



**NORTHEAST FLORIDA REGIONAL COUNCIL**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**  
**March 7, 2024**

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**MINUTES**

The Northeast Florida Regional Council Board of Directors, pursuant to Chapter 120.525, F.S., held a hybrid meeting at 100 Festival Park Ave., Jacksonville, FL and virtually via Zoom, on Thursday, March 7, 2024, 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 Anderson  
Mr. Griffis  
Mr. Register

**CLAY:** Mr. Bourre (virtual)  
Mr. Kennedy  
Commissioner Condon  
Commissioner Renninger

**DUVAL:** Councilman Amaro  
Councilman Gay  
Mayor Lynch (virtual)

**FLAGLER:** Mayor Alfin  
Commissioner Dance (virtual)  
Commissioner Sullivan (virtual)

**NASSAU:** Commissioner Martin  
Vice-Mayor Sturges

**PUTNAM:** Commissioner Adamczyk (virtual)

**ST. JOHNS:** Commissioner Alaimo  
Commissioner Horvath  
Commissioner Whitehurst

**EX-OFFICIO:** Mr. Conkey, St. Johns River Water Management District  
Mr. Dixon, Florida Department of Transportation (virtual)

**Excused:** Commissioner Bennett, Mr. Drew, and Commissioner Harvey

**Absent:** Mayor Brown, Mr. Hart, Mr. Strong

**Presenters:** **Lt. Shawn Hall**, City of Jacksonville Fire & Rescue Dept.

Guests: Mr. Matthew Dews (Senator Rubio's Ofc), Catherine Hannan (FWC), Holly Coyle, and other members of the public.

Staff: Eric Anderson, Fara Ilami, Elizabeth Payne, Jack Shad, Donna Starling, Cassidy Taylor, 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. The public will be recognized during public comment.

#### \*CONSENT AGENDA

**President Whitehurst called for a motion on the consent agenda. Mr. Register moved approval of the consent agenda; seconded by Commissioner Renninger. Motion carried.**

#### OTHER REPORTS/ACTION ITEMS

##### Presentation: Chemical Attack on a Special Event Exercise

Lt. Shawn Hall, City of Jacksonville Fire & Rescue Dept., stated that the City has partnered with the NEFRC and the Department of Homeland Security to provide training exercises in preparation for any possibilities of chemical attacks on special events. He provided a brief overview of a two-part terrorism exercise that is being implemented in Northeast Florida. The exercise series addresses intelligence and information-sharing practices and capabilities in advance of a chemical attack on a special event, followed by a coordinated response and recovery from such an attack. Federal, State, and local partners have been invited to attend and participate in the exercise. He stated that the goal is to expand this exercise offering in other communities to assist with planning considerations for special events located across the Region and eventually the State.

##### Presentation: Regional Community Institute (RCI) Update: Heirs' Property

Ms. Moehring, RCI Executive Director, introduced Ms. Deborah Thompson, Member of the Regional Community Institute; and Mr. Kristopher Smith of LISC Jacksonville who has partnered with the RCI on the heirs' property policy work. Ms. Thompson shared the RCI activities undertaken to date to address the issue of heirs' property. Mr. Smith provided an overview of the heirs' property issue and resources to help constituents navigate the process required in order to retain inherited properties. Ms. Moehring stated that the RCI Board's next meeting is March 25<sup>th</sup>, which may be their final meeting on this policy issue and will share relevant information related to this issue with the NEFRC Board. Additionally, LISC Jacksonville has provided a link to their heirs' property toolkit that will be made available to the Members following the meeting.

##### Community Resiliency Update

Ms. Ilami provided an update on the Council's Resiliency program activities. She highlighted the recent progress on the Regional Resiliency Action Plan and other components of the Regional Resiliency Entity grant, progress on local government Vulnerability Assessments being conducted by the NEFRC, and developments on the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant project being

collaborated on with the City of Jacksonville that includes options for multiple Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) to collaborate on a larger Implementation Grant application.

