

**MINUTES OF THE
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL
MARCH 19, 2009**

The regular meeting of the **Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council** was held on **March 19, 2009** in the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) Land & Water Trust in Estero, Florida. **Chairman Jim Humphrey** called the meeting to order at **9:00 a.m.** **Commissioner Paul Beck** led the Prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance. Senior Administrative Staff Nichole Gwinnett conducted the roll call.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Charlotte County: Councilman Don McCormick, Mr. Alan LeBeau

Collier County: Commissioner Jim Coletta, Commissioner Frank Halas, Councilwoman Teresa Heitmann, Councilman Charles Kiester

Glades County: Commissioner Paul Beck, Dr. Edward Elkowitz

Hendry County: Commissioner Karson Turner, Mr. Melvin Karau

Lee County: Commissioner Ray Judah, Commissioner Tammy Hall, Mayor Mick Denham, Mayor Jim Humphrey, Mayor Jim Burch, Councilman Tom Babcock

Sarasota County: Commissioner Jon Thaxton, Commissioner Tom Jones

Ex-Officio Members: Mr. Jon Iglehart - FDEP, Mr. Phil Flood - SFWMD, Ms. Dianne Davies - SFWMD

MEMBERS ABSENT

Charlotte County: Commissioner Tricia Duffy, Commissioner Robert Skidmore, Ms. Andrea Messina

Collier County: Ms. Laura Holquist

Glades County: Councilman Michael Brantley, Commissioner Kenneth "Butch" Jones

Hendry County: Mayor Mali Chamness, Commissioner Tristan Chapman, Mayor Paul Puletti

Lee County: Councilman John Spear

Sarasota County: Commissioner Carolyn Mason, Councilman Ernie Zavodnyik, Mr. David Farley, Mr. George Mazzarantani

Ex-Officio Membership: Mr. Johnny Limbaugh – FDOT, Ms. Tammie Nemecek – EDC of Collier County

Chairman Humphrey congratulated Vice Chairman, Mayor Denham, on his recent re-election to both the City Council and to his second term as Mayor to the City of Sanibel.

Commissioner Judah gave an overview of the CREW Land & Water Trust and then introduced Ms. Brenda Brooks, CREW Executive Director.

Mr. Heatherington welcomed the following guests: Mr. Patrick McQuillan from US Congressman Connie Mack, Ms. Diana McGee from US Senator Bill Nelson and Mr. Chad McLeod from US Senator Mel Martinez.

**AGENDA ITEM #1
AGENDA**

The agenda was approved as presented by unanimous consent.

**AGENDA ITEM #2
MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 19, 2009**

Ms. Davies referred to page 4 of 517, last sentence , under State Agencies comments, should read: “We have added an item to the agendas entitled the Basin Activities Report, which allows anyone in Sarasota or Charlotte Counties and the municipalities within those counties are able to submit any announcements of upcoming events, project completions, successes, etc. to the Basin Boards.”

Mayor Denham moved and Commissioner Hall seconded to approve the minutes of February 19, 2009 as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM #3
CONSENT AGENDA**

Commissioner Judah moved and Commissioner Beck seconded to approve the consent agenda: Agenda Item #3(a) Intergovernmental Coordination and Review; Agenda Item #3(b) Financial Statement for February 28, 2009; Agenda Item #3(c) City of Punta Gorda Comprehensive Plan Amendments (DCA 09-1); and Agenda Item #3(d) Florida Gulf Coast Technology & Research Park DRI - 90 Day Extension. The motion carried unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM #4(a)
Lower West Coast Watershed Subcommittee – Implementation Status Presentation
Vice Chairman Mick Denham**

Vice Chairman Denham gave a verbal presentation and distributed handouts.

Councilwoman Heitmann thanked Mayor Denham for not only creating legislation through the resolutions, but also following through with the next step of implementation.

Mr. Hutchinson asked wasn't it a major objective to protect the region's economy. Vice Chairman Denham explained that it wasn't one of the subcommittee's objectives initially. He feels that every environmental issue is an economic issue of the region.

AGENDA ITEM #5(a)

Climate Prosperity Kick-off Meeting in San Jose, CA Report - Chairman Jim Humphrey & Vice Chairman Mick Denham

Chairman Humphrey gave an overview of the Climate Prosperity kick-off meeting. He then asked Commissioner Thaxton to give an overview of Sarasota County's solar farm.

Commissioner Thaxton reported that Sarasota County partnered with Florida Power & Light (FPL) where rebates come out of the power bills. The county is currently looking into additional sites, possibly near the landfill in conjunction with their methane gas processing.

