



Supervisors Trek to DC Seeking Economic Development

Three hot topics for George County were the focus of meetings held in Washington, D.C. earlier this month. Those topics were: the process for housing federal inmates at the County's correctional facility, the use of Federal grants at the County's Industrial Park and an update on the Lake George permitting process.

This was the third year for a delegation of George County Supervisors to trek to the nation's capital to meet with Senators and Congressmen representing Mississippi. Supervisors Fred Croom (Dist. One), Kelly Wright (Dist. Two), and Larry McDonald (Dist. Three) made the trip the year. Accompanying them was Ken Flanagan, GC Community Development Director.

The supervisors met with both Mississippi Senators, Thad Cochran and Roger Wicker, and their staffs. They also met with Congressmen Steven Palazzo and Greg Harper and their staffs.

"It was two days packed with meetings and updates. The real benefit of a visit with your senator and congressman is sitting down with them personally and their staff members. The discussion and insights into the federal process on certain items is vital for future planning," Larry McDonald said.

In addition to the meeting with Mississippi legislators, the delegation made a side trip to Bethesda, Maryland to meet with top Enviva officials.

"This was a major economic development meeting," reported Ken Flanagan. "County supervisors met with the management team of Enviva Biomass at their corporate headquarters. Joining supervisors at the meeting were representatives from Mississippi Power, Mississippi Development Authority and Mississippi Export Railroad."

The two-and-a-half hour meeting focused on a construction timeframe for the ground breaking for a wood pellet plant and an update on current utilities at the Industrial Park.

"The Enviva team was impressed with the recent and planned expansions for the Multi-Mart Water System and complimented their entire Board. Enviva was also impressed by the County's use of state and federal grants to improve the Industrial Park's infrastructure," McDonald said.

Enviva is a major U.S. wood products company that manufactures and sells wood pellets to European and United Kingdom power plants to be used as a sustainable fuel. The company owns and operates five pellet plants. Two are in North Carolina, two are in Mississippi, and one is in Cottondale, Florida. The five plants have a capacity of 1.7 million metric tons of wood pellets per year.

In 2013, Green Circle Bio Energy announced plans to build a \$115 million wood pellet plant near Lucedale. Before construction could begin, the company was sold to Enviva in 2014, putting the project on hold.

There have been indications recently that the George County pellet mill project is once again heating up.

"George County brought its A-Game to the Enviva meeting, MS Power, MS Export Railroad, and the State were great additions to our presentation and updates. Each of their representative's travel at their own expense for this meeting. It demonstrated how strong our partnerships are for this project. It might have been our best meeting of the entire trip," Flanagan said.