LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS EAST ALABAMA (the “LWVEA”)

OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

MEETING SUMMARY:

NW AUBURN TASK FORCE, COUNCILWOMEN CONNIE FITCH TAYLOR PRESIDING

Boykin/Donahue Campus (400 Boykin Street)

Tuesday, September 10, 2019 6:00 p.m. CDT, with approximately 40 people attending

(Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 8, 2019)

For additional information contact:

Councilwomen Ms. Connie Fitch Taylor (334.704.3970) ctaylor@auburnalabama.org

I. MAJOR TOPICS ADDRESSED:

A. August 13, 2019, Meeting Summary:

1. **Strategic Plan:** Councilwomen Taylor presented the Task Force’s goals or Team objectives, of which there are 16. Slogan is “We Will Never Move Forward, if We Keep Looking Back” (attached, 1 pg.). Attendees are encouraged to sign up for one or more of 16 teams on the list.

2. **Joint Use of the Boykin Center medical center and library:** Councilwoman and others stressed the importance of creating a library at the Boykin Center for use by students, possibly sharing space with the medical center given lack of other suitable space at the Boykin Community Center.

3. **Property Development:** Neighborhood property owners encouraged to self-develop their property rather than sell to nonresidents.

4. **Youth Probation Project:** Meeting with Judge McLaughlin [sic] to encourage judgements to include having youth and young adults join the Task Force for work and education related assignment. May require establishing 501.c.3.

5. **2020 Census:** The importance of everyone participating in the 2020 Census was emphasized.

B. September 10, 2019, Meeting Summary:

1. **Fall Festival:** Councilwomen Taylor commented that she has reserved Martin Luther King (the “MLK”) Park for a Fall Festival on October 26th. The celebration will be oriented towards children. Donations, including food, would be greatly appreciated. The hope is that food for children under 12 will be free. Negotiations with vendors are underway.
2. **Thanksgiving Dinner for Seniors:** Plans are underway to provide Thanksgiving Dinner for seniors free of charge. Donations are appreciated.

3. **Christmas Dinner for Seniors at Julie Collins Museum:** Last year the Museum and Councilwomen provided dinner for approximately 50 seniors, with costs shared. The hope is that more seniors can and will be invited to the event.

4. **Library:** Councilwomen Taylor reintroduced the topic first discussed last month’s meeting noting that, given current student scores and with other medical facilities nearby, priority need be given to establishing an education center for students. She had suggested sharing space with the already approved medical facility in the Boykin Community Center. The Councilwomen further commented that she had met with City Manager Jim Buston regarding the topic. Subsequently, she provided her with a draft plan titled *Boykin/Donahue Campus - Concept Plan # 2* (attached, 2 pp.). The proposed plan is further identified as Item # 17 in the Legend.

5. **African American Museum:** Councilwomen Taylor updated those in attendance on the establishment of an African American history museum commenting that the search for a suitable place is ongoing. Mr. Lindbergh Jackson commented that the African American history dates to 1619 when 20 slaves deboarded a slave ship in Virginia. He referenced a New York Times article by Ms. Nicole Jones titled *The 1620 Program.* It and others are viewable on several *YouTube,* among others. Mr. Jackson further commented that he had met with Auburn City School Superintendent and encouraged her to use an existing high school curriculum on the history of the African American experience to school children [See Mr. Jackson for a copy].

6. **Ward 1 Neighborhood Student Cookout:** Councilwomen Taylor is planning a ward/neighborhood cookout with the intention of getting to know student constituents. Date, place and time will be announced later. Participation is encouraged; volunteers, and donations are appreciated.

7. **Team Reports:** Mr. Herb Denmark representing the Voter Registration team reported that he has contacted the *Lee County Voters League* regarding coordinating voter registration efforts with the Task Force.

C. **Speakers:**

1. **State Representative District 82 - Ms. Pebblin Warren:** Representative Warren commented that while municipalities have Home Rule and counties do not; hence, much of the State’s time is spent on county- and state-wide issues. She provided a sampling of legislation approved this past session. The State passed a **10-cent gas tax** that will be implemented over a three-year period, with the first phase going into effect July 1, 2019. Representative Warren serves on both the Black and Democratic caucuses. **Medicaid** is a big issue. The **Department of Corrections** is another big issue. Currently, the Department faces numerous lawsuits, with the Federal Government threatening a takeover of the system. A concern with a takeover is the possibility of prematurely releasing many prisoners. Governor Ivey is attempting to solve the problem by building new prisons, but
funding is a real challenge. Mental illness is another problem; the term includes drug addiction. According to Representative Warren, money is available for Youth Enrichment Programs; the problem is the program is underutilized (reference was made to Item A.4 above as a possible candidate for currently unallocated funds). Lastly, Gerrymandering continues to be a significant issue, both locally and nationally. She cautioned drivers to be aware of the new law that limits the length of time a driver may drive on the left lane of a four-lane road without being ticketed; the left lane is intended to be a passing lane. Representative Warren encouraged everyone to complete the Census 2020 form. Lastly, she commented that some form of gun legislation is needed to discourage future gun violence.

