PEOPLE ORIENTED STREETS ARE
MORE FINANCIALLY
PRODUCTIVE PER ACRE
(URBAN3)

BUSINESSES OCCUPY THE LAND
SO YOU CAN GET TO MULTIPLE
DESTINATIONS IN MINUTES

INCREASE IN WALK SCORE CAN
INCREASE HOME VALUES UP TO
\$500.00-3,000.00



STRATEGIC PLANNING

ENVIRONMENT-

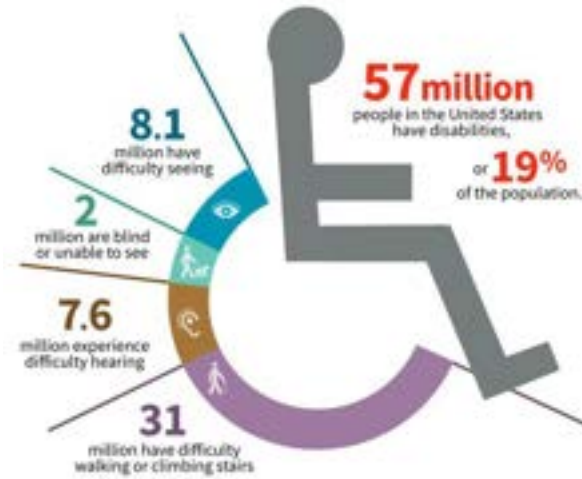
- LESS LAND CONSUMPTION
- FEWER EMISSIONS
- LESS WASTE
- 13% OF ALL CAR TRIPS ARE ONE MILE OR LESS



