



highlights

Monthly Report of the Northeast Florida Regional Planning Council

For September 1999

Council was there when Floyd threatened Northeast Florida

When Hurricane Floyd threatened the region (and the state) in September, Council planner Jeffrey Alexander found himself living at the Duval Emergency Operation Center for a few hectic days while his wife and two children packed up and evacuated.

Alexander, who is the Regional Evacuation Coordinator for 12 North Florida counties, including the Council's seven county members, is often called upon during emergencies to assist county emergency operations, but this was the first time the Regional Evacuation Coordinator's position was activated and extensively used during a "protective action" (evacuation).

His role included 1) keeping counties apprised of the status and actions of other counties, 2) keeping media informed of the actions of the outlying counties outside Duval, 3) coordinating actions that needed to be taken by one county in support of another, 4) providing information about hurricane impacts and the 1998 Northeast Florida Hurricane Evacuation Study (produced by the Council) to city officials and the media.

He also worked closely with the a state official who coordinated state actions in support of location actions.

How did it go? Says Jeff: "From a preliminary review, the evacuation went well and according to the estimates in the Hurricane Study. Yes, the I-10 issue was a problem, but not an unexpected one.

"While a large number of people were inconvenienced by the delays on I-10, we knew from the Hurricane Study that evacuation would take about 13 to 18 hours. That's why the evacuation was ordered early Tuesday morning (Sept. 14)—to allow for the 18-hour clearance time. And the roads, in fact, were cleared after 15 hours."

Anyone leaving Tuesday at dark would have still reached safe shelter before the projected impact of gale force winds which, at one point, were expected at 3 a.m. Wednesday, said Alexander.

"You have to remember that it was not until 11 p.m. on Tuesday that the storm turned enough to take most of the winds off shore, and not until Wednesday at 2 a.m. that we learned the storm had moved far enough east to spare us any

major impact hurricane force winds. Even then, the forecasts were for gale force winds and category 1 to 2 storm surge levels."

The Regional Planning Council is in the process of signing an agreement with the 12 counties of North Florida to formalize the Regional Evacuation Coordinator position. For info, call Jeffrey Alexander (904) 363-6375 X134.

Speaking of hurricanes

Hurricane Floyd and its resulting evacuation of Beaches residents was the topic of the Local Government Chief Administrative Officials Committee meeting Sept. 23 at the Council.

The group, which includes all Northeast Florida county and city administrator, is coordinated by the Council and meets regularly to discuss issues of common interest and to foster cooperation on extra-jurisdiction issues.

There was support at the meeting for the Council to pursue a cooperative purchasing program in the region. The Council will be contacting local government purchasing staff to further investigate this idea. The group's next meeting will be held after the first of the year. For info, call Mike Brown (904) 363-6375 X135.

Council assists Interlachen planning

Staff assisted the Town of Interlachen with three comprehensive plan amendments which they presented to the Planning and Zoning Board and the Town Council in September. The changes, which were adopted by the Town Council, have been transmitted by the Council to DCA for review.

The Interlachen Town Council recently retained the Council's planning services on an "as needed" basis. The first project will be the development of a tower ordinance. For info, call Wayne Dyess (904) 363-6375 X147 or Lindsay Haga (904) 363-6375 X151.

BDC adds two more loans

A hardware store and restaurant are the latest loans by the Business Development Corporation of Northeast Florida to receive approval from the SBA, bringing BDC's loan portfolio to 13 approved loans for fiscal year 1998-99

Bryan's Ace Home Center, Inc. in Melrose (Putnam County), is a \$840,000 project which will relocate the business to a new building and create 7 new jobs. Participating lender is Compass Bank. Cap's on the Water, Inc., a restaurant in St. Augustine (St. Johns County) is a \$1,122,000 project that will create 30 new jobs. Participating lender is First Federal Bank of North Florida. For info, call Pat Ferm 1-800-385-7888.

New public awareness campaign aims at early prenatal care

Because too many mothers are still starting health care late in their pregnancies, the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition is launching a new public awareness campaign on the importance of early and regular prenatal care to maternal and infant health.

The coalition plans to broaden the message of the Prenatal Passport (a pocket-sized medical record distributed by maternity care providers) campaign now in its second year.

The new campaign will utilize bus ads, billboards, and public service ads. The availability of Medicaid health insurance for pregnant women and other sources of low-cost care in the community will also be highlighted. The coalition is seeking community partners to underwrite the campaign. For info, call Carol Brady (904) 363-6352.

Local TD meetings held

Quarterly meetings of the Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Boards (LCB) were held in August-September.

Putnam and St. Johns approved the annual update to the TD Service Plan. Nassau's reviewed the Community Transportation Coordinator's annual operating report which showed a slight excess in program revenues for the second straight year. Clay discussed fiscal accounting of capital equipment inventories,

while Flagler discussed the on-going Intelligent Transportation System project. Baker's agenda included financial contributions to the program by the County Commission, Macclenny, and Glen St. Mary. Without these funds, many clients would have been denied future transportation services.

For info, call Stephen Jones (904) 363-6375 X115.

Council briefs . . .

• **Hurricanes.** Planner Jeffrey Alexander spoke on the Northeast Florida Hurricane Study to the Duval County Emergency Preparedness Planning Council Aug. 30.

• **Child Health.** The Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition was one of the sponsors of a Public Policy Forum on Children's Health that featured Floirda Kidcare on Sept 24.

• **Ecotourism.** The Northeast Florida Eco/Heritage Tourism Committee, facilitated by the Council, was instrumental in obtaining an article on Northeast Florida ecotourism activities in the August issue of the Delta Airlines magazine.

• **City of Palm Coast.** Palm Coast residents in Flagler County passed incorporation on Sept. 21, making it the 27th municipality in the Council's district. Palm Coast will not officially become a city until Dec. 31.

• **KidCare.** Northeast Florida KidCare will be a primary sponsor of the 6th Annual Hispanic Heritage Folk Festival from noon to 8 p.m. on Oct. 16 at Hemming Plaza in downtown Jacksonville. KidCare will distribute information and applications at the event.

• **In the news.** A new guide by the Northeast Florida *Healthy Start Coalition* that helps doctors and hospitals identify substance abuse in pregnant women and newborns got front page coverage in the Times-Union Metro section. Emergency Planner *Jeffrey Alexander* was interviewed by the Florida Times-Union and all the local television stations during the Hurricane Floyd emergency.



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