



NORTHEAST FLORIDA REGIONAL COUNCIL
Board of Directors Meeting
November 2, 2023

MINUTES

The Northeast Florida Regional Council Board of Directors, pursuant to Chapter 120.525, F.S., held a hybrid meeting both in-person, at 100 Festival Park Ave., Jacksonville, FL and virtually via Zoom, on Thursday, November 2, 2023, 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: Commissioner Bennett
Mr. Griffis
Mr. Register

CLAY: Commissioner Renninger (**via zoom**)
Mr. Bourre (**via zoom**)
Mr. Kennedy

DUVAL: Councilmember Amaro (**via zoom**)
Councilmember Gay
Mayor Lynch (**via zoom**)

FLAGLER: Commissioner Sullivan
Mayor Alfin

NASSAU: Mr. Drew (**via zoom**)
Commissioner Martin
Vice-Mayor Sturges

PUTNAM: Commissioner Harvey

ST. JOHNS: Commissioner Arnold (**via zoom**)
Commissioner Horvath
Commissioner Whitehurst

EX-OFFICIO: Mr. Dixon *for Mr. Parks*, Florida Department of Transportation
Ms. Craver *for Mr. Strong*, Department of Environmental Protection

Excused: Commissioner Anderson, Commissioner Condon, and Mr. Conkey

Absent: Commissioner Adamczyk, Commissioner Arnold, Mayor Brown, Mr. Hart, and Mayor Robinson

Presenter: **Allison DeFoor**, President/CEO, North Florida Land Trust; **Ramesh Buch**, Director of Conservation and Acquisitions

Guests: Holly Coyle, Blake Nugent, Tim Hanley, Bill White, Chris Blank, and other members of the public

Staff: Eric Anderson, Joseph Cearley, Summer Jones, Tyler Nolen, Elizabeth Payne, 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. Commissioner Harvey moved approval of the consent agenda; seconded by Mr. Register. Motion carried.

OTHER REPORTS/ACTION ITEMS

Presentation: North Florida Land Trust

Mr. Allison DeFoor, CEO & President, and Mr. Ramesh Buch, Director of Conservation Acquisitions at the North Florida Land Trust (NFLT) provide a presentation on their work across Northeast Florida. “The North Florida Land Trust is a non-profit organization committed to protecting and preserving our region’s irreplaceable natural beauty.” The presentation highlighted: the NFLT’s Mission and Vision, the protected lands, which lands to preserve – strategic vision, land conservation tools, military readiness and base buffering, Salt Marsh-Marsh migration areas, community conservation – historically underserved and local referenda, O2O partnership protected lands, Salt Marsh & coastal resilience – Little Tiger Island, O2O – Swan Smiley Preserve, and ACUB – Rayonier Upchurch. Discussion followed.

Commissioner Bennett left the meeting.

*Qualified Vendors List for GIS Technical Services

Mr. Register stated that the Council issued a Request for Qualified Vendors for GIS Technical Services in August. Six responses were received and, from those, the review committee selected five that were qualified. When projects occur, the Council will request quotes and qualifications from the five qualified vendors. He stated that the Personnel, Budget, and Finance Committee reviewed this item and passed the motion to approve contracts with the five qualified vendors and allow staff to request quotes from them as needed for GIS Services.

Mr. Register motioned to approve contracts for the five qualified vendors and allow staff to request quotes from them as needed for GIS Services; seconded by Commissioner Harvey. Motion carried.

*Website Design Services Request for Proposal

Mr. Register stated that the Council issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for website design service. Three responses were received and ranked by the review committee, 1) CTRL + ALT Digital, 2) SGS Technologie, and 3) The Zimmerman Agency. The Personnel, Budget and Finance Committee passed a motion authorizing staff to negotiate with the top two firms, after reviewing

the process of an RFP to ensure this type of negotiation is allowed, for consideration by the Board. A brief discussion followed.

Vice-Mayor Sturges joined the meeting.

Mr. Register motioned to approve authorizing staff to negotiate with the top two firms, SGS Technologie, and CTRL + ALT Digital; seconded by Commissioner Harvey. Motion carried.

*CEO Replacement Vehicle

Mr. Register shared the circumstances involving the CEO's Council vehicle being totaled. Insurance payment was received at 56,000. Considering the process involved in replacing a vehicle on the State contract, which has since been changed and is a considerably lengthy process, The Personnel, Budget, and Finance Committee discussed this and passed a motion authorizing the CEO to seek a replacement vehicle from private dealerships for purchase in an amount not to exceed \$70,000 for Board consideration.

Mr. Register motioned to approve authorizing the CEO to seek a replacement vehicle from private dealerships for purchase in an amount not to exceed \$70,000; seconded by Commissioner Horvath. Motion carried.

*2023 NE Florida Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Annual Report & Resolution

Mr. Shad provided an overview of the 2023 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy's (CEDS) Annual Report and resolution. He shared information on the Economic Development Administration's (EDA) application process and highlighted the activities conducted during 2023, such as, technical assistance with EDA and State grants; projects in support of CEDS goals for affordable housing, and eco-tourism and trails strategy; economic modeling utilizing REMI for Baker, Clay, Duval and Flagler counties as well as projects for JEA and JaxUSA; and economic resiliency, which resulted in grant to hire a post Disaster Recovery Coordinator, and develop connections between emergency management, resiliency and economic development. He stated that, as required by EDA grant, Resolution 2023-06 approves the annual report for transmittal to the US Economic Development Administration.

