

**MINUTES OF THE  
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL  
October 17, 2024, MEETING**

The virtual zoom meeting of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council's Executive Board was held on October 17, 2024. Collier County Commissioner and Council Chair, Mr. Bill McDaniel called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. There was a quorum of the Executive Committee present.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

**Charlotte County:** Mr. Don McCormick (zoom)

**Collier County:** Commissioner Bill McDaniel  
Councilman Bill Kramer - City of Naples (zoom)

**Glades County:** Commissioner, Tim Stanley (zoom)

**Hendry County:** None

**Lee County:** None

**Sarasota County:** Councilman Ron Smith – City of Venice

**Ex-Officio Members:** None

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Ms. Margaret Wuerstle - Executive Director, SWFRPC  
Ms. Catherine Peralta – SWFRPC Vista

**Commissioner Bill McDaniel offered a motion to allow online members to participate and vote. Councilman Ron Smith seconded the motion to allow online members to participate and vote. The motion was approved unanimously.**

## **AGENDA**

### **AGENDA ITEM #6(a)**

#### **MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 19, 2024, COUNCIL/EXECUTIVE MEETING**

Councilman Ron Smith noted that the minutes are not formatted in the usual summary style typically found in the packet. He recommended tabling the minutes to allow staff time to review and summarize them.

**Councilman Ron Smith offered a motion to table the September 19, 2024, meeting minutes until a future meeting. Commissioner Bill McDaniel seconded the motion to table the September 19, 2024, meeting minutes until a future meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.**

### **AGENDA ITEM #7(a)**

#### **FINANCIALS: September Financials**

Ms. Wuerstle explained that we finished the year with a smaller deficit than expected—\$35,770, compared to the anticipated \$160,000 to \$170,000. This improvement is due to receiving reimbursements and closing out some grants. Ms. Wuerstle explained that we need to approve both the financials and the budget amendment, which will transfer funds and zero out the accounts.

Commissioner McDaniel asked for clarification as to why there was a better-than-expected financial circumstances.

Ms. Wuerstle responded and explained that our better than anticipated end of the year financials is due to grants that we were able to close out and get reimbursement for. Ms. Wuerstle continued to explain that the federal agencies are much faster for reimbursements than the State. The State can take months to reimburse for grants. Ms. Wuerstle continued that we were able to get all of our reimbursements back from both the State and federal government, which put us in a much better position.

Commissioner McDaniel asked for clarification on the accounts receivable amount of \$119,000 on the balance sheet, page 38.

Ms. Wuerstle responded that it is for assessments and grant receivables. Ms. Wuerstle pointed out that Rebekah prepared a cheat sheet for the grants that outlines what grants we have, what goes to contractors and the length of the grants.

Commissioner McDaniels questioned if the accounts receivables is based off of the old interlocal agreement and MOU from a revenue standpoint or are using the proposed yet to be accepted and adopted MOU interlocal agreement?

Ms. Wuerstle stated that before we can use the new interlocal agreement assessment amounts, we will need all 6 counties to sign off on it, so it's based off of the old one. Ms. Wuerstle explained that we still send out invoices for the assessments.

Commissioner McDaniel would like staff to prepare a draft comparison of assessment receivables from the current (old) interlocal agreement assessment rates to the new proposed rates.

Ms. Wuerstle asked Commissioner McDaniel to ask his county attorney if we in fact need all six signatures or does the majority count.

Commissioner McDaniels replied that yes he would bring it to his attorney. McDaniels reviewed the updates to the membership in the new proposed Interlocal agreement, bylaws and MOU. Commissioner McDaniels reemphasized the importance of bringing the comparison of the current and proposed assessments so that there can be budgetary adjustments made.

**Councilman Ron Smith offered a motion to accept the September financials. Commissioner Bill McDaniel seconded the motion to accept the September financials. The motion was accepted unanimously.**

#### **AGENDA ITEM #7(b)**

##### **FINANCIALS: FY23-24 Fiscal Year End Closeout Budget Amendment**

**Councilman Ron Smith offered a motion to accept the FY23-24 Fiscal Year End Closeout Budget Amendment. Commissioner Bill McDaniel seconded the motion to accept the FY23-24 Fiscal Year End Closeout Budget Amendment. The motion was accepted unanimously.**

#### **AGENDA ITEM #8**

##### **CONSENT AGENDA: None**

**AGENDA ITEM #9  
DIRECTORS REPORT**

Commissioner McDaniel asked what the status is regarding the Executive Director's performance evaluation.

