

**MINUTES OF THE  
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL  
July 18, 2024, MEETING**

The virtual zoom meeting of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council's Executive Board was held on July 18, 2024. Collier County Commissioner and Council Chair, Mr. Bill McDaniel called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. There was a quorum of the Executive Committee present.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

**Charlotte County:** Mr. Don McCormick (zoom),  
Councilwoman Dr. Debi Lux – City of Punta Gorda

**Collier County:** Commissioner Bill McDaniel  
Commissioner Rick Locastro (zoom)  
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. Charity Franks – SWFRPC

Mr. Jim Paulmann – Stantec

**AGENDA ITEM #6(a)**  
**MINUTES OF THE MAY 16, 2024, COUNCIL/EXECUTIVE MEETING**

**Councilman Fred Burson offered a motion to approve the May 16, 2024, meeting minutes. Councilman Ron Smith seconded the motion to approve the May 16, 2024, meeting minutes. The motion was approved unanimously.**

**AGENDA ITEM #7(a)**  
**FINANCIALS: Final Amendment to FY23 Budget with Carry Forward**

Ms. Wuerstle explained that last month we heard from our auditor and as a result we have amended our budget to be consistent per the audit requirements. Ms. Wuerstle asked if Rebekah Harp had any additional comments. Ms. Harp responded that the only change to the budget is the notation of the fund balance per the approved audit (page 9) recorded in the footnote.

**Councilman Fred Burson offered a motion to approve the Final Amendment to the FY23 Budget with Carry Forward. Councilman Ron Smith seconded the motion to approve the Final Amendment to the FY23 Budget with Carry Forward. The motion was approved unanimously.**

**AGENDA ITEM #8(a)**  
**CONSENT AGENDA: Palmer Ranch Increment 31**

Mr. Dan Trescott presented Palmer Ranch Increment 31. The project proposal is to construct multi-family development, hotel and commercial on 122.68 acres located west of I-75, south of SR 681 and east of Honore Avenue.

Commissioner McDaniel shared a circumstance around Ave Maria that arose in Collier County. The legislature created a special district for Ave Maria and after twelve years they discovered that they do not have enough capital assets, replacement and maintenance reserves. They are currently looking at doubling the expense on an annual basis on the residents of Ave Maria. Commissioner McDaniel explained that he doesn't want to continue to do what we have always done and keep coming up with the same results.

Jim Paulmann responded that Palmer Ranch made a decision a long time ago that they were not going to create a special district, and they are funding all the improvements, on-site and off-site, so there are no districts that were created. The master development order dictates what improvements have to be made. All the utilities are in for the entire project and this is the last piece. There is water and sewer, everything is in place including the roadways. We just did a master traffic study update, which had the current residential and commercial plan for this area in the traffic analysis and no improvements are necessary. As Dan said, this is the last increment and last remnant piece of Palmer Ranch. Then we will be doing a close out agreement to close out the DRI.

Mr. Dan Trescott asked Mr. Paulmann in terms of long term road maintenance, where that money would come from. They are all public roads, so would that come from the county? Mr. Paulmann explained that they are all public roads. SR 681 certainly is the state and Honore Avenue, which is the north - south thoroughfare is county maintained. They do have a master association at Palmer Ranch that provides additional maintenance of landscaping and other improvements along that road corridor that they fund themselves in addition to the county maintenance. All private development roads are maintained by the homeowners.

Mr. Paulmann continued to explain that they are currently doing a comprehensive plan amendment to create the commercial node on the Sarasota County plan. It will be processed concurrent with this (DRI increment). In addition to that, Palmer Ranch has in their development order 99 acres that were vested for commercial development, which only a fraction has been used. The impact is assessed based on traffic and we are well under what the traffic impacts are and all those improvements to the roadway systems have already been made.

