

**MINUTES OF THE
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL
September 19, 2024, MEETING**

The virtual zoom meeting of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council’s Executive Board was held on September 19, 2024. Collier County Commissioner and Council Chair, Mr. Bill McDaniel called the meeting to order at 9:16 a.m. There was a quorum of the Executive Committee present.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

- Charlotte County:** Mr. Don McCormick (zoom)
- Collier County:** Commissioner Bill McDaniel
Councilman Bill Kramer - City of Naples (zoom)
- Glades County:** None
- Hendry County:** None
- Lee County:** Councilman Fred Burson – City of Fort Myers
- Sarasota County:** Councilman Ron Smith – City of Venice
- Ex-Officio Members:** Mr. Phil Flood, SFWMD

OTHERS PRESENT

- Ms. Margaret Wuerstle - Executive Director, SWFRPC
Ms. Rebekah Harp – SWFRPC
Ms. Catherine Peralta – SWFRPC Vista
Ms. Sofia Mercer – SWFRPC Vista
Ms. Alyssia Cancel – SWFRPC Vista

AGENDA #5

Councilman Fred Burson offered a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Bill McDaniel seconded the motion to approve the agenda. The motion was approved unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM #6(a) MINUTES OF THE JULY 18, 2024, COUNCIL/EXECUTIVE MEETING

Councilman Fred Burson offered a motion to approve the July 18, 2024, meeting minutes. Commissioner Bill McDaniel seconded the motion to approve the July 18, 2024, meeting minutes. The motion was approved unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM #7(a) FINANCIALS: Proposed FY24/25 Budget

Ms. Wuerstle: This is a very conservative budget based on what we know that we have. There are no projections in here for things that we don't have. It's what we have in hand, the grants and the contracts. Is this a new budget? The last one I saw, we ended the year with about \$53,000. This one is showing \$169,000.

Ms. Harp: this budget incorporates our reserves. We have \$288,000 in reserves. So that's why you see \$169,000 because we have an income loss of \$118,000. But then if you incorporate our reserves of \$288,000, you'll see we ended with \$169,000.

Ms. Wuerstle: we closed out several grants recently that we were able to replenish some of those reserves. So that's good news.

Commissioner McDaniel: that it is going to be way down, we don't have to belabor that discussion. And thank you for that clarification because that was different than the one that you handed me last month. And adding those reserves in gives us a better idea, thank you.

Ms. Wuerstle: Yes. It looks much, much better than it did. But it may, fingers crossed, it may be even better if we can bring in grants.

Commissioner McDaniel: Things are going to change, Margaret.

Ms. Wuerstle stated: Yes, If we get additional grants coming in. And we've been very lucky in past years to bring in several grants each year. So fingers crossed, we'll be able to do it again.

Commissioner McDaniel: And if I can ask Rebekah or Margaret, either one, you know, the funds that we have that are considered reserves, are those restricted or unrestricted?

Ms. Wuerstle stated: they are unrestricted.

Commissioner McDaniel: Okay. So they can contribute to operating deficits going forward.

Ms. Wuerstle: Yes, so you know, when we need to, we pull on them and then we replenish them when we get reimbursed. Because remember, all the grants are reimbursement. We have to pay for things up front and then they reimburse us.

Commissioner McDaniel: I understand. All right. So does anybody have any questions on the proposed budget? This is again, I'm not going to call for an approval of this because it's not, it's not satisfactory, but it is what it is. So and the good news from prior rumors, prior circumstances, the good news is we, per this, we have about a year to go without any substantive adjustments. So if we continue to tattle along like we are tattling along, we got about a year and still have some, some money in reserves. Let's go ahead and approve or accept. Is there any discussion, anybody online Bill or Dawn, have anything to say?

Mr. McCormick: Mr. Chairman, I just like to commend Margaret and Rebekah for putting together what looks to be an effective budget. I appreciate their efforts. Very good.

Councilman Kramer: Bill, I have no comment.

Commissioner McDaniel: All right. Well, you always got a comment, William, but I appreciate you withholding it.

Councilman Kramer: I was just going to say how fantastic you are.

Commissioner McDaniel: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Thank you. I'll give you that 20 bucks later.

Councilman Fred Burson offered a motion to approve the Proposed FY24/25 Budget. Commissioner Bill McDaniel seconded the motion to approve the Proposed FY24/25 Budget. The motion was approved unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM #7(b) FINANCIALS: April – August Financials

Ms. Wuerstle: We have several financials. And if you start with April, it's pretty scary. We're right down to total reserves of \$134,000. And it gets worse. You know, our loss gets worse over the months, but when you get to August, you see it coming back up. So that's a good sign. You know, it's a little better in June, in July, and then August is better. It's typical of the cycle that we follow with our financials. And as of August, we have over \$288,000, which is a great sign. Rebekah, do you want to explain about the grants that we just closed out that aren't going to show up?

Ms. Harp: Right. So we have several grants that are ending in September, October. So we'll start to see some more accumulation of income recognized over the next few months.