STRATEGIC PLANNING

ACCESSIBILITY-
SAFELY
EASE
DESIGN
DIGNITY

American Disabilities



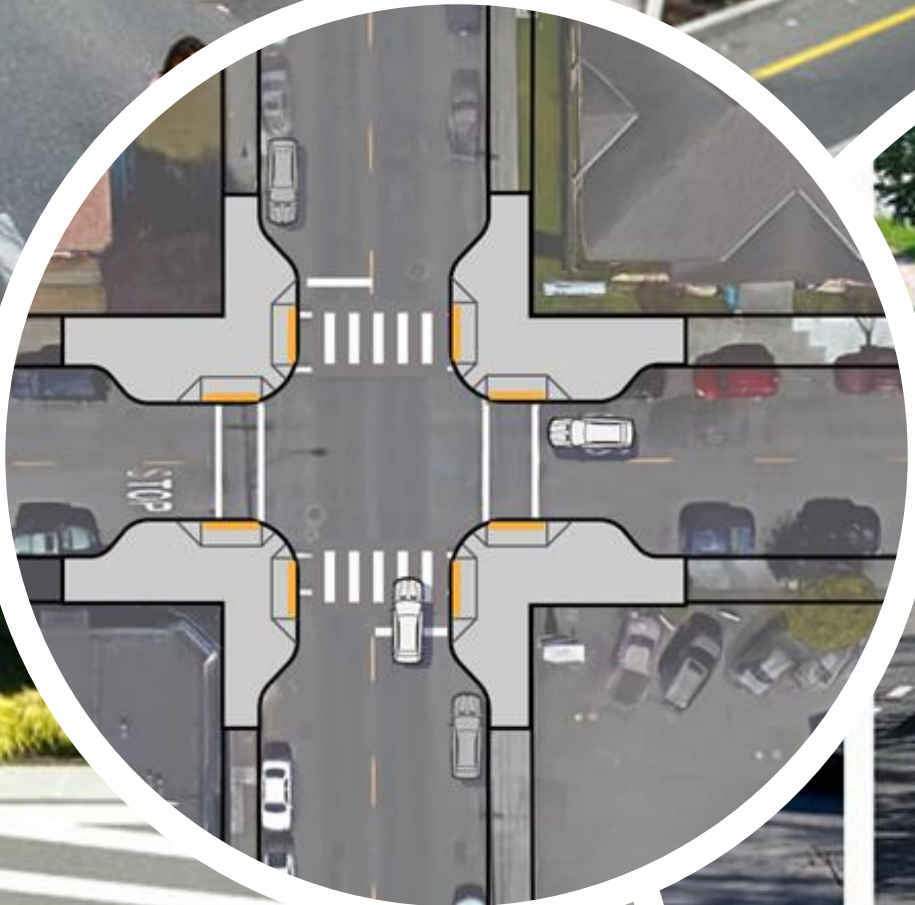
WHO BENEFITS FROM ACCESSIBILITY





SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY







ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT





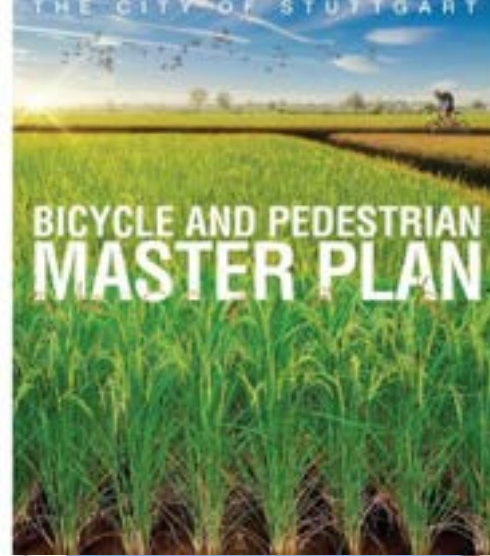
WHERE DO
WE START
LOOKING?



Instead of
bringing
the
community
to the table

... It's now
about bringing
the table to the
community.

DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS



DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS



CREATIVE FUNDING

- CDC
 - SPAN
 - REACH
 - HOP
- Recreation Trails Program
- FEMA
- USDA
- Hamburger Tax
- US Forestry
- Project Safe Neighborhood
- Winrock International
- EPA:
 - Lighting
 - Conservation Easement
 - Walk/Move Curriculum
- America Walks
- AARP Livable Community
- Foundations



- Get out of your silos ...
- Take the table out to the community ... make sure “**ALL**” are involved
- Embrace being a Network Manager for funding ...
- **Funding is a puzzle, and you must get creative to find all the pieces ...**



KEY TAKEAWAYS:



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METROPLAN UPDATE DRAFT SCC BY-LAWS

May 2025

BY-LAWS OF THE METROPLAN SMALL CITIES COUNCIL, A STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE METROPLAN BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ARTICLE 1. Name

The name of this committee of small cities in Central Arkansas shall be the Metroplan Small Cities Council.

ARTICLE 2. Purpose

The Small Cities Council serves as a standing committee of the Metroplan Board of Directors, dedicated to supporting the unique needs of smaller cities through:

(a) *Focused Assistance:* Providing technical support, planning guidance, and resources tailored to the transportation and development challenges of smaller cities;

(b) *Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing:* Creating a forum where smaller cities can share experiences, exchange best practices, and learn from one another to strengthen governance and planning efforts;

(c) *Capacity Building:* Empowering smaller communities to build local expertise, advocate for their needs, and effectively plan for sustainable growth; and

(d) *Advisory Role:* Making recommendations to the full Metroplan Board.

ARTICLE 3. Membership

Any city or community under 10,000 population, including second-class cities and incorporated towns, within the Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway Metropolitan Statistical Area ("Central Arkansas") is eligible to participate in the Small Cities Council. Membership to the Metroplan Board of Directors is not required. There is no fee for participation on the Small Cities Council.

Committee membership is open to any mayor or county judge (or their designated representative) of a Central Arkansas small city/town or small cities within its boundaries.



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METROPLAN UPDATE

APA LEGISLATIVE SEMINAR UPDATE

- Legislative Round Table | APA AR | 21 May 2025
 - **Unique Acts Discussed:**
 - **HBI772 | [Act 529](#) : Protection of Vegetable Gardens**
 - *Allows residents to grow a garden of edible plants/flowers for personal use on private residential property and not requiring additional permission from local govt.*
 - **SB546 | [Act 935](#): Package Plant Permitting**
 - *Limits the issuance of new permits for package sewer plants and community sewer systems within 5 miles of an existing sewer line.*
 - **SB571 | [Act 1002](#): Limits of Municipal Regulation of County Land**
 - *Eliminates a city's ability to apply planning or zoning regulations on county-owned property inside a municipality.*



