



**NORTHEAST FLORIDA REGIONAL COUNCIL**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**  
**November 3, 2022**

---

**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 Avenue, Jacksonville, FL, and virtually via Zoom, on Thursday, November 3, 2022, at 10:02 a.m.

**1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Whitehurst** welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order with the following members present:

**BAKER:** Commissioner Jimmy Anderson (**in person**)  
Commissioner James Bennett (**in person**)

**CLAY:** Commissioner Betsy Condon (**zoom**)  
Mr. Steve Kennedy (**in person**)  
Commissioner Jim Renninger (**in person**)

**DUVAL:** Councilmember Randy DeFoor (**in person**)  
Mayor Sean Lynch (**in person**)  
Councilmember Joyce Morgan(**in person**)

**FLAGLER:** Mayor David Alfin (**in person**)  
Mayor Catherine Robinson (**zoom**)  
Commissioner David Sullivan (**in person**)

**NASSAU:** Mr. John Drew (**in person**)  
Mayor Michael Lednovich (**zoom**)  
Commissioner John Martin (**in person**)

**ST. JOHNS:** Commissioner Sarah Arnold (**in person**)  
Commissioner Roxanne Horvath (**in person**)  
Commissioner Christian Whitehurst (**in person**)

**EX-OFFICIO:** Mr. Doug Conkey (SJRWMD) (**in person**)

**Excused:** Mr. Michael Bourre, Mr. Michael Griffis, Commissioner Larry Harvey, Mr. Donald Holmes, Commissioner Jeff Rawls, Mr. Darryl Register, Mr. Russell Simpson (DEP), and Ms. Karen Taulbee (DOT)

**Absent:** Mayor Elaine Brown, and Mr. Curtis Hart

**Presenter:** Katie Smith, FL Dept. of Broadband (zoom)

**Guest:** Deborah K. Thompson

**Staff:** Kate Haigh, Tyler Nolen, Donna Starling, Elizabeth Payne, Sheron Forde, et al

### WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBER

**1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Whitehurst** welcomed new Board Member, Commissioner Sarah Arnold, St. Johns County.

### INVITATION TO SPEAK

**1<sup>st</sup> Vice 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

**1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Whitehurst** asked if anyone would like to pull any item on the consent agenda for discussion. Hearing none, **he called for a motion on the consent agenda. Commissioner Martin moved approval of the consent agenda; seconded by Mr. Drew. Motion carried.**

### OTHER REPORTS/ACTION ITEMS

*President DeFoor arrived*

#### Broadband Presentation

Ms. Katie Smith, Director, Florida Office of Broadband, provided an overview of the responsibilities of the Office of Broadband, which includes: developing, marketing, and promoting broadband Internet services in the State; Creating a strategic plan to increase the use of broadband Internet services in the State; Reviewing and verifying public input regarding transmission speeds and availability of broadband Internet services throughout the state; Building and facilitating Local Technology Planning Teams (LTPT) or partnerships; Establishing the Broadband Opportunity Program and rulemaking to award grants to applicants seeking to expand broadband to unserved areas; Developing a map of broadband Internet service availability throughout the state. Ms. Smith highlighted the 1) Definition of Broadband; 2) Strategic Plan, which was presented to the Governor, Senate President and Speaker of the House in June of this year; 3) State of Florida's role; 4) How communities can utilize the Plan; 5) Integral partners in the Plan's implementation; 6) Florida's broadband availability map, and speed test that can be accessed at [www.floridajobs.org/broadband](http://www.floridajobs.org/broadband); 7) Broadband opportunity program established in Statute for the installation and deployment of broadband infrastructure expansion. \$400 million was appropriated for the program using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) during the 21/22 Legislative Session. Under the Broadband Opportunity Program, each grant awarded will be capped at \$5 million. Eligibility under this program includes Corporations, limited liability companies, general partnerships, and limited partnerships that are organized under Florida laws or otherwise authorized to transact business in Florida, Political subdivisions, and Indian tribes. The timeline runs from November 2<sup>nd</sup> to December 2<sup>nd</sup> this year.

