

**Minutes of the
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee
Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council
January 9, 2020 Committee Meeting**

Chair Astolfi called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

Agenda Item 1: ROLL CALL

Ms. Heidt called roll.

Committee Members Present:

Bruce Redus	Indian River County
Ted Astolfi	Martin County
Pinal Gandhi-Savdas	Martin County
Jared Gaylord	Martin County
Pauline Becker	Martin County
Alan Chin Lee	Palm Beach County
Thuy Shutt	Palm Beach County
Charles Duval	Palm Beach County
Napoleon Collins	Palm Beach County
Peter Jones	St. Lucie County
R. Douglas Bynoe	St. Lucie County

Committee Members Participating Via Conference Call:

Nicholas Rojas	Indian River County
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Excused

Kevin Kryzda	Martin County
Helene Caseltine	Indian River County
Peter Tesch	St. Lucie County
Gary Hines	Palm Beach County

Absent:

Kelley Armitage	Indian River County
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Guests:

Dr. Edwin Massey	President, Indian River State College
Dr. Angela Browning	Indian River State College
Cynthia Bruin	Indian River State College

Council Staff:

Stephanie Heidt	TCRPC
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Ms. Heidt indicated a quorum was present.

Agenda Item 2: Agenda Approval

Committee Action: Ms. Becker moved approval of the agenda. Mr. Redus seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 3: Approval of Meeting Minutes for November 14, 2019

Committee Action: Mr. Redus moved approval of the November 14, 2019 meeting minutes. Ms. Becker seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 4: Committee Reorganization

4A: Membership Appointments

Chair Astolfi read into the record the following appointments:

Indian River County Board of County Commissioners

- Helene Caseltine
- Nicholas Rojas
- Kelley Armitage
- Bruce Redus

St. Lucie County Board of County Commissioners

- Douglas R. Bynoe
- Peter Jones
- Peter Tesch

Martin County Board of County Commissioners

- Ted Astolfi
- Pauline Becker
- Jared Gaylord
- Kevin Kryzda
- Pinal Gandhi-Savdas
- Kathie Smith, as an Alternate
- Ralph Davino, as an Alternate

Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners

- Nepoleon Collins
- Alan Chin Lee
- Charles Duval
- Gary S. Hines
- Thuy Shutt

4B: Election of Officers

Chair Astolfi indicated the officer positions for 2020 will be: Chair – Palm Beach County, 1st Vice Chair – St. Lucie County; 2nd Vice Chair – Indian River County; and 3rd Vice Chair – Martin County. After Committee discussion, the following slate of officers was nominated:

Chair:	Charles Duval	Palm Beach County
1 st Vice Chair:	R. Douglas Bynoe	St. Lucie County
2 nd Vice Chair:	Bruce Redus	Indian River County
3 rd Vice Chair:	Jared Gaylord	Martin County

Committee Action: Ms. Becker moved approval of the recommended slate of officers. Mr. Redus seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Ms. Heidt indicated the new officers will begin serving at the March 12, 2020 meeting.

Agenda Item 5: Committee Orientation

Ms. Heidt explained that the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (Council) serves as the Economic Development District for the Region. Economic development work is done through a planning grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). She explained that the work program is focused on achieving EDA's missions, which is reflected in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Plan. This plan is developed by Council staff, the CEDS Committee members, and stakeholders and interested parties in the Region. Another responsibility of the CEDS Committee is to review applications to EDA for funding and make a determination if the proposal is consistent with the CEDS Plan. Chair Astolfi recommended that all members read the CEDS Plan.

Ms. Heidt noted that in 2019 updates were done to the Committee's bylaws; the CEDS Plan; and the Performance Metrics contained within the plan. Consistency findings were done for three applications: 1) a roadway improvement project in the City of Port St. Lucie; 2) computer and resiliency updates for a small business consulting firm; and 3) funding to complete an advanced manufacturing training facility at Indian River State College in Fort Pierce. The Committee also received presentations from the Palm Beach County School District related to their teacher extern program; Transit-Oriented Development planning efforts being undertaken by Council; and an update on activities and redevelopment of the Port of Fort Pierce. Ms. Heidt indicated that Council's work programs include the areas of emergency management, Brownfields assessment and cleanup, post-disaster redevelopment planning, and resiliency planning.

