



## Alabama Caucus Minutes Wed., June 16, 2021, 8:30-11am CT via ZOOM

### Attendance:

Name	Organization	Name	Organization
Aron Boldog	CAP - North AL	Jackie Weiss	Fahe
Tim Thrasher	CAP - North AL	Jim King	Fahe
Concepsheon Hall	HERO	Joshua Stewart	Fahe
Mary Ellen Judah	Neighborhood Concepts	Katy Stigers	Fahe
	<b>NHS-Birmingham</b>	Pam Johnson	Fahe
Lisa Pierce - ARM	Guest-AL Rural Ministries	Sara Morgan	Fahe
Carrie Lea	Guest - CAA of NE AL	Ted Boyatt	Fahe
Luke Laney	Guest - CAA of NE AL	Vonda Poynter	Fahe
Maggie Bell	Guest - CAA of NE AL	Christina Tetrick	UChi, Inst.of Politics, Intern
Jose Quinonez	PRT	Claire Silberman	App CARES AC/VISTA
Alex Dadok	Fahe	Sarah Weintraub	Fahe AmeriCorps
Colby Lilly	Fahe	Shannon Howley	AC/VISTA Summer Assoc
Dwain Neeley	Fahe		

**3 of 4 Member Groups in attendance = 75%**

- 1) **Welcome Everyone**, guests from CAA of Northeast Alabama, summer VISTAs, Advocacy Interns, Caucus Members and Fahe Staff.
- 2) **AL Caucus Business**
  - a. **Approve Minutes of February meeting** – Aron moved for approval, Mary Ellen seconded; approved unanimously
  - b. **Nominating Committee** (Mary Ellen Judah) – since we elected the Caucus Chair and Mary Ellen offered to serve on the Nominating Committee, we won't have another go-around until June 2022. Make recommendations for easing the lift – caucus chair – what would make it easier to serve – want to make sure that there are numerous opportunities – not only at the board and at the Caucus meetings. Mary Ellen is always looking for opportunities and serves on the Membership Committee and the Finance Committee. You get to see the breadth and depth of the work across the region.
- 3) **American Rescue Plan**

Aron – guidance coming in the Fall per Ellen Wallace at AHFA

Mary Ellen – seeing a little of the Rental Asst. \$ trickling in – difficulties getting residents to fill out the paperwork

Tim – HeadStart \$\$ coming in, also Relief coming to residents via LIHEAP and Weatherization

Mary Ellen: Residents may be back at work but lots are seeing reduction in hours; small businesses are having trouble filing positions – likely waiting for unemployment benefits to run out.

Alex: State level agencies – sounds like same issues – not the best of working relationships. This could be a strengthening force for your organizations while doing good work for your communities.

Push the local jurisdiction money – flexible – and it can be disbursed to non-profit partners.

Tim: CDBG \$ for infrastructure, some jurisdictions have HOME funds for allocations that may not have the same

Talked to AHFA on the overriding material costs – Aron wrote a member – AAHA is sending a letter to AHFA to let them know that as a group, we can't continue to address increased costs (Jeff Little, Underwriter at AHFA, specifically to amend the QAP) while surrounding states are looking at forward commitment of credits.

Aron: AHFA is not as open as other states to working with the property developments. Barbara Wallace and Jeff – Aaron is touching base each week. I do know that a lot of lenders and syndicators are writing letters to AHFA to let them know how serious this is. Robert Strickland – David Young's boss. This is a real issue and projects are in real jeopardy.

Mary Ellen: Properties that started construction before COVID or last year – increased material costs and delays on supplies as well as labor shortages. Construction loan interest issue – negative impact on credit delivery with investors – share the stories with AHFA – this will be a problem for some time. AHFA received \$41M of HOME – they have a pretty tight box with HOME funds – must be a 56 unit development – release the restrictions. Keep educating locally and at the state. The money needs to be used. **For example** – Mary Ellen met with city planner/engineering dept. and noted that the road cost couldn't be included in basis – they didn't know that.

Tim: Financial Stability funds via the ARP – grant funds for NWA, HUD Counseling agency – does that fit or can you partner with anyone to do that? Opportunity as agencies in AL to make a difference right now to move folks out of poverty into more housing stability situations. Advocate and use the talking points.

