

**MINUTES OF THE
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL
SEPTEMBER 17, 2020 MEETING**

The meeting of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council was held on September 17, 2020 virtually via GoToMeeting. Governor Appointee Mr. Tommy Perry called the meeting to order at 9:00AM. Ms. Margaret Wuerstle conducted the roll call and announced that a quorum was not yet present.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Charlotte County: Commissioner Ken Doherty, Commissioner Joe Tiseo, Mr. Don McCormick

Collier County: Commissioner Bill McDaniel, Commissioner Penny Taylor

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

Hendry County: Mr. Mel Karau, Commissioner Julie Wilkins

Lee County: Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass, Commissioner Frank Mann

Sarasota County: Vice-Mayor Chuck Newsom

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Charlotte County: Ms. Suzanne Graham

City of Naples: None

Glades County: Commissioner Donald Strenth

Hendry County: Commissioner Mitchell Wills, Commissioner Emma Byrd, Vice-Mayor Michael Atkinson

Lee County: Councilman Fred Burson, Vice- Mayor Ray Murphy, Councilman Jesse Purdon

Sarasota County: Commissioner Charles Hines, Commissioner Michael Moran, Commissioner Willie Shaw

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

**AGENDA ITEM #4
PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

**AGENDA ITEM #5
AGENDA**

Mr. Tommy Perry announced that because a quorum was not present, the agenda items will be moved around so the items that require a vote will be discussed last in order to wait for a quorum to be present.

**AGENDA ITEM #11
DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Ms. Margaret Wuerstle brought everyone up to date on where we are with the FY20-21 budget. Since the approval of the budget in June the SWFRPC has received about \$723,000 in additional funding. A Healthy Cities & Healthy Counties grant was received for \$100,000 through EDA. \$400,000 was received as well as an addition \$60,000 for conducting a regional evacuation study update, a small grant was received for the website for the ABM to be update and notice was recently received that the Waterfront Master Plan for Clewiston for \$175,000 was awarded. This changes the financial picture of the SWFRPC substantially.

Ms. Wuerstle went on to announce that the 'Building Resilient Kids' conference scheduled for later this month was cancelled due to COVID but will hopefully be rescheduled for some time in 2021. Going forward, at the virtual November council meeting Ms. Wuerstle would like the council to discuss what topics they would like to address at each of the upcoming council meetings.

Ms. Wuerstle reminded everyone that the SWFRPC office is no longer at 1400 Colonial Blvd., in Fort Myers; staff is working remotely and the RPC has a small space with the United Way at Bell Towers where printers and supplies are located for staff use. Working from home has been going very well, the staff is working hard, and many grants have been submitted since working remotely started in March. The new mailing address for the SWFRPC is PO Box 60933, Fort Myers, FL 33906-6933 and the telephone number is 844.988.8244, calls are forwarded to the staffs' cellphones. Ms. Wuerstle stated that the landlord at the office was very understanding and allowed the lease to be terminated early, saving the SWFRPC \$13,000. She went on to let everyone know that the furniture has all been donated to various organizations and schools and materials not picked up by the counties was sent to the library at FGCU.

AGENDA ITEM #11(a)
KICK-OFF MEETING AGENDA

Ms. Wuerstle explained that on Monday, September 14, 2020 the RPC held a virtual kick-off meeting for two big projects that the agency is working on. The first is a statewide regional evacuation study funded by \$1.2 million allocated by the state legislature to the division of emergency management. Emergency management has contracted with Northeast Regional Planning Council who is doing contracts with all 10 RPC's as well as RFPs for consultants, all materials, slides, and recordings from this meeting are available on the SWFRPC's website. This information is all vital in case of a disaster.

The second project that the RPC is working on is through the Economic Development Administration. The EDA has awarded \$400,000 to each of the RPCs in Florida, this was a noncompetitive grant by invitation only. This money is received for two years, part of the money is to hire a Regional Economic Disaster Recovery Coordinator, Mr. Jim Burch has filled this position. Mr. Burch thanked everyone for attending the meeting and shared that he is a previous mayor and council person for Cape Coral as well as a business owner so he is prepared for this position and would like to speak to all council members by email or phone to hear what the issues being faced are in order to form a resiliency plan as it is very important for everyone to participate. He stated that he is available if anyone has questions and information and resource guides on this new program can be found on the SWFRPC website.