For 2020, Ms. Heidt stated she would like to have the Committee concentrate on the issues of affordable housing and opportunity zones. Also, she asked for Committee members to help get out information regarding the upcoming Census and the importance of having everyone counted. With respect to Opportunity Zones, she indicated that she has asked

Jordan Pastorius from the Martin County Community Redevelopment Agency to do a presentation on the prospectus they did for the Rio CRA Opportunity Zones.

Mr. Redus expressed concern of how the Legislature continually raids the Sadowski Fund, which is intended to be used for affordable housing. Chair Astolfi suggested the Committee could take a stand on this issue, with the approval from the Council Board. Ms. Heidt indicated that at a joint meeting with the South Florida Regional Planning Council, a resolution was passed that supports full appropriation of state and local trust funds for housing. Chair Astolfi suggested that this is an issue that needs to be expanded and updated in the CEDS plan.

Mr. Redus noted that in *The Florida Trend* list of goals for the state, about sixty percent of the goals are related to protecting our waterways. Ms. Heidt noted that another priority for the regional planning councils is combating coral reef disease, because the reef tract is not only important for tourism, but it serves as protection from storms. Chair Astolfi noted that there have been great advances in growing and replanting coral.

Agenda Item 6: Committee Work Program

Ms. Heidt presented the work program and asked Committee members if there is anything they would like to accomplish during the coming year. Mr. Redus asked how the Committee can support staff in furthering the economic development planning efforts done under the U.S. EDA program. Chair Astolfi noted that as representatives of the different communities in the Region, Committee members need to share information about how Council staff, working as the economic development district for the Region, can provide assistance and what programs, such as the Brownfields program, are available. He stated that the Committee serves as a marketing arm that raises awareness within their communities. Also, if there are needs in the community, Committee members can bring that back to the Committee and ask for help or support. Ms. Heidt noted that an example of this is last year St. Lucie County requested assistance putting together a multi-jurisdictional conference to talk about resilience and adaptation planning.

Mr. Redus suggested that one specific issue that really needs attention is affordable housing. Chair Astolfi agreed that needs to be raised up as a priority for within the CEDS Plan. Ms. Heidt noted that the new grant from EDA specifies that Opportunity Zones need to be incorporated into all CEDS Plans. She stated that this can be coordinated with Council's Brownfields program, noting that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has been working closely with other federal agencies on the Opportunity Zone Program. Also, EDA is streamlining the application process for projects within Opportunity Zones.

Ms. Shutt noted that the Federal Emergency Management Agency is in the process of their insurance rate maps. She asked if there are any local efforts occurring or planning grants available to help type of work or doing vulnerability assessments. Ms. Heidt indicated there are grants available through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to help with resiliency planning. Also, Palm Beach County is working with some of their municipalities to do this type of planning.

Ms. Gandhi-Savdas asked if there are any grants available to help with converting big-box office buildings into affordable housing. Chair Astolfi noted that he and George Stokus, Assistant County Administrator for Martin County, have spoken with Tom Lanahan, Council's Executive Director, about this issue, because there are a lot of empty, large retail spaces throughout the County and, because of a shift away from brick and mortar retail, there are opportunities where this could happen. He stated there are probably some grant opportunities available to do this type of planning. Ms. Shutt noted that she is a member of a chapter of the American Institute of Architects where she serves on the housing committee. She indicated that she has several presentation for how this issues is being dealt with from all around the Country. She offered to forward those presentations.

Ms. Heidt asked if Broadband is something the Committee would like to focus on in the coming year. Chair Astolfi noted that Martin County has done a lot of work to provide broadband infrastructure for both private and public use. Mr. Chin Lee asked if anyone knows of a strategy to make broadband affordable for low income areas in rural communities. He noted that in the Glades Region of Palm Beach County broadband is available, however most residents cannot afford it. He noted that there are areas where free Wi-Fi is offered, but it is becoming more of a demand by visitors to the region. Chair Astolfi suggested he get with Kevin Kryzda who will be able to provide good insight and solutions. He also noted that there is a company in Brevard County that is building a network of satellites.

Ms. Gandhi-Savdas asked how the opportunity zones were established. Mr. Chin Lee stated that up to 25% of eligible census tract could be nominated to the U.S. Department of Treasury by each respective state governor. He noted that anyone could lobby to the governor to have a census tract included. Eligible census tracts are those that have been defined as low-income community census tracts that were originally established under the New Markets Tax Credit Program.

