

**MINUTES OF THE
TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL
JANUARY 21, 2022**

Chair Townsend called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. and welcomed everyone. She led the pledge of allegiance and requested roll call. Thomas Lanahan, Council's Executive Director, took roll and announced a quorum was present.

The following attended in person:

Indian River County: Commissioner O'Bryan
 Councilmember Minuse, Alternate

St. Lucie County: Commissioner Townsend
 Commissioner Mitchell
 Councilman Bonna

Palm Beach County: Commissioner Marino
 Councilman Hmara
 Commissioner Linden

Gubernatorial Appointees: Douglas Bournique
 Michael Davis

Council Staff: Thomas J. Lanahan
 Phyllis Castro
 Kim DeLaney
 Liz Gulick
 Stephanie Heidt
 Dana Little
 Jessica Seymour

Ex-Officios: Kathy LaMartina, SFWMD
 Jason Andreotta, FDEP

Council Attorney: Keith Davis

The following participated remotely:

Indian River County: Commissioner Earman, Alternate
 Councilmember Oertle-Phaneuf
 Councilmember Renick, Alternate

Martin County: Commissioner Hetherington
 Commissioner Smith
 Commissioner Clarke

Palm Beach County: Vice Mayor Weiss

Vice Mayor Gottlieb
Vice Mayor Bohlen, Alternate

Ex-Officios: Lois Bush, FDOT

Council Staff: Kathryn Boer
Sarah Kammel

Chair Townsend welcomed new member Councilman Bonna from the City of Port St. Lucie.

Agenda Item 3: Agenda Approval

Mr. Lanahan noted that a revised agenda had been provided to include Agenda Item 7A, Discussion of February Council meeting date (conflict with Safe Streets Summit). Councilmember Minuse from the City of Vero Beach asked that Council discuss the April 15th meeting date, which falls on the Good Friday holiday. Mr. Lanahan indicated that this would be discussed under Agenda Item 7A.

Council Action: Councilman Hmara from the Village of Royal Palm Beach moved approval of the amended Agenda. Councilmember Minuse seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 4: Consent Agenda

Chair Townsend called for public comment on the Consent Agenda. There was no public comment.

Items on the Consent were: 4B1, Financial Report – November 30, 2021; 4B2, Minutes – December 10, 2021; 4B3, Boca Raton Amendment No. 21-01ESR (Property Rights Element); 4B4, Lake Park Amendment No. 21-03ESR (Downtown Future Land Use Classification Regulations and change 21.6 acres from CM, RMD, SFR and PBG to Downtown); 4B5, Sebastian Amendment No. 21-02ESR (Property Rights Element); 4B6, Vero Beach Amendment No. 21-01ESR (Cultural Arts Village and Property Rights Element); and 4B7, West Palm Beach Amendment No. 21-05ESR (North Railroad Avenue District)

Council Action: Commissioner O'Bryan from Indian River County moved approval of the Consent Agenda. Councilman Hmara seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 5: Annual Audit Report – Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Presentation by McAlpin, Cavalcanti & Lewis, CPAs

Mr. Lanahan noted that each year Council engages a professional auditing firm to examine Council's books and administrative practices, and provide an analysis of how well Council has reported its financial situation. Christine McKenzie of the certified public accounting firm of McAlpin, Cavalcanti & Lewis provided an overview of the audit conducted of the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council for the period of October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021.

Ms. McKenzie indicated that there were no findings and the audit was given an unqualified opinion, which means that it is the auditor's judgement that Council's financial statements are

fairly and appropriately presented. She indicated that there were no major changes from the previous year, noting that cash is up \$252,000; accounts payable is down \$61,000; and notes payable, which is the building loan, is down \$139,947. She noted that Council's restricted fund balance of \$1,755,694 in the Revolving Loan Fund can only be used for purposes related to Brownfields assessment and cleanup. She also noted that over the past fiscal year Council has contributed \$132,839 toward the retirement plan. With respect to long-term liabilities, she noted that Council's note payable to TD Bank balloons in April of 2026, and that during the year Council has paid principal payments and interest payments of \$134,508 and \$29,341 respectively. She indicated that Council ended the year under budget by \$404,781, with Revenue under budget by \$101,950 and Expenditures being under budget by \$302,831.