Commissioner McDaniel: Approximately how much? Plus minus?

Ms. Harp: With USDA, I would say maybe \$150,000, but please don't quote me on that. I can get an exact number and get that to you.

Commissioner McDaniel: Okay. Now, talk to me a little bit about the, one of the exorbitant expenses that we're bearing is 350,000 plus in contract consultation for grant management.

Ms. Wuerstle: Is that the Brownfield?

Ms. Harp: So there's several consultants that we have for different grants. So that would be TerraCon for our Brownfields that we have contracted for over 300,000.

Commissioner McDaniel: Just one?

Ms. Harp: Just one. Yes.

Commissioner McDaniel: And how much was the grant for?

Ms. Harp: I think it was 350,000.

Commissioner McDaniel: Hold on.

Ms. Harp: The grant was for 350,000. But it's over several years.

Commissioner McDaniel: I understand. Hear me out. My question is, what was the total amount of the grant? Plus minus?

Ms. Harp: I would say 350 or 400,000.

Commissioner McDaniel: And then we're paying a consultant 300,000?

Ms. Harp: A percentage of that. Yes. So I can get those exact numbers for you just so you have a better idea of those consultants. And I can itemize each one for you so you understand what's going out. A lot is going out. So we're kind of like a pass through.

Commissioner McDaniel: I understand. Okay. I'm well aware of how grants function. I don't want you to take any offense to what it is that I'm asking. I've been asking these questions for years and haven't found satisfactory answers. I want it while we're on this discussion, I want a detailed breakdown of our income, where the grant monies individually are coming from, the assessments, who's in fact paying, who isn't. And then I'll break down on the salaries along with an org chart. I want an org chart for this organization as to how many staff we have and what the salaries in fact are. And then the breakdown with regard to the expenses, consultant fees, I mean, the audit's pretty well, you don't have a choice. And that's not an unfair, when I say unfair, it's not an unrealistic expectation to look at from an expense standpoint, 25, 26,000 bucks a year for an audit. It's not unusual. But I want a specific breakdown on these expenses. Because on the other side of this equation, you can't cut your way to prosperity. But on the same token, we have to look at the viability of what we're putting out in relationship to what we're in fact receiving and make a determination as to whether or not it's a viable grant to in

fact get if we have to pay a consultant. But once we have the knowledge of who we're hiring, what we're hiring them for, why are we hiring them? Are there other agencies? Are there other staff? Are there other municipalities that can come and help? I mean, and I'm going to use this as an example. I mean, it wasn't very long ago, where it was put out that this organization was going to run out of money this month. I was already in the process of making moves with my staff, with my municipality, to pick up the slack, pick up the \$200 a month rental for the storage facility that we have, pick up the staffing requisites to make sure that our accounting and organizationally and Collier County, I'm going to say this on the record, Collier County can and will do that. So, in the event circumstances come to light, we will do that. But if I know that we're hiring a grant consultant for whatever X amount of money, and then I have staff at Collier County that can do that, then why not have internal Lee County, Charlotte County that I mean, there's six or seven. How many counties are there in our region? Six. I mean, we so we can start to have some discussions in those regards, but I need to detail.

Ms. Wuerstle: Let me just explain one thing. We might be paying Terracon, the consultant for the Brownfield grant \$300,000, because they're doing all the work, all the assessments on the sites, but we get the admin money. So we might make \$50,000 for administering the grant, they do the work-- we administer, but that helps us with our bottom line.

Commissioner McDaniel: I understand. So that's the only revenue that you've been getting for quite some time other than the few assessments that are in fact being paid is the admin fees that are drawn off the top of these grants. So, I'm well aware of how this how this thing acts.

Councilman Burson: (inaudible)

Commissioner McDaniel: Well, it gives us an extra \$50,000 to...well, you go to the next page 28 over here with and there is a breakdown over here with salaries and expenses. You know, we've got \$280,000 a year in admin expense that's associated with this organization. And without a consistent income stream, Fred, the only revenue of this organization necessarily has gotten if, you look at the previous page, it's tanked down from back in 2020 and \$57,000 all the way down to this year, \$34,000, \$35,000 in assessments. We're going to have a discussion about the income, the income stream as well, and again, any grant that is accessible that is a benefit to the community. I actually had a conversation with one of my staff yesterday with regard to the fact if you delineate a piece of property as a brownfield or a greenfield, as the case may be greenfields a little happier language - words matter. There is a lot of federal funding that flows down from the feds to the state and then ultimately to the locals with regard to that designation of brownfield/ greenfield. So, if you do the work, they're good grants to be able to manage these brownfields slash greenfield properties.

Ms. Wuerstle: Fred, Glades County requested that we assist them and write the grant because we've been successful in getting several of the brownfield grants. We don't have the capacity to do the assessments of the site in-house. So, we have to contract out with the consultant to do

it. But Glades County benefits because they get their sites assessed. And we benefit because we get the admin funds.