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APA LEGISLATIVE SEMINAR UPDATE

- Legislative Round Table | APA AR | 21 May 2025
 - **Unique Acts Discussed:**
 - **HB1991 | [Act 1020](#): Fire Code Exemptions for Rural Development**
 - *Reduces number of approved fire accesses to a development in specific circumstances.*
 - **SB324 | [Act 519](#): Planning Board Membership**
 - *Requires majority of board or commission to live within the area it represents and regulates.*
 - **Special Instructions**
 - Continue to have a plan, but do not enforce PAB regulations
 - Adopt the administrative rezoning procedures only if you have a solid Zoning and Land Use Plan. It is completely optional.



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GRANTS & CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES



- KAB Mission Grant | Keep Arkansas Beautiful
 - Grant Amount & Structure: KAB will award 16 reimbursement-based grants of up to \$2,500 each.
 - Eligible Applicants: City and County governments, Schools, Nonprofits, Civic groups, and Businesses.
 - Project Focus Areas:
 - Beautification
 - Litter prevention, Recycling, Waste reduction
 - Environmental education or Eco-restoration
 - Application Timeline:

Application are accepted year-round but are reviewed and awarded during two cycles:

 1. Winter Cycle: Jan 1 – Feb 15
 2. Summer Cycle: July 1 – August 15
 - Know more: <https://keeparkansasbeautiful.com/community-resources/grants/>



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GRANTS & CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- This grant absorbs and expands upon the offerings of the previously separate Trash Boom Grant and Green Event Grant. **Examples of eligible items include** (but are not limited to):
 - Litter grabbers and cleanup tools
 - Native plants, trees, mulch, and landscaping materials
 - Educational or directional signage
 - Trash or recycling receptacles
 - Yard equipment and light tools
- **Not eligible for reimbursement:**
 - Items already supplied by KAB (e.g., trash bags, gloves, safety vests)
 - Food and beverages
 - Permanent structures requiring large-scale construction

Apply: <https://tinyurl.com/KABGrant>



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LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Convention 91 By Arkansas Municipal League

Statehouse Convention Center | Duration: June 18 - 21, 2025



- **Registration:**

- \$350 (Member rate) if registered by May 30
- \$400 (Member) and \$450 (Nonmember) for June 1–19
- All registrations must be online at register.arml.org

- **Topics Discussed:**

- **Wednesday, June 18**

- Keynote: Becky McCray – *The Idea Friendly Method: Open-Up to New Ideas*

- **Thursday, June 19**

- Legislative Session & Significance of Juneteenth
- [Breakout Sessions:](#)

- **Friday, June 20**

- Panel Discussion: The “3 Ds” – *Drugs, Dogs, & Drainage*
- Annual Business Meetings & State of the League
- Awards & Welcoming new president and officers



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LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

2025 Arkansas Planning Official Training Program: By UALR | Course 4: Subdivision

Open for Registration | Held on: June 18, 2025 | 6:00 – 9:00 pm

- **Live Online via Zoom:**
 - Cost: \$65 per person
- **You will Explore:**
 - Definition of Subdivision
 - Subdivision regulations and code,
 - Platting procedures, plat approval, and subdivision application review and approval.
- **Other Courses:**
 - Course 5 Development Review and Variances – Sept 10
 - Course 6: Advanced Planning Tools - October 15, 2025 (Prerequisites: Courses 1-5)

Contact: Lisa Crittenden @ lacrittenden@ualr.edu | 501 916 6050

Register: [2025 Planning Official Training: Course Registration](#)



Grant	Status	Deadline
Transportation		
USDOT Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE)	Closed	January 30, 2025
Transportation Alternatives Program 2025-2026 (Metroplan)	Closed	January 8, 2025
Transportation Alternatives Program 2025-2026 (ARDOT)	Closed	April 30, 2025
Recreational Trails Program 2025	Closed	April 30, 2025
Reconnecting Communities	Closed	September 30, 2024
Rail Crossing Elimination	Closed	September 23, 2024
Water		
FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure Communities (BRIC)	Closed	April 18, 2025
FEMA Flood Mitigation Assistance	Closed	April 18, 2025
Energy		
Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program (EECBG)	Open	May 31, 2025
Environmental		
EPA Inflation Reduction Act Community Change Grants Program	Closed	November 21, 2024
Housing		
HUD Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing (PRO Housing)	Closed	October 15, 2024
HUD Choice Neighborhoods	Closed	June 10, 2024



