

**MINUTES OF THE  
TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL  
APRIL 21, 2017**

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting. He led the pledge of allegiance and requested roll call.

The following members and alternates were present:

Indian River County:	Commissioner O'Bryan Commissioner Adams Councilman Dodd
Martin County:	Commissioner Smith Commissioner Fielding Mayor Campo
St. Lucie County:	Commissioner Mowery Commissioner Townsend Councilman Carvelli Commissioner Johnson
Palm Beach County:	Commissioner Hal Valeche Mayor Burdick Councilman Hmara Commissioner Ryan, Alternate Mayor Marino, Alternate
Gubernatorial Appointees:	Michael Houston Michael Davis Reece Parrish Steven M. Weaver, Sr.
Ex-Officios:	Kathy LaMartina, SFWMD Jennifer Davis, FDEP Vicki Gatanis, SFRTA Lisa Dykstra, FDOT
Council Staff:	Michael Busha Kim DeLaney Liz Gulick Stephanie Heidt Tom Lanahan Dana Little
Council Attorney:	Keith Davis

The Executive Director announced a quorum is present.

## **AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA**

Commissioner Mowery moved approval of the Agenda and Consent Agenda. Councilmember Davis seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. **Motion**

Items on the consent agenda were: 3A, Financial Report – February 28, 2017; 3B, Minutes – March 17, 2017; 3C, Indian River County Comprehensive Plan Amendment No. 17-1ESR; 3D, Town of Jupiter Island Comprehensive Plan Amendment No. 17-1ESR; 3E, Supplement No. 1 to Florida Department of Transportation Joint Participation Agreement; and 3F, Intergovernmental Coordination and Review Log.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Staff indicated there would be a meeting of the Budget and Personnel Committee immediately following the Council meeting.

Staff announced Tom Lanahan is now Council's Deputy Executive Director.

Staff noted there will be a Florida Regional Councils Association Policy Board meeting held in conjunction with the Florida Association of Counties meeting at the Palm Beach Convention Center on June 30<sup>th</sup>.

Staff noted Chairman Smith and the executive director will be meeting with the chairman and executive director of the South Florida Regional Planning Council (SFRPC) and attending their Council meeting on April 24<sup>th</sup>. The coral reef initiative will be on that meeting agenda and Chairman Smith would like to provide our support and collaborate with SFRPC on this issue.

## **CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS**

Chairman Smith introduced Kelley Burke, Administrative Assistant to Commissioner McKinlay of Palm Beach County. Ms. Burke read into the record a letter provided by Commissioner McKinlay on the following agenda items: Item 9, Resolution Addressing the Locally Preferred Option for the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project; Item 11, US Highway 27 Multi-Modal Corridor Project Update; and Item 12, Opioid Epidemic Project Update – Data and Mapping for the Treasure Coast Region. The letter has been provided as an attachment to these minutes.

## **COUNCIL MEMBER UPDATE**

Councilman Carvelli with the City of Port St. Lucie stated the city is working on a lot of projects. He noted the city is in the process of approving a Riverwalk project right off Port St. Lucie and Westmoreland Boulevards on the river. The project will consist of an amphitheater, outdoor restaurant, and botanical gardens.

Mayor Marino with the City of Palm Beach Gardens stated the city is currently working with the county on development of a district park that will offer more soccer and recreational opportunities.

Commissioner Valeche with Palm Beach County stated with respect to the opioid epidemic Palm Beach County has clearly been impacted more than the other counties in the region, but believes it will extend into the northern counties. He noted an article in the paper that morning reported there has been a huge increase in overdoses and it is rumored there is a bad batch of drugs currently on the street. He stated at a recent workshop it was noted the dealers are cutting their heroin with carfentanyl, which is an elephant tranquilizer. He stated he cannot believe the Governor will not declare this as a state of emergency. He noted the county had a very successful spring training season with the new ballpark and continued baseball activities at Roger Dean Stadium.

