

## **Drax Gloster Community Advisory Panel**

Meeting Minutes 07/31/2024

### **Present:**

Aarika Plunkett

Lauren George

Christy Havard

Linda Campbell

Crystal Murray

Michelli Martin

Jackie Robinson

Velicia Anderson

### **Guest Attendees present for opening remarks:**

Bob Ellis

Daniel Cook

Houston Smith

Jeff Crawford

### **Absent:**

Inez Bell

Larry Veal

Vivica Hoover

### **MEETING NOTES:**

#### **Opening Remarks & Administrative-**

- Drax hosts thanked the attendees for participating and reiterated the panel's objectives.
- Drax guest attendees from the Amite Bioenergy Operations team gave remarks on their roles at the facility and their support for the panel.
- All panel members introduced themselves and explained the rules of action.
- Panel attendees sign photo/video release and conflict of interest forms.
- Explanation of conflict-of-interest forms.

#### **Regular business-**

- Panel reviewed the local organizations and causes Drax has funded to date via the Gloster Community Fund.
- Panel provided advice on how to consider future applications into the fund, including noting the organizations whose missions meet a true need in the community.

- Panel discussed new ideas not already addressed by applications approved through the Community Fund - this included:
  - Establishing a vocational tech program to prepare students leaving high school to obtain jobs in roles across the forestry industry. Drax representatives agreed to raise this idea with the Mississippi Forestry Association workforce development lead as a potential partner and with Amite County Schools directly.
  - Workshops and training for students regarding fundamental job application and interview skills. There are no existing programs in the school due to low enrollment and funding. The panel has recommended that Drax investigate partners or opportunities to work on this need with the local high school.
  - Advice on how Drax's donation of laptops would be most useful, given that there is not an existing Gloster tutoring program. Suggestions included talking to other organizations that coordinate these kinds of programs, including the Mississippi State University Extension Service or the Southwest Mississippi Community College.
  - There are many challenges to sharing information about services for veterans in the area and limited convening spaces for them to gather. Suggested that organizations should specify this need and potentially submit an application to the Community Fund.
  - The lack of transportation options is a key barrier for community members to access the public services available to them. It was acknowledged that there are no significant organizations that Drax can directly support to address this need and therefore it may be outside the realm of capacity.
  - The Gloster library needs updated books; it is a very small collection of books and those that are there are very old. The library receives books through the Pike-Amite-Walthall Library System, but the overall shared supply is limited. Suggested supporting the organization of a "Friends of the Library" charitable group to raise funds for new books and/or submitting an application into the Drax Community Fund.
  - The library has no laptop devices for residents to use. Given the limited hours of the library, a laptop device loan program would be helpful but other local libraries have attempted this and decided to end them so that may not be a practical idea to implement.

## **Adjournment**

Discuss meeting frequency: Meeting quarterly / every three months.

The next general meeting will be held Tuesday, November 12, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in the breakroom at the Drax Amite Bioenergy Facility.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Minutes submitted by: Michelli Martin

Approved by: Aarika Plunkett