

**MINUTES OF THE  
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL  
JULY 20, 2017 MEETING**

The meeting of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council was held on July 20, 2017 at the offices of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council-1400 Colonial Boulevard, Suite #1 in Fort Myers, Florida. Chair Burch called the meeting to order at 9:03 AM. Commissioner Mann then led an invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance. Ms. Margaret Wuerstle conducted the roll call and noted that a quorum was not present.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

**Charlotte County:** Commissioner Ken Doherty, Mr. Don McCormick

**Collier County:** Commissioner Bill McDaniel, Mr. Bob Mulhere

**Glades County:** Commissioner Donna Storter-Long,

**Hendry County:** Commissioner Karson Turner, Commissioner Julie Wilkins

**Lee County:** Commissioner Frank Mann, Councilman Jim Burch,  
Councilman Forrest Banks, Vice-Mayor Mick Denham,  
Councilman Greg DeWitt

**Sarasota County:** Commissioner Willie Shaw, Councilman Fred Fraize

**Ex-Officio:** Ms. Jennifer Carpenter-FDEP, Ms. Sarah Catala-FDOT

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

**Charlotte County:** Commissioner Joe Tiseo, Councilwoman Lynne Matthews,  
Ms. Suzanne Graham

**Collier County:** Commissioner Penny Taylor, Councilman Reg Buxton

**Glades County:** Commissioner Donald Strenth, Councilwoman Pat Lucas,  
Mr. Thomas Perry

**Hendry County:** Commissioner Mitchell Wills, Vice-Mayor Michael Atkinson,  
Mr. Mel Karau

**Lee County:** Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass, Councilwoman Anita Cereceda,  
Councilmember Jim Wilson, Ms. Laura Holquist

**Sarasota County:** Commissioner Charles Hines, Commissioner Michael Moran,  
Mr. Felipe Colón

**Ex-Officio:** Mr. Phil Flood-SFWMD, Ms. Tara Poulton-SWFWMD

**AGENDA ITEM #4  
PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No public comments were made at this time.

**AGENDA ITEM #5  
AGENDA**

There were no changes made to the July 20, 2017 agenda.

**AGENDA ITEM #6  
UPDATES**

**AGENDA ITEM #6(a)  
Opioid Project-VISTA Volunteers**

Mr. Stoltzfus stated that the RPC is now accepting applications for the two new VISTA positions for the region-wide opioid project. Ms. Nightingale passed out a form on the value of the VISTA volunteers and added that she will be distributing news releases to the Council to keep them updated on staff activities.

Ms. Wuerstle asked that the Promise Zone communities take all of the steps necessary to fill their VISTA positions before we lose them. Commissioner Wilkins and Mr. Stoltzfus discussed the progress and next steps for the City of LaBelle and Hendry County Economic Development Council to fill their VISTA positions. Commissioner McDaniel added that he will assist Council staff in getting Collier County to provide the Council with what they need.

Chair Burch stated that he believed there was a concerted effort to eliminate organizations like the RPCs and eliminate home rule for the cities. He also added that the opioid issue is absolutely relevant and we are losing an entire generation to the opioid epidemic. This is a topic that is more appropriate for the RPC to handle than the local governments due to the regional nature of the threat. Commissioner McDaniel believed that its three generations that have been lost to opioids.

**AGENDA ITEM #6(b)  
CEDS Schedule**

Ms. Wuerstle announced that the 2017 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) update will go before the CEDS Committee next week for approval before it goes out for public comment. The RPC is the region's federally designated Economic Development District. After the 30 day public comment period, it will be brought to the Council in September. Chair Burch asked that the Council be alerted when that 30 day period begins. Ms. Wuerstle added that it is important that the Council members check the vital projects list and make sure that it is accurate for their community.

**AGENDA ITEM #6(c)**  
**New Grants Submitted**

Mr. Stoltzfus announced that five DEO grants were submitted in June. These were for Phase 2 of the MLK Corridor Plan, printing of the LaBelle Farm Tour Brochure, Economic Valuation of the CHNEP Coastal Counties, Promise Zone Broadband Study, and Regional Strategy for Agricultural Sustainability.

He also announced that the Florida Job Growth Grant Fund was recently announced. \$85 million are available statewide for infrastructure and workforce training. Commissioner Wilkins asked for more clarification on the types of projects that will be funded. Mr. Stoltzfus answered that almost all of the projects funded are infrastructure and they prefer shovel-ready projects.