Commissioner McDaniel: The rest of the agenda all the way through page 34 are a more detailed breakdown of the of the expenses as well. So thank you.

**Councilman Fred Burson offered a motion to approve the April – August Financials.
Commissioner Bill McDaniel seconded the motion to approve the April – August Financials.
The motion was approved unanimously.**

**AGENDA ITEM #8
CONSENT AGENDA: None**

Commissioner McDaniel: Next we have consent agenda items.
Ms. Wuerstle: We don't have any.

**AGENDA ITEM #9
DIRECTORS REPORT**

Ms. Wuerstle: Before you jump into the first item, something has come up that I need to run by you and get your input on. We had a call asking us to appoint someone to the Myakka River Management Coordinating Council. The last person that was appointed was Ms. Williams. I'm not familiar with her. She hasn't been here since I've been here. But they asked that we either appoint someone or that we let them know that we are no longer going to be a member. And that's because they too are having issues with their quorum and with us having a seat on the board and never showing up that they have a hard time. Anyway, I explained to them that we don't have the resources to assign someone to this. But I didn't want to say we're withdrawing our seat on this board without bringing it to you all to get your input on it. And I did promise them that I would get back to them today because their next meeting is tomorrow in Sarasota and they need an answer on that.

Commissioner McDaniel: Well, if they were up to me, I don't see anybody raising their hands to serve on that committee. Do you want to? No. We don't have sufficient membership to cover the spot. So apologize but say no. Say and express to them that we're about to move into a major reorg of this organization. It's going to happen. And so in the event that their organization still exists and we beef up membership that is interested in serving, then great. So I concur that somebody from Sarasota, minimally Charlotte County should be involved in that not Fred, Fred's busy.

Ms. Wuerstle: I will get back to them.

Commissioner McDaniel: Is that an okay response to them? Do you need to vote on that? That's just does anybody online get anything to say with regard to that?

Councilman Kramer: No, sir.

Mr. McCormick: I'm with you, Bill.

Commissioner McDaniel: Okay. Carry on.

AGENDA ITEM #9(a)(b)(c)
Executive Director's Contract
Executive Directors Compensation Matrix
Attorney General Opinion: Planning Council Member Must Pay its Share of Dues

Ms. Wuerstle: You had asked for my contract to be on this agenda. And so it is. I have also included a spreadsheet that has the salaries of all of the executive directors of the regional planning council.

Commissioner McDaniel: So this contract nears I can tell was entered into back in 2018?

Ms. Wuerstle: That's correct.

But I don't see it an annual contract that this goes on forever? Or is there a term typically contracts that I deal with start one year and two years, three years with reviews and so on?

Ms. Wuerstle: That should have happened. It just never has happened. I mean, there are a number of things that happened with COVID and counties pulling out and different issues. It just it was never renewed.

Commissioner McDaniel: I see. Okay. Let's whip up an annual review. Between now and the end of the year. Hey, Mr. Ron, speaking of which, here's a fellow from Sarasota that might volunteer for your Myakka committee. Say that again, Fred.

Councilman Burson: inaudible

Commissioner McDaniel: Do you have an extra agenda package? Well, it's supposed to been done, not done, doesn't matter. Let's get it done before the end of the year. Because the nearest I can tell the contract commenced on February 1st of 2018. Let's get it out and do you have samples of a performance review?

Ms. Wuerstle: We do. Okay. So I can send them, out to you, to the executive board.

Commissioner McDaniel: Send it out to all the members.

Ms. Wuerstle: All the members?

Commissioner McDaniel: All members until such time as they are no longer all members.

Councilman Kramer: Hey, Bill.

Commissioner McDaniel: Yes, sir.

Councilman Kramer: Do we have any benchmarking for that review? Is there or do we have any concepts of other, you know, of management districts and what their finances look like, you know, what their activities. I mean, how do we know what we're measuring against?

Commissioner McDaniel: Well, I'm not quite sure about your question.

Councilman Kramer: We have that in terms of an executive director. How do you know what the standard is, is my question. I'm the new guy here. No offense to anybody. But when you look at how we're trending.

Commissioner McDaniel: And let's do this. My suggestion is pull your last review, Margaret, the last one that was done whenever it was done, I assume sometime before COVID, there was something that was done. So pull one of that. And if we supply the last review, along with the new review, that'll at least give you a little bit of a benchmark to be able to ascertain what we're going to do.

Speaker: inaudible

Commissioner McDaniel: Are you talking about all the performance?

Speaker: inaudible

Commissioner McDaniel: Well, it says the terms and number one says it'll be reviewed quarterly and then and then no later than the first and then the performance evaluated by the by February. I'd like it to be sent to everybody. I mean, we can still allow for the executive committee to review and report, but I'd like it to be sent to everybody. It's just so we can get a cross section across the board. I'm about to go on a roadshow here in a little bit and involvement is critical. Now, so with that, I mean, there's nothing, there's nothing necessarily, I don't see anything necessarily to vote on with regard to your contract. I just wanted to see it review and see where we're at with terms.

