

**MINUTES OF THE
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL
JANUARY 12, 2023, WORKSHOP**

The in-person and zoom meeting/workshop of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council and Executive Board was held on January 12, 2023, at the South Florida Water Management District Office with a conference call option. Governor Appointee and Council Chair, Mr. Don McCormick called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. There was a quorum of the Executive Committee present.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Charlotte County: Mr. Don McCormick – Chair, Councilman William Dryburgh

Collier County: Commissioner Bill McDaniel (*Zoom*)

Glades County: Mr. Thomas Perry Chairman, Commissioner Donna Storter-Long (*Zoom*)

Hendry County: None

Lee County: Councilman Ray Sandelli (*Zoom*), Councilman Fred Burson

Sarasota County: None

Ex-Officio Members: Phil Flood SFWMD

OTHERS PRESENT

34 Participants on ZOOM

Ms. Margaret Wuerstle - Executive Director, SWFRPC

Ms. Rebekah Harp - SWFRPC

Ms. Tracy Whirls - SWFRPC

Ms. Asmaa Odeh – SWFRPC (*Zoom*)

Mr. Jaha Cummings - Citizen

Mr. Tony Palmero, City of Fort Myers – Public Comment Item #6

Mr. Dan Oberski, SWFL Impact Partners – Public Comment

Ms. Megan Greer, Blue Zones – Public Comment

Ms. Marsha Elis – Inner Loop Working Group RGMC – Public Comment

Ms. Patty Whitehead – EBABM – Public Comment

Mr. Forrest Banks, City of Fort Myers Citizen – Public Comment

Ms. Elisha Roy – Lee County School District – Public Comment

Ms. Cheryl Cook – Public Comment (*Zoom*)

Mr. Lou Murry, Sarasota Food Advocate – Public Comment (*Zoom*)

Ms. Nora Demers, EBABM – Public Comment (*Zoom*)

Mr. Lou Murray, Manasota Food Access Council Co-chair – Public Comment (*Zoom*)

Full zoom meeting video: [January 12, 2023](#)

**AGENDA ITEM #4
PUBLIC COMMENT**

- Ms. Cheryl Cook explained that she sat on the RPC board in the past and expects, as a citizen from the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council, that she represents approximately 2 million citizens. Without the participation of the counties in the SWFRPC in the Opioid Task Force, how can we combat the escalation in Opioid overdoses and deaths? This is one example of the importance of the SWFRPC. Another example is the conservation foundation and how they are tasked with the protection of the Florida Panther. This falls under Lee County who is under the SWFRPC. If you look at the map of the Florida Regional Planning Councils, how will the counties be divided if this organization goes away? Please review the documents I provided and please come to a consensus to MOVE FORWARD with the SWFRPC.
- Ms. Marsha Elis presented some of the great successes of the SWFRPC. First, we have the benefit of having the existing Watershed Master Planning Initiative through the Caloosahatchee basin. Which is so important in the conversation today because this will help reduce the costs of insurance and issues we are facing in the future for planning. Ms. Ellis continues to point out different projects throughout her presentation that needs the support of the SWFRPC.

Public comments will continue after Ms. Wuerstle's presentation.

**AGENDA ITEM #5 & 6
BUDGET EXPLANATION
MOVING FORWARD: "HOW DO WE THRIVE AND NOT JUST SURVIVE"? – MARGARET
WUERSTLE**

Ms. Wuerstle begins her presentation with going over the budget and explains what funds are restricted and what funds are not. Every budget is presented to the board in the same format with a breakdown of funds for each highlighted section. The current budget is \$963 thousand dollars and if you look at the cash, cash equivalents, and investments of \$271,773 - none of these funds are restricted. We use the operating account and pull from the money market as needed and replace these funds when we are reimbursed from the grants.

Ms. Wuerstle goes onto explain the background. There are 37 duties within 11 chapters of the state statutes that the Regional Planning Councils are obligated. If you eliminate the SWFRPC, you will have to eliminate all of the state statues or eliminate all of the regional planning councils or this council will be divided up into the remaining RPCs.