Commissioner O'Bryan with Indian River County stated a week ago an Indian River County resident called in that a boat was dumping chemicals in the Indian River Lagoon. The City of Vero Beach Police Department responded with a SWAT team and with the assistance of the Indian River County Sheriff's Marine Patrol and Coast Guard, they were able to chase that boat out of Indian River County and into St. Lucie County. He stated they ended up chasing the boat down the shipping channel at Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute where the boat was boarded, and a terrorist suspect was shot. Unfortunately, there was an explosion on the boat which resulted in a release of toxic chemicals into the air. At that time, St. Lucie County Emergency Services Hazardous Materials (HazMat) unit was already responding to another explosion at the Tradition Water Plant and Indian River County Emergency Services HazMat was also tied up and so they called over to the National Guard in Tampa for their HazMat team to respond to the incident. He stated they arrived via Black Hawk helicopter which touched down at Harbor Branch, donned their suits, boarded the boat and took care of the hazardous materials. He indicated it is fortunate no lives were lost other than the terrorist and all agencies responded well to avoid a potential disaster with mass casualty.

Mayor Burdick with Palm Beach County stated it is nice when the emergency medical services departments work collaboratively not only locally, but regionally as well. Commissioner O'Bryan indicated that was the point of the exercise. They wanted to make sure there is coordination vertical as well as horizontal. Councilmember Houston, Gubernatorial Appointee from Martin County, asked if this was real or an exercise. Commissioner O'Bryan stated it was an exercise coordinated through Council that involved simultaneous terrorist incidents at the Tradition Water Plant in Port St. Lucie, Witham Airport in Stuart, and Harbor Branch. The exercise was designed for all these events to happen simultaneously in order to tax all the local resources so they would need to go to the state and federal levels and integrate the entire response. Commissioner O'Bryan stated he would recommend that if there is an incident such as this, they do not put all the SWAT officers into one small boat, because this makes for a very easy target for the terrorists.

Councilmember Houston stated he will try to have a report in May regarding pesticide and fertilizer applications that are being excessively applied and is detrimental to our environment. He indicated there are discussions among researchers to create an organic solution to the fertilizer.

Mayor Burdick stated National Association of Counties and the National League of Cities have put together a lot of very useful information with respect to the heroin and opioid epidemic. She noted President Trump recently hosted the presidents of China and Guatemala in Palm Beach County, which provided an opportunity for local, state and federal agencies to work collaboratively. She thanked all the neighboring counties for their assistance.

Commissioner Ryan with the City of West Palm Beach stated the Okeechobee Boulevard corridor is inundated with development opportunities and the city is being proactive in planning and looking at their downtown master plan, which is a living document. She stated they plan to get public and professional input on such issues as technology and infrastructure in order to ensure they are not negatively impacting the region.

Commissioner Adams with Indian River County stated the annual Jackie Robison game held at Dodgertown the previous weekend was heavily attended and it is nice to see baseball back at Dodgertown.

Commissioner Mowery with St. Lucie County stated the county is getting ready to start a \$60 million expansion of their baseball facility. He stated the plan is to improve the existing stadium as well as add dormitories and other facilities. He indicated the state contribution for the county's Veterans nursing home has been received from the federal government and should pass through the budget process. He noted the county needs an additional \$20 million from the state to bring the entire project together. The nursing home will provide services to Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River, and Okeechobee counties and be located in Tradition, which is located near mile marker 118 off I-95. Commissioner Mowery stated they have also just received word both state and federal funding has come together for a 33,000 square foot maintenance rehabilitation hangar for the county's airport, which will add to the 12 hangars already in operation at the airport. He indicated the three international airports in Miami, Fort Lauderdale and Palm Beach could all be placed into the footprint of the St. Lucie County Airport property. Commissioner Mowery stated the county is working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture on an incubator kitchen project at the county's research park in Fort Pierce. This project will provide a fully licensed kitchen and tools for those wanting to start a business as well as assistance for food product development, processing, packaging, and marketing for current businesses. He noted Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson, who is a county employee as well as a city commissioner in Fort Pierce, is heading this project. With respect to the opioid issue, he noted he has been working with Commissioner McKinlay to address this epidemic that he noted is getting attention now from the White House, which is working on a rural caucus to tackle the issue.

