

**MINUTES OF THE  
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL  
APRIL 21, 2022, MEETING**

The in-person and zoom meeting of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council and Executive Board was held on April 21, 2022, 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 9:00 a.m. There was a quorum of the Executive Committee present. At 9:18 a.m. a quorum of the full board was present.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

- Charlotte County:** Mr. Don McCormick – Chair, Commissioner Jaha Cummings
- Collier County:** Commissioner Bill McDaniel, Commissioner Rick LoCastro (*Zoom*),
- Glades County:** Mr. Tommy Perry - Governor Appointee (*Zoom*), Chairman Tim Stanley (*Zoom*), Commissioner Donna Storter-Long
- Hendry County:** Mr. Mel Karau - Governor Appointee (*Zoom*)
- Lee County:** Commissioner Frank Mann, Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass, Councilman Fred Burson
- Sarasota County:** Councilman Jim Boldt, City of Venice
- Ex-Officio:** Mr. Jon Iglehart, FDEP

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Ms. Trinity Scott, Collier County  
Ms. Margaret Wuerstle - Executive Director, SWFRPC  
Ms. Rebekah Harp - SWFRPC  
Ms. Tracy Whirls - SWFRPC  
Mr. Jim Burch – SWFRPC, (*Zoom*)  
Ms. Asmaa Odeh – SWFRPC, (*Zoom*)

**AGENDA ITEM #6  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SECRETARY APPOINTMENT**

**Councilman Fred Burson offered a motion to accept the appointment of Commission Bill McDaniel to secretary of the executive committee. Mr. Donald McCormick seconded the motion to accept the appointment of secretary. The action was approved unanimously.**

**AGENDA ITEM #7(a)  
MINUTES OF THE MARCH 17, 2022, MEETING**

**Commissioner Bill McDaniel offered a motion to accept the minutes of the March 17, 2022, Executive Committee Meeting. Councilman Fred Burson seconded the motion to accept the minutes of the March 17, 2022, Executive Committee Meeting. The action was approved unanimously.**

**AGENDA ITEM #8(a)  
ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE: INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT AND BYLAWS**

Ms. Wuerstle presented a PowerPoint presentation to the board with background information and history of what the SWFRPC is required to do by State Statutes that are unfunded. Ms. Wuerstle also presented the SWFRPC's funded and unfunded program obligations. Relevancy priorities were presented in 2019 to County Managers and Council.

Mr. McCormick expressed the importance of Commissioner McDaniel's efforts and wanted to share his support as he did in his letter to the Council prior to the meeting.

Commissioner Bill McDaniel provided his history with the SWFRPC and what his observations were with regards to relevancy over the years serving the Council. Commissioner McDaniel thought a restructure and a reorganization with ultimately a rebranding was needed. Commissioner McDaniel directed the Council to the Executive Summary in the agenda packet that he and Ms. Wuerstle worked on in 2020. The Executive Summary provides recommendations. Commissioner McDaniel explained that in the proposed interlocal agreement there is a reduction in per capita costs from each of the six counties.

Commissioner Pendergrass asked if there was a quorum to vote on this specific item. Commissioner McDaniel replies that there is a quorum of both the Executive Board and the Council so business could be conducted.

Commissioner McDaniel asked if there were any questions or comments on the proposed draft of the interlocal agreement. He explained that the proposed draft will need to be brought back to each of the respective county attorneys for review, approval and signatures. Commissioner McDaniel wanted to start discussing the ILA.

Commissioner Storter-Long provided some grammatical suggestions and said she would provide her suggestions to Margaret.

Discussion ensued regarding the legality of whether the termination of the old ILA needs to take place before the new ILA can be adopted.

Councilman Cummings wanted assurance that there would be no dissolution of the organization (SWFRPC). Councilman Cummings continued that he personally sees great value in the SWFRPC. He wants strong assurances that this does not jeopardize or harm the status of the organization.

Commissioner McDaniel continued to ask the Council, “How do we go from here”, that is the global question. How does the organization continue to sustain itself and provide relevance?

Councilman Cummings argued that the SWFRPC is relevant. Councilman Cummings continued to explain how and why the SWFRPC is relevant provided that there are viable programs. He continued to explain that where the relevance has concrete positive effects is in the conversations with the Florida Heartland Association. Councilman Cummings explained that because of this organization he is able to have those discussions regarding the inland ports, transportation, and other regional issues.