Ms. Wuerstle: Mr. Chairman, I just want to point out that I used to always do the budget and I had a work plan with it. And then this board said, just give us the budget. We don't want the work plan. It's like that kind of defeats our purpose without you knowing you're approving a budget to do what? But all I've been doing is giving the budget because that's what I was told to do. But I really do think you need a work plan submitted with the budget every year.

Commissioner McDaniel: Let's worry about the review of your contract and getting that done. We've approved the budget. We have a budget. There's no reason to and without, I don't want to create work that isn't requisite at this particular stage. So, let's just stay with the budget as far as that goes. Let's get the performance review done by the end of the year. And the reason I'm spelling for an entire quarter for that is one month of that, when you look over here, this seat will be empty because I'm out for the month of November. So if we get the performance review done by the end of the year and we can come back in January having everyone who has submitted a performance review and we can make some decisions accordingly. Now, if we're

going to leave the specific agenda item and run, you weren't here. So just so you know, we're going to take it out of your pay. Margaret has a message that you need to hear and decide whether you want to be a volunteer.

Ms. Wuerstle: I had a request for an appointment to the Myakka River Management Coordinating Council. Apparently, the Regional Planning Council is a member of that. We haven't had an appointment to that board for a long, long time. This is the first, actually, I'm hearing of it. I explained to them that we don't have the resources to put someone on. And they said, then we would like you to formally withdraw your seat. But I didn't want to do that until I brought it to this board to see if there was someone who wanted to be on it. Or if it was okay to withdraw our seat.

Commissioner McDaniel: Before you got here, we decided that it needed to be somebody from Sarasota County or minimum Charlotte County. And since you're our Sarasota County guy, we just decided we were going to withdraw from the seat, unless you would like to take that position and hold that seat for this RPC.

Councilman Smith: If you believe that we should be involved with it, and I will agree to do it. I don't know if we have an answer today. I'd love to have more information on them and what they do. And when they meet, that type of thing before I commit it to it.

Ms. Wuerstle: Tomorrow from 930 to 1230 at the Colonial Oaks Park in Sarasota. I can give you a copy of this. He did ask me because they're having problems with quorums if I would respond to him today and let him know if we're going to stay or if we are going to withdraw.

Commissioner McDaniel: We're totally okay with withdrawing.

Councilman Smith: You are?

Commissioner McDaniel: Yes.

Speaker: Inaudible

Councilman Smith: All right. I cannot go to their meeting tomorrow. Just obviously the short notice I'm committed already.

Commissioner McDaniel: Really? What else you get to do?

Councilman Smith: Hardly a thing. So I'll agree to that plan of withdraw and maybe rejoin. And I'd like to receive whatever information they have, you know, so that I can consider joining them.

Commissioner McDaniel: Yes. Let's withdraw with a reservation for rejoining. And if they don't want us to come back, we won't go back. How's that? We haven't had anybody in that seat for ever anyway.

Ms. Wuerstle: This is before I came on board.

Commissioner McDaniel: So if they'll allow us to withdraw.

Ms. Wuerstle: The next item on my agenda is an update on the workshop we had with the with FRCA. They had recommended that we have a retreat. I don't know how you feel about that. If you plan on doing that, they were questioning when it is the last time I met with them. Do you want a retreat?

Commissioner McDaniel: No. What do you want to retreat for?

Ms. Wuerstle: To reorganize to revitalize. My concern is if you look at who attended the workshop, Sarasota wasn't there.

Commissioner McDaniel: Nobody's there, Margaret. I don't have any interest in having another workshop again. There's no reason for us to have a retreat until the reorganization of this organization is accomplished. Once that's accomplished, we can have a workshop. If, in fact, that's accomplished, then we can have a workshop, we can have a retreat, and I'll get in the pile and figure out how we're going to do what we're going to do. How about you, folks? I don't want to be... Fred, how do you feel? No retreat? Ron? Ron, how do you feel about a retreat?

Mr. Flood: I was just going to say, and you're going to go ahead and go back around a lot of things. I would think that would be about who gave us the interest, and I have to bring them back into the fold, and that would be the time for everybody to get their interests around.

Ms. Wuerstle: Okay, I just want to point out that there is a 1995 Attorney General opinion. This was given to me by FRCA. I'm just passing it on to you, FYI. It is an Attorney General's opinion that says that the counties must pay their assessments, but I don't know what we do with it beyond that.

Commissioner McDaniel: Well, you can... There again, we had this discussion at the workshop. We had this discussion the last time. We had this discussion years ago when there was a movement of foot to sue our members. That is not going to happen, period, and I can give this AG's opinion to my attorney, a county attorney, and you put three of them in a room and you're going to get three different opinions as to what the definition actually says. I'm not a lawyer. I'm not inflicted with that mental issue called a law degree, but when I'm reading this, I don't concur with the AG's opinion here. So, well, at the end of the day. So, we don't really need to belabor this point any longer.

