

**MINUTES OF THE  
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL  
JANUARY 19, 2017 MEETING**

The meeting of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council was held on January 19, 2017 at the offices of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council-1400 Colonial Boulevard, Suite #1 in Fort Myers, Florida. Chair McCormick called the meeting to order at 9:06AM. Mayor Shaw then led an invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance. Ms. Margaret Wuerstle conducted the roll call and noted that a quorum was present.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

**Charlotte County:** Commissioner Joe Tiseo, Mr. Don McCormick

**Collier County:** Commissioner Penny Taylor, Commissioner Bill McDaniel, Councilman Reg Buxton, Mr. Alan Reynolds, Mr. Bob Mulhere

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

**Hendry County:** Commissioner Karson Turner, Commissioner Julie Wilkins, Vice-Mayor Michael Atkinson

**Lee County:** Commissioner Frank Mann, Councilman Jim Burch, Councilman Forrest Banks

**Sarasota County:** Commissioner Charles Hines, Commissioner Michael Moran, Mayor Willie Shaw, Councilman Fred Fraize, Commissioner Debbie McDowell

**Ex-Officio:** None

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

**Charlotte County:** Commissioner Ken Doherty, Councilwoman Lynne Matthews, Ms. Suzanne Graham

**Collier County:** None

**Glades County:** Commissioner Donald Strenth, Councilwoman Pat Lucas

**Hendry County:** Commissioner Mitchell Wills, Mr. Mel Karau

**Lee County:** Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass, Councilman Greg DeWitt, Vice-Mayor Mick Denham, Councilmember Jim Wilson, Councilwoman Anita Cereceda, Ms. Laura Holquist

**Sarasota County:** Mr. Felipe Colón

**Ex-Officio:** Ms. Tara Poulton-SWFWMD, Mr. Phil Flood-SFWMD, Mr. Jon Iglehart-FDEP, Ms. Sarah Catala-FDOT

**AGENDA ITEM #4  
PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No public comments were made at this time.

**AGENDA ITEM #5  
AGENDA**

A motion was made by Commissioner Taylor to approve the January 19, 2017 Agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mulhere and passed unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM #6  
MINUTES OF THE DECMEBER 15, 2016 MEETING**

The minutes of the December 15, 2016 meeting will be presented during the February 2017 meeting.

**AGENDA ITEM #7  
DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Ms. Wuerstle presented the Nomination Committee's (Vice-Mayor Denham, Commissioner Mann, and Mayor Shaw) recommendations for the 2017 Executive Board:

Chair: Councilman Burch  
Vice Chair: Mr. Perry  
Secretary: Councilman Banks  
Treasurer: Mayor Shaw

**A motion was made by Mr. Mulhere to approve the Nominating Committee's recommendations. The motion was seconded by Councilman Fraize and passed unanimously.**

Chair Burch thanked everyone for their support and stated that he sees the RPC as the most important Board in the area. He also thanked Mr. McCormick for his great work as Chair last year.

Ms. Wuerstle presented Chair Burch's recommendations for the Council's standing Committees. Commissioner Turner was added to the Promise Zone Steering Committee.

**A motion was made by Commissioner McDaniel to approve the Committee recommendations. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mulhere and passed unanimously.**

Ms. Wuerstle presented the November 2016 financials. She explained that the financials are being presented a month later than usual in order to present more accurate information. The Council revenue was down in November, but this is typical due to assessment cycles. The Council ended the FY 2016 with an unaudited \$22,258 surplus. This surplus has been added to the Council Reserve section of the financials. The Council is financially healthy at this point in the year. \$150,000 was put into the budget for unsecured grants. To date, the Council has received \$532,650 in additional grant revenue so the unsecured grants as well as the use of reserve dollars has been addressed in the first quarter of the fiscal year.

**A motion was made by Mayor Shaw to approve the November 2016 financials as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Fraize and passed unanimously.**

Chair Burch welcomed the new members of the Council: Commissioner Tiseo, Commissioner Storter-Long, Commissioner McDowell, Commissioner McDaniel, Vice-Mayor Atkinson, and Commissioner Moran.

Ms. Wuerstle presented the Council's Annual Report video for FY 2016. Chair Burch thanked Ms. Wuerstle and the RPC staff for their hard work under less than ideal conditions. Mr. Mulhere asked what will be done with the video other than having it posted on the website. Ms. Wuerstle explained that the video is presented when the staff visits County Commission or City Council meetings. Mr. Mulhere asked that the video be sent to each member of the Council so that they can share the video. Commissioner Turner recommended that the video be presented to each county and municipality in the region.