1. Call to Order
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4. Community Spotlight: City of Austin
5. Metroplan Update
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7. **Member Q&A**
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PREVIEW OF UPCOMING MEETINGS

- **TODAY**
 - 10:00 AM: Board Meeting

- **Wednesday, June 25, 2025**
 - 9:00 AM: SCC Meeting
 - 10:00 AM: Board Meeting



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THANK YOU!

SCC Leadership:

Mayor Mike Kemp, Chair
City of Shannon Hills
501-455-2003
shannonhillsmayor@aristotle.net

Mayor Charles Gastineau, Vice Chair
City of Ward
501-843-2226
mayor@cityofward.com

Metroplan:
501-372-3300

Bernadette Rhodes
brhodes@metroplan.org

Paritosh (Pari/PJ) Jambhale
pjambhale@metroplan.org



Small Cities Council

Meeting Summary

Wednesday, May 28, 2025, | 9:00 AM
Pulaski County Regional Center | Little Rock
Approved June 25, 2025

Meeting PowerPoint slides available at 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. Mayor Bernadette Chamberlain | City of Austin |
| 4. Mayor Derrick Rainey | City of Wrightsville |
| 5. Mr. Jeff Arey | City of Haskell |
| 6. Mr. Keith Keck | Hot Springs Village |
| 7. Mayor Butch Hale | City of England |
| 8. Mayor Crystal Herrmann | City of Alexander |
| 9. Mr. Brady Zweifel | City of Vilonia |

Additional Attendees

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 10. Mr. Mark Stodola | Arkansas Municipal League |
| 11. Mr. Mike Watson | Halff |

Metroplan Staff

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 12. Mr. Casey Covington | Executive Director |
| 13. Ms. Bernadette Rhodes | Deputy Director/Senior Planner for Partnerships & Grants |
| 14. Ms. Lynn Bell | Publications and Graphics Specialist |
| 15. Ms. Leesa Freasier | Grants Administrator |

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

Introductions were skipped in this meeting due to the amount of information to be covered in the meeting.

3. Summary of Previous Meeting

Mayor Chamberlain made a motion to approve the summary of the May 28, 2025 meeting. Mayor Herrmann seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. The Small City Spark:

Ms. Rhodes introduced the Council to the new concept introduced in the small city meetings. It brings in industry leaders and speakers with specific expertise on topics such as economic development, small businesses, and community development to name a few. Ms. Rhodes also suggested that this initiative will work in tandem with what the Council wants to hear more about and Metroplan will try to acquire speakers with experience in those areas. She explained the format of the session, where a brief presentation of 10-15 minutes will be followed by a quick question-answer session for the next 5-10 minutes. In order to kick-off this new session, Ms. Leesa Freasier, Metroplan's Grant Administrator was chosen as the first speaker to talk on internal funding opportunities, and to guide small cities to work on their own or work in a group to maximize opportunities for their jurisdictions. Ms. Freasier is a seasoned professional with various expertise including grants and funding opportunities. She is also a resource that Metroplan's member jurisdictions can look to for guidance on grants, especially the Energy and Environment Innovation opportunities. She led this session.

She explained the key concepts of strategic planning, by introducing concepts of walkability and the value of people-oriented streets. Developing an understanding of what the residents of the city want and how to bring residents of other cities to a city's "downtown" and "commercial centers" was a key concept of the presentation. She also mentioned that there needs to be an environmental aspect to strategic planning and that it should not be a by-product of it. She emphasized that aiming for reducing emissions is just as important as bringing new footfall downtown. Ms. Freasier talked about planning and designing cities and their infrastructure without any biases, and with people with disabilities and people of all walks of life in mind, thus making it accessible and safe for everyone. She introduced the concept of mid-way crossings to reduce jaywalking on streets. She also introduced the concept of curb extensions which acts as a traffic regulation device by narrowing streets and squares. This slows traffic and reduces the distance between two streets thus making travel easy for pedestrians and bicyclists. This in-turn makes roads safer for all modes of transportation.

