

**MINUTES OF THE
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL
FEBRUARY 20, 2025, MEETING**

The in-person and virtual zoom meeting of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council's Executive Board was held on February 20, 2025. The meeting started at approximately 10:12 am. There was no quorum of the Executive Committee present.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Charlotte County: None Mr. Don McCormick (zoom)

Collier County: None

Glades County: Commissioner Tim Stanley (zoom)

Hendry County: None

Lee County: None

Sarasota County: Councilman Ron Smith – City of Venice

Ex-Officio Members: Mr. Phil Flood, SFWMD

OTHERS PRESENT

Mr. Derek Felder – President of the Unite Lehigh, Inc.
Ms. Margaret Wuerstle – SWFRPC, Executive Director
Ms. Catherine Peralta – SWFRPC Vista

Zoom Attendance

Ms. Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP
Ms. Asmaa Odeh – SWFRPC, Project Director
Mr. Jim Burch – SWFRPC, Disaster Recovery Coordinator/Project Manager
Ms. Alysia Cancel – SWFRPC Vista
Grant Williams Alley
19419161162

Since there was no quorum present, Ms. Wuerstle started the meeting by explaining the items that did not need approval. She explained the tight security at this facility and that each member needs to be escorted up to the conference room.

AGENDA

AGENDA ITEM #6(a)(b)

MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 19, 2024 COUNCIL/EXECUTIVE MEETING

MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 16, 2025 COUNCIL/EXECUTIVE MEETING

Ms. Wuerstle stated that we will hold the minutes for approval until the next meeting in March.

AGENDA ITEM #7(a)

FINANCIALS: December Financials

Ms. Wuerstle discussed the December financials, noting that we closed the month with a surplus of \$984, a significant improvement from their previous deficit.

Ms. Wuerstle mentioned the need to approve the December and January financials at the next meeting in March.

AGENDA ITEM #7(b)

FINANCIALS:

Draft Comparison of Assessments (Current vs. Proposed) (*Informational*)

Mr. Felder noted that the last column where it is showing \$.15/per capita, is incorrect. Ms. Wuerstle made note and ensured the correction would be made.

AGENDA ITEM #7(c)

FINANCIALS:

Government Fund History (*Informational*)

Ms. Wuerstle explained that the government fund history item is informational and that this is the one that was requested to be included on the agenda each month.

AGENDA ITEM #8(a)

CONSENT AGENDA

None

**AGENDA ITEM #9
DIRECTORS REPORT**

**AGENDA ITEM #9(a)
Update on February 19 Listening Session**

Ms. Wuerstle went over the meeting held on February 19th and explained it was a listening session that was requested by EDA. In attendance on site there was the EDA, the Park Service, US Army Corps, and the State Department of Commerce. Online there was the US Department of Agriculture, Health and Human Services, HUD, and others. Ms. Wuerstle believed it was a good showing of the Federal Agencies, and a lot of information was covered. Ms. Wuerstle continued that there was also good attendance, stating that in the room there were approximately 25-30 people and online there were approximately 40 people that attended. Thirty-one projects were presented, and the agencies discussed the projects that they could possibly fund and what specifically they were looking for. The money for these projects has been approved by Congress, but the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) has not yet been released but is expected to be released next month. There will be a deadline and quick turnaround once it is released. Ms. Wuerstle emphasized that applications should be in the process of being completed now, because once the NOFA is released, applications should be submitted within a day or two. The EDA reviews applications as they are received and as the deadline approaches funds may be exhausted even before the deadline. Ms. Wuerstle urged the importance of completing the applications now and if anyone needs assistance, she is there to help with any of the processes.

Councilman Smith thanked Ms. Wuerstle for the update and stated that he is excited and is going to make sure to get his cities and counties ready.

Ms. Wuerstle continued to explain that there were many really good projects that were presented and some that were very interesting. One particular issue that was highlighted was the importance of addressing issues like debris removal and mental health support for disaster victims. Ms. Wuerstle also mentioned that the Dutch Embassy was also present online to understand the region's needs better and will continue to work with the SWFRPC.

Ms. Wuerstle noted the time and stated that there was still no quorum.

Councilman Smith suggested waiting until 10:30 to give people more time.

**AGENDA ITEM #9(b)
US 27 Rail Corridor Map and Presentation**

Ms. Wuerstle explained the US 27 Rail Corridor resolution was passed at the last meeting to support this project and that the project map is included as requested previously. The maps

showed the existing and new sections of the rail corridor, with the new section running from Lake Okeechobee towards Miami.

Councilman Smith asked which of our counties does the project go through. Mr. Felder stated it is just Glades. After reviewing the maps, it appears that the line goes through Hendry County as well.

AGENDA ITEM #9(d)
Hurricane Economic Recovery & Resiliency Project Work Sheet

AGENDA ITEM #10
COMMITTEE REPORTS

AGENDA ITEM #10(a)
EXECUTIVE 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's reports given.

AGENDA ITEM #13
COUNCIL MEMBERS' COMMENTS

Councilman Smith inquired about Venice utilizing the services of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council to apply for grants under the new supplemental program. He expressed his intention to promote this idea to Venice, as they lack the capacity to handle grant applications independently. He acknowledged that there is a charge for these services but noted that the administrative fees are incorporated into the grant. He then asked about the specific fee structure, questioning whether there is a standard rate, such as 10%, or if it varies.

Ms. Wuerstle explained that some grants have limitations on the percentage allocated for grant management, which can range from 10% to 15%. This includes reporting, required filings, grant

closeout, and overall tracking. However, there is no fixed percentage, as the fee structure depends on the specific services provided. Some costs may fall under administrative fees, while others may cover project management tasks such as coordinating with contractors, municipal staff, organizing, and facilitating meetings—services that are billed separately if required.

Ms. Wuerstle explained one example that we charge a flat rate is FHERO (Florida Heartland), that we have managed rural development grants for years, receiving a flat fee of approximately \$7,000 for reporting and administration. In other cases, such as a master plan project, their role extended beyond administration to include project management, such as organizing and facilitating meetings, even though a consultant drafted the master plan. She emphasized that these costs are incorporated into the grant itself, and they do not charge upfront for these services.

Councilman Smith noted that he would be going back to sell this to his board, and asked how many millions of dollars in grants have been handled by the Southwest Florida RPC?

Ms. Wuerstle responded that all that information is typically included in the agenda packet each month under the grant tracker and shows how many were applied, approved, pending and denied. The spreadsheet goes back for many years documenting the project funded.

Mr. Phil Flood noted that the grant information is usually highlighted in the Directors Report and asked for a reminder on what the \$282,000 Resiliency grant was for.

Ms. Wuerstle explained that it is for coordinating meetings in our region and assisting in filling gaps in vulnerability assessments and resiliency plans for the coast counties.

AGENDA ITEM #14 ADJOURN

The meeting ended at 10:40 a.m.

 Bill McDaniel jr (Apr 25, 2025 19:25 EDT)

Commissioner Bill McDaniel, Chair

The meeting was duly advertised in the February 5, 2025, issue of the FLORIDA ADMINISTRATIVE REGISTER, Volume 51, Number 24.