Commissioner Pendergrass asked if there were any counties paying membership dues? Ms. Wuerstle responded that Glades County is currently paying dues along with the City of Fort Myers, Bonita Springs and Fort Myers Beach. Commissioner Pendergrass expressed that he wasn't sure if the SWFRPC would get the support of the other five counties. Commissioner Pendergrass explained that he had conversations with Senator Passidomo last year about RPC's statewide and what the purpose was of even having them in place. (Finding the ability and a way to displace that). Commissioner Pendergrass continued that he's not sure if the rebranding is an effort to get above that future action. Or is the purpose to requalify the reason for grant funding. If it is to create a job for someone, what is the purpose of that? Commission Pendergrass explains that over the last five years the position of his board has not changed and he is not sure that any of the other county's positions would change.

Commissioner McDaniel explained briefly that the proposed ILA dues would be voluntary. If dues are paid, then the county member is able to vote. Commissioner McDaniel continues to explain that the SWFRPC is a regional organization that conveys issues across the board. The entire premise of the organization is regional collaboration. Structurally, the SWFRPC is outside the bounds of statutes. The draft ILA and By-laws brings the organization back into conformity with statutes. Commissioner McDaniel proposed that each county take the draft ILA and draft By-laws back to their respective councils, get comments from your respective councils and come back to this organization with the response.

Ms. Whirls suggested that Ms. Wuerstle's presentation be brought to each of the county commission and municipality meetings with an advocate of the SWFRPC, like Councilman Jaha Cummings to explain what he sees as the value.

Councilman Bolt explained the reason for attending the SWFRPC meetings was to determine what the organization does. What he continuing to hear is that this would be more along the lines of a marketing program. Councilman Bolt believes that there is a need to get in front of the six counties again and explain the benefits that come with being part of the organization and that he thinks that they have lost track of that. Councilman Bolt explains that the people in Sarasota that he has spoken to question the relevancy. Councilman Bolt continues that it is important at this point to bring it back in front of the counties with an explanation. He believes if we can get to that point there might be a chance to getting their participation.

Commissioner Pendergrass explains that a 30 second snapshot – what could he say to anybody, the taxpayers, voters or his board, the purpose of even the rebranding, what's the purpose of that? What is the initial impact, what can we do any different with the rebranding?

Commissioner McDaniel explained the rebranding/restructure – the restructure comes first and needs to happen in advance of the rebranding. The restructure needs to come first with the ILA, which condenses the membership to the organization then the rebranding comes with what we want to be when we grow up. Commissioner McDaniel poses the question to Commissioner Pendergrass, who can argue with the fact that there is not enough regionality in our communications of what's going on with our individual communities. Commissioner McDaniel continues that we continue to look for the commonality and common ground. All counties along the coast have the beaches in common and all counties have transportation in common.

Commissioner McDaniel explained that all counties currently need to be a member of an RPC by statute. Commissioner Pendergrass stated, "that is what is required "currently" unless it is changed by the state in the future". Commissioner McDaniel explained that until that statutory and legislative adjustment comes about, he is proposing a restructure and a rebrand and a draft of the by-laws that the organization can actually work under and hopefully bring back relevancy.

Councilman Cummings explains that the one place we can look at is national markets themselves. Florida has seven chambers and regionality is the theme of how they approach the world.

Discussions continued regarding the issues shared between each of the counties: transportation, water quality, quality of life and while the urban counties share the beaches, Glades and Hendry counties share the Caloosahatchee River. There is an abundance of Eco-Tourism opportunities, and the big thing is the economic development that exists in the region with a tremendous amount of highway networks. Highway and rail improvements could benefit the region as well.

Questions were read aloud from the Zoom chat. Discussion continued with regards to the questions and restructuring. Discussion continued regarding the restructuring and condensing the organization to the counties. Questions were brought up regarding the counties and municipalities as members. Ms. Wuerstle explained that the state statutes requires that there are two county seats and one municipality seat in each county. Discussion ensued.

Councilman Burson asked about disseminating information like comp plan amendments. Discussion continued with regards to how information can be distributed through the SWFRPC. Discussion continued that it would be beneficial to include a list of the comp plans received for the Council to review.

Commissioner McDaniel urges that in the declining revenue status, our organization will not be able to survive. Commissioner McDaniel stated that the restructure and rebranding is urgent.

Councilman Burson proposed that the information is disseminated to the six counties to review over the next few days.

Discussions ensued regarding the legality of how the draft ILA and draft By-laws can be brought to the respective county attorneys. It was determined that the each of the county commissions need to approve and direct that the drafts go forth to the county attorneys for review.

