

**MINUTES OF THE  
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL  
JANUARY 21, 2021 MEETING**

The meeting of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council was held on January 21, 2021 virtually via GoToMeeting. Governor Appointee and Council Chair, Mr. Don McCormick called the meeting to order at 9:04AM. Ms. Margaret Wuerstle conducted the roll call and announced that a quorum was present.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

**Charlotte County:** Councilman Jaha Cummings, Mr. Don McCormick, Commissioner Joe Tiseo

**Collier County:** Commissioner Bill McDaniel, Commissioner Rick LoCastro

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

**Hendry County:** Mr. Mel Karau, Commissioner Mitchell Wills

**Lee County:** Councilman Jesse Purdon

**Sarasota County:** Vice-Mayor Erik Arroyo, Commissioner Ron Cutsinger

**Ex-Officio:** Mr. Phil Flood–SFWMD, Mr. Dennis Ragosta-SFWMD

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

**Charlotte County:** Commissioner Ken Doherty, Ms. Suzanne Graham

**Collier County:** None

**Glades County:** None

**Hendry County:** Commissioner Emma Byrd, Vice-Mayor Greg Thompson

**Lee County:** Councilman Fred Burson, Commissioner Frank Mann, Vice- Mayor Ray Murphy, Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass

**Sarasota County:** Councilwoman Mitzie Fiedler

**Ex-Officio:** Mr. Wayne Gaither-FDOT, Mr. Jon Iglehart-FDEP

**AGENDA ITEM #4  
PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

**AGENDA ITEM #5  
AGENDA**

Commissioner McDaniel stated that the important business that the group needed to take care of should be moved to the top of the agenda. Item 12(e) Proposed Changes to Interlocal Agreement was moved ahead to item 8 in front of Financials.

**A motion was made by Commissioner McDaniel to move item 12(e) ahead of Financials to item 8. This motion was seconded by Mr. Mel Karau and passed unanimously.**

**AGENDA ITEM #6  
NOMINATING COMMITTEE: APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS**

Ms. Margaret Wuerstle explained that there was not a meeting in November 2020 due to lack of a quorum, so instead there was a meeting of the Executive Board to approve items with a deadline and act as the nominating committee for the 2021 officers. The nominating committee recommended the following individuals to fill the seats: Mr. Don McCormick for the Chairman position, Councilman Fred Burson for Vice-Chairman, Councilman Jaha Cummings for the Treasurer position, and Mr. Tommy Perry will stay on for another term as the outgoing member. There is still a vacancy for the Secretary position that needs to be filled.

**A motion was made by Mr. Mel Karau to accept the new appointment of officers. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Joe Tiseo and passed unanimously.**

**AGENDA ITEM #7  
MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 17, 2020 MEETING**

There were no corrections or additions to the minutes of the September 17, 2020 meeting.

**A motion was made by Mr. Mel Karau to accept the minutes of the September 17, 2020 meeting. This motion was seconded by Councilman Jaha Cummings and passed unanimously.**

**AGENDA ITEM #12(e)  
PROPOSED CHANGES TO INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT**

Ms. Wuerstle explained that the pending Senate Bill #62, if passed would remove the Regional Planning Councils from the statutes. Regional Planning Councils will still be able to exist by interlocal agreement only. Ms. Wuerstle went on to add that when Commissioner McDaniel

and herself worked on this item several months back Senate Bill #62 did not exist, and their work on this item was to clean up the interlocal agreement and bylaws to ensure that they were consistent with the state statutes. She stated that now that the bill is pending it may be premature to do this. It is still important to consider relevancy issues and the interlocal agreement, but this may change depending on if the bill passes in the legislative session. Commissioner McDaniel stated that there is way more to this item than the pending bill. He went on to say that the bill has a long way to go before the statute could be changed and that it is incumbent upon the organization to adjust what it is that the RPC is doing. He added that he would prefer that the Council start the process of having the organization minimally be conforming to the state statutes. Ms. Wuerstle added that she just wanted everyone to be aware that things could change significantly.

Mr. McCormick commented that he would like to commend Ms. Wuerstle and Commissioner McDaniel for seizing the opportunity to try and clarify the RPC's relationship.