Councilman Hmara with the Village of Royal Palm Beach stated they have just completed the 6<sup>th</sup> annual update of the village's strategic plan. He noted the plan has been evolving from a conceptual plan to one that is more specific and addresses actual expenditures. He stated their goal as an older, family-oriented community is to stay relevant in the midst of all the explosive development in western Palm Beach County.

Councilmember Weaver, Gubernatorial Appointee for St. Lucie County, stated the investment of \$10-15 million made by the City of Fort Pierce is beginning to pay off as indicated by increasing home values for both waterfront and non-waterfront properties.

Kathy LaMartina with the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) indicates they are refurbishing their coastal structures in Martin and St. Lucie counties. She noted the Indian River Lagoon Council recently issued a Request for Proposal for projects related to the lagoon. The projects will be under the categories of citizen engagement and education; restoration; resilient coastal communities planning; and science and innovative technologies. She indicated the applications are due May 19<sup>th</sup>. Council staff noted the Indian River Lagoon Annual report had been provided to all Councilmembers.

Mayor Campo with the Town of Sewall's Point indicated they are seeking funds from Tallahassee for septic to sewer conversions. He indicated that because the town is surrounded on three sides by water, they would like to have the ability for the citizens to hook-up to a centralized sewer system. He thanked Chairman Smith for providing county resources to put together a master plan.

Ms. LaMartina announced the SFWMD will have 4 to 6 internships available this summer.

Vicki Gatanis with the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority noted she has been working with Council staff to develop a transit-oriented design policy and a companion outreach strategy and that it will go to her board next Friday for approval. She stated they are concentrating on both the CSX and FEC corridors, and we will be meeting with local governments over the next 12-18 months.

Chairman Smith thanked everyone involved with the baseball phenomenon that has come to our region. He noted the impact to tourism this attracts is evident throughout the entire region. He indicated the county had a Coral Reef Task Force meeting that included a presentation by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration that has done a basin study on how increased phosphorus and nitrogen are impacting our inlets. He indicated the Martin/St. Lucie Basin is the largest going down to Miami, and has become a large contributor to the phosphorous and nitrogen that travels to the estuary and eventually out into the ocean impacting the coral reefs.

Chairman Smith stated we need to start becoming more knowledgeable, working together as a region, on the topic of sludge disposal and manure disposal. He indicated there is some new technology coming forward on how to deal with the sludge in terms of how to refine it and make it less-nutrient loaded. Mayor Burdick stated Palm Beach County was recently considering a comprehensive plan amendment to put a manure recycling facility in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA). She stated they were about to approve the project when they received information from the farmers in the EAA that large retailers would no longer purchase their crops if the facility was located there. She stated this is ironic, because currently the manure is being dumped on the land and on a rainy day automatically runs into the canals the farmers use for irrigation. She indicated the amendment was pulled from the agenda for further review.

Councilmember Davis, Gubernatorial Appointee for Palm Beach County, stated he is the consultant on the proposed project. He stated it is not the horse manure that will be refined, but the bedding waste that will be recycled. He stated they will take the straw, which does contain some manure, in a covered truck, bring it to an indoor facility, treat and sanitize it, and then put it into plastic bags. He stated no rain will ever touch it, nor will it get into the canals. He stated he believes this is a perceptual problem. Chairman Smith indicated this is why this needs to be addressed as a regional issue, because it will avoid a duplication of efforts and costs can be combined.

**LEGISLATIVE UPDATE 2017 – U.S. SENATOR BILL NELSON'S OFFICE – MICHELLE OYOLA MCGOVERN, DIRECTOR OF OUTREACH**

This item was postponed to the May 19, 2017 Council meeting.

## **CONTINUING SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH THE CITY OF SEBASTIAN**

Staff indicated part of Council's mission is to assist the communities in our region with comprehensive planning. Staff stated the proposed agreement with City of Sebastian is to assist them with updating the Parks and Recreation Element of their comprehensive plan as well as creating a 5-year capital improvement plan for their parks.