**Commissioner Fred Burson offered a motion to direct the chairman to draft a letter to each of the six counties providing the draft ILA and draft By-laws for review by each county commission and reviewed by each county attorney. Also requesting a brief presentation pertaining to the relevancy of the SWFRPC. Councilman Jaha Cummings seconded the motion to send a letter and the draft ILA and draft By-laws to each of the county commission meetings. The action was adopted unanimously.**

Ms. Wuerstle notified the board that there is a process of updating the Administrative Code with any changes made to the By-laws. There will be a need for an attorney to assist in that process once we are at that point.

Ms. Wuerstle also noted that State statues still require the cities and counties to submit their comp plan amendments to the regional planning council. What we do not have to do is review them, it is optional. Ms. Wuerstle explained that the SWFRPC does received all the comp plan amendments and records them. If there is a blatant or glaring issue, Ms. Wuerstle will address it. Ms. Wuerstle continued that we do not have the funding to review all the comp plans and that it would require a full time FTE. Ms. Wuerstle agreed to provide a list of comp plans received.

The zoom chat questions were read aloud to the board. Commissioner McDaniel stated that due to the amount and length of questions from Mr. Burch in the zoom chat, the questions would be saved and addressed at a later time.

### **Zoom Chat Transcript of Questions from Mr. Jim Burch:**

09:29:18 From Jim Burch to Everyone:

My question is that it seems that cities are removed from the potential role of majority members of the RPC. Is that true and why?

09:30:18 From Jim Burch to Everyone:

Can the counties pay their dues to help with sustainability of RPC?

09:35:18 From Jim Burch to Everyone:

Seems like the bylaws and interlocal were reviewed in the 2000's and why are the cities being left out of the review of the bylaws.

09:36:55 From Jim Burch to Everyone:

Can the counties review the history and components of the RPC so that we can move past the quote that the RPC is doing nothing?

09:43:14 From Jim Burch to Everyone:

Are the CARES Act, food policy council, refresh program, emergency planning, ARPA, broadband and others not being handled by the RPC? I assumed that these programs were RPC driven ones that have been funded through grants and funding options of state and federal govt.?

09:46:58 From Jim Burch to Everyone:

This agency is the only one that I know of that allows for counties and municipalities to convene and discuss relevant regional issues. The Pandemic and ARPA are two current examples of that and it seems having all cities involved with the counties in this discussion makes a lot of sense.

09:51:25 From Jim Burch to Everyone:

If the dues are properly paid will that help with sustainability?

09:53:44 From Jim Burch to Everyone:

Can a quorum be reached by elected officials that agree to be a part of the RPC, simply, by upholding their responsibility to attend meetings?

10:01:57 From Jim Burch to Everyone:

Don't the cities pay taxes to the counties, ( i.e. residential or vacant land), and what can city elected officials tell their taxpayers as to its lack of authority as a non-voting member of the RPC and yet paying taxes to the county it resides in?

10:07:54 From Jim Burch to Everyone:

Seems like a good solution may be that the counties submit any changes in the bylaws to the cities within that county for approval and adoption.

10:21:16 From Jim Burch to Everyone:

Are we OK with hiring attorneys to defend our actions without following protocol? Seems like taxpayers may have an issue with that.

### **AGENDA ITEM #9 COMMITTEE REPORTS**

No Committee Reports were given

### **AGENDA ITEM #9(a)**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

There was no update given.

**AGENDA ITEM #9(b)  
QUALITY OF LIFE & SAFETY COMMITTEE**

There was no update given.

**AGENDA ITEM #10  
NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business.

**AGENDA ITEM #11  
STATE AGENCIES COMMENTS/REPORTS**

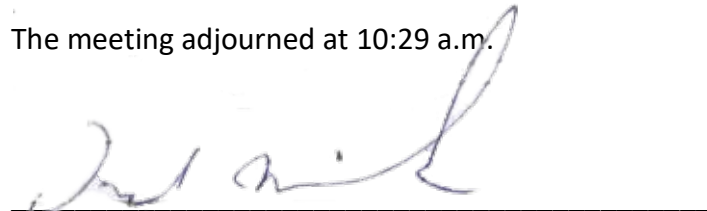
There was no update given.

**AGENDA ITEM #12  
COUNCIL MEMBERS' COMMENTS**

Commissioner Donna Storter-Long commended the efforts with the drafts presented and announced that Glades County has new Count Manager.

**AGENDA ITEM #13  
ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 10:29 a.m.



Don McCormick, Chairman

**The meeting was duly advertised in the April 6, 2022, issue of the FLORIDA ADMINISTRATIVE REGISTER, Volume 48, Number 69.**