Ms. Wuerstle added that if Senate Bill #62 does pass, the RPC is going to need an interlocal agreement more than ever. As far as reviewing and making the interlocal agreement relevant to how we want to operate is very important. Commissioner McDaniel stated that the goal with this process is to reconstitute, rebrand and repeal the existing interlocal agreement along with an adjustment to our bylaws and bring the documents into the current statutory compliance. He went on to say that the RPC has been way out of conformity with the statutes for quite some time. His recommendation was to move forward with this reconstitution with the repeal of the interlocal agreement. He added that this is our organization agreeing to reconstitute and repeal the existing charter and replace it and rename, rebrand, and do whatever needs to be done to make the RPC as relevant as possible. Each member of the RPC will need to take the new agreement back to their individual commissions for a response. Commissioner McDaniel stated that this is a process which is why he does not concur with Ms. Wuerstle's theory of waiting until there is a decision with the Senate Bill #62 that may or may not come. He added that an RPC of some sort is always necessary for the counties to come together and discuss matters and the common issues throughout this area.

**A motion was made by Commissioner McDaniel to adjust the RPC meetings to be held monthly rather than quarterly in order to begin repealing, reconstituting and rebranding the organization. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Joe Tiseo.**

Vice- Mayor Arroyo questioned if monthly meetings will be in person once it is safe to do so according to COVID regulations. Commissioner McDaniel stated that he would like monthly meetings in person. Ms. Wuerstle added that attendance for RPC meetings can include a call-in option or virtual presence, as it has always been allowed.

Commissioner Storter-Long mentioned that in the last RPC meeting she stated that she did not see a reason for monthly meetings and also nothing has changed. Ms. Wuerstle keeps everyone informed, she is always available and there seems to be no advantage of holding monthly meetings and regardless of what happens with legislature there does not seem to be a purpose

of monthly meetings. She went on to say it is a waste of time to hold monthly meetings whenever there are no imperative issues. Bi-monthly meetings would be better but quarterly is most convenient and makes the most sense and due to the currently situation. She asked what Commissioner McDaniel wanted to achieve with monthly meetings. Commissioner McDaniel stated that he has proposed a repeal and reconstitution and rebrand and rename along with a new set of bylaws for the organization. He went on to add that the premise of this is to bring the organization up to date with the current statutes because currently the organization is outside of the statutes on what the RPC can and cannot do. He then stated the new proposal mentions way to start funding the RPC again and he feels that there is a lot of housekeeping to be taken care of so monthly meetings for a period of time are necessary.

**A motion was made by Commissioner McDaniel to adjust the RPC meetings to be held monthly rather than quarterly. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Joe Tiseo. The motion did not pass unanimously.**

**At this time Ms. Wuerstle began taking a row call to vote on the motion. There was not a quorum present at this time.**

Ms. Wuerstle explained that the Council could not adopt this item without a quorum.

**A motion was made by Commissioner McDaniel to begin repealing, reconstituting, and rebranding the organization regardless of if meetings are held monthly or not.**

**Commissioner McDaniel repealed the original motion of moving to monthly meetings. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Joe Tiseo and passed unanimously.**

**Ms. Wuerstle called roll call once again and a quorum was still no longer present.**

Mr. McCormick recommended moving forward with the agenda while waiting for a quorum.

**AGENDA ITEM #8  
FINANCIALS**

**AGENDA ITEM #8(a)  
AUGUST 2020 FINANCIALS**

**AGENDA ITEM #8(b)  
SEPTEMBER 2020 FINANCIALS**

**AGENDA ITEM #8(c)  
BUDGET AMENDMENT**

Ms. Wuerstle stated that although none of the financial items can be voted on without a quorum, the Executive Board did already meet and vote on these items to continue with last year's audit. The year did end in the hole \$174,000, but it was better than the \$250,000 that was expected. Part of the reason the RPC was able to do this was because of grants that were received. Since the adoption of the budget for the current year, the RPC has been able to bring in over \$1 million in new funding and grants for this region. There was \$400,000 from the CARES Act to develop a resiliency plan, \$175,000 for Clewiston's Waterfront Master Plan, \$100,000 to create a Food Policy Council in Collier County and \$350,000 to develop a regional strategy for local food systems.

Ms. Wuerstle added that when there is a quorum the financials can be brought back to vote on, but they have already been approved by the Executive Committee.

**AGENDA ITEM #10  
CONSENT AGENDA**

Ms. Wuerstle stated that we cannot move forward with the consent agenda without a quorum.