#### Program Spotlight: City of Palatka Vision Plan

Mr. Shad and Ms. Taylor provided an update on the City of Palatka's Vision Plan. NEFRC was contracted to develop a vision plan to define the community's preferences and desires for the next 20 years. The vision plan will help the City develop the goals, objectives, and policies to update their comprehensive plan. Staff highlighted the tools utilized to engage the community, such as workshops, community discussions, surveys, special events, etc. A draft plan will be presented to the City's Planning Board and the final plan will be approved by the City Commission at the end of the process. Discussion followed.

#### Regional Leadership Academy (RLA): Baker & Putnam Counties

Mr. Nolen provided an overview of the Council's RLA program to date. In January, the group visited Baker County and toured a small business as well as Heritage Park, and heard presentations from Florida Power & Light and the Baker County Chamber. In February, the group visited Putnam County and toured downtown Palatka, and heard a presentation from a local business, Azalea City Brewing Company. The group also visited the Ravine Gardens State Park. The next session will take place in Flagler County. Mr. Nolen stated that this year's class includes two Jacksonville University students. Brief discussion followed.

Public Comment – None.

#### Local and Regional Issues Discussion

**Clay:** **Commissioner Renninger** – Clay County Fair begins in April.

**Mr. Kennedy** – The City of Green Cove Springs recently kicked off the Walnut Street redevelopment project from one block west of SR 17 to the river for improvements in that area.

**Duval:** **Councilman Gay** – District 2, a lot of development happening in north Jacksonville, which includes a huge facility being built there by DHL.

**Flagler:** **Mayor Alfin** – The City of Palm Coast is awaiting the end of the Legislative Session for assistance in their western expansion.

**Commissioner Sullivan** – The Homestead Exemption increase of \$25,000 was just passed in the Legislature and is headed to the Governor for signature. The County is part of Bike week, and they are expecting three to four thousand people in the area.

**Nassau:** **Commissioner Martin** – Nassau County is currently doing their Vision 2050 plan. They are celebrating their bicentennial year. The County recently started their own non-profit called Imagine Nassau, which allows the County to take private contributions. He added that the Shrimp Festival is the first weekend in May.

**St. Johns:** **President Whitehurst** – the Players Championship is coming up and everyone is invited.

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS' REPORTS

Florida Department of Commerce

**Mr. Register** shared information from a recent edition of Site Selection Magazine that ranks areas of the country based on the number of successful economic development project announcements. In 2023, Chicago was ranked #1 for the 11<sup>th</sup> year in a row. No area in Florida made the top ten. However, when they broke down the country into five regions, with Florida in the South Atlantic Region; Atlanta was #1, Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach was #3, Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater was #5, and Jacksonville was #9 with 34 project announcements.

Florida Department of Transportation

**Mr. Dixon** – Nothing to report.

St. Johns River Water Management District

**Mr. Conkey** has observed recent issues with residential resiliency improvements involving water around the Region and encourages local governments to inform their constituents seeking these improvements to obtain permits. He also stated that April is Water Conservation Month and thanked local governments for their support with proclamations. He reminded Members that on March 10th the clocks move forward one hour, and residents can water their lawns twice a week.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

Ms. Payne informed the Members on Council activities involving, 1) a new Community Development Manager has been hired and will begin on March 18th, 2) the Council's planning staff is doing a lot of planning work for some of our local communities, i.e., visioning exercises and comprehensive plan updates for Putnam County and some of our smaller municipalities like the Town of Callahan and City of Flagler Beach, 3) staff is preparing for hurricane season and our annual exercises, 4) received notification that the Healthcare Coalition contract is being renewed for another five years, 5) recently participated in the Nassau County Opioid Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threat analysis meeting.

The Executive Committee will meet in April and the full Board will meet in May. Staff is still working with Mayor Alfin on getting Speaker Renner to one of our meetings, which may require a change in meeting location in either May or June.

Next Meeting Date: The next meeting will be May 2, 2024.

Meeting Adjourned: 11:50 a.m.



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Christian Whitehurst  
President



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Elizabeth Payne  
Chief Executive Officer