There are four unfunded mandates required by state statutes, which are 1. SRPP Strategic Regional Policy Plan, 2. Regional Data Clearinghouse/IC&R, 3. Annual Report/Financial & Audit Reporting, 4. Regional Dispute Resolution.

There are also ongoing programs funded by the federal government which are filtered to the states and then the states disburse to the RPCs. These programs are 1. Local Emergency

Planning Committee, 2. Hazardous Material Emergency Planning, 3. Economic Development District (CEDDS).

In addition to those mandated and funded, here are a list of all the programs that we have done in the past and that we are doing right now (17 programs listed in the presentation). Projects in progress right now are the following: CEDDS Economic Development, Disaster Recovery and Continuity/Resiliency Guide, SWFL Fresh, Choose Local, Choose Fresh, Collier County Food Policy Council, A Resiliency Strategy, Inland Port, Clewiston Waterfront Master Plan, Grant Research and Writing for Government Projects.

We only have three full time employees. Amelia Williams handles the FDEM contracts and is the coordinator for the LEPC Local Emergency Planning Committee, HMEP Hazardous Material Emergency Preparedness, and HA Hazardous Analysis projects. These are approximately \$142,265 in annual revenue with no match. With this money we conduct quarterly meetings, conduct Hazmat exercises and trainings, provide technical assistance and the Tier II reporting and shelter-in-place trainings.

Under the HMEP contract we provide \$62,000 in trainings for the hazmat and first responders. For the HA contract we conduct 80 site visits in Lee and Collier Counties. This information is put into a system so all the first responders know what their walking into when they arrive on scene to an incident.

Another program is the VISTA program that we have had for the last 7 years. This program funds 9 VISTA volunteers in the SW Florida Region. There are 14 sites that have benefited from this program.

There is also the Glades SQG 5-year contract to conduct inspections of Glades County businesses for SQG compliance, which is entered into a state database.

Continuing with in progress services, we do grant writing and data services. The next slide shows all the awarded grants since 2017. It is a total of almost \$4 million dollars. There were approximately \$16 million dollars of grants submitted, of which one is pending.

For Regional Collaboration, we have assisted with the Brownfields conferences, disaster recover meetings for EDA. With Hurricane Ian, we have done three listening sessions so far with EDA and we are waiting to hear when they will be directing us to put on a workshop.

Ms. Wuerstle explains that each time she goes to meet with a county, they always ask “What have you done for our county”. The following six slides are broken down by county showing what the SWFRPC has done for each county.

COLLIER COUNTY:

Marco Island –

- Vulnerability Assessment grant submitted,
- Seeking funding to address flooding issues.

Collier County –

- Awarded a grant to establish a Food Policy Council;
- Awarded a grant to address food insecurity in the region;
- Awarded a grant to help small to mid-sized growers through branding SWFL Fresh Choose Local Choose Fresh;
- Created a Disaster Recovery & Continuity/Resiliency Guide for SW Florida Business.
- The Immokalee foundation has been assigned VISTA Volunteers for 6 consecutive years.
- Conduct Hazard Analysis for industry sites that contain Extremely Hazardous Substances (EHS).
- Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC): Coordinates the activities of the SWF LEPC. The LEPC is responsible for preparing a regional hazardous materials emergency response plan
- Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) Grant: Coordinates the grant, which provides funding for hazardous materials trainings for first responders within the region
- Hired a new Disaster Coordinator to assist with Hurricane Ian Recovery

LEE COUNTY:

Ft. Myers –

- Enterprise Center: seeking funding for Incubator Program and providing VISTA Volunteers to assist with program; wrote DEO grant for incubator program
- Impact Partners: providing VISTA Volunteer to assist with Outreach to Minority businesses; funded outreach to minority businesses with CARES ACT grant.
- Black History Museum was assigned a VISTA Volunteer to help with capacity building and grant writing.
- Collaboratory was assigned a VISTA Volunteer to help with programming
- ACT was assigned VISTA Volunteer to assist with Human Trafficking for 6 consecutive years