Commissioner Thaxton stated that another project that the county is working on is retrofitting solar hot water appliances.

Mr. Heatherington stated that he was considering doing a State of the Region Address at the October 15th Annual meeting at the Charlotte Harbor Event Center. He gave an overview of the various solar project sites that they had visited throughout San Jose.

Vice Chairman Denham stated that San Jose is currently doing many innovative things, whether it is with the electric car or developing solar panels. In general, his feeling of the meeting was there were a lot of communities that felt they had to justify that they had to do something; while personally he felt there not that much going on. There is a lot of talk, planning but no momentum.

Vice Chairman Denham stated that Mr. Dell Jones from Southwest Florida discussed solar heating of hot water and he feels that the Council needs to do something as a region and form a subcommittee to handle such a mission.

Mr. Heatherington explained that the Council already has a subcommittee established called the Climate & Energy Subcommittee.

Commissioner Coletta stated that he agreed with Vice Chairman Denham and also would like to take a tour of Sarasota County's solar field.

Vice Chairman Denham stated that he would like to serve on the Climate & Energy Subcommittee.

Commissioner Hall stated that the solar aspect is very exciting and Mr. Heatherington had an opportunity to sit down with Lee County's Economic Development Director and herself, who serves as the Liaison to the Horizon's Council and discussed the economic impacts of the

renewable energy and opportunities. We are spending a tremendous amount of money to diversify economy in Southwest Florida from building and tourism and from that conversation turned into a potential startup business to manufacture the solar panels within Lee County.

Chairman Humphrey announced that the new regional library has been selected to be located downtown Fort Myers and will be a "green" building.

Councilman Kiester stated that the advances in solar technology are moving so fast that they are working on a material that would act as a roofing material.

Commissioner Turner stated that FPL is building a larger megawatt fields over in both Martin and DeSoto Counties. He visited the Sarasota County site on his way up to St. Petersburg and one of things that were discouraging to him was the issues with amount of jobs pre and post construction. Another issue of concern was why the brakes were being put on the number of solar plants in Florida. He then also volunteered to serve on the Climate & Energy Subcommittee.

Councilman McCormick volunteered to serve on the Climate & Energy Subcommittee.

Commissioner Judah announced that Lee County is hoping to enter into a contract to build a bio diesel facility which will use grease from restaurants.

Vice Chairman Denham asked for staff to put a team together and then at the next Council meeting announce who is on the Climate & Energy Subcommittee.

Mayor Burch stated that he attended a Renewable Energy Seminar with Representative Kreegel and Representative Aubuchon and suggested staff contact them because a good portion of the seminar consisted of the solar roofing material.

Mr. Heatherington suggested holding a WebEx/conference call meeting of the Climate & Energy Subcommittee either the 2-3 week in April.

AGENDA ITEM #5(b)
Growth Management & Related Bills - Mr. Ken Heatherington

Mr. Heatherington reviewed the item as presented and distributed handouts.

Vice Chairman Denham asked if anyone had any opinions on the proposal by Representative Trudi Williams on terminating environmental permitting. Commissioner Hall explained that Ms. Blakely is working through the Lee County Attorney's office and is tracking the Growth Management Bill through all its legalities along with the House Bills. They are moving very fast and also changing very fast. There are a lot of politics behind these bills and on other bills they want to negotiate with the Governor on.

Commissioner Halas stated that the Florida Association of Counties (FAC) has taken the stance that they want to keep the Department of Community of Affairs (DCA) intact because they are our buffer. He feels that if DCA is eliminated then it is going to become the "wild west" and he doesn't believe that any member of the Council would want it going in that direction.

Mayor Burch stated that one of the issues that need to be discussed is the transportation concurrency requirements.

Mr. Heatherington stated that he agrees with Mayor Burch and the direction that staff has been given is that there are numerous bills out there regarding the transportation shell package and a lot of it is embedded within the Growth Management Bill along with other bills.

Commissioner Judah moved and Councilman Kiester seconded to approve the FRCA Letter to Senator Don Gaetz and Senator Mike Bennett and SWFRPC Resolution #2009-02 - A Resolution of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council in Opposition to Florida Senate Bill 360 Committee Substitute - An Act Related to Growth Management, Including Senate Bill 1306 and Other Legislative Proposals that Weaken Growth Management.

Mr. Flood referred to the language of the letter and wanted clarification that there was language stating specifically as to why the Council did not like the Bill, because he would hate to go on record stating one thing and then it changes. Chairman Humphrey stated that the way it was stated in the letter was in a positive manner.