**Councilman Fred Burson offered a motion to approve Palmer Ranch Increment 31. Councilman Ron Smith seconded the motion to approve Palmer Ranch Increment 31. The motion was approved unanimously.**

#### **AGENDA ITEM #9 DIRECTORS REPORT**

Ms. Wuerstle wanted bring up one issue before turning it over to Denise from FRCA. Ms. Wuerstle explained that at the last meeting this group identified four areas that they wanted this Regional Planning Council to focus on. That was Beach Renourishment and Resiliency, Water Supply Quantity, Water Quality and Regional Transportation. It was asked that I email this list out to all the cities and counties including all the county managers asking them to review and identify any other areas to focus on. I didn't get even one response. My question is, can we adopt focus areas today so I can start working on them?

Commissioner McDaniel responded that if this board gives direction, then yes, you can start working towards them. Commissioner McDaniel's believed that these are global enough to touch all the region. Commissioner McDaniel believed that water quality and water quantity is synonymous, but we can go with them separately – bottom line-- do we need a motion for that?

Ms. Wuerstle explains that she has continued to ask over the course of five years and she never gets anything back. The only thing that is expressed is "you're not relevant". If we adopt these items then this will be our main focus.

Commissioner McDaniel asks for a motion.

**Councilman Ron Smith offered a motion to approve the four priorities for the Executive Director. Councilman Fred Burson seconded the motion to approve the four priorities for the Executive Director. The motion was approved unanimously.**

Ms. Wuerstle explained that this board asked FRCA and some of the regional planning directors along with their attorneys to come talk to us about where we go from here. They have decided that they would like to have a workshop with Ron Book and regional planning directors and their attorneys. A few dates they gave us are August 20<sup>th</sup>, August 21<sup>st</sup>, and August 23<sup>rd</sup>. Our next meeting is August 15<sup>th</sup>, which is close to those dates. I need to know if you would like to have the August 15<sup>th</sup> meeting along with the workshop or cancel the August 15th meeting? Consensus with the board was decided for August 23<sup>rd</sup> at 10:00am and cancel the August 15th meeting.

Ms. Denise Imbler explained that the concept that was requested was for FRCA to assist with your desire to revitalize the regional planning council in light of the lack of participation and financial support from the major of the counties in the region. Ms. Imbler asked if she was understanding this correctly and if that still the goal? Commissioner McDaniel responded yes. Ms. Imbler continued that in her conversations with Margaret, as well as Directors in Central Florida Regional Planning Council and the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council, we had a conversation about the letter that was sent to the Governor and that there was no response. Ms. Imbler also had a conversation with someone at the Department of the Florida of Commerce from the Governors office who was tasked to address the letter. Ms. Imbler is not surprised that there was no response as they don't feel like they have any jurisdiction in this matter. Hopefully they will follow up with something more official, but she cannot say that they will. Ms. Imbler continued to explain that in light of that, and in conversations with the directors, we thought that potentially what could be beneficial is if we bring two of your co-directors from regions that surround you, that work in a similar fashion on different programmatic areas as well as our lobbyist, Ron Book and as well as some board members who are county or city commissioners who are advocates for regional planning councils so that your folks can hear from their cohorts the function and success of a regional planning council that is supported at the local level. Ms. Imbler would like to hear thoughts about this concept.

Commissioner McDaniel responded that with all due respect, that the reality of what we are dealing with our RPC, is what we are dealing with. Whether or not we get a response from the Governors office for the restructure suggestion that this board has done, remains to be seen whether it comes through or not. Commissioner McDaniel continues to explain that we are facing demise financially within two years. There's no argument that relevancy has been an issue with this organization, at least within the last eight years that he has been on this board. An adjustment needs to be done in adherence to the new law and new statutes that are out with regards to RPCs have to be effectuated. So having the workshop and having the lobbyist come in and share with us some financial things we may be able to effectuate is certainly the beginning of that process. If we don't get a response from the governor's office, then we don't get a response from the governor's office. Commissioner McDaniel assumed that the structure

could be effectuated by the governor. Instead of belaboring an obvious point given that we need to take action in some form or fashion or an RPC in Southwest Florida is not going to exist in two years. With no money there is no mission. Having this discussion, we are certainly pleased that your willing to step up and offer assistance offer advice – maybe assistance and advice that we would not have pursued on our own obviously has not been successful. So at this stage any and all opportunity for discussion and ideas is certainly welcome.