Lee County –

- Awarded a grant to address food insecurity in the region; Awarded a grant to help small to mid-sized growers through branding SWFL Fresh Choose Local Choose Fresh.
- SRES – Statewide Regional Evacuation Study (Sarasota, Charlotte, Lee)
- Created a Disaster Recovery & Continuity/Resiliency Guide for SW Florida Business
- Conduct Hazard Analysis for industry sites that contain Extremely Hazardous Substances (EHS). Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC): Coordinates the activities of the SWF LEPC. The LEPC is responsible for preparing a regional hazardous materials emergency response plan, Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) Grant: Coordinates the grant, which provides funding for hazardous materials trainings for first responders within the region
- Hired a Disaster Coordinator to assist with Hurricane Ian Recovery

- FGCU was awarded a grant through the CARES Act to purchase IMPLAN software to study the impact of COVID -19 on the region's businesses. FGCU was also assigned a VISTA Volunteer to help develop a Dashboard for economic development activities in the region

HENDRY COUNTY:

Clewiston –

- Wrote 3 grants to address the problems at the Wastewater Treatment Plant; Wrote one grant to address the transmission lines.
- Awarded a grant to prepare the Clewiston Lakefront Master Plan

Hendry County –

- Awarded a grant to address food insecurity in the region; Awarded a grant to help small to mid-sized growers through branding SWFL Fresh Choose Local Choose Fresh. Created a Disaster Recovery & Continuity/Resiliency Guide for SW Florida Business
- Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC): Coordinates the activities of the SWF LEPC. The LEPC is responsible for preparing a regional hazardous materials emergency response plan
- Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) Grant: Coordinates the grant, which provides funding for hazardous materials trainings for first responders within the region
- Awarded a Brownfield Assessment grant
- Hired a new Disaster Coordinator to assist with Hurricane Ian Recovery

GLADES COUNTY:

- Wrote 2 grants for the Ortono Indian Mound Park for a Strategic Plan
- The RPC completes the inspections for the Small Quantity Generators (SQG) Hazardous Materials Program
- Awarded a grant to address food insecurity in the region; Awarded a grant to help small to mid-sized growers through branding SWFL Fresh Choose Local Choose Fresh.
- Awarded 2 Brownfield Assessment Grants
- Created a Disaster Recovery & Continuity/Resiliency Guide for SW Florida Business
- Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC): Coordinates the activities of the SWF LEPC. The LEPC is responsible for preparing a regional hazardous materials emergency response plan
- Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) Grant: Coordinates the grant, which provides funding for hazardous materials trainings for first responders within the region
- Hired a New Disaster Coordinator to assist with Hurricane Ian Recovery

CHARLOTTE COUNTY:

Punta Gorda –

- Wrote and submitted \$4,000,000 grant for stormwater management system for the new City Market Place

Charlotte County –

- Awarded a grant to address food insecurity in the region; Awarded a grant to help small to mid-sized growers through branding SWFL Fresh Choose Local Choose Fresh. Created a Disaster Recovery & Continuity/Resiliency Guide for SW Florida Business
- Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC): Coordinates the activities of the SWF LEPC. The LEPC is responsible for preparing a regional hazardous materials emergency response plan,
- Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) Grant: Coordinates the grant, which provides funding for hazardous materials trainings for first responders within the region
- SRES – Statewide Regional Evacuation Study (Sarasota, Charlotte, Lee)
- Hired a Disaster Coordinator to assist with Hurricane Ian Recovery

SARASOTA COUNTY:

- Awarded a grant to address food insecurity in the region; Awarded a grant to help small to mid-sized growers through branding SWFL Fresh Choose Local Choose Fresh. Created a Disaster Recovery & Continuity/Resiliency Guide for SW Florida Business
- Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC): Coordinates the activities of the SWF LEPC. The LEPC is responsible for preparing a regional hazardous materials emergency response plan,
- Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) Grant: Coordinates the grant, which provides funding for hazardous materials trainings for first responders within the region
- SRES – Statewide Regional Evacuation Study (Sarasota, Charlotte, Lee)
- Hired a Disaster Coordinator to assist with Hurricane Ian Recovery
- Writing grants for Bay Park Improvements

The next slides are some of the other many projects we have done, but there are many more. All of which can be found on our website. Ms. Wuerstle explains that she finds it hard to accept that anyone would say that the SWFRPC is not relevant. We certainly are because most of the projects I have went over have been done with little or no money from the counties. The only entities paying are the Fort Myers Beach, City of Fort Myers, Glades County, and Bonita Springs. The rest of this was funded through grants and contracts. So for three people to be doing all of these projects is pretty good return on your investment.