Chair Townsend noted it had been a while since an audit had been presented in person to Council (typically it is on the consent agenda), so it was important to do this presentation. She called for a motion to approve the Annual Audit report.

Council Action: Commissioner O'Bryan moved approval of the Annual Audit for Fiscal Year 2020-2021. Commissioner Linden from the Town of Lake Park seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 6: Committee Appointments – 2022

A list of committee appointments proposed by Chair Townsend for each committee for 2022 was presented. Commissioner Linden requested to be added to the Budget and Personnel Committee.

The amended committee appointments for 2022 are:

BUDGET/PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Commissioner Susan Adams	(Indian River County)
Commissioner Peter O'Bryan	(Indian River County)
Commissioner Doug Smith	(Martin County)
Commissioner Cathy Townsend	(St. Lucie County)
Councilmember Reece Parrish	(St. Lucie County)
Councilman Jeff Hmara	(Palm Beach County)
Commissioner Mack Bernard	(Palm Beach County)
Councilmember Michael Davis	(Palm Beach County)
Commissioner John Linden	(Palm Beach County)

FRCA POLICY BOARD COMMITTEE

Members:

Commissioner Peter O'Bryan	(Indian River County)
Commissioner Doug Smith	(Martin County)
Councilmember Reece Parrish	(St. Lucie County)

Alternates:

Councilman Jeff Hmara	(Palm Beach County)
Councilmember Michael Davis	(Palm Beach County)

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Commissioner Susan Adams	(Indian River County)
Commissioner Peter O’Bryan	(Indian River County)
Commissioner Doug Smith	(Martin County)
Councilmember Reece Parrish	(St. Lucie County)
Commissioner John Linden	(Palm Beach County)
Mayor Anne Gerwig	(Palm Beach County)
Vice Mayor Chelsea Reed	(Palm Beach County)
Vice Mayor Robert Gottlieb	(Palm Beach County)

Chair Townsend called for a motion to ratify the committee appointments as amended.

Council Action: Councilmember Bournique, Gubernatorial Appointee from Indian River County, moved approval of the Committee Appointments as amended. Councilman Hmara seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 7: Budget and Personnel Committee – Juneteenth Holiday

Councilman Hmara indicated that at the July 23, 2021 Council meeting staff had been directed to explore establishing Juneteenth as a Council holiday. He noted that the Budget and Personnel Committee met on December 10, 2021 and discussed various alternatives. Council’s holidays currently include Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Presidents Day, with staff being required to individually choose which of the two days to take as a holiday. The office is open both days. Currently, there are a total of ten holidays and two personal days provided to staff. Councilman Hmara noted that at the December meeting, the Budget and Personnel Committee voted unanimously to recommend that Council alter the holiday schedule to change Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day to a permanent Council holiday and to provide staff with the option of taking Presidents Day or Juneteenth as a flex holiday.

Council Action: Commissioner Mitchell from St. Lucie County moved approval of the Committee’s recommendation. Councilman Bonna from the City of Port St. Lucie seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 7A. Discussion of February Council Meeting date (conflicts with Safe Streets Summit)

Mr. Lanahan indicated the February 18th Council meeting date conflicts with the 9th Annual 2022 Safe Streets Summit being held in Miami and that a number of Council members are anticipated to attend. After discussion by Council members of alternative dates, the consensus was that February 25th would work well.

Council Action: Commissioner O’Bryan moved approval of rescheduling the February Council meeting from February 18th to February 25th. Councilman Hmara seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Councilmember Minuse indicated that the April 15th Council meeting falls on Good Friday and the City of Vero Beach will be closed for that holiday. After Council member discussion, it was determined that the April Council meeting date should remain April 15th.

Council Action: Commissioner Marino from Palm Beach County moved approval to leave April 15th as the date for the April Council meeting. Commissioner Linden seconded the motion, which carried with Councilmember Bonna opposed.