Ms. Smith also presented information on available grant opportunities such as 1) Capital Projects Fund (CPF), established in the ARPA of 2021 and included in the Governor's FY 22/23 budget. However, all funds (\$366,036,869) must be expended by December 2026. Eligibility for CPF grant funds, must meet all the following criteria: a) invest in capital assets designed to directly enable work, education, and health monitoring; b) designed to address a critical need that resulted from, was made apparent, or exacerbated by the pandemic; and c) designed to address a critical need of the community to be served by it; 2) Broadband, Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Grant Program. This program covers Broadband planning, deployment, mapping, and adoption

activities related primarily to unserved locations; with priority placed on providing last mile infrastructure designed to provide connectivity directly to the end user. All funds for the BEAD program must be expended within four years of the date of award; and 3) Digital Adoption and Use Program, part of the State's Digital Equity Planning Grant Program, was established in 2021 to a) identify barriers to digital adoption and use within the state and create strategies for overcoming them, b) support digital inclusive activities and build capacities for efforts related to the adoption of broadband, and c) mesh activities with BEAD and the 5-year Strategic Plan for BEAD, and the Florida Strategic Plan for Broadband. All funds for the Digital Adoption and Use Program must be expended within 270 days of the date of award. For more information or to discuss a future project, contact the Florida Broadband office at [www.FloridaJobs.org/Broadband](http://www.FloridaJobs.org/Broadband). Discussion followed.

**Commissioner Renninger** stated that several years ago, the FCC had a program called the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund and awarded contracts to two or three providers with a 10-year execution timeframe. However, they recently cancelled the contract with Star Link a few months ago. He inquired if the program was still working and, if so, how is it coordinated with what is being done now? Ms. Smith stated that the program is still going; it is a nationwide program with many census blocks and different service providers that were awarded funding. Many of them are still going through with the program. If there is an ARGARF area that has been awarded, that is not an eligible project area for the Broadband Opportunity Program. However, if an ARGARF area provider has withdrawn, cancelled, or are no longer receiving funding, that is an eligible area for a project.

**Councilmember Morgan** inquired about where to find the Broadband Planning Teams in our area, or do they exist yet? Ms. Smith stated that every county has a Planning Team or at least a Team Lead at the very minimum. She will provide the list of Planning Teams/Team Lead so the Members can identify their team.

#### Regional Domestic Security Task Force Program Support

Mr. Anderson provided an overview of the Council's Regional Domestic Security Task Force (RDSTF) Program Support for Region 3; a total of 13 counties. NEFRC is one of seven RDSTFs in the State of Florida; each co-chaired by a local Sheriff or Police Chief and an FDLE Special Agent in Charge (SAC). The RDSTF includes the disciplines of fire/rescue, emergency management, public health, hospitals, and law enforcement that provides support to local communities. Mr. Anderson shared information on recent activities. One of those activities included the coordination of speakers for an after action review of the 'Route 91 Harvest Music Festival' mass casualty incident in Las Vegas with 278 attendees. The RDSTF partnered with the Center for Domestic Preparedness to provide virtual training classes, i.e., Public Information Officer virtual series – 283 attendees; Cybersecurity virtual tabletop exercise, basic through advanced – 52 registered. Upcoming programming includes a Virtual Speaker Series on Active Assailants, Toolkits, & Response Concepts; Cybersecurity Tabletop Exercises through a partnership with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA); and Emergency Management Institute's 2023 Virtual Tabletop Exercise (VTTX) Program based on varying scenarios within the Region. Mr. Anderson highlighted the RDSTF's long term initiatives for Drones/UAS Training Program, and a regional training/exercise through a three phased approach. Discussion followed.

**Councilmember Morgan** inquired if the upcoming virtual training series could be offered to groups such as the Sheriff's Watch. Mr. Anderson stated that staff could assist in the coordination of training for specific groups.

**Commissioner Anderson** inquired if the RDSTF provides any active shooter training, with local Sheriff's office, for schools. Mr. Anderson stated that while other regions has begun to address this, Region 3 has not. However, he is aware that some counties are working with the schools and their Sheriff's office to provide this training, i.e., Duval. For those who may be interested, staff can provide resources to assist local Sheriff's offices and school districts in making that happen. **Commissioner Anderson** stated that he believes this is something that this Regional Council should look into doing.

**Mr. Conkey** inquired if the virtual trainings would be available online. Mr. Anderson stated that they are not available online; however, he can provide the training schedule so access to the classes is available.

