

**MINUTES OF THE
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL
February 22, 2024, MEETING**

The virtual zoom meeting of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council’s Executive Board was held on February 22, 2024. Governor Appointee and Council Chair, Mr. Don McCormick called the meeting to order at 1:20 p.m. There was a quorum of the Executive Committee present.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Charlotte County: Mr. Don McCormick – Chair, Councilwoman Dr. Debi Lux – City of Punta Gorda

Collier County: Commissioner Bill McDaniel

Glades County: Commissioner Tim Stanley

Hendry County: Mr. Mel Karau (zoom)

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. Asmaa Odeh – SWFRPC – (zoom)

Ms. Denise Imbler – FRCA – (zoom)

Ms. Rochelle Gallant – City of Sarasota

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

Commissioner Bill McDaniel offered a motion to approve the minutes of the January 18, 2024, Council/Executive Committee meeting. Councilman Fred Burson seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the January 18, 2024, Council/Executive Committee meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM #7(a)
FINANCIALS: October-December 2023 Financials

Councilman Fred Burson offered a motion to approve the October-December financials. Commissioner Bill McDaniel seconded the motion to approve the October-December financials. The motion was approved unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM #8
CONSENT AGENDA

AGENDA ITEM #9
DIRECTORS REPORT
AGENDA ITEM #9(a)

Ms. Wuerstle explained that originally she sent a letter to the Governor giving the full background and history. Supplement attachments were included that provided examples of the history including Sarasota's withdrawal letter and the Attorney General's letter. The attachments were substantial. Apparently the board wasn't happy with that and they wanted something very simple stating they wanted the Governor to reconstitute, recharter and approve the amended interlocal. Ms. Wuerstle had prepared the revised letter but had not sent it yet because FRCA, which is the Florida Regional Council's Association, sent a letter to the executive board requesting that they not send a letter to the Governor. Ms. Denise Imbler from FRCA was on the zoom call to discuss the FRCA letter.

Ms. Denise Imbler provided comments on behalf of FRCA to the board respectfully requesting that a letter not be sent to the Governor. Ms. Imbler offered FRCA's assistance and support to the SWFRPC and believed that participation is the SWFRPC's biggest hurdle. Ms. Imbler explained that the Economic Development District and the Local Emergency Planning Committee provides Federal and State funding to all the regional planning councils which

provides a baseline of activities. Ms. Imbler also invited the board to meet with the other regional planning council executive directors and their legal staff to see what options might be available and how best to move forward.

Discussion ensued and the members appreciated Ms. Imbler's comments but agreed to move forward with sending the letter.

Commissioner Bill McDaniel offered a motion to generate a one-page letter to the Governor asking for a reconstitution and a recharter of our organization with a separate document of the draft of the MOU and by-laws.

Ms. Imbler asked the members what the intent was for the letter and what is it exactly that the Council would like the Governor to do? She stated that FRCA's lobbyist is going to want to know.

Commissioner McDaniel explained that the letter asks the Governor to accept and propose the draft bylaws, constitution and interlocal agreement that are attached with the letter and by waving his magic wand to make us that new organization.

Ms. Imbler respectfully responded and explained that she doesn't believe that the Governor has the authority to do that as the statutes is currently written. I don't think he can do what you want him to do. He can redraw the RPC boundaries; He can relocate counties in and out of RPC districts, but he does not have the authority to change your bylaws for you.

Commissioner McDaniel responds to Denise that she is probably more knowledgeable with regards to RPC's, however he was told that the Governor can, especially with the circumstances now where we can't even get a quorum of our organization to come together to make the proposition.

Mr. McCormick would like to send the letter to give the Governor the opportunity to respond. If we don't ask the question, we will never get an answer.

Ms. Imbler requested that she be copied on the letter so that FRCA's lobbyist can be aware of the request.

Commissioner McDaniel responded that he is more than happy to communicate with anyone and expressed to the Chairman that he is more than welcome to be the spokesman, and he is more than willing to get the lobbyist onboard. Commissioner McDaniel explained that he

already communicated the request to his lobbyist for Collier County. Commissioner McDaniel expressed to Mr. McCormick that if any questions come up that he doesn't feel comfortable answering to have the Governor call him (Commissioner McDaniel).

