



**NORTHEAST FLORIDA REGIONAL COUNCIL**  
**Affordable Housing Committee**

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WORKSHOP SUMMARY

The Northeast Florida Regional Council's Affordable Housing Committee held a hybrid workshop meeting in-person and virtually via Zoom, on Thursday, March 2, 2023, at 12:00 p.m. **Chair Renninger** called the meeting to order with the following members present:

BAKER                      Mr. Griffis  
CLAY                        Mr. Bourre, Commissioner Renninger  
FLAGLER                  Mayor Robinson (Via Zoom)

Excused:                  Commissioner Horvath, Commissioner Anderson, Mr. Hart, Mayor Lynch

Presenter (via Zoom): Mr. Orville Dothage, Sr. Manager, Northrop Grumman Aerospace Systems

Guests (via Zoom):    Elizabeth Deutsch, R. Parker

Staff Present:            Noël P. Comeaux, Matamron Bacon, Robert Jordan

After roll call, it was determined that the quorum was not met; therefore, the meeting is held as a workshop.

Invitation to Speak

**Chair Renninger** welcomed everyone. The invitation to speak was offered; however, no one spoke.

Meeting Summary

Approval of the November Meeting Minutes

Without a quorum, the February Meeting Minutes is deferred to the May meeting.

Presentation: Northrop Grumman Aerospace Systems

**Chair Renninger** invited Mr. Orthage, Senior Manager at Northrop Grumman Aerospace Systems, to deliver his presentation about Northrop Grumman's High School Technician Internship Program. The St. Augustine facility develops the U.S. Navy's E-2 Hawkeye aircraft.

Mr. Comeaux started the presentation, offering context to the committee. He cited the Northeast Florida Regional Council's (NEFRC) 2022 Affordable Housing Strategic Plan, which outlines the need to recognize the crucial role of the workforce and exposure to well-paying jobs to holistically address affordable housing. Mr. Orthage subsequently began his presentation by detailing why Northrop Grumman decided to develop the internship program. He stated that there is a need to develop a pool of experienced, locally trained, airframe technicians in the area to meet the growth of the organization's aviation program. Northrop Grumman has maintained a 20-year relationship

with First Coast Technical College in St. Johns County, creating an airframe manufacturing certification program. Graduates from the program are offered interviews with Grumman that lead to full-time employment opportunities. Still assessing a need for more trained individuals, Northrop Grumman has established a paid internship pilot program with local high school students.

Mr. Orthage explained the structure of the program and the success of the inaugural cohort of students. Recruited students are requested to possess good citizenship and attendance records at their high schools, and successfully pass a drug and background test. Interns receive special permissions to leave school early and work at Northrop Grumman's St. Augustine facility Monday through Thursday. Progression plans are modified based on each intern to ensure completion of the program by the time an intern is eligible for a full-time job offer. Interns undergo 60 hours of pre-facility training where they overview safety measures, electric and manual tool use, blueprint study, sketch interpretation, and other needed skills before starting job-specific functions. Each intern is paired with a mentor.

Seven students are currently enrolled in the internship program; one from the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind in St. Augustine, one Florida Virtual School student, and five from other schools throughout the region. All of the current interns have identified interest in working full-time & long-term for Northrop Grumman upon completion of their internship program. Northrop Grumman offers interns up to \$10,000 in tuition and book reimbursement to continue their education after acceptance of full-time position. The participating interns are training in structure mechanics, final assembly, and the global supply chain process.

Further, to put in further context, Mr. Comeaux concluded the presentation, providing data on Northrop Grumman's wage progression compared to average rent by county in Northeast Florida. The data showed a significant disparity between Northrop Grumman's well-paying jobs and housing rental cost.

**Chair Renninger** put forth that careers in aviation within the region are not well advertised to communities and programs. In contrast, Northrop Grumman's internship is a great way to introduce youth to well-paying career paths in the field. He also invited Mr. Orthage to reach out to Florida State College concerning a partnership with Airframe and Powerplant Program.

**Mayor Robinson** commended Northrop Grumman for its job creation and training within the Region.

Public Comment - None. The next meeting date: May 4, 2023.

The meeting adjourned at 12:45 p.m.