Ms. Heidt provided a hardcopy example of The Florida Scorecard, which is a tool available on the Florida Chamber Foundation's website, that provides economic and demographic data for each county. Chair Astolfi noted that for the state it appears that unemployment rates are declining, and the probability of a recession is decreasing, which are both positives for the state. Mr. Chin Lee questioned what jobs would be included under the category Technology. He noted that he is not aware of any schools in Florida that are top in the nation for technology oriented degrees and that is usually a big part of why the jobs are in an area. Chair Astolfi stated he believes this is driven by some of the major metro communities such as Tampa where there has been a spike in technology jobs, and at the cape with the development of Space Florida. He also noted that agricultural technology is becoming big. He stated that there is now intelligent farming that uses data to manage farm operations such as water usage and application of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers, which is important in our Region, because we all have major agricultural areas in our communities.

Agenda Item 7: Public Comment

None

Agenda Item 8: CEDS Committee Member Comment

Mr. Duval announced that West Technical Education Center is now offering a CDL Driver License training program. He stated that based on consensus from the community and employers, this is something that is needed as these jobs are now in high demand. Chair Astolfi noted that in Florida you can do in state driving when you are 18 years old. However, you must be 21 or older to do cross country trips.

Mr. Redus indicated that planning for the manufacturing boot camp in Indian River County has begun.

Mr. Jones reported that Derektor Boat Works, the operator of the Port of Fort Pierce, has been doing repairs and upgrades at the Port and is in the waiting period on their permit for the cut out of the wharf where the boat lift for the mega yachts will be installed. Also, the new hangar at the airport is out of the ground, so it is an exciting year for the County.

Mr. Gaylord noted that on January 15th at 6:00 pm there will be a meeting of the Hobe Sound Neighborhood Advisory Committee where they will discuss the proposed Community Redevelopment Area land development regulations.

Chair Astolfi noted that in the past incentives for economic development and bringing in companies were about cash (i.e. free land, free buildings, etc.). Now companies know that if they cannot find the talent, all of those incentives are irrelevant. What is most critical now is having the talent and workforce they need to run their businesses. He noted that in the Treasure Coast Region there is a Workforce Readiness Task Force that works with CareerSource to promote initiatives such as apprenticeship and boot camp programs as well as soft skills training. Additionally, they do job fairs and trade shows so that students can learn about the opportunities that are available to them. He noted that one of the problems we have in Florida is that colleges and universities cannot charge tuition for apprenticeship programs, and because colleges cannot offer programs for free, they are not offering these programs. He stated that he has been working on a bill to rescind language that takes away that restriction so those programs can be offered, and then the companies can pay the tuition for their employees to get the needed training. He noted that he is a proponent of the Swiss model, which is 3 days on the job, a day of technical skill training maybe at the company or somewhere else, and a day of theoretical learning or college classwork.

Mr. Bynoe suggested having apprenticeships programs offered through the high schools. Chair Astolfi noted that currently they are bringing in students from all around the region to attend the job conferences and learn about opportunities in the manufacturing, health care, digital technology, and business sectors, and giving them exposure to the people and companies that are looking to hire. He said they have begun to incorporate a soft skills

training program called YESS (Youth Employment Success Solutions). He noted that with apprenticeship programs will, if they are laid out correctly, give students a progression path that could, if they wanted, lead to them being president of the company one day. Mr. Redus noted that these programs not only improve skill sets of the workforce, but offer an alternative to college for many students.

Mr. Bynoe noted that traditionally an apprentice is someone that works with a master in the trade. He stated that although the college aspect is important, he thinks that it is better for individuals that have done the job successfully for many years, which will also help to bridge the gap between the talent that is already there and the talent of the future. He suggested before looking at the college programs, we should be reaching out to those that have been doing the job and ask them to share their knowledge and wisdom of skills it takes to do the actual job. Chair Astolfi noted that at some level we need both types of training and that is why he prefers the Swiss model of apprenticeship training programs.

Agenda Item 9: Staff Comment

None

Agenda Item 11: Adjournment

The next meeting is scheduled for March 12, 2020. There being no further business, Chair Astolfi adjourned the meeting at 3:20 p.m.