AGENDA ITEM #11(b)
SWFL FRESH LOGO

Ms. Wuerstle updated everyone on a project that the SWFRPC had just completed, after Hurricane Irma the State Department of Economic Opportunity funded a study to determine the impact of hurricane Irma on small growers. EDA funded the development of a brand for SWFL growers. A marketing firm had been hired to develop a logo and tag line for the SWFRPC. Originally it was "SWFL Fresh; taste the local difference," however just as printed materials, ad's and billboards were about to go out the RPC received a call from a group in Michigan that was already using this tagline and wanted to be paid if SWFL was going to use it. So, last minute the logo and tagline were changed to "SWFL Fresh; Choose Local, Choose Fresh," which is now being trademarked by the University of Florida's attorneys. Ms. Wuerstle shared that tote bags, t-shirts, window decals and other merchandise has been printed and distributed to the local growers.

AGENDA ITEM #11(c)
ALL GRANTS IN PROMISE ZONE

Ms. Wuerstle gave a brief update on the Promise Zone, due to COVID the Promise Zone Coordinators have not met in some time, but they are still working on securing grants for the promise zone. In the packet is a running list of grants that have been applied for, grants that have been awarded, those that are pending, as well as those that have been denied. Currently,

there is about \$2.9 million that has been awarded, there \$4.8 million in pending grants, and \$4.8 million that have been denied.

**AGENDA ITEM #11(d)
FY20-21 MEETING SCHEDULE**

Ms. Wuerstle stated that the next meeting will be in November 2020 and following that meeting the next will be in January 2021.

**AGENDA ITEM #11(e)
FRCA JULY 2020/ AUGUST 2020 REPORT**

These reports are for information only.

**AGENDA ITEM #12
COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**AGENDA ITEM #12(a)
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

No update was given.

**AGENDA ITEM #12(b)
ESTERO BAY AGENCY ON BAY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

Ms. Mackenzie Moorhouse gave an update on the ABM. The ABM heard from Director Roland Ottolini regarding the Southern Lee County Flood Mitigation Plan at the August 2020 meeting. The membership plans to provide comments and recommendations in a letter to Director Ottolini. Captain Jon Hall joined the membership as the primary member for Pelican Landing, as did Joe Miceli for ECCL and Bill Veach for the Town of Fort Myers Beach.

**AGENDA ITEM #12(c)
QUALITY OF LIFE & SAFETY COMMITTEE**

No update was given.

**AGENDA ITEM #7
DISPOSAL OF FIXED ASSETS**

Ms. Wuerstle explain that when the SWFRPC moved out of the office there were items that needed to be disposed of. In order to keep the books in order there needed to be approval on the disposal of these items. Ms. Rebekah Harp stated that on the list provided in the council packet you can see that aside from the items donated to other agencies, several of the items are in storage.

A motion was made by Commissioner Wilkins to approve the disposal of fixed assets. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Doherty and passed unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM #8
FINANCIALS: FEBRUARY- JULY 2020**

Ms. Wuerstle briefly explained the financials, as of February 2020 the RPC was down \$58,000 for the month and \$209,000 for the year, although the council was aware that this would happen due to assessment fees not being paid by the counties. As of July 2020, the financials were \$33,000 to the good, the RPC still has about \$363,000 in reserves as of the end of July and August and September look better. The year will still end in the red, but it should not be quite as bad as it currently is as new funding has been brought in. October 1, 2020 is the start of the new budget year. When the new budget was adopted it was planned to end the year with \$20,000 in reserves, however with securing over \$700,000 in grants the year will end much better.

A motion was made by Commissioner McDaniel to approve the financials. This motion was seconded by Mr. McCormick and passed unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM #9
CONSENT AGENDA**

**AGENDA ITEM #9(a)
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION AND REVIEW**

Ms. Wuerstle explained that three new transit replacement/upgrade projects have come in and they are all regionally significant and consistent.

A motion was made by Commissioner Wilkins to approve the consent agenda. This motion was seconded by Commissioner McDaniel and passed unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM #10
UPDATES**

**AGENDA ITEM #10(a)
LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE (LEPC)**

Ms. Katelyn Kubasik announced that the August 20th meeting of the LEPC was held virtually and that the 2020 Emergency Response Guidebooks are out now. The next LEPC meeting will be held virtually on December 3, 2020. There was a SERC meeting on September 10th and at this meeting it was announced that the 2021 HazMat Symposium has been cancelled due to COVID and safety concerns. It was also announced that when COVID was at its peak there were around 100,000 tests done each day, now there are about 9,000 tests being done each day, which has been a 90% reduction leading to the cut down of testing sites. If there is a resurgence in numbers testing sites will have to go back up.