Commissioner Fielding moved approval of the continuing services agreement. Commissioner O'Bryan seconded the motion. Chairman Smith called for public comment. Seeing none he called for a vote on the motion, which carried unanimously.

**Motion**

## **RESOLUTION ADDRESSING THE LOCALLY PREFERRED OPTION FOR THE LOXAHATCHEE RIVER WATERSHED RESTORATION PROJECT**

Staff noted the Loxahatchee River Restoration Watershed Project, which is part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) to restore the everglades and, as originally proposed in 2011, was to accomplish five goals: 1) restoration of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River (one of two nationally designated Florida Wild and Scenic Rivers); 2) restoration of the Loxahatchee Slough; 3) the reduction of damaging fresh water discharges to Lake Worth Lagoon by increasing surface water storage and conveyance; 4) restoration of the Grassy Waters Preserve and enhancement of water supplies for local governments in Palm Beach County; and 5) the provision of better flood protection for the western communities within the County. However, staff explained that the currently proposed plan from the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and SFWMD only addresses the first two goals. Currently, the county is working with other stakeholder organizations and is proposing what they call the locally preferred option, which puts the other 3 goals back into the project. Staff stated if there are extra projects that are not included in the CERP plan, the local government will have to pay for the additional work. Staff indicated the current agenda item proposes a resolution of Council's support of the proposed locally preferred option and encourages the Corps and SFWMD support the modeling and planning efforts associated with the proposed local option components of the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project.

Commissioner Fielding moved approval of the resolution. Commissioner Ryan seconded the motion.

**Motion**

Councilmember Davis stated he is very supportive of the resolution. However, he indicated the test for the Corps is to pick the most cost-effective solution. He stated by doing the locally preferred option, the locals are responsible for the delta (the extra cost). He asked if we have done everything possible to convince the Corps to include the preferred alternative and avoid the delta. Staff asked what else can be done by Council beyond showing support for the locally preferred option through the proposed resolution, which will be sent to the Colonel and project delivery team for the Corps, and the director of the SFWMD. Mr. Davis indicated this typically comes into play in flood protection projects where the benefits are truly local. He stated although the extra benefits may not be of federal interest, they are typically willing to build them into the project as long as they are locally funded. He said he supports moving forward with the resolution while continuing to press the Corps to make this part of the preferred alternative.

Commissioner Ryan stated they were informed the previous day at the Water Resources Task Force meeting that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has been told, along with the Corps and other federal agencies, to review their rules and regulations to determine what is necessary in all projects. She stated at this point we should focus on trying to internally locate the funding resources that will be needed for the locally preferred option.

Staff asked if there might be another way to influence getting the locally preferred option included, such as this will keep the water out of the Lake Worth Lagoon, which will mean sending the water south, which is a federal issue. Councilmember Davis stated Commissioner Ryan is correct that there will be federal budget cuts and he suggested this needs to be a parallel approach of pushing to make this part of the overall federal project, while trying to locate local funding sources. Chairman Smith stated this is the type of issue that we need to work on as a region. He stated if there is something of importance in the region, we need to think collectively and that speaking as one voice is more effective and influential in Tallahassee and Washington DC.

Commissioner Fielding called the question and requested directing staff to explore this issue further be added to the motion. Chairman Smith indicated before a vote could be taken, he needed to ask for public comment. Seeing none he called for a vote on the motion, which carried unanimously.

Staff indicated in the short-term they will reach out to Senators Nelson and Rubio, as well as our Congressmen to share this resolution and ask for their assistance. Staff suggested in the long-term the elected officials in the region need to get together to discuss issues such as this and talk about what they would like to see happen in the region through federal legislation. Chairman Smith stated the four counties in the region specifically have not gotten together, but when he was president of the Florida Association of Counties he instituted a state-wide policy program. He noted that after the Deep Horizon oil spill they adopted more of a regional format. He suggested if there is a regional issue within the four counties, or even an issue that would include the SFRPC, they can go to the FAC to ask them for assistance. Councilmember Davis stated he is available to assist with advancing Council's resolution supporting the locally preferred option for the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project.