The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Humphrey encouraged all members to stay on top of the current legislative issues.

AGENDA ITEM #5(c)

Smart Growth America Washington & FY09 Omnibus Spending Package Update - Mr. Ken Heatherington

Mr. Heatherington reviewed the item as presented.

Mr. Trescott gave a status overview of the South LaBelle Village DRI. He noted that staff has worked with city staff on how to obtain stimulus funds to build two phases of their water plant which will allow the city to have excess capacity to allow the South LaBelle Village DRI to move forward.

Mr. Iglehart noted that FDEP is unlike most as far as the stimulus projects, because DEP goes through the environmental impact process. So your stimulus projects within your county will go through FDEP's South District Office. He suggested emailing the South District Office, let them know that they are a stimulus project and highlight the project.

AGENDA ITEM #5(d)

Renewable Energy Dividends (REDs) - Mr. Ken Heatherington

Mr. Heatherington reviewed the item as presented.

AGENDA ITEM #5(e)
Cap & Trade Transportation Proposal - Mr. Ken Heatherington

Mr. Heatherington introduced Ms. Amy Davies of Wilbur Smith Associates.

Ms. Davies and Mr. Chris Swenson of CRSPE, Inc. distributed a handout and gave a verbal presentation.

Commissioner Halas asked Mr. Swenson if any research has been done to look at buses to run on natural gas and also light rail in order to take more cars off the congested highways. These are some areas that need to be addressed and need to start working on those issues as soon as possible. Mr. Swenson said that he agrees with Commissioner Halas and that he had a piece of good news. Currently, as an example project, a contract was just signed with LeeTran to look at what are the most obvious uses of transit to reduce congestion in Southwest Florida. We are taking a look at what can be done in reducing carbon reduction if we were to "beef up" the trolley system in Fort Myers Beach using natural gas, etc. The nice thing about the \$400 million in competitive grant, we have our eye on that or something to the Climate Trust to be able to fund the capital operating costs, alternative green fuel vehicles, compressed natural gas, etc.

Councilman McCormick asked if traffic light sequencing and fly-overs work into the formula. Mr. Swenson replied yes, anything that we can take back and revert back into fuel savings.

Mr. Karau asked how are the tolls for the bridges documented. Mr. Swenson replied that the answer to the question is both scary and full of opportunity. The scary part is nobody has come up with a system yet, so the opportunity is there for someone to come up with a system. Southwest Florida is trying to be part of how that system is developed.

Councilman Babcock stated that Mr. Swenson has worked with the Town of Fort Myers Beach in the past and three months out of the year Estero Boulevard is a parking lot and in a way he is concerned that some of the Town's solutions will add capacity to traffic. To some extent the Town can not add anymore people to come down Estero Boulevard because it doesn't move during most of that timeframe. Mr. Swenson had placed a program in-place where three trolleys would bring in people from off the island onto the island with hopes that the traffic would improve, but what you really find is if you make more space for cars they will fill it. In some ways you might want to consider reducing traffic, he always thought if you closed off the island and have a very efficient transportation system and have small buses that are more efficient of getting people where they want to go then they would have to look for more creative places where we try to encourage people to try to use transportation systems as opposed to opening up the capacity that have more capacity.

Mr. Swenson stated that the name of the game is not to have more cars on Fort Myers Beach.

Commissioner Halas suggested looking at putting a street car system on Fort Myers Beach. Councilman Babcock stated that it has been discussed but the problem is that there are many limitations of what can be done.

AGENDA ITEM #5(f)
Other Emerging Regional Issues

No other emerging regional issues were discussed at this time.

AGENDA ITEM #6
PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Carol Newcomb-Jones stated that she came on behalf of her husband, Mr. Dell Jones, she said that Mr. Jones is very interested in helping in anyway with the climate prosperity initiative. She then stated that she has been following the issue of renewable energy dividends for last three years very closely and it is the business model for bringing renewable energy to a doable application on residential and commercial buildings. It is the model which Germany has been used for the past decade which they call feed in tariff. She also gave an overview of alternative modes of transportation bus fleet in Eagle County, Colorado and she encourages everyone to research the hydro-electric buses.

AGENDA ITEM #7
DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Mr. Heatherington had no comments at this time.

AGENDA ITEM #8
STATE AGENCIES COMMENTS/REPORTS

Mr. Flood announced that on April 16 and 17 a public workshop is being held at the SFWMD Service Center in Fort Myers to discuss the River Grass Restoration.