Councilman Ron Smith introduced himself and explained that he was trying to understand the issues at hand. He explained that after Commissioner McDaniels explanation of everything, it seems like we need some action from the Governor to bail us out. To be relevant we must get the attendance to make a change. If the Governor doesn't do it, somehow, we must get everyone here. Possibly call an "Emergency Meeting" calling everyone to attend creating public pressure for them to attend, for the likes or the depths of this organization. With adequate time and a lot of publicity drawing attention to where we stand. Councilman Smith explained that he didn't know about the death spiral of this organization if he didn't read the minutes. He hasn't seen anything in the Sarasota or Fort Myers newspaper telling him what is going on, so it was alarming when he read the minutes. He believed that calling attention to the meeting with the headlines of "Emergency Crisis Meeting of the Members" might shame members in coming to the meetings and their attendance.

Councilwoman Debi Lux added that it sounds like to her that we are trying to do the right thing for our communities and our residents by coming together to do the right thing. Councilwoman Lux explains that what she fears is that other areas are getting stronger with the Economic Forum and Developers, and somehow we are missing how we get the developers and the residents to work together.

Commissioner McDaniel responded that Councilwoman Lux's comments were correct and that when our relevancy tanked and Sarasota figured out that they didn't have to pay, Lee County followed and didn't pay, Charlotte County followed and didn't pay. Collier County held on as long as they could. Commissioner McDaniel explained that rather than sit and talk about relevancy, let's fix the organization and make it a centric compact organization with fewer members. With all the members of this RPC the number is close to 30 and it can be difficult to get through anything with differing opinions. The Commissioner goes on to explain that this isn't a secret even though it hasn't been publicized or put in the paper. All the members have seen the drafts of the reconstitution, by laws and interlocal agreement. No one has given an opinion to our Chair or Executive Director. However, Commissioner McDaniel was ok with trying to publicize and try to do an emergency meeting. He also thought the path that we are on is accomplishable and will get this organization back to a manageable group.

Councilman Smith asked if this death spiral – sinking ship is due to a torpedo fired by the developers? The members responded no. Councilman Smith explained that he is trying to understand why.

Discussion ensued regarding why and how the downfall originally began.

Ms. Imbler asked to make a comment and explained that the RPCs need a set amount of money. You need a set amount of income to match your Economic Development District, your EDA funds – you need to have some kind of revenue stream. Ms. Imbler explained that one way other councils have been successful, is to enter into a scope of work. So the council will contract with each county to perform a set of services. By trial basis before you get into dues by population. It is just a suggestion that Margaret and Rebekah can work on with County Managers and the boards could sign. That would at least start the relevancy by showing them that these are the things that we can do for you and get the council a set revenue income source and stop using reserves.

Commissioner McDaniel responded that it would be a great idea if we had a functional organization that can actually operate and he is not willing and has no interest to do that. We cannot ask the counties to pay because we are nice.

Ms. Imbler responds that she is not suggesting that at all and explained that she one hundred percent agrees that the council needs to go back and say these are the services we offer. They are not free, right, no one works for free, but this is what we can provide to you as part of a regional collaborative and it's \$10,000. Anything to start the process of that, but there is a scope of work with that. You're not giving money - I'm not asking any county to just donate money to the council. They can't continue on with no amount of income and only living off of grants. Yes, they need to do those things that their counties want them to do and they find necessary within the region. Ms. Imbler continues to explain that you could work with each county to determine what that is and enter into a contract that looks like an ILA and grow from there. It is just a suggestion, and she explained that she is not advocating for any county to give money to just help it along.

Ms. Wuerstle explained that she believes that we only have enough money to make it to the end of this fiscal year unless a miracle happens.

Commissioner McDaniel stated that then we will be forced into a reorganization and be split among the other RPCs. Commissioner McDaniels expressed that it would be a travesty if that transpires.

Discussion ensued regarding why the other commissioners are not participating if they choose to be on this board.

**AGENDA ITEM #10
COMMITTEE REPORTS**

No Committee Reports were given.

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

There was no update given.

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

There was no update given.

**AGENDA ITEM #11
NEW BUSINESS**

No new business was discussed.

**AGENDA ITEM #12
STATE AGENCIES COMMENTS/REPORTS**

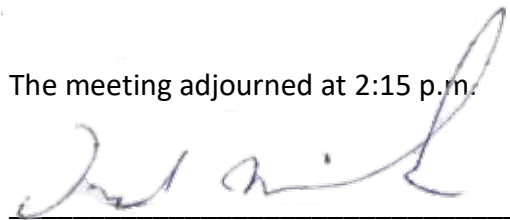
No state agency comments were given.

**AGENDA ITEM #13
COUNCIL MEMBERS' COMMENTS**

No comments were provided.

**AGENDA ITEM #14
ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.



Don McCormick, Chairman

The meeting was duly advertised in the February 15, 2024, issue of the FLORIDA ADMINISTRATIVE REGISTER, Volume 50, Number 32.