#### **APPROVAL OF SOUTHEAST FLORIDA TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT PILOT PROGRAM GRANT APPLICATION RANKINGS AND AUTHORIZATION TO EXECUTE INTERLOCAL AGREEMENTS**

Staff indicated the purpose of this item is to request Council approval of application rankings and recommended funding awards for the Southeast Florida Transit-Oriented Development Pilot Program Grant, and authorize the Executive Director to execute interlocal agreements with the selected applicants. Staff noted funding for this effort has been secured through a transit-oriented development planning grant from the Federal Transit Administration and is included in Council's work program via an agreement between Council and the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA). Staff stated the current action will allocate \$860,000 of those funds to seven communities along the FEC corridor for planning assistance. Staff noted the agenda item provides a summary of the 14 applications received, seven of which are being recommended by the technical selection committee established by Council to provide guidance and review.

Commissioner Valeche asked for an explanation of the difference between the coastal link and the extension of Tri-Rail through this grant. Staff noted Tri-Rail operates on the CSX corridor, which is

called the South Florida Rail Corridor and is owned by the State of Florida. In this corridor, Tri-Rail operates 18 stations within 72 miles, and exists for the most part west of I-95. Staff noted Tri-Rail Coastal Link is the project name for all the service that will occur on the FEC corridor. Staff explained service is envisioned as occurring in 3 segments: a northern extension, also called the Jupiter Extension, that will be Tri-Rail service extending north from Mangonia Park, crossing on a piece of track that is currently being constructed at Northwood in the City of West Palm Beach. The second segment of the corridor runs from Aventura into downtown Miami. Staff indicated Tri-Rail is currently completing improvements at the All Aboard Florida (AAF) station in Miami to allow Tri-Rail service to come across Miami and go all the way into downtown Miami and the airport. Staff noted this service will have 50 trains per day with half going into downtown Miami and the other half to the airport. Staff indicated the third section runs in between the City of West Palm Beach and Miami.

Commissioner Valeche asked if the train sets are going to be the same on Coastal Link as they are on Tri-Rail. Staff indicated that is the expectation, because they will only need 500 foot platforms; fit within a block so they will not cause street closures; and provide several options for locating stations in the downtown environments.

Chairman Smith asked if Tri-Rail will be running 50 trains per day to the airport in Miami. Staff explained that Tri-Rail operates approximately 50 trains a day. When service into downtown Miami begins, the existing service will split at the Metrorail Transfer station so that approximately every other train goes to the airport and the other trains go to Miami Central, which is the new AAF station at the Miami-Dade government center and federal courthouse. There will also be a connector train running between the airport and Miami Central.

Mayor Burdick moved approval of the staff recommendation. Commissioner Ryan seconded the motion. Chairman Smith called for public comment. Seeing none he called for a vote on the motion, which carried unanimously.

**Motion**

## **U.S. HIGHWAY 27 MULTI-MODAL CORRIDOR PROJECT UPDATE**

Staff provided an overview of this project, which was initiated by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). Staff indicated in 2013 FDOT completed a Planning and Conceptual Engineering study to investigate the feasibility of developing a multi-modal U.S. Highway 27 corridor as an alternative for moving freight. The primary study objectives were: determining the feasibility of a potential rail by-pass; identifying conceptual engineering alternative for U.S. Highway 27 (with and without rails); conducting a preliminary environmental evaluation; and planning for U.S. Highway 27 based on travel demand and Strategic Intermodal System standards. Staff indicated the study for a multi-modal alternative showed lanes would need to be added shifting the highway within the right of way to provide space for single mainline track with five two-mile siding tracks within the right-of way. Staff noted 5 potential connections to the South Central Florida Express railroad were identified. FDOT preferred what they call the N-ALT-2A alternative, which has the lowest environmental impacts, least cost, and most direct connection. Staff noted the FDOT study concludes U.S. Highway 27 must be widened to accommodate future Intermodal Logistics Centers, potential rail demand is 15 to 22 trains per day, no fatal engineering or environmental flaws identified, and adding a railroad was determined to be feasible. Staff indicated the benefits of moving forward include: reducing freight traffic through the population centers between Fort Pierce and Miami; capacity will be freed up for commuter passenger trains; truck



traffic will be diverted from U.S. Highway 27 and I-95; and this project will support economic development and job creation for the distressed communities along the south and east sides of Lake Okeechobee. Staff stated additional stakeholders are being identified and a working group will be established to continue exploring this concept.