Ms. Wuerstle announced that a pre-legislative delegation luncheon will be held in Fort Myers on February 1. She asked if the Council would like to pay \$500 for a table of eight. Commissioner Mann asked how this event was different from the free legislative delegation hearings. Mr. Mulhere explained that the delegation uses these luncheons to receive input from the public in a more informal setting. Chair Burch added that the cost of having representation may be worth the potential rewards. Commissioner Mann asked if single tickets were available. Ms. Wuerstle answered that a single ticket was \$40. Chair Burch volunteered to attend on behalf of the RPC.

Ms. Wuerstle added that she needed to know which of the Council's Governor Appointees are interested in being re-appointed.

Ms. Wuerstle gave a report on the Florida Chamber meeting. She thought the region had an ok attendance. She added that the information presented was very interesting. Commissioner McDowell planned on attending the meeting, but was unable to due to a conflicting meeting. She asked if Ms. Wuerstle could share any materials from the meeting with the Council. Ms. Wuerstle stated that she will pass that information on and added that some of the statistics were amazing. According to the presentation, Southwest Florida needs to add 1,100 jobs a month to meet the projected population growth. Chair Burch attended the meeting and thought it was a productive presentation and discussion. He hopes that the data collected during the meeting will be included in the final report.

Commissioner Taylor provided an update on the Culinary Accelerator in Collier County. She explained that this is a Promise Zone project, located in Immokalee. The Accelerators aim to expand an economy that is already in place by linking the agriculture industry with educational opportunities. The goal is to create a culinary arts production campus in Immokalee. They are looking to build a 50,000-100,000 square foot facility. Operations are currently taking place at the airport and they want to remain there. The incubator brings businesses in and helps them grow. This is a partnership between Collier County, Taste of Immokalee, and Alternative Laboratories. The University of Florida and Florida State University both work within Immokalee. This creates an opportunity for the rural workforce of the three Promise Zone communities. The project embraces 21<sup>st</sup> century agricultural technology and long term community development. A market analysis and feasibility report are required to move forward. They will be asking the State for \$3.75 million in funding. Letters of support are needed from surrounding communities and organizations.

Mr. Jace Kenter, Interim Economic Development Director of Collier County, added additional information on the project. The first grant for the accelerators was obtained 3 years ago for \$2.5 million with the help of the RPC. The project is centrally located to take advantage of local produce from Hendry, Glades and eastern Lee Counties. Commissioner Taylor added that they have a Senate sponsor for the project and they will need support once they receive a bill number. Mr. Mulhere asked if an in-kind contribution of land was factored into the grant match. Those issues are still being worked out. Mr. McCormick asked if expansion would impact the airport. Mr. Kenter answered that an expansion would not negatively impact airport operations. Commissioner Taylor added that the Consulate of Mexico visited Collier County and was interested in flying cargo into Collier County. Commissioner Storter-Long asked if hospitality training was an option for this project. Commissioner Taylor answered that all aspects of food production were involved, not just meal preparation and FGCU has a successful hospitality program that they would be interested in working into this project. Commissioner Sorter-Long added that Good Wheels has added a route to iTECH in Immokalee. Commissioner McDaniel commented that iTECH already has elements of that kind of training.

Ms. Wuerstle stated that Mr. Jason Stoltzfus is at the REDI (Rural Economic Development Initiative) meeting to try to gain support for the Promise Zone. Specifically, he is trying to get State agencies to potentially waive any match requirements for State grants. Mr. Stoltzfus called in to the meeting to give an update on the VISTA volunteers along with Ms. Beth Nightingale. Commissioner Turner asked about the availability and capacity of the VISTA volunteers. Ms. Wuerstle answered that they can be assigned anywhere. Every County in the Promise Zone will have at least one VISTA volunteer, two will be in the RPC office, and one will serve with a nonprofit agency. The VISTA volunteers can do whatever is needed.

Mr. McCormick stated that several Council members are currently at the legislative delegation meeting in Charlotte County. Commissioner Tiseo added that Commissioner Doherty is currently attending that legislative meeting.

**AGENDA ITEM #8(a)  
GRANT ACTIVITY SHEET**

**This item was for informational purposes only.**

**AGENDA ITEM #9  
CONSENT AGENDA**

**A motion was made by Commissioner Turner to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Perry and passed unanimously.**

**AGENDA ITEM #10  
COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**AGENDA ITEM #10(a)  
Budget & Finance Committee**

The November 2016 financial were presented and approved during the Director's Report.

**AGENDA ITEM #10(b)  
Economic Development Committee**

Chair Burch stated that there was a very productive meeting between the region's MPO directors and the Council's Executive Committee earlier in the month. The two sides agreed on the importance of an overlay map. Mr. Perry agreed that the MPO directors were enthusiastic about the development of the map with the RPC. Mr. McCormick asked that the new director of the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program be added to the Council's distribution list. She has expressed an interest in economic development mapping for the CHNEP region. Chair Burch expressed that this project is starting to see support from people who had not expressed interest before.