Ms. Freasier explained the importance of proper signage that indicates and informs residents about streets and businesses. She also explained that investing in proper signage adds to the accessibility of a city and makes navigation easier, thus making travel an easy task. This ensures better traffic flow and more footfall, which ultimately brings more money invested to a city's local businesses. She also explained that it is important to interact with the community proactively instead of waiting for the community to communicate with the city officials. Ms. Freasier also introduced the Council to the idea of walk audits and how they are a part of understanding problems pedestrians face daily. She explained how they help in developing pedestrian plans

such as the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan which discusses design, construction and maintenance of new and existing bike/ped facilities throughout the region of Central Arkansas. She explained how demonstration projects help in selling and testing the idea of trying something new. She then concluded her presentation with various creative funding opportunities such as US Forestry that provides area specific indigenous species of trees and plants, FEMA, recreational trail programs, and many more such fundraising opportunities. They can be found on the slides on Metroplan's website.

Following the presentation Mr. Keck asked a question about the Economic Development Authority Constitutional Amendment SJR 15 and how this platform of Small City Spark could help small cities in identifying and building these zones for the Economic Development Districts that this constitutional amendment may lead to if it passes. Ms. Freasier answered positively that she has helped cities with zoning overlays across the country. She explained that these overlays need to be developed for the longer run, and taking the next 20 odd years into consideration. Mayor Herrmann added that she would like to use this platform to know more about an improvement district. Especially how does a small city go about implementing an improvement district. Ms. Rhodes answered to that query that she can share some information with Mayor Herrmann regarding the same. She also mentioned that it tends to be difficult to implement due to the legalities that cities need to follow to get it approved. An example of it is that the city needs a specific number of attestations from residents to go ahead with planning an improvement district. It also needs a lot of available and vacant land. Alexander may be one of the small cities which has the land available for the same.

5. Metroplan Update

1. Draft Small Cities Council Bylaws Discussion

Ms. Rhodes led this section by sharing with the council that Metroplan has been working on updating the Small Cities Council Bylaws. She highlighted some provisions of the bylaws. They will be discussed and presented to the Small Cities Council on the next meeting, held on July 25, 2025. Mr. Covington added that Metroplan would like to get the Council's and the Board's views on it. The bylaws will be voted on either at the Board meeting held in June or July. He explained that the idea; that is Small Cities Council was first developed about six years ago and there wasn't a formal recognition of the council till the updated Metroplan bylaws were adopted about two months ago. Now that the Small Cities Council is formally recognized, it is important that it has its own bylaws, which will include specific information of what roles and responsibilities they have. Some considerations that are discussed in the bylaws are also about which non-voting members would the council like to see included for an audience in the Small Cities Council. Ms. Rhodes added that the bylaws borrowed from the outline that was prepared when the council was conceptualized. She mentioned the roles of Chair and Vice Chair and their responsibilities of providing support and guidance for issues tailored to development and transportation challenges faced by smaller cities. She mentioned the purpose of strengthening and empowering smaller communities. She also mentioned that the SCC acts as a standing committee of the Metroplan Board and plays an advisory role by making recommendations to the full Board.

There was some general discussion around the makeup of the Small Cities Council, specifically, who should be eligible for membership and in what capacity they can participate. Members shared their thoughts on voting rights and the role of county judges, as well as the possibility of involving an Executive Committee liaison. Overall, the conversation reflected a desire to keep the council inclusive while ensuring representation remains aligned with the needs of small cities.

2. APA legislative Seminar Update

Ms. Rhodes talked about the APA legislative seminar that was attended by Metroplan. It had a panel of planners and lawyers alike who discussed the various bills that passed in this legislative session and how they impact the cities. She mentioned the Protection of Vegetable Gardens bill HB1772 which was passed and was one of the bills that was new to Metroplan as well. It protects owners' rights to cultivate a garden for edible plants/flowers on residential property. It helps homeowners by helping them not require additional permission or special permit from the local government to cultivate the said vegetable garden. Ms. Rhodes mentioned that the city can regulate the heights of the vegetable garden and certain specifics of it, so that it does not create an unnecessary nuisance for the city and its residents.