**AGENDA ITEM #15
COUNCIL MEMBER' COMMENTS**

Commissioner McDaniel asked Ms. Wuerstle if meetings had been changed to quarterly instead of monthly and if it is possible to administratively go back to a monthly basis since meetings are now virtual and really put forth the effort to garner a quorum because these meetings information but not a good use of the RPC members' time. Ms. Wuerstle stated that the RPC board did adopt the resolution to change meetings to quarterly.

At this point in the meeting a quorum was reached and previously items that required a vote were now voted on

Commissioner McDaniel made a motion to move back to monthly virtual meetings for the foreseeable future and get the notice out to RPC membership to achieve a quorum. There was no second to this motion.

Mr. Perry made a motion that at the November meeting when the 2021 schedule is discussed we revisit this issue and move forward in a positive way. Commissioner Pendergrass seconded Commissioner McDaniel motion at this point in the meeting. Mr. McCormick added that while dealing with COVID and the RPC having virtual meetings he does not see any reason to make a change at this time and voted against Commissioner McDaniel motion. Commissioner Storter-Long stated that she is not in favor of having meetings more often as Ms. Wuerstle keeps everyone well informed by email updates, phone calls and quarterly meetings.

A call for vote showed that the majority of the RPC Board Members were opposed to going back to monthly meetings, the motion did *not* pass.

Commissioner McDaniel made a motion that at the November meeting an agenda item be added to call for a reconstitution of the SWFRPC to appeal the existing rules and reconstitute and rebrand the SWFRPC. Mr. Perry stated that any member can request an agenda item be added without a vote.

Commissioner Doherty pointed out that it should be remembered that even if council members support what Commissioner McDaniel is proposing at the next meeting, there is an interlocal agreement amongst the counties in SWFL so each individual board of county commissioners will have to vote on this motion so it is more complicated that just bringing this to the SWFRPC board calling for legal counsel to weigh in on this matter. Commissioner McDaniel agreed with Commissioner Doherty's points and stated that he would still like to move forward with this process because the RPC cannot continue to do what has always been done.

At this point Commissioner McDaniel withdrew his motion for the reconstitution and repeal of the SWFRPC roles and stated that he will bring the matter to the table at the November meeting.

Commissioner Julie Wilkins stated that we just spent the last year discussing the issues that Commissioner McDaniel brought up and we already have the results. Mr. Perry agreed and stated that there should be another discussion on this matter again moving forward. Commissioner McDaniel stated that when he came onto the RPC four years ago there were discussions of relevancy, then a relevancy committee was established but since then this has all been undone and he believes that there needs to be a reconstitution. He also mentioned that he has discussed this with two other RPC directors, and this is the path that he feels this is the path to follow in order to revamp the RPC with regard to relevancy. Commissioner Wilkins stated that there is a relevancy subcommittee and this conversation continues to come up, but there is a lot of legwork from the committees the SWFRPC is working. Commissioner McDaniel agreed and said that rules of this charter need to be reevaluated as an organization.

**AGENDA ITEM #6
MINUTES OF THE JUNE 18, 2020 MEETING**

A motion was made by Commissioner Doherty to approve the minutes of the June 18, 2020 meeting. This motion was seconded by Commissioner McDaniel and passed unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM #13
NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business.

**AGENDA ITEM #14
STATE AGENCIES COMMENTS/REPORTS**

Phil Flood of SFWMD shared that COVID had not slowed anything down with regard to Everglades Restoration, SFWMD is moving forward on numerous projects through the state and the legislature has given SFWMD \$368 million this year. The big project over on the West Coast is the C43 Reservoir, and Hendry County is well underway, there are well over 150 workers out there with over 100 pieces of heavy equipment. Everything is still on schedule to be completed in 2023. Mr. Flood also mentioned that there will be a ribbon cutting later today in Glades County for the big water quality project on the Brighton Valley Waterfall on 8,100 acres.

Mr. Dennis Ragosta of SWFWMD gave a COVID update stating there has been no hold back on any projects and thanked all cooperators out there for being understanding and cooperative.

Commissioner Wilkins informed the SWFRPC that this was her last meeting as she is stepping down. There is a new Commissioner on board for Hendry County that will be taking her place.

**AGENDA ITEM #16
ADJOURN**

The next meeting will be on November 19, 2020. The meeting adjourned at 9:59 a.m.

Vice-Mayor Michael Atkinson, Secretary

The meeting was duly advertised in the June 8, 2020 issue of the FLORIDA ADMINISTRATIVE REGISTER, Volume 46, Number 111.