



News release

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BAHEP hosts HREDA quarterly meeting

BAY AREA HOUSTON, TEXAS – “This recession will turn around when consumers start spending,” declared well known economist Robert F. Hodgins, Ph.D., to the members of the Houston Region Economic Development Alliance during its summer 2009 meeting held at Space Center Houston on July 9. Hodgins is an associate professor at the University of Houston-Clear Lake. He is also director of the Center for Economic Education at UHCL. The meeting’s agenda was devised by the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership, an HREDA member, and also included presentations by Blaine Brown from Lockheed Martin, Bob Mitchell, BAHEP president, and Dan Seal, BAHEP’s executive director, technology programs.

Hodgins presented recent government data interspersed with his personal remarks. He affirmed that consumer spending is key to getting out of the longest recession since the Great Depression. “There are articles coming out that say this is not true. They are just wrong,” Hodgins flatly stated. He continued, “Another round of stimulus is more than warranted, and I said this in January ‘08 that the current fiscal stimulus was going to be inadequate by half. That may end up actually being true, because the recession was more debilitating and is going to be longer than we had initially anticipated.” In regard to unemployment, Hodgins advised, “It will continue to rise through mid 2010, and then it will tend to level off as the economy feels its oats again and starts to absorb the labor that was cast out during the early year or two of this recession.”

He also cautioned, “It would be a fatal error for the federal government to start to back off on the stimulus. It would be a fatal error for the Federal Reserve to cut back on the level of the money supply at this time. We’re probably at the riskiest policy point in this recessionary phase right now.” Everyone in the room was happy to hear Hodgins state that Houston will be a little faster than Texas and a little faster than the rest of the economy in turning around. “How much faster is hard to say. This recession is unprecedented in the last two generations,” he related.

Mitchell reports on Washington trip in support of NASA

Mitchell opened his presentation saying, “A lot of people take NASA Johnson Space Center for granted. There are 18,000 engineers in this community today who work in the aerospace industry. Each year, \$3.5

billion goes in and out of the Johnson Space Center. There is funding in every congressional district in Texas that NASA provides in some form or fashion.”

He then gave a report on BAHEP’s Citizens for Space Exploration Committee’s 18th annual trip to Washington, D.C., in support of NASA. The travelers descended on Capitol Hill to advocate for an adequately funded human space exploration program that encompasses the Space Shuttle, International Space Station and Constellation programs. The group also expressed support for a long-term goal of investing 1% of the federal budget annually in NASA compared to the .5% currently received.

From May 18-21, 2009, 115 CSE travelers representing 24 states visited 341 congressional offices. They met individually with members of Congress or their staff. The CSE trip has grown to be the nation’s largest (i.e. most congressional offices contacted) pro-NASA, pro-space exploration grassroots annual trip to Washington. Mitchell noted that Harris County Precinct 2 Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia joined the travelers on Capitol Hill, marking her 12th consecutive trip with the group.

Brown gives overview of Constellation Program

Mitchell then introduced Blaine Brown from Lockheed Martin. Brown is the Integrated Product Team director for the design, development, test, certification and delivery of the Orion vehicle. Orion is the next generation Crew Exploration Vehicle that will replace the capability of taking humans into space when the space shuttle orbiters retire at the end of 2010. He controls a \$1.3 billion budget.

Brown gave a video presentation on the Constellation Program and the Orion CEV and explained how Constellation is very different from the Apollo Program. Very unlike Apollo, Orion will be able to spend up to 210 days circling the moon unattended while a four-person crew lives in a permanent base and explores the moon’s surface. Crews will rotate at six-month intervals. Solar arrays, which deploy soon after Orion reaches low earth orbit, will generate power for life support, computer, and communications systems, and service module batteries will store that power for use during times the vehicle is in darkness. Apollo could only land on points around the equator due to orbital mechanics and could only remain on the surface for a few days. Orion will allow the Altair lunar lander to set down at any point on the moon at any time and return at any time. Brown explained that they are closely examining the moon’s South Pole as a potential landing site due to the possibility of water being present there.

Seal provides update on Ike Dike

Seal closed out the agenda by giving a Power Point presentation on an enormous potential project termed the Ike Dike. Obviously named for Hurricane Ike that devastated the Bay Area Houston region in September 2008, the Ike Dike is the brainchild of Bill Merrell, Ph.D., an oceanographer from Texas A&M University at Galveston.

The project would extend Galveston’s 17-ft.-high seawall to cover 60 miles of Texas’ upper coast and would include 1,000 ft. long floodgates to hold back storm surge. Seal commented that the engineering for such a huge undertaking is already proven. Rotterdam in the Netherlands and London are using such floodgates, and construction on those in St. Petersburg, Russia, is almost finished. He noted, “The area is home to three of the country’s 10 largest oil refineries, 40% of its chemical manufacturing capacity and the country’s second largest seaport, handling some 600,000 tons of cargo a day. Protecting these assets is not only of economic importance, but it affects our national security as well.”

Seal reported that BAHEP’s International Maritime Advisory Committee has been working with the region’s elected officials, business and industry leaders to determine the level of support for the Ike Dike, which would take 10 years to build at a cost of \$2 billion - \$4 billion, a fraction of the \$32 billion in damages caused by Hurricane Ike.

Thus far, support to build the Ike Dike has gained momentum rapidly. Recently, those working on behalf of this multi-billion dollar project have chosen to continue their efforts under the organizational name of Coastal Storm Protection Alliance.

The quarterly HREDA meeting was followed by a CenterPoint sponsored luncheon.



Robert F. Hodgkin, Ph.D.



Blaine Brown





The Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership hosted the summer 2009 meeting of the Houston Region Economic Development Alliance, which was held at Space Center Houston.

The Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership is a member-driven organization that provides the leadership to stimulate regional economic development and employment in southeast Texas. Its members include more than 260 investor companies, business professionals, local governments, and educational institutions encompassing 13 cities, Galveston and Harris counties, and the Port of Houston Authority. Visit www.bayareahouston.com.

Space Alliance Technology Outreach Program is administered by the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership. It is a State of Texas funded initiative designed to transfer the knowledge and technology of the U.S. Space Program to small businesses to solve technical challenges they are unable to solve themselves. Visit www.spacetechnsolutions.com/bahep.