**Commissioner Renninger** commended the Regional Council for their efforts related to the Route 91 Harvest Music Festival mass casualty presentation. He attended the event and has heard nothing but positive comments.

**President DeFoor** inquired if the Route 91 event was recorded. Mr. Anderson stated that the presenters specifically requested that it not be recorded due to the fact that procedures/tactics were discussed. **President DeFoor** requested that whenever events like these can be placed on the Council website, it should be for access at any given time.

#### Program Spotlight: Competitive Florida Grants

Mr. Shad provided an update on the State's Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) Competitive Florida Grants for economic development community planning. The awards range from \$40,000 to \$45,000, which can be most helpful for rural counties; the funding can go directly to Regional Councils who can then assist areas such as unincorporated towns. The current grant period runs from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023. Staff is currently working on two DEO grants: 1) A1A Ocean Islands Trails Scenic Byway, conducting research to align resiliency goals for both Byway and local jurisdictions; and 2) working with the Town of Welaka on visioning for a potential village center. Mr. Shad provided an overview of the prior year's grant projects, which included the City of Palatka Strategic Plan and Baker County's Economic Development Plan. A brief discussion followed.

**President DeFoor** inquired how the process works for counties who are interested to obtain these grants and partnering with the Council. Mr. Shad stated that they can contact the Council and speak with staff who will follow up with them.

#### CQLI Special Committee, Jacksonville

Ms. Payne reminded the Members of how staff became involved with the City of Jacksonville's Special Committee for Critical Quality of Life Issues (CQLI) with three working groups on Homelessness, Access to Healthcare, and Affordable Housing. Council staff assisted in creating the process, attending each of the meetings, and will be preparing the final report.

Mr. Comeaux provided an overview of staff's involvement and shared some of the findings during this process. He stated that within the four months of the CQLI special committee, staff attended more than 30 presentations and conducted approximately 12 interviews with people who were personally affected. He stated that the working groups covered, the current state; best practices; Strengths, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threats (SWOT) analysis; recommendations; and the final report. Mr. Comeaux shared Council staff's preliminary assessment to 1) opportunities, and 2) barriers. Some initial insights from each working group showed overlaps, i.e., a public-private partnership, and access to healthcare. He stated that Councilmember Boylan, Chair of the CQLI, indicated that every recommendation from each working group will be put forward with reference to the overlap of opportunities with overarching recommendations. Next steps include analyzing the intersection of the working groups to determine recommendations that would serve multiple efforts; assist in developing the final recommendations; and coordinating the final report for presentation to City Council.

*Commissioner Horvath arrived during the presentation*

#### Community Resilience Update

Ms. Ilami shared the vision and goals for Resilient First Coast. The Vision and Goals are based on four pillars: Environment, Quality of Life, Infrastructure, and Economic Resilience. She stated that the goals should be seen through the lens of resilience to climate change factors, i.e., sea level rise, storms, extreme heat, etc., which the Collaborative will be working to achieve. She stated that the full Collaborative will meet on December 6, 2022 and will discuss working groups/committees that will be working on various aspects.

Ms. Ilami provided an overview of the Environmental Symposium, a joint effort of the City of Jacksonville's Environmental Protection Board and the University of North Florida held on October 14<sup>th</sup>. Council staff participated in the Green Infrastructure Session, the Regional Resilience and Water Planning Session, and had an exhibitor table. Ms. Ilami informed the Members of the State of the River report that was presented at this event and provided a brief overview of some of the findings that affect resiliency, such as wetlands and submerged aquatic vegetation.

Ms. Ilami shared information related to the North Florida Resiliency Plan for the Health and Medical Lifeline. This project focuses on improving healthcare infrastructure resilience for a broad range of healthcare facilities and organization to improve their ability to function in the face of climate change and extreme weather events. Staff is currently completing Element two – in which map series have been developed for: healthcare facilities in the Region, 100 and 500 year flood; sea level rise with various scenarios; and storm surge with various scenarios. Staff will then complete a climate exposure analysis on healthcare facilities using data and mapping gathered from Element one.

Ms. Ilami shared information on staff's ongoing activities including the CDBG Mitigation Multi-Regional Planning & Mitigation Assessment Grant; the FDEP Regional Resilience Entity Grant; and encouraging local governments to apply for the FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Grant. Discussion followed.