AGENDA ITEM #9(d)(e)(f)
FRCA Monthly Activity Report – July 2024
FRCA Monthly Activity Report – August 2024
Promise Zone Grants (Informational)

Commissioner McDaniel: Let's go forward. How about our FRCA Monthly Activity Report, and the Promise Zone?

Ms. Wuerstle: That's just FYI, but I do want to point out that in the Promise Zone, I mean, there have been \$42 million in grants denied. I know it's denied, but you still have to put the work in to submit those grants. So, we've done a lot of work with trying to find grants for the Promise Zone. We're successful for \$5 million, but we continue to try. Our most recent grants is for FHERO. We do the Rural Regional Development Grants for FHERO. That was approved. We are working on it, and we're waiting to hear from NOAA on our grants for \$500,000 for the shrimp industry.

AGENDA ITEM #9(g)
Government Fund History (Informational)

Commissioner McDaniel: What's this report with regard to the governmental funding's activity?

Ms. Harp: I'll pull it up. You had requested that I always include the governmental funds activity from the audit. If you look on the screen, you'll see just the history of income and our net balance each year.

Commissioner McDaniel: I see. So, back in 2006, we received \$3.2 million, and that's a combination of grants and membership fees.

Ms. Wuerstle: We also back then had yearly funding from the state. It was before my time, I came in just as the governor vetoed that, but it was around, I want to say, at least \$250,000 each year.

Commissioner McDaniel: There were several funding sources that were coming back in those days.

Ms. Wuerstle: You can see in 2012, where the money from the state was vetoed and took us down.

Commissioner McDaniel: Right. All right. Are there any questions on those reports from anybody online? Ron, did you have a chance to, anybody have any comments with regard to those reports?

Mr. McCormick: Looks fine to me. Thanks.

AGENDA ITEM #10
COMMITTEE REPORTS

No Committee Reports were given.

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

There was no update given.

Commissioner McDaniel: Okay. Executive Committee let's go to the quality of life and then I'll, there's no report from the executive committee. We're all here, unless you got anything, anything extra to add? Ron?

Councilman Smith: Well, I'm so sorry that I came in late.

Commissioner McDaniel: Don't be sorry.

Mr. McCormick: Bill, could you ask Ron to get to a mic, please?

Councilman Smith: If I can, just a couple of things. Okay. Maybe I want to save it for them. Let me save it.

Commissioner McDaniel: He's going to save his executive committee comments for the member comments. And so, we're going to go over to you quality of life and safety committee. Don, isn't Don the chair of that committee? Don, do you have anything to report on that before I go to state agency?

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

There was no update given.

Mr. McCormick: No, that committee has not met in quite a while and I have nothing to report.

Commissioner McDaniel: We can take that off the agenda until that committee starts to meet. There's no reason to have it on the agenda until that committee starts to meet. There's no reason to have it on the agenda.

**AGENDA ITEM #11
NEW BUSINESS**

No new business was discussed.

Commissioner McDaniel: How about, how about new business? Does anybody have anything they want to bring up for new business? I'm going to cover a lot of new business, my new business, under member comments.

Mr. Flood: I was just going to ask if you ever heard back from the governor's office?

Commissioner McDaniel: No, not a word. Even after the favorite lawyer sat over there and said he was going to get that chief of staff to reach out, I called him again after that. So, I'm not getting any communication out of the governor's office. So, all right, let's, uh, let's hear from state agencies.

AGENDA ITEM #12 STATE AGENCIES COMMENTS/REPORTS

Mr. Flood: So this week, DEP finally announced a series of base and management action plan workshops to talk about the water quality, specifically for the, for the west coast and lake Okeechobee and the east coast. So we're going to have a DEP is going to hold a meeting, right here in this office, October 22nd, to talk about the Caloosahatchee and the Everglades west coast. That is at 9am on Tuesday, October the 22nd, right here in Fort Myers.

Ms. Wuerstle: Do you need to register?

Mr. Flood: No, it's in person only - nothing online.

Ms. Wuerstle: So just show up?

Mr. Flood: Yes. So you just have to show up and they're going to have a follow up or they have one over in LaBelle for the folks in Henry County later that afternoon on the 22nd. I won't say that our governing board just awarded \$53 million to build a new field station over in Clewiston, but they did do that. I will mention that the last couple of weeks ago, the legislature announced the dates for committee meetings. Of course, legislative session starts March 4th, but committee meetings have been scheduled now. They're going to begin in December and also the, what do they call themselves? The, joint legislative budget commission, they adopted the long range long range financial forecast. And the good news is our economy is still clicking along here in Florida and they're expecting about a \$2 billion surplus for this next fiscal year for the legislature to work with. So, that's very good. The, the bad news is, they project the economy to start taking a downward trend the next couple of years. And so the following year, they're looking at over \$3 billion shortfall. So, we got one more good year of funding out there. So it's not too early for local governments and people to start thinking about legislative funding request and so start thinking about what you want and lining up your, your legislators are going to sponsor that. So just thought I'd throw that out there.

Mr. Burson: What was the ending date of that meeting – the time?