Ms. Wuerstle responded that we have only received two. One from Mel Karu and the other from Bill Kramer.

Commissioner McDaniel requested that staff send the members a notice to have the performance evaluations submitted by the December meeting.

**AGENDA ITEM #9(a)(b)  
Executive Director's Evaluation  
Executive Directors Compensation Matrix (Informational)**

**AGENDA ITEM #9(c)  
FRCA Monthly Activity Report – September 2024 (Informational)**

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

**AGENDA ITEM #10  
COMMITTEE REPORTS**

There were no Committee Reports.

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

There was no update given.

**AGENDA ITEM #11  
NEW BUSINESS**

Commissioner McDaniel explained that in September he was successful at getting his board to unanimously accept and approve the draft MOU, interlocal and bylaws. Collier County is now back in active membership.

Commissioner McDaniel requested that the active members take the draft MOU, interlocal, and bylaws back to their boards for approval.

Councilman Kramer asked if he was given a copy of all the draft documents. Commissioner McDaniel believed it was sent out, however he can have his executive assistant send it out to anyone who needs a copy.

Councilman Kramer stated that he did receive it and ran it through finance and city attorney, and all were in agreeance. Councilman Kramer asked if he needed to bring it to his council for approval.

Commissioner McDaniel would like the City of Naples council to vote and approve and accept the draft and sign on when it is official. Commissioner McDaniel asked Councilman Kramer to send an email to his executive assistant and she will send over the executive summary that was presented to the Collier County board, which was ultimately approved and accepted.

Commissioner McDaniel offered to come to the December City of Naples board meeting to help with answering questions. Councilman Kramer responded that he would be happy to have him there.

Commissioner McDaniel asked if any other members are online.

Commissioner Stanley responded that they are still active paying members.

Commissioner McDaniel asked if the draft MOU, interlocal and bylaws have been brought before the Glades County board.

Commissioner Stanley responded that they have not.

Commissioner McDaniel asked Commissioner Stanely to send him an email and his executive assistant will also send him the executive summary. Commissioner McDaniel requested that Glades County add a formal agenda item to an upcoming meeting to review the draft MOU, interlocal and bylaws. Commissioner McDaniel explained that he will attend the meeting to answer any questions.

Commissioner Stanley responded that he would do so, however there are new commissioners coming in late November so it would be sometime after that.

Councilman Ron Smith would like to commend and acknowledge Glades County's active membership and that it should be less controversial for their board's approval.

Commissioner McDaniel stated that we will treat all boards equally. He continued to explain that he does not know any of the members from the Sarasota County board. Commissioner McDaniel asked Councilman Smith to provide any recommendation of who he can speak with from Sarasota County.

Councilman Smith responded that he would do so.

Councilman McDaniel brought up the last council meeting, recalling that the City of Venice did not agree to pay.

Councilman Smith acknowledged and stated that they voted not to pay and that he has since then circulated the Attorney General's opinion to the council, city manager and the finance director and he plans to bring it back up. There is a re-election for two members in November, which might bring in a new board so that he can bring it back in December. At which Councilman Smith would like to invite Commissioner McDaniel to come speak.

Commissioner McDaniel responded that he would love to be there and requested that Councilman Smith provide a contact for one of the commissioners in Sarasota County so that we can get on their agenda and hopefully schedule a time for him to present to the Sarasota County board.

Commissioner McDaniel opened the discussion regarding the meeting in November.

Councilman Smith recommended that the RPC forgo the meeting in November and meet in December, unless Margaret has any pressing business that would require us to meet in November.

Ms. Wuerstle responded that there were no pressing issues.

**Councilman Ron Smith offered a motion to forgo the meeting in November and continue the meeting in December. Commissioner Bill McDaniel seconded the motion to forgo the meeting in November and continue the meeting in December. The motion was accepted unanimously.**

Commissioner McDaniel stated for the record that it was mentioned that the Department of Transportation has built a new building by I-75. Commissioner McDaniel has not spoken to Wayne Gaither regarding access there for our future meetings and attending as the DOT representative.