Ms. Davies announced that the SWFWMD Governing Board will be considering upgrading their Water Shortage Declaration to Phase 4.

Commissioner Coletta expressed his concern that the water management districts are basing their decisions on east coast's situation.

Ms. Davies explained that the SWFWMD tables are through further planning areas and water use caution areas and other types of planning areas. They don't all have the same requirements and it will be limited to the 15 counties within the SWFWMD's jurisdiction.

Commissioner Coletta stated that Collier County has 80% of their land put into conservation easements which can collect water and restore the aquifer and he feels that the county should be recognized for their efforts.

Commissioner Halas stated that Collier County has also spent a lot money in reclaimed water efforts which give the county the ability to make sure that it has plenty of water.

Ms. Davies explained that she is with the SWFWMD and the geology is greatly different north of the Caloosahatchee River than in the SFWMD jurisdiction. The aquifers within the SWFWMD's boundaries are not rebounding, so they are depending a great deal on surface water and new reservoirs.

Mr. Flood stated that the SFWMD currently does not have any plans to change any water restrictions. He then noted that there were aquifers that were threatened within Lee County in Lehigh Acres and along Corkscrew Road and are of significant concern.

**AGENDA ITEM #9
COUNCIL ATTORNEY'S COMMENTS**

Ms. Donley had no comments at this time.

**AGENDA ITEM #10
COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS**

Councilman Kiester explained that there has been discussion among the City Council of Marco Island of why they are not taking advantage of the SFWMD's grant program and taking the water from the septic tanks, since the island is in the process of converting over to sewers, and turning the tanks into cisterns, so residents can use the water to water lawns, etc. He has been getting conflicting reports, but he understands that it has been done in the Florida Keys.

Mr. Iglehart stated that he had just heard of the issue, but there are health department laws which restrict the use of septic tanks be used for anything. In the Florida Keys the Monroe Health Department has agreed to allow the septic tanks to be converted into cisterns.

Commissioner Coletta announced that Collier County is currently in a cooperative working arrangement with Miami-Dade with providing an ATV recreation facility at Jetport. In 2002, Collier County gave up their rights to the roads in the southern block which became the Picayune Forest in exchange the SFWMD agreed to provide 640 acres. However, for various reasons the SFWMD was never able to provide the 640 acres. Currently, Collier County has the opportunity to move forward with the acquisition at a considerable less expense than it would be to purchase 640 acres in Collier County by using land that has already been disturbed. He then stated that he is also looking for a possible cooperative arrangement for another site for another ATV facility either in Hendry, Lee or Collier Counties. He has been working with Commissioner Turner from Hendry County and he hopes to work with another Commissioner from Lee County to see about coming up with a cooperative arrangement through grants to locate a park.

Commissioner Halas stated that he appreciated the venue of the meeting and looks forward to future meetings with the same type of setting, ideas and discussions.

Commissioner Turner distributed a handout regarding the Glades/Hendry Counties Big O Birding Festival from April 3-6. He then gave an overview of the Council's upcoming May 21st meeting which is going to be held at the Seminole Tribe of Florida at Big Cypress.

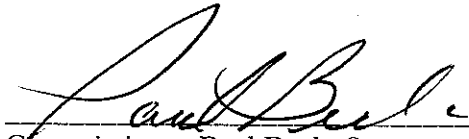
Mr. Heatherington announced that for the May 21st meeting he is working with ULI to having buses available and to also include a tour of Ave Maria University on the return trip. The first meetings is at 10:00 am with the Seminole Council at their chambers on the 3rd floor and then go to the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum to have a presentation given. Commissioner Turner announced that the museum is accredited by the Smithsonian. Mr. Heatherington continued that there are lunch reservations at the Safari Swamp Café at 12:00 pm and then depending on what everyone wants to do Commissioner Turner has arranged for swamp buggy and airboat tours at Billy Swamp Safari.

Commissioner Halas asked if spouses are invited. Commissioner Turner stated that he was going to extend the invitation to spouses and others and while business is being conducted they could enjoy the boardwalk and other areas.

Commissioner Judah thanked everyone for the meeting and venue. He encouraged everyone to take the buggy ride around CREW lands with Mr. Goodman after lunch.

**AGENDA ITEM #11
ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.



Commissioner Paul Beck, Secretary

The meeting was duly advertised in the March 6, 2009 issue of the FLORIDA ADMINISTRATIVE WEEKLY, Volume 35, Number 09.