Ms. Wuerstle continues onto the next slide and explains that back in 2019 she was asked to go out to the City manager and County's to see what they thought would make this entity relevant. Here is what we heard: water quality, affordable housing, regional transportation, storm resiliency & climate change, quality of life, inter-governmental coordination and communication. Then at the May 16, 2019 board meeting, this is what we heard from the members: water quality, affordable housing, regional coalition common voice in Tallahassee, beach renourishment, quality of life, information on common issues, collective force to combat erosion of home rule, the go-to people for organizing among counties, impact of development on adjacent counties, coordinate and share information with county staff.

We also heard: move to quarterly meetings, have half day event, short business meeting followed by a meaningful presentation on important issue.

The board wanted to maintain the unfunded mandates required by state statutes. As well as keep the funded programs.

The issues that were most important back in 2019 were: Impact Of Development On Adjacent Counties, Coordinate & Share Information With County Staff, Provide Information On Common Issues along with Home Rule, Water Quality, Affordable Housing, Beach Renourishment, Resiliency, Quality of Life Issues, Impact of Development, Coordinate and Share Information, Information on Common Issues, Collective Force.

The SWFRPC never had the opportunity to move forward with what was outlined in 2019 and approved by the board. There were several reasons why we could not move forward. The first reason is COVID. The first workshop that was scheduled with a speaker lined up, David Griffin, we had to cancel it. But the good news is that the agency has been flexible enough and resilient enough to bounce back with programs that were important during COVID. We had a disaster recovery coordinator that wrote a disaster resiliency guide that we are now starting to implement through the new grant. We had the food insecurity grant that was awarded during COVID.

Ms. Wuerstle goes on to explain that now moving forward, this is what she is proposing. To remind everyone that that there is a full slide of state statues that the regional planning councils are mentioned. If we are eliminated, the counties are going to go to another regional planning council and your dues could go up, stay the same or go down depending on where the Governor directs the county to. There still will be regional planning councils.

Ms. Wuerstle suggests the following:

1. Start immediately - to identifying the focus for the rest of the year. Build on the positives and identify issues that will be our Common Voice.
2. Rebrand the Council - Change the Name to be consistent with the new direction and Common Voice and Develop Outreach Strategy to promote Common Voice
3. Reduce Assessments from \$.30 per Capita to **\$.10 per Capita**
4. Go back to quarterly SWFRPC Board meeting - Take the SWFRPC meetings to the Counties during the "off" months, have a prominent speaker at the quarterly meeting Move the meeting to different county each quarter, Have TAC meeting on "off" months.
5. Create a technical advisory committee
6. Coordinate and host one major event/conference

---Brief meeting interruption due to system restart --

Commissioner Bill McDaniel asks to not go to quarterly meetings and continue with monthly meetings. Commissioner McDaniel states that this meeting was not supposed to be about eliminating the SWFRPC, but how to financially sustain the SWFRPC. Commissioner McDaniel apologizes that he must leave to attend a meeting with the Governor.

Ms. Wuerstle continues with her presentation and provides a **10 Step Proposal**:

1. Start Immediately - identify the Common Voice Issue TODAY
2. Rebrand - Change the Name of the RPC
3. Reduce Assessments to \$.10 per Capita/ Only paying members can vote
4. Go back to quarterly SWFRPC Board meeting/take SWFRPC to counties/cities on "off" months
5. Create a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
6. Coordinate and host one major event/conference with a prominent speaker on an issue of importance to the Southwest Florida Region
7. Hold 2 meetings per year with all county/city planning staff
8. Continue CEDS meeting with Economic Development Stakeholders
9. Provide the services mandated by State Statute and funded by contracts
10. Continue assistance to our governments and agencies through grant writing and providing data

Ms. Wuerstle recommends that this proposal is implemented on a 1 year trial basis and if it is going to be successful the members must participate! Ms. Wuerstle asks for any questions or comments.