Mr. Flood: For the base of management action plan, probably, I think 11 o'clock. I'll forward you the invite if you'd like, Fred.

Ms. Wuerstle: Would you send it to me also?

Commissioner McDaniel: And then if you would spread it out to all of our membership as well, you or Rebekah, whoever's pushing the buttons over there. Let's go into our council members' comments and I'll start with our, our members online. Mr. Kramer, do you have anything you want to add for the greater good?

AGENDA ITEM #13 COUNCIL MEMBERS' COMMENTS

Councilman Kramer: I'm not sure everybody's aware of this, but we're kind of the end of the line on a peninsula here in Southwest Florida where, it's been 30 years in the making, but we've got \$120 million stormwater outfall project. I'm amazed to say this, but we've been on a gravity system with no backflow preventers. Yeah. Kind of like the middle ages forever. And, we're going to be putting in pump stations. We're going to pump it 200, 300 yards offshore. And we're going to have backflow preventers. And there's also going to be some scrubbing of that stormwater before it goes out. So that's a big deal here. We've found ways to finance it. The state's helped some of our TDC funds. We're begun the ask, but it hasn't been finalized yet. We're going to put shovels in the ground the middle of October. We're having that ceremony. That's all I've got.

Commissioner McDaniel: Outstanding.

Councilman Kramer: I hear you.

Commissioner McDaniel: Well, pumping it 6, 700 feet offshore without attenuation.

Councilman Kramer: Yeah. Well, that's what I'm talking about. Scrubbing it.

Commissioner McDaniel: Okay. And, uh, I'm happy to hear that because it was very, very frustrating for me watching that all transpire. And as you said, the city operating in dark ages with a gravity system that with no backflow protectors. And I understand land is very expensive.

Commissioner McDaniel: How about you, Mr. McCormick? Do you have anything to say?

Mr. McCormick: No, I'm all set at this time.

Commissioner McDaniel: And it is Vanessa. She's been dutifully sitting there. Vanessa, do you have anything you wish to add?

Vanessa: I've just been actively listening, but no, nothing to add.

Commissioner McDaniel: Anybody else online that is there? Fred, do you have anything for the good of the org?

Councilman Burson: No, I don't have anything.

Commissioner McDaniel: All right. Mr. Ron has something to say that he withheld. So I'll wait. I'll go to last.

Councilman Smith: Fine. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was hopeful that we would have some discussion about our last meeting where I was so pleased to see this room filled. And I wanted your reaction to that meeting because I've thought about it. And maybe I had unrealistic expectations for what that meeting was going to be. I had great hope that they were going to show us the way forward or help us find the way forward. And I felt like we didn't get that. So for me, it was a disappointment. I don't know if it was for you. And I would stop there and ask for your response. I do have one other item I'd like to just mention afterwards.

Commissioner McDaniel: I agree with you. I was disappointed. I think that in all sincerity, that workshop was whipped up on incorrect information. Margaret shared that we had budgetary constraints that weren't going to allow this organization to last past the end of this month. And that whipped them up to be able to come together. Now, she may have a different story as to why, in fact, it came together at all. But I, in all sincerity, think we're past that other than having the FRCA and the Central Regional Planning Council be of assistance. In fact, if this organization bolts, we already know the path that we have to travel. And that path of traveling is going to be part of my upcoming comments. So I considered that with all due respect, those people all gave their time. That was, that was what was a politically correct statement? It wasn't as fruitful a use of our time as what could have in fact transpired. How do you like that?

Ms. Wuerstle: And just for the record, it was not because of my comments on the budget. They were talking about that way before I made that comment because of our situation and the letter that was sent to the Governor. I don't think they have the answers for us. At least, like you said, they didn't present anything that would help us.

Commissioner McDaniel: And your other comments, sir?

Councilman Smith: My other comment, I wanted to report on my flailing efforts to get the city of Venice to pay its dues. I do appreciate the Attorney General. I have the affliction. I am a lawyer. And I think you knew that when you said it. Anyway, I have taken up the torch to try to get Venice to pay its dues. And I know that it won't save this organization. But I think it's the right thing to do. And I told them my story that I shared here of covering this group 40 years ago as a reporter and being thrilled to be a part of this group and being honored to be put on the executive committee and being honored to be made the treasurer only to find that my city council hasn't paid its bill. And I forced the issue in three different meetings and finally had it on the agenda for a vote last week. And they voted not to pay to my horror and to my frustration. I'm not done fighting.

Ms. Wuerstle: Did they say why?

Councilman Smith: Excuse me?

Ms. Wuerstle: Did they say why they chose not to vote?

Councilman Smith: Yes. Not in any clear-cut way. And part of it was because I was bringing the issue up. I would speculate. In other words, I put them on the spot. They didn't appreciate it and they put me back down. But I'm going to bring it back up again. I have met with a project editor, a local paper, about doing the story that I see, that if I were still a writer, I would write about what is happening. It's an important public issue in my opinion. So I wanted you to know that I had done that, and that bad result. It caused all of the other members of that board to go back into the history of what's happened over the last several years and to come forward and say, no, we're not. And then they threatened that if I push it any further, they'll withdraw from the group and remove me from my position here. So, that frustrated me further. But my efforts continue. Thank you.