**AGENDA ITEM #10(c)  
Energy & Climate Committee**

No report was given at this time.

**AGENDA ITEM #10(d)  
Estero Bay Agency on Bay Management (EBABM) Committee**

Mr. Beever provided an update on the Estero Bay Agency on Bay Management. The Agency held its Cela Tega Meeting in December at FGCU. One outcome of the meeting is a potential grant for storm surge mapping in partnership with the SFRPC. Mr. Beever is also working on climate change projects with the City of Cape Coral and the Pelican Cove community in Sarasota County. He also informed the Council on an administrative hearing regarding potential private boardwalks

through the Little Estero Island Critical Wildlife Area. The Agency is also keeping its eye on legislation. There may be potential funding for acquisition of land.

**AGENDA ITEM #10(e)**  
**Executive Committee**

No report was given at this time.

**AGENDA ITEM #10(f)**  
**Legislative Affairs Committee**

Commissioner Turner asked about the reasoning behind stopping short of an explicit request for State support of the Promise Zone. Ms. Wuerstle explained that during meetings with FDOT, DEO, the Florida Association of Counties, and FRCA, she was advised not to open up any legislation that affects recurring State funding. Promise Zone legislation would potentially affect RAO's (Rural Areas of Economic Opportunity) recurring funding. That State agencies thought it would be best to work directly with the agencies to get priority funding rather than changing legislation. Mr. Perry added that it is a good sign that the agencies are eager to work with the RPC on the Promise Zone. Commissioner Turner asked if the change in administration will impact the Promise Zone. Ms. Wuerstle added that there is always a chance that changes will be made, but it would take at least a year or two. She adds that she has pushed the Promise Zone partners to submit projects before any changes could be made. The other rural Promise Zones have all been very successful. Commissioner Turner states that we are one year into a ten year marathon with the Promise Zone and he asked Ms. Wuerstle to create a presentation that shows short term, long term, and current status of the Promise Zone initiative, praising the Annual Report video as a great marketing tool. Commissioner McDaniel added that regional projects will be more successful in receiving funding than local projects. Mr. Perry advised that we don't want to look back ten years from now and say that the Promise Zone brought in one factory. Rather, we want the factory as well as additional companies that support the operations of that factory to build up the economy. The Promise Zone needs to be transformative and not something that just moves the ball. Commissioner McDaniel explained that the strength of the Promise Zone communities is workforce and that workforce can be an asset in the distribution industry. Mr. Perry added that he views the Promise Zone as a ten year sprint, not a marathon. Chair Burch stressed that the difference makers for this project need to be the local communities. Commissioner McDaniel expressed the desire to see a regional partnership come out of this effort. Ms. Wuerstle adds that the regional communities outside of the Promise Zone can still benefit from Promise Zone grants.

Chair Burch added that there will be no money available from the legislature and the theme is to make as few bills as possible. Commissioner Turner asked if there was any reason given for the State deficit. Commissioner Taylor heard it was tied to the refusal of Medicaid funding. Commissioner Turner struggled to accept that the State is experiencing a revenue shortfall, stating that every forecast showed large revenue expansions. Chair Burch added that there are many potential reasons for the shortfall that have been thrown around, but the State agencies claim the reason is "legislative policy issues". Mr. Perry explained that two of the issues stated at the FRCA meeting were: how was the gulf oil spill money going to be spent and freezing of the State tax for

school support. He also added that Senator Negrón wants to increase spending on higher education. Chair Burch stated that he believes there will be a major assault on education.

**AGENDA ITEM #10(g)**  
**Quality of Life & Safety Committee**

Mayor Shaw thanked Commissioner Taylor for her presentation and everyone for their efforts with the Promise Zone and added that there is still a lot of work to be done. He adds that SWFL can be the best rural Promise Zone in the nation if the region works together. Chair Burch asked those involved with the Promise Zone to keep Mayor Shaw informed on quality of life issues. He explained that quality of life issues are directly tied into economic gain.

**AGENDA ITEM #10(h)**  
**Regional Transportation Committee**

The Executive Committee's meeting with the region's MPO directors was discussed under the Economic Development Committee report. The next step is to meet with the FDOT District One director. Commissioner McDaniel asked about the meeting dates and locations for the Council's Committees. Mr. McCormick informed him that when the Committees meet, it's often half an hour before the Council meeting at the RPC office.

