



**NORTHEAST FLORIDA REGIONAL COUNCIL**  
**Executive Committee Meeting**  
**August 3, 2023**

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MINUTES

The Northeast Florida Regional Council's Executive Committee, pursuant to Chapter 120.525, F.S., held a hybrid meeting both in-person and virtually via Zoom, on Thursday, August 3, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.

**President Whitehurst** called the meeting to order with the following members present, representing a quorum:

BAKER        Mr. Register (zoom)  
CLAY         Commissioner Condon (In Person)  
               Commissioner Renninger (In Person)  
NASSAU      Commissioner Martin (In Person)  
FLAGLER     Commissioner Sullivan (In Person)  
PUTNAM      Commissioner Harvey (zoom)  
ST. JOHNS   Commissioner Whitehurst (In Person)  
Also Present Mr. Conkey, SJRWMD (In Person)

Staff Present: Elizabeth Payne, Donna Starling, Eric Anderson, Tyler Nolen, Sheron Forde, et al.

INVITATION TO SPEAK

**President Whitehurst** stated that members of the public are welcome to speak on any item before the Board.

\*CONSENT AGENDA

**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 Harvey motioned to approve the consent agenda; seconded by Commissioner Sullivan. Motion carried.**

OTHER REPORTS/ACTION ITEMS

\*May 2023 Financial Report

Ms. Starling provided the financial report for the month of May 2023 reflecting a net loss of \$21,726 and a year-to-date net income of \$60,665. She stated that the loss is attributed to having three payrolls in May, the quarterly Florida Regional Council Association (FRCA) dues, tuition reimbursement and annual software costs.

**President Whitehurst called for a motion on the May 2023 Financial Report. Commissioner Harvey moved approval of the May 2023 Financial Report; seconded by Commissioner Condon. Motion carried.**

#### \*June 2023 Financial Report

Ms. Starling provided the financial report for the month of June 2023 reflecting a net income of \$14,379 and a year-to-date net income of \$75,043.

**President Whitehurst called for a motion on the June 2023 Financial Report. Mr. Register moved approval of the June 2023 Financial Report; seconded by Commissioner Renninger. Motion carried.**

#### \*FY 2022-23 Return On Investment (ROI) Summaries & Talking Points

Ms. Payne provided an overview of the Regional Council's Return on Investment for each County and the Region as a whole. Also highlighted are projects completed for each County. The ROI's reflects 3-years ROI, with the exception of Clay County. This information will be shared with each County Board of County Commission Chairs and as many of the City of Jacksonville's City Council as possible. Discussion followed.

Ms. Payne shared that the two new City of Jacksonville appointments to the Board are Councilmen Joe Carlucci and Mike Gay, with Councilman Carlucci also serving as the Chair of the Duval County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board. She stated that the Personnel, Budget & Finance Committee will address filling the second vice president position at their September meeting.

Ms. Payne directed the Members' attention to the speaking points that are provided to assist them when speaking with others about the work of the Regional Council. A digital copy will be provided to the Members.

**President Whitehurst called for a motion on the Return On Investment. Commissioner Condon moved approval of the Return On Investment; seconded by Commissioner Renninger. Motion carried.**

#### Ecotourism Update

Mr. Anderson provided an overview of the activities of the Ecotourism & Trails Steering Committee and highlighted a District 2 Florida Department of Transportation presentation on SUN Trail and Florida Wildlife Corridor. He also highlighted the Committee's project schedule and upcoming opportunities with the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program. This program is designed to assist locally led projects by combining the skills of their staff with those of local organizations over a couple of years. Following meetings with hurricane impacted communities, it was determined that two separate requests for assistance would be submitted: 1) a letter was developed requesting assistance for hurricane impacted communities (Flagler, Putnam, and St. Johns Counties), and 2) support for a regional trails and ecotourism initiatives that included technical support for GIS and storyboards, collaboration services, identifying funding strategies, and designing community outreach & participating strategies. Next steps: submit a request letter to the National Parks Service, develop the regional initiative request letter, and await a response. While we hope for an approval, we will return to our current work plan if not approved. Discussion followed.