PUBLIC COMMENT CONTINUES:

- Ms. Patty Whitehead – explains that she has been a member of the Estero Bay Agency on Bay Management for several years and a resident of Southwest Florida for 20 years and someone who holds a degree in Environmental Policy, she agrees with everything Margaret says up to a point. She takes exception with one thing, this is a planning council and planning is important. The lack of planning in SWFL is what got us sprawl in Lehigh Acres. The lack of planning in SWFL is what got us the mess in Cape Coral and Cape Coral government is trying to reverse engineer from. We cannot allow developers to be de facto planners, that's not how things work. If we do that, we lose the opportunity for a cohesive functional and appropriate landscape and land use. We are confronting that yet again. We are confronting that on Corkscrew Rd. Ms. Whitehead continues to explain that this RPC isn't strong enough to handle important issues that are killing conservation land areas. She explains that her city, Estero bailed out of the RPC of which she disagreed with. This is how intergovernmental coordination takes place, within this room. With a united front of elected officials, experts, scientists. Ms. Whitehead explains that there could be a better landscape if there was better planning.
- Mr. Forrest Banks – Mr. Banks explains he was a former Council member for the City of Fort Myers. He is proud that the City of Fort Myers has remained in the planning council. However, he believes that the train left the station. When the legislature changed making the developers more powerful and removed the power from the planning councils, the RPCs have continued to have the same struggle over the last five years. Margaret is spot on with how she wants to proceed with moving forward and Mr. Banks applauds the commissioner from Collier County for being interested in keeping this organization alive. Mr. Banks likes the idea of changing the name and he would like to apply for the Technical Advisory Committee. Mr. Banks also

announced that he might put in an application to get back on the SWFRPC's board because the SWFRPC is the only place that everyone can get together officially.

- Ms. Megan Greer – is from the Blue Zones Project of Southwest Florida and she is also a representative of the Food Policy Council that was initiated in 2015, but then solidified with help and support of the SWFRPC through a grant from the AETNA Foundation. Since they have come together as a Food Policy Council, their partners have come together and with the guidance and writing of the SWFRPC to now have landed an approximate \$1.2 million dollars that is related to food resiliency, food access, healthy food access and healthy food policy. Ms. Greer continues to explain that she cannot stress enough the importance and impact of having a collaborative effort and a full-time staff person dedicated to the work of the Food Policy Council. Ms. Greer explains that they were able to bring the MEANS database, a national program, to Florida. In less than two years, a half of a million pounds of food have been rescued from going to waste and given to families in need and to organizations that provide and prepare food for families in need in all of our communities. The collaboration between school districts have been phenomenal – the work that was administrated throughout COVID to ensure universal feeding was made accessible to every single child. Also advocating and helping to support for the continuation of the CEP program for schools. This means that thousands of families now have secured access, at least throughout the school year, to breakfast, lunch and dinner for those who need it. This makes a huge impact, not only to food access and health, but families who are struggling with food access generally incur a 20% increase in their medical costs. This impacts all communities and families throughout Southwest Florida need the support of work like this. We are so grateful to the work of the SWFRPC but recognizing only three full-time staff are doing all this work, we know how much burden that is and how much better we could do in the areas of food access and food resiliency. The CDBG grant that is focused on food resiliency, we are seeing so much impact on inflation and the farmers how they are able to move food, what their barriers are. Their costs right now are about 150% increase over last year alone. These are extremely important issues that need to be addressed. The facilitation of bringing a council members together to address these issues to work on efficiency, to work on the gaps, to communicate everywhere we can. To work and write for more funding is essential to this community, it is essential to the families. Ms. Greer advocates and make sure we are sharing the impacts of the work of the regional planning council and how important this is for every single county that is involved with it or should be involved. She highly advocates for events to share the work of the council. With only three staff the work goes unrecognized because everyone is focused on getting work done. But the funding is essential to continue this work and Ms. Greer cannot stress the impact and importance of the work that is happening that is impacting the end users and families and people in need. Also, the support of the nine VISTAs that that have been procured through the SWFRPC is essential. All of us are wearing multiple hats and to have a full-time free employee to help with some of this work is crucial.
- Mr. Lou Murray, Manasota Food Access Council Co-chair for Sarasota & Manatee Count (Zoom). Mr. Murray expresses that Ms. Greer is absolutely right. We are working with the Southern Region along with USDA looking at policies dealing with food waste, where 47% of the food produced go to waste. Those issues are crucial and we are also finding out that nutrition is also