Agenda Item 8: Resolution #22-01 – Statewide Water Resources Planning

Mr. Lanahan presented a resolution for Council member consideration related to statewide water resources planning and the way state funding is spent on water resources. Currently, funding levels are more focused locally and move up and down unpredictably with different projects being prioritized in a way that is not consistent year over year. He noted that multi-year capital planning is not being done, and that it is becoming clear that this should be handled statewide in a manner that is consistent, uses multi-year planning, and a prioritization system with consistent and effective local input. He suggested that it could be modeled after the Florida Transportation Commission and Florida Transportation Plan. He noted that this policy position has been adopted by the Florida Association of Counties (FAC). Additionally, it has been discussed by the Florida Regional Councils Association, and will be taken up by the South Florida Regional Planning Council at its meeting scheduled for January 24th.

Commissioner Smith indicated that this is an issue that has been discussed for the past couple of years at FAC, and has been adopted as a priority by the Water & Sustainability Committee. He noted that he has been in Tallahassee and has had very good conversations with legislators and, although it might not necessarily happen this year, it is something that is being considered, and that incoming leadership has shown an interest in doing.

Councilmember Bournique agreed this is an important issue to consider. He noted that at the St. Johns River Water Management District's next meeting, there will be a focus on the lands in western sections of the counties and the interest for development there that is happening at a very rapid rate. He noted that it will take a regional approach to ensure that water will be available to serve all this growth. He noted that the South Florida Water Management District, under the leadership of Drew Bartlett, is doing great work with regional water storage and water farming. He stated that every day hundreds of billions of gallons are going to tide and we need to plan how we can use that water.

Vice Mayor Weiss from Palm Beach County offered his support of the resolution and agreed with the comments of Commissioner Smith and Councilmember Bournique.

Councilmember Minuse stated she agrees that it is important to do strategic planning because our water supply is critical for our future. She noted her concern with a proposed bill in Tallahassee to abolish all local soil and water conservation districts throughout the state. She stated that as long as we can bring everybody together through public private partnerships, and have respect for everyone's roles, she can fully support the resolution.

Council Action: Commissioner Marino moved approval of Resolution 22-01 supporting improved statewide water resources planning. Councilmember Bournique seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 9: Resolution #22-02 – Authorizing Execution of Amendment to the Florida Department of Transportation Public Transportation Grant Agreement

Mr. Lanahan indicated the resolution is being proposed to obtain Council authorization to amend Council's Public Transportation Grant Agreement with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for technical expertise services to reflect an increase of \$50,000 for funding Fiscal Year 2022.

Council Action: Councilman Hmara moved approval of Resolution 22-02. Commissioner O'Bryan seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 10: Council Member Orientation and Annual Work Program.

Mr. Lanahan provided an orientation briefing and updates regarding Council's annual work program, outlining major tasks and ongoing efforts expected to be completed during the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year. He provided an overview of the Treasure Coast Region, how the ten regional planning councils throughout the State work together, and the responsibilities and duties Council has to its member local governments. He noted that Council is in the connection business, which includes connecting one another through education and solutions to common issues; connecting the local governments to state and federal funding; connecting Council members with staff to expand expertise and capacity; and connecting to other regions.

Mr. Lanahan reviewed the different work program areas of economic development; intergovernmental coordination; urban design and town planning; emergency management; transportation policy; and strategic visioning and planning. He provided a summary of Council's Work Program for Fiscal Year 2021-2022 which includes:

- Florida East Coast Railway Quiet Zone Designation Assistance for Local Governments in northern Palm Beach County
- Riviera Beach Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) Plan Update and associated Water Quality, Signage, Ocean Mall, and Multi-modal Transportation components
- Delray Beach CRA Plan Update
- Master Plan for 1,200 acres in Port St. Lucie's Southern Grove Jobs Corridor
- Economic Analysis and Development Planning for State Road 7 and the Mall at Wellington Green in the Village of Wellington
- Redevelopment Planning for State Road 7 in Royal Palm Beach
- Continuing Services for Martin County CRA
- Sewer plant relocation agreement between Fort Pierce and the Fort Pierce Utility Authority
- Creating a Stuart Form Based Code in Stuart for East Stuart and The Creek District
- Community Visioning for Lake Worth Beach CRA properties
- Tequesta Commercial Area Plans