Commissioner McDaniel: You're not the lone ranger. Okay. I have an agenda item coming up next Tuesday. I have brought forward the rewritten bylaws, the draft bylaws, the draft constitution, and the draft interlocal agreement. I have been ratified it by my county attorney and I'm bringing the agenda forward item forward on Tuesday to get my board hopefully to accept the amended constitution, amended bylaws and amended MOU with the payment. If I am successful Tuesday in getting my board to acquiesce to that, as you all will recall, the previous, the current MOU that we are operating under calls for a 30 cent per diem, 30 cent a head. We reduced that to 15 cent a head. And then we cut it up into quarterly payments to then allow for the electeds to earn the trust of the organization. You're dealing with an enormous amount of history with your organization as I am with mine. So can't go anywhere until we do something different. My goal is my board members will support this. Collier County will begin to pay. And then Margaret or Rebekah, whichever one of you is pushing the buttons is going to supply my office with every single county commissioner in our RPC and their contact information. And then as opposed to the roadshow that was tried before, I will get a county commissioner of all six districts or all six counties to put me on their agenda. We're not going to show up and talk for three minutes and not receive any comment. I'm going to actually put an agenda item on every single county commission board's agenda. Because if you'll recall, in the rewrite of the bylaws, I scrolled the membership back from 40 or however many members we in fact have, I scrolled it back to two county commissioners from if my recollection is correct, I scrolled it back to two county commissioners from each county and a city municipality within each county, just to condense the membership at the beginning. And it's just for the reorganization process to actually transpire. And then the group, the then 18 member group can make a decision as to how many municipalities per county can be a member. Now, the positive attribute of that is it's a defray, it's a defer or a fragmentation of the 15 cent a head per diem. And there's no reason to not have every municipality in your county on the RPC, because we're no longer an authority. And that that reality has to be accepted. We're no longer an

authority. We are strictly an information dispersal organization process period, we have no authority. And we are going to start to disperse the information that's necessary for our membership to then actually see relevancy with regard to this organization. So step one, Tuesday coming up, I wasn't, I missed the, I missed, talk about flailing efforts, I missed the agenda item for two weeks ago at my county commission and didn't get it, didn't get the agenda item loaded up in time. So but it's loaded up now and it's on next week's agenda. My premise there is leadership from example. I'll be able to go to every one of the single county, the county commissions and get an agenda item here. Collier County stepping up to the plate, however many, I mean, there's some people that are paying dues anyway. I mean, I think you got 38,000 or so coming in in fees. So I won't have to necessarily, do you recall off the top which ones those are?

Ms. Wuerstle: Glades County, City of Fort Myers and Fort Myers Beach.

Ms. Harp: City of Naples as well now, City of Naples as well.

Ms. Wuerstle: Oh, they just started the City of Naples.

Commissioner McDaniel: Thank you, William. So from this, my hope is with this, from this leadership by example process, I'm going to go in front of every single one of the county commissions and re-invite them back into the fold. And I'm going to start doing that, assuming Tuesday's adventure for me is successful. And then if you wish, my process is I'm going to go to the county commissions and in the event that the county commissions and I'm successful with the county commissions, then I can spread out to the municipalities and come speak to your council as well. And because the reality of it is Lee County has a million people plus minus, that's \$150,000 a year. Every one of the municipalities, Fort Myers Beach, Fort Myers, the City of Fort Myers, everybody, all of the municipalities can pay their pro-rata share for their living in the great state of Lee County. And so the rationale before was they didn't want a lot of membership from local municipalities because of the authority factor that came with being a member of the RPC. And if Lee County loaded up, then they could be making poor decisions for the overall greater good in the region because the organization was weighted by Lee County or Sarasota County or anything along those lines. So now there's no reason to not have them. The second part that I'm going to do is I'm going to, as the counties come online, ultimately my plan is to peel it back from two members of the commission to one member with an alternate and then a staff member from every planning department attend these RPC meetings.

Ms. Wuerstle: Statute says it has to be two members from the county. So we have to change the statute to change that.