**AGENDA ITEM #6(d)**  
**Regional Transportation Map**

Mr. Walker presented the latest version of the Regional Transportation Map that he created using FDOT data. He went through all of the various data layers that he has compiled for the map. Commissioner Wilkins noted that the Enterprise Zones should not be on the map as they expired at the end of 2016. Mr. Walker explained that this interactive map is not on the RPC's website yet. He stated that he is working on adding it to the website and creating interactive pdfs. Chair Burch added that part of the value of the map is that the local governments will be able to add to it. This will be a strong marketing tool for the region.

Mr. Walker showed a layer that demonstrated a unified Future Land Use Map for the entire region. Mr. Mulhere asked about hurricane evacuation routes and funded transportation improvements. Mr. Walker answered that he has the hurricane evacuation data. Ms. Catala added that the transportation improvement data could come from FDOT or the MPOs. Commissioner Doherty believed that this is a great database and it can help prioritize project funding. Commissioner Doherty and Chair Burch emphasized the importance of the regional nature of this map and database. Commissioner McDaniel applauded Council staff for their efforts. He wanted to see the map distributed to the county and municipality staffs for comments and agreed that the planned transportation improvements data would add even more value.

Councilman Banks asked if the Charlotte County Airport is still the designated disaster airport for the region. He also recommended that the interactive map be brought to the State representatives to show the value of the RPC. Chair Burch stressed the importance of keeping the data repository in one spot to keep the data up to date and consistent throughout the region. Ms. Carpenter added that FDEP has data on approved disaster debris management sites that may be useful to add to the map. Mr. Mulhere asked that the Council be made aware when the map becomes available online. Commissioner Wilkins stated that Mr. Walker did an excellent job and asked what the intermodal hubs layer consists of. Mr. Walker explained that the intermodal hub category consists of marinas, airports, and bus terminals.

Councilman Fraize asked if shelters could be included. Mr. Walker added that he and Mr. Kammerer are currently updating the Statewide Regional Evacuation Study Program (SRESP) which updates evacuation clearance times. That data will become available soon and include

evacuation routes and shelters. Mr. Mulhere explained that the hurricane evacuation process has changed in recent years.

**AGENDA ITEM #6(e)**  
**Climate Change Adaptation Plans**

Mr. Beever gave a presentation on two climate change adaptation plans he created for the City of Cape Coral and the Pelican Cove Community in Sarasota County. Mr. Beever specified that these studies were not funded by local assessments and he can find funding to do a study for any willing local government in the region. These plans also had a high level of public involvement. Mr. Beever showcased the effects that filter floating marsh floating islands can have on water quality and Commissioner McDaniel noted that these have worked to great effect in Naples.

Commissioner McDaniel asked how measurable and milestones are put in place for these plans. Mr. Beever outlined the measurables for the Punta Gorda adaptation plan. Commissioner McDaniel asked for the cost of one of these plans? Mr. Beever answered that his plans have cost between \$20,000 and \$50,000. Commissioner McDaniel explained that Collier County has been asked to hire Harvard graduates to study sea level rise, which would be a \$300,000 expense. Commissioner Wilkins explained that the water quality and restoration elements of the plan are more relevant to Hendry County than climate change. She suggested that the RPC use water quality and restoration to sell this service rather than climate change. Mr. Beever added that he would also look at drought planning, hydrology balance, river quality, and Lake Shoreline in Hendry County. Chair Burch stated that climate change does exist and the RPC has been a leader in climate change planning. Mr. McCormick added that the City of Punta Gorda along with the Nature Conservancy of Southwest Florida have implemented biodegradable reef balls.

**AGENDA ITEM #7**  
**NEW BUISNESS**

**AGENDA ITEMS #7(a) and 7(b)**  
**Yelp System and Knox Box for Fire Departments**

Councilman Fraize asked what system the other counties use for fire departments entering gated communities. Commissioner McDaniel stated that Collier Counties leaves that decision to the individual fire departments. Councilman Fraize explained that this became an issue when the City of Venice had to cover for Charlotte County. Councilman DeWitt is the assistant chief of the Bonita Springs Fire Department and explained that Lee County uses the EVAC system. This system allows access for every fire department to any community and station in the county. The Council asked staff to survey each community and determine what system each is using.

**AGENDA ITEM #8**  
**DISCUSSION OF THE RELEVANCY AND FUTURE OF THE SWFRPC**

Chair Burch stated that this is a conversation that the Council has had several times over the years and the Council will not give up in its efforts to continue its existence. Ms. Wuerstle asked if the Council would like to hold a workshop to determine a future direction for the RPC. She also handed out a form for the Councilmembers to indicate which areas of work the Council should

focus on. Commissioner McDaniel asked how much longer the Council can sustain itself financially. Ms. Wuerstle predicted that the Council could survive through September 30, 2018. Commissioner McDaniel asked if that includes the possibility that Collier County could withdraw funding. Ms. Wuerstle will make those changes to the budget when official action is taken by Collier County.