tied to good health. 50% of illness and disease it tied to food. Then you have economic development for underserved communities tied into that. Mr. Murray explains that he gets frustrated that he receives information on projects every week from the southern region from USDA and healthy human services and he doesn't have anyone to go the funding projects to. For example, project funding opportunities for artificial intelligence, food waste, food security, and now food sovereignty and nutrition sovereignty. Mr. Murray explains that he has been frustrated and didn't know that the SWFRPC existed. When you don't act as a region, that money goes somewhere else. It is important that this council is functional because when we are not functional our communities don't receive funds and programs in our communities, and they suffer.

- Elsha Roy – is in charge of comprehensive health for the Lee County School District. The fall before last they started a healthy living collaboration at the school district, working on school Gardens, Farm to school, smarter lunchrooms. They have made amazing progress and Ms. Roy explains that this is her first time at this meeting. She thinks everybody has goals of doing great things. What they discovered at the school district when they combined their curriculum, instruction and food, nutrition services and environmental education that they were all working towards the same thing, but nobody knew what anybody else was doing and their collaboration within four or five months they received \$100,000 farm school grant from the federal government. They have made amazing strides. They are providing food from our school gardens to multiple other schools, providing fresh produce in their cafeterias. Ms. Roy explains, just listening this, it's like a flashback to when they first started just within the school district. She definitely thinks that there are things that can be done once everybody knows what everybody else is doing and trying to work toward the same goal.
- Tony Palermo – Mr. Palermo explains that he didn't expect to speak or want to speak, but he was provoked. He explains, "I can organize my thoughts into four parts. First, I want to thank Margaret, Rebekah and Amelia for hosting us here today and for being the staff for the RPC. So thank you for being here and thank you for putting this together. I'm going to speak on behalf of I work for the City of Fort Myers, but I'm also a leader in the American Planning Association's Florida chapter. I was the promised land second chair for four years, and I also served as the Vice President for Section Affairs for APA, Florida, also very active in FPZ A and ULI. That's who I'm speaking on behalf of today. I hate to do this, but the I guess the 1st order of business is to bitch about the RPC and I'm sorry to do that, but that's what happens and that's what people do. I've been a city employee for the past five years and I've enjoyed that and I'm a professional planner, but during those five years I did not hear from the RPC and I did not know you were doing anything and it's been radio silence and that's been a shame because we could have been working together for a long time on projects, either in the related to the city or related to the region, or related to planning activities. Because again I'm active in planning and that I'm disappointed that I didn't hear from the RPC and didn't know you were existing until we were invited. I mean, as a city employee and as a leader of APA, I mean I there should have been a lot more contact and there should have been a lot more communication and that's just not for me personally, but I can speak on behalf of other Members. They don't hear from the RPC, they don't hear anything about the RPC, they think the RPC is dead and obviously it's not. I guess the