#### 2024 Legislative Priorities' Tentative Schedule

Ms. Payne stated that with the 2024 Legislative Session beginning in January, a request for

priorities was sent out and are due in mid-September. She thanked Commissioner Harvey for his willingness to Chair the Legislative Policy Committee this year. The Members for the Committee were provided, other members are welcome to attend the meetings if interested. Ms. Payne reminded the Members that the Regional Council does not advocate or lobby on any specific issues; these are requested from our local governments, including municipalities, and reviewed for the most impact to our local communities to develop the Northeast Regional Legislative Priorities. The tentative schedule for the Committee meetings was provided. It is expected that the final priorities will be presented to the Board in October for approval. Discussion followed.

#### CEO Evaluation / Contract Review

Mr. Register provided an overview of the extremely positive CEO evaluation results and stated that Ms. Payne has far exceeded expectations and has continued to carry the Council upward and onward. He noted that Ms. Payne's self-evaluation was lower than others, but believes it is a sign of a good leader in recognizing there is room for improvement. A brief discussion followed.

Mr. Register stated that Ms. Payne's current three-year contract ends September 30<sup>th</sup>; therefore, a new contract needs to be discussed, and any increase to be included. He stated that, based on precedence, the President should negotiate the new contract and any increase with Ms. Payne. This could be brought to the Personnel, Budget & Finance Policy Committee in September for review and recommendation to the Board so that Ms. Payne can start October with a new contract.

**Mr. Register motioned for President Whitehurst to negotiate a new three-year contract and any increase with Ms. Payne for consideration at the September Personnel, Budget & Finance Policy Committee meeting; seconded by Commissioner Condon.** Discussion followed.

Ms. Payne shared the contents of her current contract for the Members information.

During discussion, it was recommended that the average salary of the other Regional Councils Director be provided to use in negotiating the salary.

**President Whitehurst stated there is a motion on the floor, and called for a voice vote. Motion carried.**

#### Public Comment

None.

#### Local and Regional Discussions

**Water Management District** – Mr. Conkey stated that Blue School grants have increased to \$60,000. This is an opportunity for teachers to teach about the WMD's four core areas, i.e., ecosystems and environmental science. Information on these grants will be provided to the schools.

**Clay County – Commissioner Condon** stated that the County is beginning to deal with the Live Local Act and believes there may be some unintended consequences of this Act; one of which includes fire rescue. She is interested to see how other counties are going to deal with these types of issues. Discussion followed.

CEO Report

Ms. Payne reiterated the upcoming Live Local webinar; the newly appointed City of Jacksonville representatives; and the Personnel, Budget & Finance Committee addressing the 2<sup>nd</sup> vice president position. She also provided an update on Council grants and contract renewals, in addition to a new contract with the Jacksonville Transportation Authority for a hurricane preparedness exercise. Se reminded the Members that the budget was adopted with a deficit of approximately \$100,000+. With the recent award of a Department of Environmental Protection regional resilience entity grant in the amount of \$275,000, the budget is made whole, with four or five other grants applied for. Additionally, the Council is working with Flagler County, who were allocated an additional \$200,000 in funding from DEP for resiliency.

Ms. Payne informed the Members staff has received the Pediatric restraints and will be distributing them, in our region and the remaining 18 counties served by the Healthcare Coalition, over the next few weeks.

Ms. Payne shared information on the Council staffing; Ms. Sonya Abu-Sharar, Communications Specialist, and Ms. Cassidy Taylor, Post Disaster Recovery Coordinator. Unfortunately, the Council's Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinator is moving on for another opportunity. She shared that Mr. Bacon has done more with the program than has been done in some time and he will be greatly missed, but we wish him well. We will be looking to fill this position in the meantime, as well as an additional Resiliency Planner.

Ms. Payne shared activities surrounding the accommodation for the expansion and growth of the Council and its staff.

Next Meeting Date

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 1, 2023.

Adjournment

**President Whitehurst** adjourned the meeting at 11:48 a.m.



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Christian Whitehurst  
President



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Elizabeth Payne  
Chief Executive Officer