Jim King – tremendous opportunity now. Surprised by AHFA's posture. As a Caucus – put something in front of Bob Strickland and his team – they may think they are waiting on direction, but we can go to Treasury and ask for the guidance we want them to give. Jim has been getting questions like how can we serve the Appalachian region better. Take what we want as local as they get and take it as high as they can get.

Tim – will share AAHA letter this afternoon. (Tim serves on that board) there may not be housing provided if they don't make some changes – they have to be pro-active. Wait, conservative, play it close, need to shift.

#### **4) Caucus Member Conversation – How do we build strength for Fahe agencies?**

Tim – Fahe is strong partner, advocate, a source of great information. Need to bring new Members to this caucus to strengthen the voice, mission, moving the needle in AL. Tired of being 50<sup>th</sup>. Set the example in the state and in the region – influence rural healthcare, housing, persistent poverty.

Mary Ellen – enjoys being around the other states Members – hear the innovation going on in other, more progressive places. A support group of sorts! Build the strength of Fahe agencies, add Members in AL, there are some great nonprofits in the state – not all putting together complex housing programs – need to help them get up to speed, partner, build their capacity.

Lisa – totally agree – coming from a smaller, volunteer, mission driven group

#### **5) Fahe Membership – Opportunities**

- a. Alabama Rural Ministries – potential Member – presentation. Following the presentation Mary Ellen Judah moved that the caucus recommend ARM to the board for Fahe Membership. Aron seconded and the motion was approved unanimously.
- b. Recruitment Strategy - Caucus Focus on building Fahe Membership
  - i. Community Action Agency NE AL, Carrie Lea, support for housing work, Rainsville – working on their application, definitely interested in becoming a Fahe Member.
- c. Other Associations to reach out to? Engagement Grid

d. Alabama Events – participation/support – Fahe AL Caucus display table?

## 6) Advocacy

- a. Federal update: prospects for passage of legislation – 2 packages, Amer. Jobs Plan, American Families Plan – proposals/counter-proposals. Path forward, trying to be bipartisan – hard infrastructure – roads, bridges – serious investment in broadband (new). \$80B needed to build our rural and fill in gaps. Sticking point is subsidy to individuals. Alex – appropriations also delayed, Faced with an enormous crisis – finally building broadband, increase in housing/comm. dev. programs, plus-ing up emergency relief. We need to set the expectations even higher, long term what we need to think bigger – Tim -
- b. Hiring update from Advocacy Department – still in process in hiring the Adv. Director, steady stream of interviews, but haven't found someone exactly the right fit. Leadership Dev. Director – native of SW Virginia – Andreas, will meet him at the Annual Mtg.
- c. Communications Director – Ted Boyatt – Maryville, TN. Joined Fahe 2 ½ mo. ago, works remotely from TN Valley – Blount Co. Not a great deal of concrete specifics right now, still rebuilding the communication team – recruitment, hiring, restructure media practices. Top line messaging, re-branding. Help clarify identity, touchpoints, web presence, etc. Intermediate term – great opportunities for our team to help complement, reinforce a combined message, raise awareness, celebrate your accomplishments/good work.

## 7) Suggestions for Caucus Friends Email List

Examples: staff at Alabama Housing Finance Agency; AL USDA-RD; LIHCA; Habitat Affiliates; CSPWAL; North AL CDC; CAA of AL; North AL Coalition for the Homeless; Family Services Groups