second part of my presentation is I'd like to comment on the 10 point plan, because I think that's important and I think that's kind of what the business of today should be about. Just some random thoughts, because I think there's some good ideas, and I think there's some not so good ideas. The technical advisory Committee is a good idea and I participate in the MPO's Technical Advisory Committee that is a model of how you should operate and I'm surprised you don't have one and maybe I'm surprised that other RPC's don't have one, but that's a great way to approach that. Have professional planners talk about things informally, with an agenda of just planners and not the general public or all the special interests. Moving meetings to quarterly will also be a productive thing to do. You can't meet monthly. No organization can do that. An intriguing issue is reducing the dues for members from \$0.30 to \$0.10 a person. I don't know how that creates more revenue, but maybe there's a way that it can create more revenue. Maybe more cities will participate. Maybe more organizations will participate. Those are the good ideas as they are the major planning events of the year and APA, Florida would be very happy to participate in the region for AP Florida events. We used to have a very strong partnership with the RPC when they were at the other facility when they were under Wayne Daltry, when they were under other leaders of the RPC. So you do have a legacy to build on and I think you should hang on to that legacy. Now to the not so good ideas. Taking your eye off the ball in terms of growth management, I think that's a that's a bad idea. I think that's part of the legacy of the RPC's in the state of Florida. I know that's a policy issue that's bigger than you all. But I think taking up the mantle of growth management, even if you're the only organization in the state of Florida or the only organization in the region doing that is something you should do, even if you don't have the power to regulate, even if you don't have DRI's. And even if the governor of the State of Florida and the cabinet and the state legislature says no, you may not touch growth management. It's part of your legacy and it's something you should hang on to. I also think changing the name of the organization is a silly idea and again that that takes away from the legacy of what was the regional Planning Council and what it is meant to do and I think that's a cosmetic change that will cause a lot of controversy and cause a lot of discussion. I'd like a copy of the presentation that we saw today and with the 10 point. Plan I can put together of some more cogent thoughts about the 10 point plan, because again, there's some good things about and there's some bad. Let me close with the one last idea, which was I think 1 central organizing point of this meeting was, what's the one issue we should work on for the rest of the year or just the one issue we can focus on and maybe we can get our RPC back into some sort of relevance. I think the one issue looking us in the face, if you drive around the city of Fort Myers and look at all the Hurricane damage, is the response to Hurricane Ian. I think that is a regional issue because that I know affected Lee County. It affected Cape Coral, it affected Port Charlotte. It affected Sanibel. It affected Estero. It affected Bonita Springs. It affected Collier County. I've seen damage from Sarasota to Bayshore on and Collier County. The response to Ian is critical. The response to Ian is regional. The response to Ian is important not just because it damaged my city, not just because it damaged a lot of institutions that I that I love, but because it is the most important thing going on in Southwest Florida right now is how we respond to this hurricane. If there's a way we can get money to people who need it, if there's a way we can get relief to people who need it, if there's a way we can bring planning to people who need it, including the

town of Fort Myers Beach their a mess. Not just because of the hurricane, but because of politics. There's a response that that we can play a constructive role in that RPC can play a constructive role in. I'd be interested to be on your TAC and if we're going to do one thing, I think we need to respond to this terrible hurricane that has done so much damage to our community."

- Dan Oberski – Mr. Oberski begins with thanking the Regional Planning Council through Southwest Florida Impact Partners. Mr. Oberski explains, "Our organization has been a benefactor of what your organization and you have done. Both through identifying, engaging disadvantaged small businesses that we got to participate and serve and better understand the outcomes of COVID and most recently through the Vista placement of Julie, she's been spectacular. We've placed over or reviewed over 200 applications for grants that are federally funded for small businesses in the impacted areas and so a huge kudos to the service and work that you do. I'm not afraid of conflict or argument or disagreement. To me, it's a great opportunity to learn and listen. I think we can have disagreements on environmental ways to engage and better engage water flow and planning. I think that's one of the biggest issues that we have is not having a platform to come and fight a little bit. It can be done respectfully and well so that we can all grow and learn. My final comment is around reducing silos and providing opportunities for that. This seems like a phenomenal platform for a multi county discussion around points that are critical for our ongoing success. So thank you very much for your service.
- Nora Demers – Ms. Demers explains, "I'm with Florida Gulf Coast University. I also represent the responsible growth management coalition to the Estero Bay Agency on Bay Management, which is a subset of the Regional Planning Council. We as that organization have done some really powerful products. One of them is the State of the Bay. That's been done every four years, which kind of give's a report on how the different ecosystems and habitats ecosystem services sort of thing, but we've also presented several conferences called Cela Tega, which is view from the high ground. Where we have not only had some that speak to the staff of agencies for management, but also more recently speaking to the residents and visitors to the area on things like resiliency and adaptation in the Estero Bay watershed and economic benefits of conservation land. I'm looking forward to hopefully having more of the former members of the RPC come back in and if \$0.10 instead of \$0.30 per resident is a way to do that, then I'm in favor of it. You said three of the five are here today are the paying members. What about those that are not paying? Did we get any of them here and how can we reach them. Jim Beaver and I have been the primary organizers of the Cela Tega events since we started them. I think in 2009 we had two. The leadership in that and obviously we couldn't do it without all of the people that presented and came together for those. We have had over 100 residents in our past couple of meetings and I think with more participation through the RPC membership, we could increase that and absolutely along with FGCU, I think that Hurricane Ian provides us a really good way to hopefully reunite and move forward together."