Commissioner McDaniel: Fine, I'll worry about that when I'm a legislator. But for right now, for right now we're going to go with the two as to what the statute actually requires. There's no reason for two county commissioners to be here. There's only a reason for one, especially since it's an advisory organization and an information dispersal organization. So there's no reason for two to be a member. One is an appointed, anointed member and one is the alternate. That's a

fine way to go with it. And that's my thought process. So on that. And I also want a planning staff member at every single one of these RPC meetings so that we are actually, and I've said it before and I'll say it again, as a general rule, I said it to you folks earlier, electeds are borderline, worthless. Staff are the ones that get these things done. And the information dissemination can be done by staff if they're here and they're participating in what we have going on. So the battle plan for me is Tuesday will be the beginning and then we're going to work on the reorganization as to how we do and what we do. I'd like to suggest number, one that we move our meeting time from 9am to 10 in the morning because we're all traveling, and we plan on two hours from 10 till 12. And then we have a box lunch brought in so that we, as long as this doesn't conflict with your schedule, eventually I plan on moving the location of our meetings to somewhere out closer to I-75. It's wonderful that you're holding these meetings here for us, Phil. I'm talking for you folks online. I'm talking to Mr. Flood with regard to being able to utilize these facilities. But the ultimate goal is to move it out closer to 75 but still move it, still be at 10 o'clock, start at 10 o'clock and then we're all not fighting because I mean you're coming from Sarasota, I'm coming from East Jesus, Idaho. It took me an hour and a half to get in here this morning from. Sir.

Speaker: inaudible

Commissioner McDaniel: Florida Department of Transportation's got a building. Yeah and since Wayne Gathers the newly anointed designee from the DOT, we'll get them lined up. So bottom line proposition is let's move our meeting time from 9 o'clock to 10 o'clock in the morning, plan on a two-hour meeting. We don't have to do the box lunch on October 17th but ultimately plan on a two-hour time slot here on October 17th. And then just to repeat briefly, assuming I'm successful next week, you'll supply me with contact information, and I'll make my own arrangements. I'm going to go meet because I know almost every county commissioner in our RPC. I'll pick the ones that I like because I don't like some of them. I'm joking. But I'll pick one that will champion the agenda item, bring forward an agenda item and then I'm actually on their docket and I'm not limited to time and I'm not limited and they're going to take a vote. I'm going to force them to take a vote.

Councilman Smith: may I comment?

Commissioner McDaniel: You certainly may.

Councilman Smith: First, I want to express my support for everything that you have just said. I love your plan and I wish you the best with it.

Commissioner McDaniel: Pray for me.

Councilman Smith: And second, I want to recommend you go from south to north because the resistance, I think, started in Sarasota. And if you can build success going north, it might force the hand there at the end. And we should vote some special status for Glades, for being this sole current county hang. It's dues. Maybe we can give them a gold star or something. A plaque

or sustaining member. That's what we should declare them at any rate. And thank you for the effort that's going to go into that major, major plan of yours.

Commissioner McDaniel: Anybody got any questions on my bulletproof plan?

Mr. McCormick: Can I give you a piece of advice, Mr. Chairman?

Commissioner McDaniel: Of course.

Mr. McCormick: Can you hear me, Mr. Chairman?

Commissioner McDaniel: Yes, of course.

Mr. McCormick: I would leave that bit about electeds not being all that effective in your presentation to county commissions. It was a joke my friend.

Commissioner McDaniel: I didn't hear what he had to say. Say it again. Oh, I won't say that out loud in front of them, although they're all part of the clan. Mr. McCormick, it's noted. I won't bring that up. I may.

Mr. McCormick: By the way, I applaud your efforts and I like your action plan and anything I can do to help them, you know.

Commissioner McDaniel: Okay, my friend. Thank you.

Ms. Wuerstle: Can I just clarify? Okay. Previously, you asked me to send you the meeting dates of all the

Commissioner McDaniel: Yeah, I've switched that. Okay. I don't care about the meeting dates. I want to contact information for all the board members.

Ms. Wuerstle: In every county in every city or every county?

Commissioner McDaniel: Every county. I'm going to go to the counties first. And then once I get once I get a positive nod out of the counties, then I'll go to the cities within that organization or within that county. And for now, if Lee County comes on board, Fort Myers is already in. If Sarasota comes on board, Venice is already in. LaBelle can be in if Henry comes back to the table. Naples is already in. As far as Collier County goes. So Charlotte's really the only one out there that doesn't have a municipality. Well, no, the lady, the Punta Gorda is here. So Charlotte's got one as well. So I'll go to I'll go to each one of those current participating members cities and do the same thing with the council member there.

Ms. Wuerstle: Now, do you want the planning commission planning directors planning people invited to our meetings going forward now? Or do you want to wait?

Commissioner McDaniel: No. We have to have a survival plan. Right now we're in we're in take no prisoners mode. There's no reason to haul all these people in staffers in to sit around and talk about our woes. We have to say without a financial plan without longevity, there's no

reason for us to be dragging all these people in here to do this. So step one, my goal will be between now I let's see how it goes on Tuesday and then I'll just I'll start whooping on them between now and the end of the year and get as many of them accomplished as I can. Sound okay?

Ms. Wuerstle: Thank you. Good luck.

Commissioner McDaniel: That's the battle plan. All right. Good luck, ladies. Carry on. With that, unless there's anything else for the greater good, we're adjourned.

**AGENDA ITEM #14
ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 10:32 a.m.
Full audio is available: September 19, 2024 Zoom

Councilwoman Debi Lux, Secretary

The meeting was duly advertised in the September 6, 2024, issue of the FLORIDA ADMINISTRATIVE REGISTER, Volume 50, Number 175.