## 9) Fahe Updates – Memo Attached

- a. Member Updates (Vonda) - *In our conversations with the membership committee, we are doing evaluations on Membership now as renewal season is here. We're working through just reviewing the memberships adherence to kind of the three things that we always talked about that are, you know, are the compliance pieces one Have you paid your dues and have you submitted all your documents. We also look at the participation, are you attending caucus meetings, Spring retreat, Annual meeting. The third leg of that compliance is reporting, are you reporting every quarter, so that we know what you're doing, as far as some of the activities in your local communities. It's important because we compile that together so we can talk about what the Fahe network does.*
  - Reporting – QE 3-31-21 - Reporting last we did really great about two quarters ago, then we've been, you know, in the kind of in the 80 80% pieces. Overall, with all the membership lately, we would really like to make sure that as we hit into this, this fiscal year, which is the quarter ending June 30. Please make a point to get your reporting in, it's not due until the 15th of the, of the following month. So it's important that that information gets submitted.
  - Membership Renewals, (Jackie Weiss) Materials went out on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Items A-D, which includes dues have a deadline of July 31 - all remaining materials no later than Aug. 31. If you haven't seen this in you inbox, please check Junk mail. Jackie can resend if needed, also, can be found on the Member website:  
<https://www.fahemembers.com/member-resources/fahe-membership-renewal/>
  - Annual Meeting - Really excited to see everyone in person in September. We are

working out the final details of the Hotel registration site and the event registration will open up in July; watch for information coming out on that. Also watch for information on the Annual Awards, we look to the Members for nominations, please be thinking about who you'd like to nominate!

Registration opens around 9:30 on the first day (Tues. 9/21) but the meeting doesn't start until Noon. The Membership Meeting is the first thing on the agenda after lunch, that's the required part of the Annual Meeting for the Members.

- b. Resource Plan Working Group (Sara Morgan)- We have received about eight people who volunteered to participate in that committee and the purpose of the committee will be to inform our fundraising and investment seeking strategies, so that we're aligning those with the kinds of resources you are me, where we can. So far we have from Alabama Tim has volunteered to participate. If anybody else is just dying to participate. Send me your name or send to Colby and we'll be more than happy to add you to the team. We should be trying to set that up in the next couple of weeks. I also wanted to address really quick reporting because I know, I know reporting probably is the bane of your existence. And I know we also recognize that the reporting that you send in only encapsulate only encompasses a small portion of the work you do but it is critically important for our ability to be able to represent the networks work in the region. When Alex and Josh and their teams are, are advocating for what's needed in the region.
- c. REED – Research Evaluation Evidence and Data Committee (Katy Stigers)- Please see the memo that is in your packet, We're inviting members to participate in the REED committee. We're mirroring some of the fancy foundations, language, as a signal to them that we know what we're doing and they should come to us and find out more about it. Oftentimes funders, researchers and so forth will come to harvest the important information that you have about what you're doing on the ground and what works best. What we are trying to do is treat our own your own expertise as an asset that you deserve to be compensated for, and that will actually start to shape the conversation so that they're asking better questions. This committee is an opportunity to sort of institutionalize, or, or build a habit of sharing amongst ourselves this is a practice that we that far he has begun to enjoy. Last summer, we developed the Data Explorer. It uses ARC and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation tabulations of census and administrative data. It's pretty self-explanatory but you're absolutely welcome to reach out to me directly. [kstigers@fahe.org](mailto:kstigers@fahe.org) If you'd like to have a tutorial or we can share out the lunch and learn presentation that we recorded for this last year. It is password protected but it's for use, and will update it as soon as the new IRC tabulations come out. <https://fahe.org/data-explorer/>  
**password:** TableauTest
- c. Lending – Community Lending, Just Choice Lending - see brochure, was emailed previously but included it just in case you missed it.
- d. Partners for Rural Transformation Report (Jose Quinonez) I wanted to share the results of our first year, how we have worked so far on our plan, how we are advancing and where we're trying to do moving forward. We also provided a link to the case study with the our experts. I think that what is important is that if you think about how you're growing the Alabama caucus, transformation has become an example of partnerships and helping each other, learning from peer to peer, and how we can explain it in that relationship to one another. I think you will find it very interesting, so whenever you have time, or you want to go to sleep just take it to bed and read. [Link to Case Study](#)

### Upcoming Events

- **Wednesday, June 30 - 2 pm:** Monthly Training Webinar – Rental Portfolio Mgmt.
- **Sept. 21/22/23 - Fahe Annual Meeting** – MeadowView Conf. Center, Kingsport, TN
- **Oct. 21 – AL Caucus Meeting**

**SAVE THE DATE: Sept. 21-22-23 - 2021 Fahe Annual Meeting!!**