



NORTHEAST FLORIDA REGIONAL COUNCIL
Board of Directors Meeting
February 1, 2024

MINUTES

The Northeast Florida Regional Council Board of Directors, pursuant to Chapter 120.525, F.S., held a hybrid meeting at 100 Festival Park Ave., Jacksonville, FL and virtually via Zoom, on Thursday, February 1, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.

President Whitehurst welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order with the following members present and in person unless otherwise noted:

BAKER: Mr. Griffis
Mr. Register

CLAY: Mr. Bourre
Commissioner Condon
Commissioner Renninger

DUVAL: Councilman Amaro
Mayor Lynch (virtual)

FLAGLER: Mayor Alfin (virtual)
Commissioner Dance
Commissioner Sullivan (virtual)

NASSAU: Commissioner Martin
Vice-Mayor Sturges

ST. JOHNS: Commissioner Alaimo (virtual)
Commissioner Horvath (virtual)
Commissioner Whitehurst

EX-OFFICIO: Mr. Hart
Mr. Conkey, St. Johns River Water Management District
Ms. Craver *for Mr. Strong*, Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Mr. Dixon, Florida Department of Transportation (virtual)

Excused: Commissioner Anderson, Commissioner Bennett, Mr. Drew, Mr. Kennedy,
Councilman Gay, and Commissioner Harvey

Absent: Commissioner Adamczyk and Mayor Brown

Presenters: **Zach Chalifour**, Partner, James Moore & Company

Anna Hopkins, North/Central Regional Coordinator, FDEP Division of Recreation & Parks, Office of Greenways and Trails

Guests: Mr. Matthew Dews (Senator Rubio's Ofc), Catherine Hannan (FWC), Holly Coyle, and other members of the public.

Staff: Eric Anderson, Fara Ilami, Tyler Nolen, Elizabeth Payne, Andrew Prokopiak, Annie Sieger, Donna Starling, and other members of staff.

INVITATION TO SPEAK

President Whitehurst stated that members of the public are welcome to speak on any item before the Board and will be recognized during public comment.

*CONSENT AGENDA

President Whitehurst called for a motion on the consent agenda. Mr. Register moved approval of the consent agenda; seconded by Commissioner Martin. Motion carried.

OTHER REPORTS/ACTION ITEMS

*FY 22/23 Audit

Mr. Zach Chalifour, auditor with James Moore & Company, provided an overview of the Council's FY 2022/2023 Audit, and thanked Ms. Starling for her assistance throughout the audit process.

He highlighted the audit process which included 1) required communications that entailed their responsibility in relation to financial statement audit, consideration of significant risks, significant estimates and/or disclosures – this year included a right-to-use office lease, corrected and/or uncorrected audit adjustments – there were none, and any significant difficulties performing the audit or disagreements with management – there were none; 2) three audit reports: a report on financial statements – which received an unmodified opinion, a single audit report on compliance for major federal programs – which received an unmodified opinion, and a report on internal control and compliance – no material weaknesses were revealed; and 3) financial highlights of grant revenues, total fund balance and total net position. He stated that the Council is in good shape. A brief discussion followed.

President Whitehurst called for a motion on the FY 22/23 Audit. Mr. Register moved approval of the FY 22/23 Audit; seconded my Commissioner Martin. Motion carried.

Ms. Payne acknowledged Ms. Starling's 30 years of service to the Regional Council.

Presentation: Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) Trail Towns Program

Ms. Anna Hopkins provided a presentation on the FDEP's Trail Towns program. She highlighted the Florida Greenways and Trails Council, Florida's Greenways and Trails System, Florida's designated Trail Towns, Trail Town goals, what makes a Trail Town and the process involved in becoming one. Discussion followed.

Community Resiliency Update

Ms. Ilami provided an update on the Council's Resiliency program activities by highlighting the Steering Committee meeting held on January 31st; the next full Collaborative meeting is scheduled for March 27th. She also provided an update on the Regional Resilience Entity grant, and shared the intra- and inter-program connections of resiliency. A brief discussion followed.