Commissioner Valeche stated his sense is an Indiantown connection location would not be acceptable to Palm Beach County. He stated he is in favor of the economic benefits this will provide for the cities around the lake, however for as long as he can remember this has been a Florida Crystals project. He asked if there is a way to build this without the impetus of a private company contributing land. Staff indicated land is a significant part of the project, because the project will need to be big enough to be successful. Staff noted there are several sites that would work for this project, including the site in Indiantown is 12,000 acres, the Florida Crystals site in Okeelanta, a location in Belle Glade, and a location in Moore Haven. Staff indicated that conceptually this project can be done with government doing the infrastructure and the development of the project being done by the private sector.

Commissioner O'Bryan stated the presentation showed this project will move 80 percent of the freight to the west. He asked how much of that freight will come back to the FEC line (at Fort Pierce) to continue north. Staff indicated that has not yet been determined, because it will depend on where the intermodal logistic center and connections will be located. Staff stated FEC is currently providing service into Orlando by running trains to Cocoa and then transferring to trucks for the drive into Orlando, which makes more sense than trucking freight from Miami to Orlando.

Commissioner Ryan asked for the presentation to be provided on Council's website. She asked if the infrastructure component can move forward before there is a decision on the location of the intermodal logistics center and land acquisition. Lisa Dykstra, SIS Coordinator with FDOT District Four, indicated the study was done primarily from the aspect of looking at the feasibility of construction of the rail line and what impacts there might be. She stated FDOT would not operate or maintain a freight railroad, so the private sector would have to play a part in doing the project and the decision of where the intermodal logistics center would be located. She stated the study, which started in 2008 at the request of the Florida Legislature, was done to provide information to companies that might be interested in investing in rail services on U.S. Highway 27.

Commissioner Valeche asked if the company purchasing FEC would be amenable to this proposal. Staff indicated that Bob Ledoux, Senior VP at FEC Railway, participated in the meeting at the Port of Palm Beach before the announcement of the acquisition and remains enthusiastic about the project. He wanted to be here today, but had a conflicting meeting.

Under public comment, Drew Martin, on behalf of the Loxahatchee Group of the Sierra Club, stated their concern is that if this is put on land that is not currently inside urban service areas, there may be adverse impacts to Everglades restoration. He stated he would not want to see a lot of industry in the western area and is concerned if U.S. Highway 27 becomes a major highway, the entire EAA will be turned into an industrial area. He asked Council to consult with environmental groups and regulatory agencies on this project to protect the environment.

Commissioner Fielding stated he visions this going forward having Orlando to Miami as the throughput that changes the entire complexion of what we are currently doing. He stated with this

project we can make a more efficient throughput from major growth areas in the state that takes congestion off the coastal corridor and makes the transportation of freight more efficient.

Chairman Smith asked if staff needs Council direction for this project. Staff indicated the intent of this item was to provide an update to Council, and would only seek authorization to continue moving forward with current efforts. Chairman Smith stated it would be helpful to acknowledge in a motion for staff to fully engage in the conversations and planning for this project. Commissioner Fielding made a motion to approve Chairman Smith's suggestion. Commissioner Valeche seconded the motion.

**Motion**

Mayor Burdick asked if part of the discussion is about raising the road for the sheet flow and wildlife in the area. Ms. Dykstra stated that was not an option that was looked at in 2013. She stated at that time the highway alternative looked at shifting the roadway to the east side of the right-of-way to be able to fit the railroad along the west side, but it did not look at raising it.

Chairman Smith clarified the motion should be to not only direct staff to fully engage in the conversation, but also to give consideration to all components of the project, including impacts to Everglades restoration. Commissioners Fielding and Valeche agreed with the amendment to the motion. Ms. Dykstra clarified FDOT is not currently studying this corridor.