Ms. Imbler responded to Commissioner McDaniel that she appreciated his response. She continues to explain that the idea of who to invite, realizing it is a short turn around, if you think we should do it at a later date, please say so. In her conversation with Margaret, she is not certain that it is two years, but she has a feeling that it may be less time. The idea was to not only invite board members, who do not always participate, but to invite to this workshop every county commissioner, every county manager and administrator and those cities that you feel would participate. The idea and the concept being that a full reengagement or even just an awareness of the situation at the council. The benefit of the council, how councils work and are beneficial in other parts of the state and what is the path forward for Southwest Florida. That is the concept of the workshop.

Commissioner McDaniel responded that is a fine idea. Inviting the county managers is a good idea. Inviting the county administrators is a good idea. They have a lot of influence and ultimately have the say so whether a check gets cut to support anything. Commissioner McDaniel would suggest to not invite all the county commissioners but invite the county managers/administrators and the membership of the council including the cities and municipalities that are technically a member. Invite all the existing members, but Commissioner McDaniel wouldn't extend it out to all the county commissioners.

Councilman Ron Smith agreed and wouldn't send it out to all the city and county representatives, however he would focus on the planning department heads of each city and county.

Ms. Imbler agreed that was a good idea as well to include the planning directors.

Commissioner McDaniel explained that he suggested that from the beginning. This council has been making presentations at length and it was assumed that the data was being carried back to the planning department. However, Commissioner McDaniel's planning department doesn't have a clue as to what's going on with Palmer Ranch.

Ms. Imbler states that we do not have to do it in such a short time frame. She just doesn't know how much time is of the essence. She needs a realistic snapshot of how quickly you all feels and Margaret feels to move forward. We could do it in September. Ms. Imbler realizes that we are getting closer and closer to the election, and we want to be sensitive to that. Ms. Imbler would like to know what would work best in your community.

Commissioner McDaniel responded August 23<sup>rd</sup> and time is of the essence. We are five years, ten years, twenty years behind. We have to get caught up and time is of the essence. So let's plan for August 23<sup>rd</sup> – we know the election is in November and we will worry about the election in that time frame. Let's shoot for the August 23<sup>rd</sup> date at 10:00a.m.

Ms. Imbler responded that she has received commitments from Ron Book and Jennifer Codo-Salisbury in Central Florida, and she will reach out to the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council. Ms. Imbler stated that she will be working with Margaret and the internal working group on the structure and the format next week.

Commissioner LoCastro mentioned that he and his cohort, Commissioner McDaniel spend a lot of time in Tallahassee, and he was just wondering if there is another angle or another person they can target to get whatever communication we are trying to send to the Governor maybe in the right hands. Commissioner LoCastro continued to explain that we all have our contacts in Tallahassee and normally if anyone sends a letter directly to the Governor you never hear back. But if it's a message we are really trying to get to him, he will talk to Commissioner McDaniel as well, a few people that could probably do that or maybe could get us some action from or attention from the right office etc. Maybe someone who is at this meeting or on zoom can suggest some contact people as well. Commissioner LoCastro continued to explain that he missed some of the messaging regarding what was sent to the Governor, but it made him want to chime in with is there another angle or person that we wanted to pursue.

Ms. Imbler responded on behalf of the association, that is why Ron Book is coming to the meeting. He is our lobbyist, he has extensive contacts, not only with the Governor directly, but he Governor's office, as well as other working groups, state senators and state representatives. Ms. Imbler really wanted to accommodate his schedule just so we can address that perspective, that political side of this conversation and he is the appropriate person to carry the water for you in essence. Whatever he feels is the right political venue for your message. Of course, if the council wants to go a different path your more than welcome to. But that is her recommendation.

Ms. Wuerstle explained that she had a conversation with the Governors chief of staff Justin Domer and explained everything that was happening and why the letter was sent. He was totally unaware and didn't have a quick fix but said he would work on it and get back to us.

Councilman Burson (audio unclear)

Commissioner McDaniel explained that this has been going on for nine months after the letter was resubmitted as a two pager with our intent. There again, we will have more ironed out after the August 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting where it will be a good time for us to regroup and revisit the history, but he would like to focus our energy on paths moving forward with the initiative that needs to transpire. Commissioner McDaniels asks Margaret for Justins phone number.