**AGENDA ITEM #10(i)**  
**Interlocal Agreement/Future of the SWFRPC Committee**

Chair Burch informed the Council that Sarasota County has decided that they will leave the SWFRPC. This means that the Council may lose the municipalities within the County as well. The County currently provides the RPC roughly \$117,000 in annual revenue through local assessments. He explained that the County is undergoing the proper steps to do so and that just because they want to leave does not mean that they are making the wrong decision for the County. Mr. Mulhere added that the boundary issues have always been a topic of discussion since he has been on the Council, particularly Sarasota County and their relationship with Manatee County. He explained that FRCA is aware of this issue and they will be engaged in this process. If the boundary issue needs to be addressed for Sarasota County, it may be reconsidered for the entire State, which is a messy issue. Mr. McCormick pointed out that Sarasota County provides nearly 25% of the RPC's local assessments and they would have much less influence if they were to join the Tampa Bay region. He stated that the County never contacted him as the Chair of the RPC to inform him that they were considering leaving or to give him an opportunity to speak to the County on behalf of the RPC. The motion to leave was voted on through the County's consent agenda. Former State Senator Nancy Detert is now a Sarasota County Commissioner. She was quoted as saying that she's fine with reverting back to the big guys pushing the little guys around. She also believes participation in an RPC should be voluntary. He stressed that if that were to happen, the Councils would blow up the first time two Counties disagreed. Chair Burch explains that in his three years on the Council, there has always been a discussion on the State Legislature impacting the RPCs and what can be done about that. He sees the RPC evolving and redefining its relevancy and he believes the RPC affects this community more than anybody else. He adds that this raises the

question of who will follow if Sarasota leaves and that makes it more important to show the Council's relevance. With the current State Statutes, Sarasota County must belong to an RPC so they would have to join Tampa Bay if they leave SWFL.

Commissioner Turner is a proponent of the FDOT District maps for determining regions. He believes Hendry County is better off staying in SWFL than moving to Central Florida, but he understands Sarasota County's decision. The issue that the Council must address is the funding issue. He also worries about Lee County potentially leaving. He added that the conversations had by the Council members at these meetings justify the RPC's existence 25 times over and a dollar amount cannot be put on that impact. The RPC's work on the SR 80/US 27 Corridor is just one example of relevancy. Commissioner Turner stated there was an average of one death per month on that Corridor and now there has not been a death in the past nine months and in the previous calendar year there was not a single death in that area. This PD&E was not scheduled until 2035 and the RPC got it done right away. He also brought up the pain management clinic as another project the RPC got done. Mr. McCormick added that balance among regions is also an issue here. Moving Sarasota's influence from SWFL to Tampa Bay gives them more sway over SWFL. He explained that the Legislature was far thinking when they originally established the RPCs. They knew conflicts would arise that would leave a particular County uninterested, but they would come back when they needed help. Commissioner Storter-Long asked for reflections on what could have been done to avoid this situation with Sarasota County so that it won't happen again with another County. Commissioner McDaniel spoke to the importance of balancing the needs of the rural and urban communities. He added that the Council needs to get out in front of this issue. Chair Burch stresses that disagreement between the Counties is important because no changes would be made among a group that completely agrees on everything. Commissioner McDaniel asked how long it has been since the RPC revised its Mission Statement, Strategic Plan, and Business Plan.

**AGENDA ITEM #10(j)**  
**Water Quality and Water Resources Management**

No report was given at this time.

**AGENDA ITEM #11**  
**NEW BUSINESS**

None

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

No representatives from the State Agencies were present.

**AGENDA ITEM #13**  
**COUNCIL ATTORNEY'S COMMENTS**

No report was given at this time.

**AGENDA ITEM #14  
COUNCIL MEMBER'S COMMENTS**

Mr. McCormick informed the Council that a recent Thousand Friends of Florida webinar recognized that the RPCs play a vital role in planning functions. He also thanked the Council for its support over the last year.

Mr. Perry stated that Mr. McCormick did a very good job as Chair last year.

Commissioner Tiseo looks forward to working with the Council.

Commissioner McDowell will have a meeting with Ms. Wuerstle. The Atlanta Braves are looking to move operations to North Port. This move may lead to improvements to River Road.

Mayor Shaw informed the Council that RPC staff has presented at his City Commission on more than one occasion to explain the Council's relevancy. He does not want his City to leave the Council because he sees a lot of work to be done.

Councilman Fraize stated that we really need to sell the Promise Zone State-wide. He wants an update on water quality and Lake Okeechobee. He informed the Council of a newspaper article that cites a study claiming high levels of mercury in Florida women. He stressed how important water is to our State and region.

Commissioner Storter-Long is glad to be back with the Council.

Mr. Reynolds is working with the Florida Chamber Foundation to facilitate additional meetings in each of the region's counties to obtain more feedback.

Chair Burch believes that we have made headway with the FRCA Policy Board. Mr. Perry agreed that the FRCA meetings have changed in a positive way.

**AGENDA ITEM #15  
ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 10:56 a.m.

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Councilman Forrest Banks, Secretary

The meeting was duly advertised in the January 6, 2017 issue of the **FLORIDA ADMINISTRATIVE REGISTER**, Volume 43, Number 04.