Mr. Mulhere believes it would be a waste of resources to hold a workshop. A better alternative would be to meet with the Counties individually to see if the Council could make any changes to receive support. Commissioner McDaniel stressed the importance of the Promise Zone at the Collier County BOCC meeting. Commissioner Doherty suggested that Ms. Wuerstle meet individually meet with each County Manager/Administrator and one County Commissioner to discuss what changes they would like to see made by the RPC. He reiterated that Charlotte County wants to salvage the RPC, but changes need to be made. Chair Burch agreed that a workshop would not be an efficient way to address this issue and advised Ms. Wuerstle to follow Mr. Mulhere and Commissioner Doherty's suggestions. Mr. McCormick stated that the RPC is still required by State Statutes and he does not believe that the Council has been effectively communicating with State Legislators. He further questioned where the counties and municipalities would get together with FDEP, FDOT and the WMDs and discuss important regional issues if the RPC were to go away.

Ms. Wuerstle announced that Hendry County had voted to stay in the RPC for the next year and the City of Bonita Springs intends to stay in the RPC. The Council is still awaiting the Attorney General's opinion of Sarasota County's decision to pull out. FRCA has stated that they may take up the declaratory judgment issue for all of the RPCs. Commissioner Turner believed that Hendry County would not have voted to stay in had he not spoken up at the meeting. He believes the Council should do everything they can to avoid litigation. Commissioner Doherty listed Home Rule issues, the National Flood Insurance Program, and Homestead as important issues for the Council to discuss rather than comprehensive plan amendments and DRIs. Commissioner Wilkins sees communication as an issue. She does not know everything that the staff is doing.

Commissioner Mann believes that the Lee County Manager will not be swayed by a meeting given the 4-1 vote by the County Commission to leave the RPC. He still believes there is a role for a region entity for water quality and quantity and transportation, but that will be defined by the Florida Legislature. Ms. Wuerstle asked about Lee County's plan for the State requirements once they pull out of the RPC. Commissioner Mann answered that the County does not care right now. Commissioner Mann called for more input from the State level on this issue. Commissioner Shaw agreed that this needs to be discussed at the State level.

Ms. Wuerstle reported that FRCA would like the SWFRPC to drop out of FRCA to avoid the negative publicity affecting the other RPCs. They have told the Association of Counties and League of Cities that this is a SWFRPC problem only. She stated that she was concerned that FRCA has a plan to divide up the SWF counties if the SWFRPC drops out of FRCA.

Vice-Mayor Denham asked if a conversation needs to happen between the municipalities and the counties about how they would communicate without the RPC. That conversation should not begin with the word "RPC", but focus on communication between counties and cities.

**AGENDA ITEM #9  
STATE AGENCIES COMMENTS/REPORTS**

Ms. Carpenter announced that FDEP has a new Secretary, Noah Valenstein, who believes in the importance of relationships with local governments. She asks that the local governments feel free to reach out to her or Mr. Iglehart with any concerns on issues so that they can be addressed collaboratively with FDEP.

Ms. Catala announced that FDOT also has a new Secretary, Michael Dew. Chris Smith, the Director of Transportation Development at District 1 has retired. He has been replaced by John Kubler. FDOT's Unfunded Needs Plan has recently been adopted and she will be giving presentations on that plan soon. Updates to the Cost Feasible Plan will begin in August. The SIS Policy Plan is also undergoing updates.

Mr. Jim Kelter with FWC announced that they are having stakeholder meetings regarding burrowing owls and the new rules and regulations will be out in December.

**AGENDA ITEM #10  
COUNCIL LEGAL CONSULTANT'S COMMENTS**

Ms. Nightingale explained that she had a discussion with the Executive Director of another RPC regarding the quorum requirements and they are considering repealing the bylaws to the extent that they are not required by State Law to give the Council more power to make changes internally. She has gone through the formal process of notifying the State of Florida of this intent. Commissioner Doherty added that the interlocal agreement grants more flexibility regarding to the quorum than the bylaws.

**AGENDA ITEM #11  
COUNCIL MEMBER'S COMMENTS**

Commissioner Wilkins asked about the status of the August meeting. Chair Burch stated that the August meeting will be cancelled

**AGENDA ITEM #12  
ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

  
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Mr. Thomas Perry, Chair

**The meeting was duly advertised in the July 6, 2017 issue of the FLORIDA ADMINISTRATIVE REGISTER, Volume 43, Number 130.**