

TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

To: Council Members AGENDA ITEM 10
From: Staff
Date: April 17, 2015 Council Meeting
Subject: National Estuaries Program Invitation to Negotiate

Introduction

The newly formed Indian River Lagoon National Estuaries Program (IRLNEP) Board of Directors recently agreed to conduct a formal Invitation to Negotiate (ITN) process to procure office space and perhaps certain levels of administrative and logistical support for IRLNEP operations. Instructions and format for ITN applications should be available by late April or early May 2015. A selection committee has been established by the IRLNEP to review the applications and make recommendations to its Board of Directors. Council offices have been identified as a potential location for housing the IRLNEP.

Background

Congress established the National Estuary Program (NEP) in 1987 to protect and restore the water quality and ecological integrity of estuaries of national significance. Nationally there are 28 estuaries in 18 coastal states and Puerto Rico covered under the program. Stretching along more than 40 percent of Florida's east coast, the Indian River Lagoon is 156 miles long extending from the Ponce Inlet in Volusia County to the Jupiter Inlet in northern Palm Beach County.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) administers the NEP. Decisions are made locally, and each NEP is composed of representatives from federal, state and local government agencies, local residents, business leaders, educators and researchers.

Overview

The IRLNEP was established in 1990 and has operated with the guidance of an Advisory Board. In February 2015, the Advisory Board approved the formation of a new regional council to sponsor and carry out the goals of the IRLNEP. The new leadership anticipates more money for lagoon research and restoration projects than in the past. By October 15, 2015, the Council will have at least \$2 million from member entities.

The IRLNEP Council includes representatives of four counties bordering the lagoon, which are Brevard, Volusia, St. Lucie and Martin counties; the St. Johns River and South Florida water management districts; and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). EPA provides guidance to both the existing Advisory Board and the new Council during this transitional phase. All seven Council members have signed an interlocal agreement outlining their managerial and financial responsibilities.

During the spring and summer of 2015, the IRLNEP Council will meet to address various interim administrative tasks needed to establish and operate the organization. One of these tasks is to secure office space and other administrative support functions for the IRLNEP staff. The transition is expected to be completed by October 1, 2015.

Analysis

Council currently has sufficient office and ancillary space to house IRLNEP staff. Establishing an independent NEP within existing Council offices offers some mutual operational and professional advantages, along with some cost-saving opportunities for the IRLNEP, which include:

- utilization of existing office space, meeting rooms, administrative and accounting staff as well as other back office operations;
- daily interaction with a highly professional staff with diverse expertise;
- capitalization on Council's grant writing and management skills (over \$50 million in EDA, EPA and other grants received over the last 10 years);
- utilization of Council's Preferred Sustainability Status with federal funding agencies;
- amplified connection with local and state government entities, the private sector and citizen constituents – increased opportunities for local government and private sector participation and support;
- operations housed within an existing 163.01 Interlocal Agreement organization;
- utilization of Council's 501(c)3 status;
- Council's region includes four of the six counties that border the Lagoon; and
- there is a certain cachet to being affiliated with Council, which is consistently recognized as one of the best in Florida, and likewise for Council with the NEP, which is recognized as highly successful by EPA.

Conclusion

The housing of IRLNEP staff within Council offices could be mutually beneficial to both organizations. Council should allow staff to prepare a response to the ITN request for Council's review and approval.

Recommendation

Council should authorize staff to: 1) prepare a response to the Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program Invitation to Negotiate request; and 2) upon approval by the full Council, transmit the Invitation to Negotiate response to the Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program Board.

Attachment

INDIAN RIVER LAGOON NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

BOARD MEMBERS

- Martin County Commissioner Ed Fielding (Chair)
- Brevard County Commissioner Curt Smith (Vice Chair)
- St. Lucie County Commissioner Chris Dzadoovsky (Secretary)
- Volusia County Councilman Doug Daniels
- DEP Deputy Secretary Drew Bartlett
- St. Johns District Governing Board member Doug Bournique
- South Florida District Governing Board member Kevin Powers