

**MINUTES OF THE
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL
April 18, 2019 MEETING**

The meeting of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council was held on April 18, 2019 at the offices of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council—1400 Colonial Boulevard, Suite #1 in Fort Myers, Florida. Chair Perry called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM. Commissioner Mann then gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Ms. Margaret Wuerstle conducted the roll call and announced that a quorum was present.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Charlotte County: Commissioner Joe Tiseo,
Councilman Gary Wein, Mr. Don McCormick

Collier County: Commissioner Penny Taylor, Commissioner Bill McDaniel

Glades County: Commissioner Donna Storter-Long, Mr. Thomas Perry

Hendry County: Commissioner Mitchell Wills, Mr. Mel Karau, Commissioner Julie Wilkins

Lee County: Commissioner Frank Mann, Councilman Fred Burson, Vice-Mayor Mick Denham, Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass, Councilman Greg DeWitt,

Sarasota County: Commissioner Willie Shaw, Councilmember Mitzie Fielder, Commissioner Charles Hines, Commissioner Michael Moran

Ex-Officio: Mr. Phil Flood—SFWMD

MEMBERS ABSENT

Charlotte County: Ms. Suzanne Graham, Commissioner Ken Doherty

Collier County: Councilman Reg Buxton

Glades County: Commissioner Donald Strenth

Hendry County: Vice-Mayor Michael Atkinson, Commissioner Emma Byrd

Lee County: Vice-Mayor Ray Murphy

Sarasota County: None

Ex-Officio: Mr. Wayne Gaither, FDOT, Mr. Jon Iglehart–FDEP,
Mr. Dennis Ragosta– SWFWMD

**AGENDA ITEM #4
PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

**AGENDA ITEM #5
AGENDA**

There were no changes made to the agenda.

**AGENDA ITEM #6
MINUTES**

Ms. Wuerstle asked that Councilwoman Fiedler be marked present at the February meeting, as she was present via telephone.

A motion was made by Commissioner Mann and seconded by Mr. McCormick to approve the February meeting minutes with the addition of Councilwoman Fiedler’s attendance. The motion passed unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM #7
CONSENT AGENDA**

A motion was made by Commissioner McDaniel and seconded by Commissioner Tiseo to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM #8
PRESENTATIONS**

**AGENDA ITEM #8(a)
CHARLOTTE HARBOR NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM**

Jennifer Hecker gave a presentation about the CHNEP and water quality issues. She stated that the CHNEP looks to address four priority problems: Hydrologic Alteration, Water Quality Degradation, Fish & Wildlife Habitat Loss and Stewardship Gaps. She asked that we adopt the Biosolids Resolution that was brought to the council several months ago. Vice-Mayor Denham asked about what must happen in order to change the CHNEP’s coverage area. Ms. Hecker answered that the policy board had already approved the coverage area and name change to Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Program effective June 1, 2019. Vice-Mayor Denham asked where the funding for the CHNEP organization comes from and Ms. Hecker stated that they receive a variety of funds, including \$600,000 annually from U.S. Environmental Protection

Agency, also from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Southwest Florida Water Management District, local governmental entities, and general public and private contributions. They're able to provide \$19 of restoration for every \$1 of federal funding that they receive. Commissioner McDaniel asked the reason for the caging of seagrass. Ms. Hecker responded that when seagrass is first planted, they are not firmly rooted, and we don't want grazers on them before they are firmly rooted. Once they are ready, the cages are removed so that the seagrass can be a food source for those animals.

Mr. James Beever explained that the RPC was one of the entities that helped to create the CHNEP and has been active with them on many projects. Commissioner Storter-Long asked why the CHNEP was moving their boundary inland toward the lake. Ms. Heckler said that the CHNEP is trying to reach the whole Caloosahatchee watershed. Commissioner Mann suggested that the RPC take another look at the Biosolids Resolution.

AGENDA ITEM #8(b)
CALUSA WATERKEEPER: A SUMMARY OF WATER QUALITY ISSUES FOR SWFL

Mr. John Cassani gave a presentation on the Calusa Waterkeeper nonprofit advocacy organization and blue-green algae. Commissioner Wilkins asked for evidence that agriculture is a contributing factor to the blue-green algae. Mr. Cassani said that in 2017, 88% of the total phosphorus loading into the lake was from agriculture. He added that it is hard to determine the effect of the best management practices. Commissioner Wilkins said that there are studies showing that water coming out of sugar facilities is cleaner than it is when it comes into the facility and asked how he could tell where the run-off water was coming from. Mr. Cassani said that a water control structure is in place and much of the loading into Lake O is from the watershed to the North. Mr. Flood said that the reservoir was never meant to be the savior of the estuary, it was intended to help the minimum flow level. Mr. Flood also stated that the District is creating a scope of work that evaluates local water quality components for the reservoir. Vice-Mayor Denham said that he feels the most important short-term step to address the watershed problem is to reevaluate laws. Commissioner Pendergrass shared that he lives inland and still sees the negative impacts from the watershed on the Lee County septic systems. Commissioner Storter-Long defended the agriculture industry saying that it cannot be blamed as the main source of runoff in the watershed, simply because it covers the largest geographic area. Mr. Cassani responded that it has been well documented over the years that agriculture indeed is a large contributor to the watershed issues.

