

Minutes of the
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee
Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council
November 12, 2020 Virtual Meeting

Chair Charles Duval called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

Agenda Item 1: Roll Call

Ms. Heidt called roll.

Committee Members Participating Via Virtual Meeting:

Nicholas Rojas	Indian River County
Bruce Redus	Indian River County
Ted Astolfi	Martin County
Pinal Gandhi-Savdas	Martin County
Charles Duval	Palm Beach County
Thuy Shutt	Palm Beach County

Excused:

Helene Caseltine	Indian River County
Kathie Smith, Alternate	Martin County
Ralph Davino, Alternate	Martin County
Peter Jones	St. Lucie County
Pete Tesch	St. Lucie County
Gary Hines	Palm Beach County
Alan Chin Lee	Palm Beach County

Absent:

Kelley Armitage	Indian River County
Pauline Becker	Martin County
Jared Gaylord	Martin County
Kevin Kryzda	Martin County
R. Douglas Bynoe	St. Lucie County
Nepoleon Collins	Palm Beach County

Guests:

Carl Baker	Port of Palm Beach
Yaremi Farinas	Port of Palm Beach
Geralyn Farella	Florida City Gas (Nexteraenergy)
Jordan Pastorius	Martin County CRA

Council Staff:

Stephanie Heidt	TCRPC
Thomas Lanahan	TCRPC
Terry Ann Paulo	TCRPC

Agenda Item 2. Agenda Approval

Due to lack of a quorum, the agenda was not approved.

Agenda Item 3. Approval of September 10, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Due to lack of a quorum, the September 10, 2020 meeting minutes will be approved at the January 14, 2021 meeting.

Agenda Item 4. Port of Palm Beach Presentation by Carl Baker, Director of Planning and Development

Carl Baker, Director of Planning and Development for the Port of Palm Beach, provided a presentation to the Committee highlighting activities and projects at the Port and how the Port has been impacted by COVID-19. Additionally, he provided an overview of the expansion of the Port's Intermodal Freight Rail Facility project that was recently awarded funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Mr. Lanahan asked if being closed for the entire year due to the pandemic will place the cruise industry in jeopardy of not being able to recover. Mr. Baker indicated that is a possibility. He noted that for some cruise lines, like Carnival, they may be able to recover. However, for other cruise lines, like Celebration out of the Bahamas, the longer this lasts, the scarier it is for those companies. Mr. Lanahan asked about the financial relationship between the cruise lines and the Port. Mr. Baker indicated that the companies pay a dockage fee of \$1,500 per day, which is assessed when they throw their lines in to dock at the Port. They also pay a per passenger fee, which is assessed each time a passenger boards the ship, and each time a passenger leaves the ship. Also, there are a few other fees such as water and electricity. Mr. Baker noted that they are not charged rent for the use of the terminal.

Ms. Heidt asked what other type of tenants are at the Port. Mr. Baker stated that Tropical is the largest tenant and there is Gulfstream which is a smaller ship line that has been operating at the Port since 1963. There is also Teeters which specializes in heavy lift cargo and runs a railroad ship carrying tertiary market vehicles down to Haiti. Additionally, current tenants include Florida Sugar, Florida Molasses Exchange, South Florida Materials Liquid Asphalt, and Southern Hay.

Mr. Duval noted that the presentation indicated that there has been a year over year increase in bulk commodities from molasses of 75% and sugar at 36%. He asked what has driven that increase. Mr. Baker indicated that sugar production last year was very good, and when there is more sugar there is more molasses.

Mr. Duval asked how COVID has affected employment at the Port. Mr. Baker noted that there are only 55 Port employees, with only 18 of those being in the administrative offices. He stated that each person works in their own office and they require masks be worn when in the building and when working on the docks. Additionally, a company cleans the offices every week with a medical grade disinfectant. He also noted that they created a video on port operations in the COVID environment and how the Port and tenants have adapted their operations to deal with COVID. He stated that the video won an award from the American Association of Port Authorities.

Mr. Astolfi noted that the five new rail lines appear to be very close together. He asked if they are able to get the straddle carriers up and down each of those lines. Mr. Baker indicated that it will be designed so that the straddle carriers can run past each other. Mr. Astolfi asked if those carriers will be owned by the Port. Mr. Baker indicated that the Port is a landlord Port, which means they own the land, some of the buildings, and the water. All other equipment is owned by the individual companies that rent space at the Port. He indicated the straddle carriers will be owned by Tropical Shipping. Mr. Astolfi asked if the growth of the Port is dependent on the growth of the tenants. Mr. Baker stated that the Port helps wherever possible, such as with marketing and making sure they have the necessary infrastructure to grow their businesses. As an example, the Port spent \$6 million to tear down a five-story building and build a pad supplied with electricity that Tropical uses for their refrigerated container market. Mr. Astolfi stated that he is going to use that as an example of how a local authority can facilitate economic development by providing the right infrastructure. He commended Mr. Baker on the great job they are doing at the Port, noting their revenues are very impressive.

Chair Duval thanked Mr. Baker for his presentation.

Agenda Item 5. Introduction to Terry Ann Paulo, Disaster Economic Recovery Coordinator for the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council

Ms. Heidt introduced Ms. Paulo as the new Disaster Economic Recovery Coordinator. Ms. Paulo noted that she has been looking into the reason for business closure to determine how many are related to COVID-19. She indicated that she started by contacting the tax collector offices in Indian River and Martin counties to determine if we are able to accurately track the reason for business closures by examining active business licenses. She stated she found that the way the systems are set up this is not a good source for tracking business closures. For example, there have been an uptick in licensing, which can be attributed to individuals believing this will help them obtain relief grants and loans. She asked for suggestions from the Committee on other ways to track this information. Mr. Astolfi noted that the number of licenses can be misleading because a doctor's office may have a license, but then each doctor within the practice will also have a license. This also occurs in most law firms. Mr. Lanahan noted that Martin County is doing a study that may give us some guideposts for looking at the other counties as well. Ms. Heidt noted that many times business will not file for bankruptcy because they do not want that to affect their credit.

Charles Duval thanked Ms. Paulo for her report and noted that businesses with more than 50 employees are required to report any layoffs to the State. He indicated that this will not help with the smaller businesses, but he will forward along any layoff notifications CareerSource receives from the state.

Agenda Item 6: 2021 Meeting Schedule

Ms. Heidt presented the 2021 meeting schedule but noted that the November date is Veteran's Day. She proposed that the November meeting be scheduled for the following week, which will be November 18th. She stated she will correct the meeting schedule and resend it to all the Committee members.

Agenda Item 7: Public Comment

None.

Agenda Item 8: Staff Comment

Ms. Heidt indicated that she is working with the Counties to get the Committee appointments for 2021. Those appointments will be read into the record at annual meeting in January.

Agenda Item 9: Committee Members

None.

Agenda Item 10: Next Meeting – January 14, 2021

Chair Duval noted the next scheduled meeting is January 14, 2021, where we will install new officers.

Agenda Item 11: Adjournment

Chair Duval adjourned the meeting 2:53 pm and wished everyone a safe and happy holiday season.