Commissioner Mowery asked if because this is an informational item, is it acceptable to pass a motion, even though it does not appear any funding by Council is involved. Chairman Smith stated there will be costs associated with staff working on this. He stated he would ask staff to come back to Council if it appears financial resources need to be allocated. Upon being put to a vote, the motion carried unanimously.

### **OPIOID EPIDEMIC PROJECT UPDATE – DATA AND MAPPING FOR THE TREASURE COAST REGION**

Staff indicated since the last meeting staff has begun regional data collection and mapping efforts to document opioid overdoses, emergency response events, mortality, and costs related to the opioid abuse epidemic. Staff noted a draft report has been compiled and provided in the agenda item that presents the preliminary results of this effort to highlight and quantify negative public health and resource impacts being experienced by Treasure Coast counties. Staff noted there are inconsistencies across the region and state on how opioid overdose-related data is kept and reported. Staff indicated that although the data and mapping in the report are considered draft based on the best available information collected to date from numerous sources, the news is not good for our region. Staff stated this has become a huge problem with not only human-related impacts, but also financial impacts to the service providers in the counties.

Staff indicated there is a grant available through the U.S. Department of Justice to pull together all the practitioners and first responders who are reporting this data and develop a way to collect and report the data in a consistent manner. Staff noted this has been done in West Virginia and Massachusetts on a county-by-county basis, which provides better data for decision-makers on how to address this crisis. Staff asked for Council authorization to pursue this grant to help develop a system for reporting data in a consistent manner and develop a GIS database to report the impacts from the opioid epidemic.

Councilmember Weaver asked if the data can be further refined by incident report location because reporting by zip code is tremendously overgeneralized. Staff noted the information is generalized because there are restrictions on sharing people's personal information.

Commissioner Ryan asked if staff has identified what stakeholders need to be engaged, such as Departments of Justice, Health and Housing. Staff indicated those involved should be the hospitals, healthcare industry, medical examiners, the circuit courts, fire and law enforcement, and local governments.

Mayor Burdick stated she will forward information she has from the National Association of Counties and National League of Cities as well as information the county is using. She stated on a national level, she would ask staff to communicate with the region's representatives. She stated funding to the National Institutes of Health is being slashed and in her opinion that is where the solution lies. She stated there are a lot of research institutes around the nation, including Scripps and Max Planck locally, doing research on the addiction component. She stated we can continue to put millions of dollars into treatment and data collecting resources, but we need to concentrate on finding a solution.

Commissioner Valeche stated the real solution is stopping the flow of fentanyl and carfentanyl into our country. He stated a large number of deaths is directly attributable to the introduction of these two drugs into the heroin and opioid mix. He stated these drugs are being produced by a few labs in China. He noted we need to find the supply chain for the drugs and eliminate that part of the problem.

Commissioner Ryan agreed with Commissioner Valeche, but stated once these drugs are shut down there will be other to take their place. She stated Mayor Burdick is absolutely right that the war on drugs does not address what is going on psychologically, mentally and physiologically with the brain.

Ted Gonzales, Executive Director for the Palm Beach Police Chiefs Association and Countywide Director of Operations for the Palm Beach County Law Enforcement Exchange, stated he has been actively involved in working groups on this topic. He stated he has been collaborating with John McKenna, Resident Agent in Charge in Palm Beach County for the Drug Enforcement Administration; Hugo Barrera, the Director of the South Florida High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area in Miami; and Scott Burton with Broward County on a mapping system for this epidemic. He noted there are issues with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act privacy rules for patients, however when a person is deceased the information is publically available. He stated he agrees this needs to be a unified effort, because each county is making up their own plans and there are multiple systems that are either redundant, or do not report the data in the same way. He indicated one of the problems with the fentanyl is that it is unregulated and each dose may be different, so if a person injects a certain amount one day, the next dose may be much stronger. He stated it is also important to regulate the sober homes to identify and remove those that are running fictitious operations. He thanked Council for being so proactive on this issue. He noted Christine Benkly, Countywide GIS Coordinator for Palm Beach County, was present and is very interested in supporting this effort.