Natalie Hardman and Don McCormick have their hands raised.

Ms. Hardman introduced herself as the natural resources manager for the City of Naples and said she spearheads most of the resiliency efforts that the City of Naples is going through right now. Ms. Hardman would like to back up in the conversation and offer some other suggestions. She explains that yes, we did get the letter, however a lot of the conversation with city management is who is this, what do they do, and what are they and who are they. The letter isn't taken seriously because we don't know enough about the organization and what they can do or what they want to do. She suggested following up those letters that were sent to every city and municipalities and by speaking at our city council meetings. Come to those meetings and present what this is and how it fits into the state, here are some of the regional actions and projects that we are currently working on or would like to work on. That kind of information because we can't act on anything that our city council and commissioners don't approve. And we don't know enough about you to make any decisions. Ms. Hardman highly suggested that personnel do that and they need more communication and a presence in our city council meetings to help us see how we fit in and how you can fit into our lives and how we would work together.

Commissioner McDaniel explains that he was elected chairman of this organization a couple of months ago and the ultimate plan is for Commissioner McDaniel to come and visit all of the current members, city councils and/or county commissions within the next year. That can't transpire due to the current personal issues that he has going on right now. McDaniel also suggests that the impetus and responsibility is on you to learn about us with regard as to what in fact is going on, with all due respect. Your councilman Bill Kramer is on the line today and he has been attending virtually, which is a great thing and attendance, and participation is how you learn about things. On the other side, McDaniel explains that he will be coming in the next twelve months to outline the priorities of the council, what the council is going to do, how we are going to do it, so on and so forth. Your suggestion is well taken and from a timing standpoint it is coming, but it won't happen until after this workshop.

Ms. Hardman replied, "that is fantastic". She looks forward to seeing you and hearing the information and if you need anything in the interim, please feel free to reach out.

Commissioner McDaniel asked Ms. Hardman to please offer back her suggestions with regard to questions, details and what other information you need so that we can better provide you with the data.

Ms. Hardman responded that she would work on providing those responses.

**AGENDA ITEM #9(a)**  
**Government Fund History (Informational)**

**AGENDA ITEM #9(b)**

### **Grant activity Sheet (Informational)**

Ms. Wuerstle explains that this item is informational and we are working hard to get more funding.

#### **AGENDA ITEM #10 COMMITTEE REPORTS**

No Committee Reports were given.

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

Mr. McCormick explained that we have new leadership, and we are moving ahead and the information we just received from the City of Naples was very valuable. As far as official actions of our subcommittees, there has been none since our last meeting.

#### **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**

Mr. Phil Flood gave an update. *(Some initial audio was not decipherable.)* The Chamber of Southwest Florida has invited several agencies to speak at their meeting. Commissioner McDaniel asked if an email could be sent out with that information.

Commissioner McDaniel asked if Mr. Wayne Gather was contacted to attend the meeting and if he cannot make it to the meeting then we need to contact FDOT to put someone in to attend our meetings especially with our newly bequeathed priorities for this organization – transportation regional transportation. Everyone knows about the new Florida initiative and that is going to have an enormous impact on our communities on a regional basis. Commissioner McDaniel would like DOT to be alerted to start making an effort for attendance.

Mr. McCormick explained that he has been the liaison for the last twelve years to the Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership program and project. He believes it's time for new



blood and put in the process of replacing him as the representative of the Regional Planning Council to the Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership.

Commissioner McDaniel replied that we will bring it up at our August or September meeting.

*(Audio was not decipherable)*

Commissioner McDaniel asks Ms. Wuerstle to have her contract for review at the September meeting. Have it dispersed to the membership and have it as an agenda item as a discussion for the September meeting.

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

**AGENDA ITEM #14  
ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 9:56 a.m.  
Full audio is available: [July 18, 2024 Zoom](#)



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Councilwoman Debi Lux, Secretary

The meeting was duly advertised in the July 8, 2024, issue of the FLORIDA ADMINISTRATIVE REGISTER, Volume 50, Number 132.

*\*Technical issues with audio during meeting. Audio was not heard by members in the room and from members on zoom.*