President Whitehurst called for a motion on the 2023 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Annual Report and Resolution 2023-06. Commissioner Horvath moved approval; seconded by Commissioner Harvey. Motion carried.

Program Spotlight: Local Emergency Planning Committee

Mr. Nolen provided an overview of the Local Emergency Planning Committee for Hazardous Materials activities, which included provision of training for over 350 personnel and exercise opportunities for over 100 first responders in Northeast Florida. The training and exercises included sending 57 individuals to a weeklong Florida Hazardous Materials Symposium, live anhydrous-ammonia training, two 160-hr Hazmat Technician courses for Putnam and Duval Counties, a Battery Emergency Response course for Duval County, and three days of First Arriving Unit Exercise for St. Johns County.

Community Resiliency Update

Ms. Payne provided a progress update on the contract and workplan for the Regional Resilient Entity grant from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Resilient Florida

program, and the Multiregional Planning and Mitigation Assessment project funded by a Community Development Block Grant from Florida Commerce. She also provided an update on the Vulnerability Assessments (VA) around the Region and those being conducted by staff in Baker and Flagler Counties, the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant that staff is working on with the City of Jacksonville, grant applications under consideration, and other ongoing resiliency work. A brief discussion followed.

Attendance Roster

The attendance roster for FY 2022/2023 was provided for the review. Members were asked to provide staff with any corrections identified by mid-November. Following any revisions, this information will be provided to the appointing authorities and the State Appointment Office.

Public Comment – None.

Local and Regional Issues Discussion

President Whitehurst – St. Johns County has hired their Interim County Administrator, Ms. Joy Andrews, for the County Administrator position.

CM Gay – The City of Jacksonville is currently revising their procurement policy. One of the amendments they are working on is regarding local preference and participation and are considering utilizing the NEFRC's footprint. They are considering including the Counties of Northeast Florida as local with the reciprocation of their including the City of Jacksonville as local by them as well.

Commissioner Sullivan – Flagler Beach is about to kick off two year projects that includes the Flagler Beach Pier replacement, the Army Corp 2.5 mile Beach Restoration near City of Flagler Beach, FDOT resurfacing along A1A near those projects, and the Margaritaville Hotel. Due to these projects, the area where A1A and Route 100 join could be closed for two to three months at a time over the two year period.

Mr. Kennedy – The City of Green Cove Springs will host the final food truck event of the season tomorrow evening and the group that opens for Lynyrd Skynyrd will be performing as a part of that final event in recognition of 50 years of Lynyrd Skynyrd to include both performers and song writers over the years also in attendance.

Mayor Alfin – The City of Palm Coast recently launched an initiative to open their comprehensive plan to every resident for input over the next 12 months to update the City on the Rise.

Commissioner Martin – 2024 is the Bicentennial for both Nassau County and the City of Fernandina Beach. The Convention & Visitors Bureau will be organizing the celebration. They are beginning a new 2050 vision process and, expanding the Tourist Development Council countywide with a referendum on the 2024 ballot for residents on the mainland. He is also up for re-election next year.

Commissioner Harvey – Putnam County is the only inland county in Florida with a port, where they build ships. They have been elected into the Florida Ports Council and developed a Port Master Plan to guide the facility. He shared information on work ongoing at the Port, including the ship building process.

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS' REPORTS

Florida Department of Commerce

Mr. Register shared information he gleaned from the CareerSource's Workforce Forum that included information regarding the declining growth rate in the US since 1964. The growth rate during 2010 - 2020 was 7.4 percent compared to during the great depression at 7.3 percent. The cause can be linked to 50 years of declining birthrate in the US; Covid, reduction of legal immigration, a retiring workforce, etc. It is said that by 2034, the older generation will outnumber children in the US. He stated that additional information can be found in two publications online: The Demographic Drought, and Who's going to do the work; published by Lightcast.

Florida Department of Transportation

Mr. Dixon – Nothing to report.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Ms. Craver stated that Salt Marsh Actuaries, DEP's Northeast District staff has been working to facilitate educational training on the value of living shorelines and streamlining the permitting process. They have conducted some training this year on living shorelines for marine contractors and plan to continue these in 2024. She also stated that for any projects involving work on surface water or wetlands, she recommends holding a pre-application meeting with DEP's Northeast District Regulatory staff regarding any required permitting.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

Ms. Payne introduced new staff member, Ms. Summer Jones, the new Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinator. She provided updates on ongoing programs and projects such as 1) the Opioid work in the Region; 2) Upcoming National Park Service – Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance (NPS-RTCA) program. As a result of a letter sent to the NPS seeking their planning service assistance to help us develop the regional initiative. Staff will host a fact finding tour of the Region with the NPS; 3) the Council submitted a Brownfields grant application on sites in Clay and Putnam Counties; 4) the Council will be receiving a grant on behalf of the Air National Guard in Jacksonville and if awarded, will be working with the Defense Support Task Force to help them purchase equipment.

Members were asked to complete the 'top three issues' card at their places. A reminder of the January 4th Luncheon and Awards ceremony following the Board meeting; registration information will be sent via email.

Next Meeting Date: The next meeting will be January 4, 2024.

Meeting Adjourned: 11:52 a.m.



Christian Whitehurst
President



Elizabeth Payne
Chief Executive Officer