Ms. Rhodes, while discussing the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) regulation bill, mentioned that the city cannot regulate the design or the placement of the ADU or its architecture style. However, it has to follow the basic fire code. Thus, cities can lean on the fire code for the construction of ADUs on single family properties. Mayor Gastineau also added that he asked the APA panel if cities could add a charge on the utilities the city is providing for the ADUs. The answer to it was no. He is also looking at the service lines and sewerage lines, but according to the legislature, the cities will need to let the ADUs be built. Ms. Rhodes's takeaway was to lean on the fire code for building standards, lean on the Department of Health Regulations for sewerage. Document any issues that you run into so that there is a catalogue of issues that the cities have to face because of the ADUs, and they can be discussed with legislative authorities.

She also talked about the concept of pre-emption, which stems from the belief that all the powers that the city has are given to it by the state. So there needs to be a lot of communication on all levels to make the state understand the tangible problems that the cities are facing due to the legislative updates. If the cities would not comply with them, there is a chance that more power from the cities could be taken away by the state. Thus, following the legislature and communicating with legislators is important.

6. Upcoming Grants & Capital Improvement Opportunities:

Ms. Rhodes introduced the council to a new opportunity:

- The Keep Arkansas Beautiful Grant

The Keep Arkansas Beautiful (KAB) Mission Grant offers a valuable funding opportunity for city and county governments, schools, nonprofits, civic groups, and businesses committed to enhancing their local environment. Through this program, KAB will award 16 reimbursement-based grants of up to \$2,500 each, supporting projects that focus on beautification, litter prevention, recycling, waste reduction, environmental education, and eco-restoration. Applications are accepted year-round, with reviews and awards made during two cycles: Winter (January 1-February 15) and Summer (July 1-August 15). This grant consolidates and broadens the scope of the former Trash Boom and Green Event Grants, allowing applicants to seek reimbursement for items such as litter grabbers, native plants and landscaping materials, signage, trash or recycling bins, and light yard tools. However, it does not cover items already provided by KAB (e.g., trash bags, gloves), food or beverages, or permanent structures requiring major construction. Learn more about it here: <https://keeparkansasbeautiful.com/community-resources/grants/>

Ms. Rhodes also introduced two learning opportunities to the council.

- The Arkansas Municipal League's 91st Convention will be held from June 18–20. The event will feature sessions focused on community leadership. A keynote by Becky McCray on *The Idea Friendly Method: Open-Up to New Ideas* shall kick things off. Thursday will include a Legislative Session, a discussion on the significance of Juneteenth, and interactive breakout sessions. On Friday, a panel on local challenges in "The 3 Ds" – Drugs, Dogs, & Drainage, will be followed by the Annual Business Meetings, State of the League, and a ceremony to recognize award winners and welcome new leadership.
- UALR's Arkansas Planning Official Training Program continues with Course 4: Subdivision (June 18, 2025), a live Zoom session covering subdivision basics, plating procedures, and subdivision applications. Future sessions on variances will be on September 10.

7. Member Q&A

Mayor Rainey asked a question about how to expand the Small Cities Council, as it was discussed that the membership will be open to all small cities in the Central Arkansas region. He asked if there was a way to introduce more small cities to the council. Ms. Rhodes suggested that a virtual option could be introduced for the SCC meetings. As Mayor Herrmann pointed out, many mayors have a full-time job while also being a mayor, thus it becomes difficult to attend these meetings on a regular basis. The council was receptive of the virtual access suggestion and agreed that it was a good idea.

8. Preview of Upcoming Meetings

- Wed, June 25th, 2025
 - 9:00 am: Small Cities Council Meeting
 - 10:00 am: Board of Directors Meeting

9. Adjourn

Mayor Kemp made a motion to adjourn. Mayor Chamberlain adjourned the Small Cities Council meeting at 9:55 AM.