**AGENDA ITEM #12(a)  
SB 0062**

Ms. Wuerstle explained that this Senate Bill removes all reference to the 10 Regional Planning Councils from the state statutes. She went on to state that she is working with FRCA to address the issues. The bill will go before the Community Affairs Committee at the upcoming Tuesday Committee hearing and there will be representatives from FRCA at the hearing to address this. If the bill does pass it does not mean that RPCs cannot exist, it just means that they will need to exist by an interlocal agreement and not by state statutes.

**AGENDA ITEM #12(c)  
POWERPOINT: SWFRPC RELEVANCY**

Ms. Wuerstle explained that right now there are four items that are required by state statutes for Regional Planning Council's to do. They are required to 1) keep and update the strategic regional policy plan 2) to be the regional cleaning house for intergovernmental coordination and review 3) to do an audit every year and 4) to dispute resolutions.

Ms. Wuerstle added that the ongoing funded programs by the federal government are 1) The Local Emergency Planning Committee 2) Hazardous Material Emergency Planning and 3) Economic Development District. Currently, the Regional Planning Councils are delegated 37 duties within 11 chapters, SB 62 is removing these different chapters. The primary focus for the 10 Regional Planning Council's is economic development, transportation, quality of life, emergency preparedness and being regional conveners.

Ms. Wuerstle shared in her PowerPoint that some of the operational changes that were needed and approved in June 2020 were to authorize the Executive Board to approve items between meetings and that approved items would be brought to the next full board meeting. This was used in November when the RPC was unable to achieve a quorum and items had to be approved to move forward.

**AGENDA ITEM #12(d)  
POWERPOINT: SWFRPC PROGRAMS**

Ms. Wuerstle shared information on the RPC's current programs. FDEM HazMat Contracts include \$80,000 for the Local Emergency Planning Committee, \$62,000 for Hazardous Material Emergency Preparedness and \$20,000 for Hazardous Analysis which totally roughly \$162,000 annually with no match required. The SWFRPC also has the Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant on a 3-year cycle. It is a \$210,000 grant with a 70/30 match. Ms. Wuerstle explained how the SWFRPC rewrites the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) every year with the EDA funds. The Brownfield grant is another grant the SWFRPC has been awarded for \$600,000. Ms. Wuerstle went on to discuss the VISTA Volunteer Grant and others that the SWFRPC receives and manages.

**AGENDA ITEM #12(f)  
FY20-21 MEETING SCHEDULE**

The meeting schedule was in the packet for informational purposes.

**AGENDA ITEM #13  
COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**AGENDA ITEM #13(a)  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**AGENDA ITEM #13(b)  
QUALITY OF LIFE & SAFETY**

Chair Don McCormick stated that there were no updates aside from the Executive Committee meeting in November. Everything is on track. The financials will have to be approved at the next council meeting.

**AGENDA ITEM #14  
NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business.

**AGENDA ITEM #15  
STATE AGENCIES COMMENTS/REPORTS**

Phil Flood of SFWMD shared a reminder that SWFL is currently in the dry season and it is expected to be a drier season than normal so everyone should be mindful of the water that they use and the COVID pandemic has not slowed the Water Management District down at all. All of their projects are still moving forward.

Dennis Ragosta of SFWMD added that thankfully COVID has not slowed down any of the WMD's construction with future or current projects. Counties and Municipalities in the area are also coming in with the cost share funding initiative program which kicks off shortly. Operationally they are full steam ahead and operating at almost 100% capacity.

**AGENDA ITEM #16  
COUNCIL MEMBERS' COMMENTS**

Commissioner Storter-Long spoke out and extended an apology to Commissioner McDaniel, she did not mean to interrupt his comments. She stated that she is calling by telephone and there is a delay on the line, so she was unable to determine when he was completed with his statements. She added that if the RPC is unable to achieve a quorum for quarterly meetings, how will a monthly quorum be achieved. She stated that she is aware Margaret and Commissioner McDaniel have worked hard on the revisions to the interlocal agreement and she understands the frustrations and part of the frustrations come from being unable to meet in person. She went on to say that she appreciates the Commissioner's concern and his work, and she wanted to express that to everyone.

Ms. Wuerstle added that there will be a meeting scheduled by the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) on February 2, 2021 from 10am until 12pm regarding Broadband and the need for changes in Broadband. All RPC's will be having meetings on this issue.

**AGENDA ITEM #16  
ADJOURN**

The next meeting will be on March 18, 2021. The meeting adjourned at 10:12 a.m.



Don McCormick, Chairman

**The meeting was duly advertised in the January 14, 2021 issue of the FLORIDA ADMINISTRATIVE REGISTER, Volume 47, Number 10.**