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

None.

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

Councilman Smith would like to commend our chair for bringing Collier County back in the fold as dues paying members of this important regional planning council. He is excited about the plan to meet with each and every county first and then the cities to educate and invite back full participation and he looks forward to this revitalized council.

Commissioner McDaniel responded that he is pleased with the outcome and that regionality is paramount. Commissioner McDaniel requested that the mission/vision be sent to him that were aligned several months ago for this organization. He continues to explain that when he

goes to speak to the boards (counties and cities) he will create a PowerPoint with the discussion points that will be brought forward.

Ms. Wuerstle asked for clarification that it is not the mission statement of the organization, but the four items that the board decided to focus on.

Commissioner McDaniel responded that is correct.

Commissioner McDaniel asked if anyone online would like to add anything.

Mr. McCormick would like to commend the chair for what he is doing and is excited for the future of this council.

Commissioner Stanely stated that he is also excited for the future of the board.

Ms. Wuerstle would like to bring up that after Hurricane Ian, representatives from the Dutch embassy visited to discuss our concerns and offered to collaborate on identifying real, sustainable solutions beyond just adding sand to the beach. Given the challenges seen at Fort Myers Beach, are we interested in reaching out to them again to see what they have to offer and explore their potential contributions?

Commissioner McDaniel responded that he would certainly like to hear solutions from the Dutch Embassy of the Netherlands to know how they deal with their communities would certainly be a benefit. Commissioner McDaniel expressed that he would be willing to schedule an independent meeting to get a report on some of the action items that they have done.

Commissioner McDaniel continued to explain that the primary goal is to reestablish an organization that can exist more than month to month or year to year. The ultimate goal, after we are successful in bringing our membership back in the fold, is to have one or two organizational meetings where we make the final adjustments to the MOU and inter local agreement deciding who can be members and who cannot. There is no rationale for reducing the municipality's out of the membership, especially since there is no authority with regard to the council's existence in upcoming developments within our communities. We want as many members as possible. Once that is established, Commissioner McDaniels plan is to move to quarterly meetings and have subject matter and subject matter speakers come and present to us. It would be scheduled for a half day, with an hour presentation and an hour or so for conducting our business as a council, and then have a lunch provided so that we can socialize and talk further about what we are going to do going forward.

Councilman Kramer stated that it sounded like a great idea and gives us something to sell that is more concrete. Looking for best practices, even if they are from Europe, I think that's brilliant, and the fact is we have the same issues. Councilman Kramer also mentioned that they had issues with Hurricane Helene that washed their berm almost flat, and they couldn't get it put back in time for Hurricane Milton. Then we were breached with Milton. We are down to five

feet of sand on Gordon Drive and Gulf Shore streets with just a big pile of sand. It will be nice to bring back to my council and explain the plan going forward. Knowing we must build the foundation first, but none the less it, it puts a bullet in the gun for anyone questioning “what’s that group going to do”? For example, we are going to collaborate with whoever has the best practices and believes this is a good idea.

Commissioner McDaniel explained to Tim Stanley that he is part of a 16-county coalition focused on addressing water quality issues related to Lake Okeechobee. On the west side of Florida, the Western Everglades Restoration Project is underway, with the district constructing various structures to improve water quality. The goal is to enhance water quality as it flows out of Lake Okeechobee and into the Caloosahatchee River. This issue folds back to our points of interest of water, water, and water - water quality and water quantity. Commissioner McDaniels Montra today and going forward is what does width, breadth and depth create? The answer is volume. One of the things we do know is that it’s not about stacking sand on the beach and hoping that the next tile surge doesn’t take it out. It’s about creating the volume that exists in both our natural waterways and in our canal systems. Commissioner McDaniels recalls a conversation with a councilman from Osceola County, where they discussed the three feet of "sludge" at the bottom of Lake Okeechobee. The councilman corrected him, explaining it's called "legacy sediment". Commissioner McDaniel explained that removing this sediment could create more volume within the lake, reducing the need for human management. Commissioner McDaniel also mentioned that similar issues occur in coastal waterways, and advocate for more regular dredging to improve and open our inland waterways. This would help prevent flooding when tidal surges occur, ensuring water has a place to go. During tidal surges, water flows along the coast until it finds gaps, which then flood inland waterways. These waterways are constrained by legacy sediment. To prevent flooding, Commissioner McDaniel suggests creating more volume within existing waterways and strengthening beachheads with proper dune systems. This would allow the waterways to better handle surges, reducing the risk of flooding for residents by keeping the water within the existing boundaries of the communities' waterways. Commissioner McDaniel continues to explain that we took on significant damage caused by surges during Ian, Helene, and Milton. While a foot of water may seem less than five feet, it still causes severe damage, disrupts lives, and can turn everything upside down for those affected.