Commissioner Taylor asked for more information on septic tanks and their influence on water degradation. Mr. Cassani said that part of the problem is that not every septic tank is the same and a lot of variables are involved in septic tanks and the water that they receive. Mr. Beever explained that generally septic tanks are a problem when they fail, when they are not properly maintained or placed, they tend to cause issues. Commissioner McDaniel asked that we add an agenda item for a future meeting on septic tanks with presentations.

**AGENDA ITEM #8(c)
WATER DISCUSSION**

Vice-Mayor Denham detailed some of the good work that the RPC has done on water quality in the past, but now he believed that there are too many other groups working on this issue for the RPC to be a key player. Chair Perry added that he thinks that people should pay more attention to the RPC and the positive work that they do. By working with the RPC elected officials are able to gain more insight on issues like water quality and septic tanks from a regional perspective. Vice-Mayor Denham stressed that the RPC shouldn't try and reinvent the wheel. Commissioner McDaniel explained that the RPC is not going to be what it used to be, but there is still great value in coming together and sharing information.

**AGENDA ITEM #9
DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**AGENDA ITEM #9(f)
NCFRPC RESOLUTION**

The North Central RPC asked the SWFRPC to sign a resolution recognizing that they've been existence for 50 years.

A motion was made by Commissioner Shaw and seconded by Commissioner McDaniel to approve the resolution as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Wuerstle asked the board to vote on changing the meeting schedule to every other month following the June meeting. Discussion followed on when to start the new schedule. There was a consensus that the RPC should meet in May and at that time bring a revised schedule to the board for approval.

A motion was made by Commissioner McDaniel and seconded by Commissioner Storter-Long to approve changing the meeting schedule to every other month and that staff should bring a revised schedule to the May meeting for approval. The motion passed unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM #9(a)
JANUARY- MARCH 2019 FINANCIALS**

This item was covered under item 10(a).

**AGENDA ITEM #9(b)
FRCA JANUARY 2019- MARCH 2019 REPORTS**

Ms. Wuerstle announced that there was funding in the legislature's budget for \$1.2 million for an update to the hurricane evacuation study.

**AGENDA ITEM #9(c)
GRANT ACTIVITY SHEET**

This item was for informational purposes only.

**AGENDA ITEM #9(d)
PROMISE ZONE UPDATE**

Ms. Wuerstle shared that the RPC recently submitted a Rural Economic Development Innovation grant for technical support to develop an actionable plan for the promise zone.

**AGENDA ITEM #9(e)
DISASTER RECOVERY COORDINATOR UPDATE**

Mr. Sean McCabe explains that there will be business continuity workshops in Fort Myers and Sarasota in June and announced that the Rebuild Florida Program has started home repairs. Commissioner McDaniel recommended that the SWFRPC coordinate reporting between the different Unmet Needs Coalitions in the region.

**AGENDA ITEM #10(a)
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Chair Perry announced that the budget is just over \$100,000 behind, somewhat similar to years passed. However, there is a low level of confidence that the budget will be closed. There will be a budget hearing in June. Chair Perry also stated that it is necessary to have a relevancy meeting with the county representatives from all 6 counties.

**AGENDA ITEM #10(b)
ESTERO BAY AGENCY ON BAY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

Mr. Beever announced that the new chair of the Estero Bay Agency on Bay Management is Brad Cornell and then proceeded to give a report on the last two Committee meetings.

**AGENDA ITEM #10(c)
QUALITY OF LIFE & SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Commissioner Shaw summarized the events of an 'Alternatives to Opioids Summit' that he and other staff attended at the end of March in Manatee County. The event was to discuss programs to support alternatives to opioids and review a developed tool kit for pain management and addiction prevention. Commissioner McDaniel mentioned that all counties need to develop a mental health plan. VISTA Volunteers Michael Bennett and Tianna Herman along with VISTA Supervisor Katelyn Kubasik explained the work that they have been doing and the partnerships they have been forming with organizations throughout the southwest Florida region which included the VISTAs joining several community drug response teams. They also

explained the data that they collected from the medical examiners on opioid related deaths and said that they will be mapping this information in GIS. The team recently wrote a grant in partnership with WINK News and the Lee and Collier Drug Coalitions for \$300,000 per year for five years (\$1.4 million total) to address underage drinking and drug use through media campaigns during prom season, football season, March Madness and Spring break.

AGENDA ITEM #10(d)
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Ms. Wuerstle announced that the committee has lined up a speaker to present at a future council meeting.

AGENDA ITEM #10(e)
COUNCIL RELEVANCY & RESTRUCTURING COMMITTEE

Chair Perry discussed the committee during the executive committee report.

AGENDA ITEM #10(d)
WATER QUALITY & WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Vice- Mayor Denham discussed water quality & water resources under item 8.

AGENDA ITEM #11
NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

AGENDA ITEM #12
STATE AGENCIES COMMENTS/REPORTS

Mr. Flood announced that the SFWMD has a new board and last month they focused on flood control. Next month on May 8th they will be focusing on water quality. Mr. Flood also announced that things are going well in the legislative session and they are getting \$325 million for Everglades restoration projects.

AGENDA ITEM #13
COUNCIL LEGAL CONSULTANT'S COMMENTS

There were no comments at this time.

AGENDA ITEM #14
COUNCIL MEMBERS' COMMENTS

There were no comments.

**AGENDA ITEM #15
ADJOURN**

The next meeting will be on May 16, 2019. The meeting adjourned at 11:21 a.m.

Commissioner Donna Storter-Long, Secretary

The meeting was duly advertised in the April 4, 2019 issue of the FLORIDA ADMINISTRATIVE REGISTER, Volume 45, Number 66.