Commissioner Ray Sandelli explains that he has been on the line since the beginning of the meeting. Mr. McCormick asks if Commissioner Sandelli has any thoughts on the meeting this morning or comments. Commissioner Sandelli responds, "Everything happens in some form of collaboration. I was appointed by the governor in 19, then ran for a full term and the assignments at the county level evolve every year. So I don't have the history of this council that some of the folks here do. But I will say this, that whoever brought up the idea of having a single focal point right now around the aftermath of the recent hurricane is I would strongly encourage that. I have three incorporated areas in my district. One of those in Fort Myers Beach. I will tell you I was in the air with the sheriff two days after the storm. I've been on the ground every week with the town down there. It's starting almost with a clean slate. There's a lot of pain, but I'm encouraged by the people of Fort Myers Beach and the efforts that they're making. We had no water, no electric, a lot of nothing. And I think that's where going back to the word collaboration where people can best. Understand the challenges, whether it's planning, whether it's zoning, whether it's food, whether it's what it's going to look like going forward. That's where I think we can collaborate around something and the fact is you're collaborating about something that the need is now. So I would incur and you know, you're welcome to call my office. Welcome to have a discussion with me. I talked to the town council down there every day and I'm down there almost every day.

Ms. Wuerstle explains that the suggestion to focus on hurricane Ian Recovery is good. There are a lot of people in need. We were just given the grant. And by the way, Jaha Cummings has been hired to fill that position and work with us and getting funding and money to businesses and people who need it. So if that is the focus I would more than welcome it. I would request that you consider at least approving setting up the Technical Advisory Committee, going to the quarterly meeting, and the major event and workshop. So that if you do approve that I can start working on it now, because you know it takes funding, it takes a lot of time to get a major speaker to collaborate with other organizations that may already be planning something. So at least we get some preliminary direction for the rest of the year, even if you don't want to approve the whole 10 steps.

Mr. Thomas Perry asks Ms. Wuerstle if she has discussed going to quarterly meetings and the 10 steps with the county commissioners that are on this board individually outside of this meeting? Ms. Wuerstle responds that she has not, that this is the first time presenting the information. Mr. Perry responds, "I believe to collaboration, you got to have communication and we don't have communication if we're not talking to the Commissioners, they're the people in the driving seat. My suggestion is, go find out what they think about going to a quarterly meeting and find out what they think about having a yearly big meeting and let's get them engaged in that decision and let's get them to have some buy in and that will lead to better participation.

Councilman Burson adds, "To go along with what Thomas said, I think you need to find out from the counties, if they're willing to pay \$0.10 per person. Just because if you propose it, if they're not still willing to pay anything, were just salmon swimming upstream".

Mr. Perry adds, "The other thing I believe you need to emphasize when you go to speak to them is that we are working on hurricane recovery and what steps you've made and what steps we're going to make and see how we can assist them or help collaborate between the counties to coordinate the efforts for each county.

Mr. McCormick asks, "if somebody, one of us who was on the executive committee here to make a motion along the lines of we endorse the efforts that Margaret's making. That we endorse the 10-point

program as a concept and that we that we as our board of this planning council. I think I'd like some sort of formal action from us as a board.

Councilman Burson moves to accept the motion to approve and move forward with the endorsement of the 10-point plan. Mr. Perry seconds the motion to approve and move forward with the endorsement of the 10-point plan. Motion is approved unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM #7
NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business.

**AGENDA ITEM #8
STATE AGENCIES COMMENTS/REPORTS**

No comments were provided.

**AGENDA ITEM #9
COUNCIL MEMBERS' COMMENTS**

No comments were provided.

**AGENDA ITEM #10
ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 10:47 a.m.

Don McCormick, Chairman

The meeting was duly advertised in the January 4, 2022, issue of the FLORIDA ADMINISTRATIVE REGISTER, Volume 49, Number 02.