### North Atlantic Right Whale Vessel Speed Regulations

Barb Zoodsma, Southeast U.S Large Whale Conservation Program Coordinator, NOAA Fisheries, provided a presentation entitled, “Proposed Amendments to the North Atlantic Right Whale Vessel Rule: Southeast U.S. Focus.” Ms. Zoodsma provided background information about the Right Whale, its mortality, which is declining; its habitat in U.S. waters; and its vulnerability to vessel strikes. Some of the known areas for vessel strikes are in the States of Georgia and Florida. She shared information on the current vessel speed rule in Seasonal Management Areas and Dynamic Management Areas/Slow Zones. She stated that NOAA Fisheries have proposed amendments to the North Atlantic Right Whale Vessel Speed Rule to provide a substantial reduction in lethal vessel strike risk to right whales. An overview of these proposed amendments was provided as well as a Safety Deviation Provision and Enforcement. Ms. Zoodsma stated that following the comment period, which just closed, NOAA will look to finalize the changes to the mandatory speed rule as soon as possible. Discussion followed.

**President DeFoor**, before leaving the meeting, stated that she believes the current proposed rule is an overreach on the part of NOAA and believes there are better ways to solve the issue.

Commissioner Whitehurst led the meeting following the departure of President DeFoor.

**Commissioner Bennett** agrees with President DeFoor’s comments. As the Chief Operating Officer for the Jacksonville Port Authority, they are very concerned about the implications the new rule will impact. They understand the need for the protections and support those efforts. However, large vessels that are traversing into the river, sometimes speeds to exceed 10 knots. This decision is made by a river pilot who boards those vessels to safely navigate into the channel. The current proposed rule adds additional implications and decision makings that could jeopardize quick decisions that have to be made to safely navigate those vessels. Currently the pilots have the authority to exceed the 10 knot restriction in order to safely navigate the channel to bring the vessel in. The proposed rule would take this away from the pilot and partners it with a tremendous amount of documentation and logs that must be completed and approved at a critical time when decisions have to be made on the fly in order to safely bring those vessels in. Additionally, the new rule would be extended to all vessels below 65ft. The pilots of those vessels should have the authority and continue to be able to safely navigate vessels; it is what keeps vessels safe and what continues to keep commerce moving in and out of this region. He urged the Regional Council to be cautious on support of the proposed changes to this legislation.

Further discussion ensued.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

### MEMBERS’ REPORT / LOCAL & REGIONAL ISSUES DISCUSSION

**Commissioner Sullivan** informed the Board that the pier in Flagler Beach has been closed and will be replaced over a 3-year period.

**Mayor Alfin** stated that the City of Palm Coast has recently adopted the USS Gerald R. Ford Aircraft carrier as a Sister City.



## EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS' REPORTS

### St. Johns River Water Management District

**Mr. Conkey** stated that with the upcoming time change, lawn watering will be one day per week. He also stated the cost sharing window opens on December 1, 2022 and closes January 31, 2023.

### CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

Ms. Payne informed the Members of a scrivener's error on the 2022-2027 CEDS Resolution that was passed by the Board at the October meeting. With President DeFoor's approval, the error was corrected to indicate the document was a 're-write' and not an update.

The Regional Council received a National Association of Development Organizations Impact Award for the 2022 Overdose Summit conducted earlier this year.

The A1A Scenic Byway will be hosting their annual 'Super Scenic Yard Sale' on November 18<sup>th</sup>.

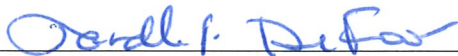
Members were asked to save the date for the upcoming Elected Officials Luncheon and Awards Ceremony taking place immediately following the Board meeting in January. The Executive Committee will determine the winners at its December meeting.

During the Regional Evacuation Study completed last year, the decision was made to move away from landline calls to inquire how people would evacuate and to the procurement of cell phone based data that shows how people evacuate in real time. This data is currently being used and analyzed by the Department of Emergency Management following Hurricane Ian.

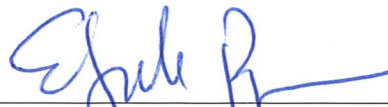
### Next Meeting Date:

The next meeting will be January 5, 2023.

Meeting Adjourned: 12:12 p.m.



Randle P. DeFoor  
President



Elizabeth Payne  
Chief Executive Officer