Program Spotlight: Northeast Florida State Hospital REMI Project

Mr. Shad shared the process utilized by Council staff to analyze the impacts to Baker County of moving the Northeast Florida State Hospital (NEFSH), the largest employer in Baker County, outside the Region. Using REMI, an economic modeling tool, the analysis showed that the negative impacts on Baker County would be significant, and that there would be additional negative impacts throughout the Region. He stated that staff have performed many such analyses, utilizing REMI PI+, for many of our local governments to project the potential impacts of economic development projects, and also have used it for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, and to model impacts of the COVID shutdown. Model results help local governments to make more informed decisions. As the Regional Council shares a license with the other nine Regional Planning Councils, NEFRC staff is able to provide this service to our member counties as needed. Discussion followed.

Opioid Settlement Status Update

Mr. Nolen provided an update on the Council's Opioid work; highlighting the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis completed for Baker, Clay, Duval and St. Johns Counties. Nassau County's SWOT is scheduled for later this month, but staff is currently assisting them with the implementation of their settlement funding; Flagler and Putnam County's SWOT will be scheduled in the near future. Council staff serves on Clay County's Opioid Settlement Task Force to assist in spending the first year's settlement funding, which must be spent by June 30th. Mr. Nolen highlighted additional opioid work that included, planning a Jacksonville Beaches (Atlantic, Neptune and Jacksonville Beaches) specific SWOT analysis, serving as an evaluator for the Clay County's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration First Responders Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act Grant, serving as a liaison between local governments and the Region's managing entity (LSF), and attending opioid meetings across Northeast Florida. Mr. Nolen also shared the Council's goals that includes completion of jurisdiction specific Substance Use Disorder SWOT analysis as well as a regional one, creation of a regional opioid task force, hosting a second opioid summit, and pursuing multi-jurisdictional projects using regional funds or unused settlement funds. Discussion followed.

Public Comment – None.

Local and Regional Issues Discussion

Commissioner Condon – Encourages everyone to follow the FRS discussions taking place in this Legislative Session.

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS' REPORTS

Florida Department of Commerce

Mr. Register shared information from Area Development Magazine regarding the ranking of hot spots for economic growth in the U.S. He shared the categories considered for the ranking. Based on those categories, 16 Florida areas were ranked in the top 50, with the Miami/Ft. Lauderdale/Palm Beach ranked #4 and Jacksonville #31 in the U.S.

Florida Department of Transportation

Mr. Dixon – Nothing to report.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Ms. Craver highlighted the success of the Great Outdoors initiative, which recently ended in January. This was a collaboration between DEP Parks & Recreation and the Fish and Wildlife Commission. DEP's focus was on providing a 50% discount on annual state park passes, which was a huge success as it sold four times more passes over the same time period the prior year.

She shared the protocol for when an event occurs that could potentially lead to hazardous releases flowing into the St. Johns River, such as from the recent Rise Doro building fire. At this particular time, as it relates to the fire, there is no evidence of any hazardous waste running off into the River.

She informed the Members of a leadership change in their Jacksonville office, the Regulatory Compliance office, the Environmental Manager has retired. Mr. Christopher Azcuy has taken over that role and is overseeing the Air and Solid Waste Department.

St. Johns River Water Management District

Mr. Conkey encourages everyone to use this time to do maintenance checks for water conservation. The water is clearest this time of year so if anything bleeds off into the water it is easily seen. If seen it will be addressed by their permitting folks.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

Ms. Payne introduced a new staff member, Ms. Kenajawa Woody, Communication Specialist and Mr. Benjamin McKissick-Hawley – a Jacksonville University Intern assisting with the City of Jacksonville Special Committee on the JSO facilities. She reminded the Members of the new requirements for Financial Disclosures, and the upcoming renewal of the Strategic Regional Policy Plan. She thanked the Florida Regional Councils Association (FRCA) reps; Mayor Alfin, Mr. Register and President Whitehurst for attending the recent FRCA Policy Board Meeting in Tallahassee. The Council's Regional Leadership Academy resumed with the first class held on January 31st. These classes are typically held on the last Wednesday of the month. She directed the Members' attention to the handouts provided: the FRCA's Annual Report, and a flyer for an Heirs Property Convening meeting. She informed the Members that, relating to the budget, the Council has received grants and contracts that have exceeded the previously expected deficit.


Discussion followed .

Next Meeting Date: The next meeting will be March 7, 2024.

Meeting Adjourned: 11:50 a.m.



Christian Whitehurst
President



Elizabeth Payne
Chief Executive Officer