Commissioner Valeche stated he read that Senator Clemens and Representative Hagar have introduced companion bills to address regulating sober homes, which he believes have a good

chance of being passed. Ms. Benkly offered her assistance to Council. Chairman Smith noted Martin County also has a fairly robust GIS system. Ms. Benkly indicated everyone uses the same format so the exchange of data will be easy. Commissioner Fielding moved approval of the staff recommendation. Councilman Hmara seconded the motion. Chairman Smith called for public comment. Seeing none he called for a vote on the motion, which carried unanimously.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Martin stated he is very concerned with the lack of tree cover and the lack of protection of native trees in the region. He said when he was driving to the meeting he noticed that in Martin County wherever there is a beautiful stand of trees, there is a for sale sign, which means those trees will be cut down. He stated in Palm Beach County there have been a couple of recent developments where all the trees were removed from the lots. He noted we are currently in a drought and that trees are important because they keep the moisture in the soil and block the sun so there is less evaporation. He stated they then replant new trees, which uses excessive amounts of water to get them started. He said at one point the county was going to buy the former Briger Tract, which is now called Alton, as a nature area. He indicated now everything has been removed and ponds were put in, which are being treated more as toxic waste sites than actual ponds. He noted even the historical site of Walden Pond has turned into a garbage dump. He stated he hopes Council will begin to change how the site plans are done so we stop cutting down and removing all the trees. He stated people will actually pay more to live next to trees, this is an economic issue as well as a health issue. He stated that although he cannot draw a direct connection to the opioid crises, he suspects we might have less opioid addiction if we protected more trees and people had something to look at to invigorate and help them.

**STAFF COMMENT**

None.

**COUNCIL COMMENT**

Chairman Smith reminded everyone the Budget/Personnel Committee meeting would immediately follow.

Mayor Burdick stated the meeting was good and thanked staff.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Chairman Smith adjourned the meeting at 11:42 a.m. This signature is to attest that the undersigned is the Secretary or a designated nominee of the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council, and that the information provided herein is the true and correct Minutes of the April 21, 2017 meeting.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature



**MELISSA McKINLAY**  
**County Commissioner**  
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April 21, 2017

The Honorable Doug Smith  
Commissioner, Martin County  
2401 S.E. Monterey Road  
Stuart, FL 34996

Dear Commissioner Smith:

I apologize that I am unable to attend the April 21, 2017 meeting of the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council. I wish to offer my thoughts, however, on three of the agenda items that are of significant interest to Palm Beach County.

First, Palm Beach County is a strong supporter of the Locally Preferred Option for addressing the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project. In January, our County Commission sent a letter to the South Florida Water Management District in support of the C-51 Reservoir Project being designated as the Pilot Project for alternative water supply development. This will bring significant environmental benefits to the Loxahatchee River and the Lake Worth Lagoon, as well as enhancing water supply to local governments in the region.

Second, the U.S. Highway 27 Multimodal Corridor Project would be a significant economic driver for the Glades region, where the poverty rate is approximately 40%. I continue to work towards the construction of an inland port, and the establishment of a new rail line serving this port would facilitate economic growth throughout the Glades, as well as provide other benefits such as reducing freight traffic through more densely populated areas along the coast and reducing truck traffic along US 27 and I-95.

Third, Palm Beach County recently took strong action to combat the opioid epidemic. On April 4, County Commissioners approved a report entitled *Opioid Crisis: Palm Beach County's Response*, which contains a multitude of action items that will make a significant difference in this fight. Additionally, the county committed \$1 million from our reserves this year for treatment and staffing expansion, and we plan to budget \$2 million more next year. Three new county positions will be added,



a senior-level manager to oversee the opioid epidemic response and, for our medical examiner's office, an assistant medical examiner and forensic technician. With 592 deaths confirmed in the county for 2016, I appreciate the vital work that the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council is doing to collect data to track and quantify this epidemic and for recognizing that it should be treated as a public health emergency.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Melissa".

Melissa McKinlay, Vice-Mayor  
Palm Beach County Commission  
District 6

cc: Michael Busha, Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council