2. Reverend Satch (Satch Tech Construction and Training):
Rev Satch owns and operates a training and construction firm in Tuskegee. The major thrust of his presentation was to find ways for teenagers and adults to take out their aggression through other than the use of guns. One solution: job training and gainful employment. Another alternative for resolving differences is through the old-fashioned method of putting on the boxing gloves and letting guys go at each other in a controlled, supervised environment - the ring. It lets both sides feel the pain yet tends to be relatively temporary in nature. As a trainer and contractor, Rev. Satch has used both method with success.

3. Ms. Yolanda Fears- A Census Report:
Ms. Fears commented that the Census is taken once every 10 years. It’s critical that every person be counted. It funds food, health, housing, transportation, medical, education, recreation, senior citizens, disaster relief, and many other programs. Without an accurate account of Alabamians, the State will lose funding for many needed, worthwhile programs and projects. Ms. Fears noted that Census survey will be issued April 1, 2020. Assistance is available to those people unable to complete the forms on their own. She commented that part-time positions in the range of $13 - $15/hour are available for qualified applicants and stressed the importance of answering the door when Census takers arrive in the neighborhood. Also, she urged everyone to request their pastor to make an announcement of the importance of completing the Census forms and of census takers arriving in parishioners’ neighborhoods. It should be noted that Census information is considered confidential for a period of 72 years. Also, in the absence of any other document (e.g., in the case of a natural disaster, etc.), a person may call upon the Census Bureau for select documentation verifying a person’s personal information such as age. Lastly, except for U.S. Senate seats, the Census information is used to determine the number and geographic area representation of both State and congressional members. (Flyer distributed, 1 page).
4. **Mr. Troy Booth, BNB & Associates, LLC:**

Mr. Booth is a real estate and mortgage broker offering a full range of affordable housing services, including listing, financing, and construction services. (Contact information: Phone: 877.846.6307; [www.bnb-associatesllc.com](http://www.bnb-associatesllc.com)). Mr. Booth has been working in the Jetter, Carver and other areas of Opelika providing affordable housing in part through a grant program sponsored by the City of Opelika. Mr. Booth commented that for all intents and purposes there are three components that must be looked at when evaluating a project. They are land, structure, and financing costs. BNB attempts to work in all three areas: i.e., buying the land, construction the homes, and providing reasonable financing. Mr. Jackson commented that land prices are the key variable differentiating Auburn from Opelika, and until that’s addressed building affordable housing will remain a challenge.

II. **ADJOURNMENT:** Councilwomen Taylor adjourned the meeting circa 8:00 p.m. CDT.

*Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 8, 2019, beginning at 6:00 p.m.*

*at the Boykin Community Center.*

**END OF SUMMARIES**

Summary by Bruno Ulrich

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“We Will Never Move Forward, if We Keep Looking Back”

**Teams**
- Young men Programs (Coaching, dress code, Fight against Violence etc.)
- Young Ladies Programs (Parenting, cooking Skills, etc.)
- Mentors (Being a Friend, Being a Good Listener) Privacy Act
- Education -Preparring For GED and High School Diplomas
- Donations (Monetary, vans, Food, Etc.)
- Entertainment Programs (Gospel, Jazz, blues, Etc.)

**Teams**
- Secretaries (Taking Notes during Meetings)
- Callers (calling and sending Texts)
- Making flyers (for events)
- Event planners (Back to School, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, Trips to Museums)
- Bringing Minority Business into the community

**Teams**
- Radio, News and TV (Advertisement) (announcing Events associated with the NWA Taskforce)
- Property Owners (investing in your property)
- Senior Programs (Picnics, Trips, house and Yard work, etc.)
- Children Programs (Touring, Trips, I am my Brother’s Keeper, Girl Scouts, Boys Troops, Big Brother etc.)
- Voter’s registers
NARRATIVE #2

Boykin Community Center is a former elementary school converted into a community center that sits on 10.64 acres on Boykin Street. The center includes a gymnasium, facilities for the Auburn Boys and Girls Club, senior center and a variety of other community services. The Doraqueon is a one-story 6,370-square-foot building used for the Auburn Environmental Services offices and the Auburn Bulldog museum. This building was designed to complement the surrounding community and serve as a focal point for the community. The building has large windows and a front porch with columns that provide a welcoming entrance. The exterior features a mix of brick and stone materials that create a warm and inviting atmosphere.