Commissioner McDaniel explained that he had an idea to create volume within our existing waterways along the coastal area. A suggestion of a continuous dredging operation of offshore dredging to move sand onto our beaches on a regular basis so we are continually fortifying higher and wider beaches to better manage the next inevitable storm surge. The combination of those things is going to take a group effort. Commissioner McDaniel continues to explain that it's going to take a force like the RPC to be able to move the regulators off of the permitting requisites to be able to allow us to move the available sands that we have offshore back onto our beaches and then certainly the proper disposal of the legacy sediment, once it's in fact removed from our from our waterways.



Councilman Kramer added that Commissioner McDaniel called out the elephant in the room -- the regulators. We can get best practices from anywhere, but by the time we get through the bureaucracy after having six storms. Councilman Kramer continues to acknowledge and agree that a united front and that there's enough juice in this area at a federal level that we can get stuff done if we need to. Councilman Kramer shares that they actually got the permission to put the sand back and they gave them the discretion to make sure it was clean enough instead of having to go through that process. So that shows that it's possible that we can get stuff done quickly if we need to.

Commissioner McDaniel agreed and explained that Collier County and Naples have been blessed to avoid a title surge event for the past 61 years. Commissioner McDaniel continued, emphasizing that proper planning with dune structures to better retain sand is essential when the inevitable surge occurs. We just need a few minor adjustments to the regulatory process to enable us to carry out these efforts on a more regular basis. As a strong front of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council, we can turn some heads as a group far better than any one individual standing up there in front of them.

Ms. Wuerstle added that Marco Island is building man made islands to address water quality issues and asked if anyone has heard or seen anything regarding this? Ms. Wuerstle explained it was a short segment on the news and that it sounded like an interesting idea, however she hasn't had a chance to follow up yet.

Commissioner McDaniel responded that he had not heard anything about it but he would look into it and stated that Commissioner Locastro would most likely know more about it. Commissioner McDaniel stated that he did hear about some suggestions about dredging efforts within the waterways within the community and building manmade islands out of the legacy sediment that is in the existing canal structures. Due to the size of the waterways, there are certain areas where these efforts can't be implemented. Commissioner McDaniel continued to explain that the majority of Port Royal is man-made. They built that area by constructed canals, dredged, and legacy sediments pumped out to create the land. Similarly, Marco Island itself is primarily man-made, formed from legacy sediments removed from the waterways. Other waterfront communities in Collier County, such as Aqualine Shores and Royal Harbor, also fall into this category.

Commissioner McDaniel continued, noting that this was merely a suggestion, and he recalled dredging efforts in Lake Okeechobee in the past. He emphasized that without consistent dredging, the sediment quickly returns. The consistency and location of the sediment are crucial to success. One issue he pointed out is that the sediment on the bottom constantly shifts. For example, if a canal or a deeper section is cut through the main waterway, the legacy sediment along the sides will inevitably shift, refilling the channel. As a result, dredging must be repeated over time. Eventually, this process creates greater width, breadth, and depth, increasing the volume of the waterway. However, from a dredging perspective, the primary focus remains on maintaining the main navigable channel, whether it is a natural waterway or a man-made canal. But it has to be done regularly and consistently. A one-time dredging effort

may provide some benefit, but it is not the ultimate solution. To truly create the necessary volume to accommodate additional water, dredging must be an ongoing process. Regular and consistent dredging is the only way to achieve the long-term volume required.

**AGENDA ITEM #14  
ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 11:17 a.m.

  
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Councilwoman Debi Lux, Secretary

**The meeting was duly advertised in the October 12, 2024, issue of the FLORIDA ADMINISTRATIVE REGISTER, Volume 50, Number 202.**