Recommendations:
1. Woodland Nature Park and Trail: A large, densely forested area, the woodland behind the existing gym is proposed to be a nature park with a soft surfaceloop trail under the trees. The trail and area can be made accessible from the Community Center and Gym.
2. Outdoor Classroom and Woodland Cleanup: The woodland site is a popular destination for nature hikes and outdoor learning. The site can be improved by adding a picnic area and signage to highlight the natural beauty of the area.
3. Building Expansion - 40 x 60 Classroom: The Boys and Girls Club space is currently too small to accommodate their needs. The club has been growing over the past few years and needs more space to accommodate their needs. Adding a new building would provide more space for after-school programs and community events.
4. Small Shelter at Multi-Purpose Field: The small turf field adjacent to the parking lot is used by the Boys and Girls Club for various activities, including sports and educational programs. A small shelter would provide a place for students to hang out, eat, and participate in outdoor activities.
5. Improve 100 x 100 Field: The small grass field is in poor condition and needs to be maintained. A simple landscape improvement program could be established to improve the quality of the turf and the field.
6. Prominent Fence (5) (2 Feet Tall): The small grass field and basketball courts border on Doraqueon Drive. A 5 (5) fence along the rear of the grass field will keep activities and ball from spilling out onto the street.
7. Fence Building Basketball Courts (Outdoor) - (2) (2): The city recently completed construction of two (2) outdoor basketball courts. They are fenced on two sides by tall retaining walls but are open on the remaining two (2) sides. Cars parking on the street and entering into the unprotected side of the basketball courts are at risk that they become a liability for play. A six (6) foot fence is needed. A fence between the cars and courts protects the cars, keeps players off the vehicles, and keeps balls out of the street.

8. Shelter for Basketball: The new courts are squeezed between a tall retaining wall and Mary Brooks Drive with little gathering, waiting or viewing space around the courts. A small space at the open end of the courts is an excellent location for a 10 x 13 shade structure for post-up and waiting.

9. Future Community Center with Naturalization: The central location of the Doraqueon site within the city is a perfect location for any of the more high-end expansive recreational facilities such as covered courts or a naturalization. These expensive facilities need to be better located near the population center so that they can be more accessible.

10. Roofing Building A (1,000 square feet): Roofing Building A would provide additional space for community gatherings, meetings, and events. The building could be used for a variety of purposes, such as a community center, arts and cultural center, or an event space.

11. Outdoor Pool: The naturalization is best served by including an outdoor pool and splash pad and water feature.

12. Expand Existing Building as Maintenance: The current Environmental Services office building is being expanded by 1,000 square feet. When the overall site becomes available for development, this building can be converted into a new building.

13. Public Art: The site development program includes a wide variety of uses and attracts a wide spectrum of patrons. Public art is identified as an important element of the program to improve the image of the site and encourage visitors to stay and explore.

14. Greenway Link to Drake School and Westview Park: A greenway is identified along the eastern edge of the Doraqueon site that connects eastward across N. Drake Street past the Drake School to Westview Park. This greenway provides an opportunity to link the community to the existing community center and park.

15. Expanded Parking Lot: Parking is expanded around the site to serve the increased demand on the new facilities.

16. Play Structure: The new Doraqueon site is centrally located so that a neighborhood distribution structure playground is an important feature to the facility. It is best located adjacent to the proposed library to make it more available to patrons and to add a visual focal point to the center.

17. Branch Library: This section of the site is in dire need of a branch library. A 10,000-square-foot building is designated for this site and should provide a visible presence from Doraqueon. See the Library Section of the report for additional data.

18. Neighborhood Park: There is a small neighborhood park on the Doraqueon Drive frontage of the site that serves the residents in the area. It needs to be improved and maintained to continue to serve the residents in the area.

22. Multi-Purpose Field: A full-size multipurpose athletic field can be incorporated into the site plans adjacent to the Doraqueon grass field. The presence of a large multi-purpose field accommodates a variety of games and practices including use by patrons of the Boykin Community Center.

Land Expansion: The city should consider trying to acquire land south of the site fronting on Martin Luther King Drive and convert the site to an internal park.
CENSUS 101: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The 2020 Census is closer than you think!
Here's a quick refresher of what it is and why it's essential that everyone is counted.

Everyone counts.
The census counts every person living in the U.S. once, only once, and in the right place.

It's about fair representation.
Every 10 years, the results of the census are used to reapportion the House of Representatives, determining how many seats each state gets.

It's in the Constitution.
The U.S. Constitution requires a census every 10 years. The census covers the entire country and everyone living here. The first census was in 1790.

It means $675 billion.
Census data determine how more than $675 billion are spent, supporting your state, county and community's vital programs.

It's about redistricting.
After each census, state officials use the results to redraw the boundaries of their congressional and state legislative districts, adapting to population shifts.

Taking part is your civic duty.
Completing the census is required: it's a way to participate in our democracy and say "I COUNT!"