Commissioner Smith noted that he recently met with former Florida Department of Transportation Secretary Kopelousos, now the Director of Legislative Affairs for Governor DeSantis. He asked her about the importance of regional, generational projects in terms of big-scale items. He stated her response was such that no one fully understands how the money is going to be allocated, but he believes from his discussion with her that big, regional transportation projects are the smart

thing to do. He indicated that he raised the question of U.S. Highway 27 being used as an alternate rail corridor, and she said that absolutely ought to be something that we keep on our radar screen. Commissioner Smith stated that Council should continue to do work with South Florida stakeholders on this issue. Mr. Lanahan noted he recently attended an FDOT District 1 meeting of their U.S. 27 Freight Stakeholder Committee where this idea was raised by others. He stated he is encouraged that this is also being discussed and the coordination is not just being considered in South Florida.

With respect to Council's work program, Councilman Hmara noted that Council and staff have done a remarkable job, especially during the pandemic period, of demonstrating agility in moving forward and providing quality analytical engineering and comprehensive planning work that could not be done by anybody else. He expressed his appreciation for that as well as the opportunity to learn from one another, which he believes is one of the great benefits of participating in regional planning councils.

Agenda Item 11: Announcements

Mr. Lanahan noted a few articles in the Communication Package related to employment trends and the "great resignation" of workers; traffic; and planning laws. He noted there is an article about Earl Starnes, Florida's first planning director in the 1970s after the state passed a suite of new laws designed to manage growth, prevent sprawl, and protect wetlands, springs, and other resources. Lois Bush with FDOT noted that she got to know Earl when the nonprofit public interest law firm she worked for helped get 1000 Friends of Florida started. Earl was one of the founding board members and that experience is how she got into the planning profession.

Mr. Lanahan noted that the Palm Beach County Fire Rescue won third place at the Annual HazMat Competition in Daytona Beach.

Mr. Lanahan indicated that he observed the Brightline test train as it recently went through the City of Stuart. He stated that Council staff is working with the Federal Railroad Administration and local governments to do Quiet Zone workshops and field diagnostic review around the region. He noted that there is a new federal grant program available to help fund safety improvements around rail corridors such as trespass prevention improvements, mental health awareness, and local law enforcement efforts and staff is working to get this information out.

Commissioner Smith asked for a progress update on Brightline at the next meeting.

Mr. Lanahan noted that Council staff will be doing a Walking tour of East Stuart and the Creek District in Stuart on Saturday, January 22nd at 10:00 am as part of a code rewrite effort.

Mr. Lanahan noted that on March 25 Council will be holding a Regional Economic Development Summit that will kick-off the five-year rewrite of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Plan.

Agenda Item 12: Chairman's Comments

Chair Townsend offered staff the opportunity to speak. Dr. Kim DeLaney stated that it is an honor to work for Council and she, as well as the rest of the staff, appreciate the opportunity to do the work of Council and to work with each other. Chair Townsend stated that the staff is amazing and

one of the most organized agencies where she is a board member. She also recognized Council's attorney Keith Davis. Mr. Davis stated that it is a pleasure to serve Council.

Chair Townsend noted that she too saw Brightline as it came through St. Lucie County. She stated St. Lucie County is in a good place and she knows that Council is as well.

Agenda Item 13: Council Member Update

Jason Andreotta with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) noted that the state is also facing employment challenges and on Wednesday there was a presentation at the Senate Committee on Governmental Oversight and Accountability on this issue. He stated that the Department of Management Services did a study that indicated there has been a 35% decline in the number of applications submitted to state government agencies over the past three years, even with the 7.2% increase in the number of job advertisements. He stated that in his district alone they have seen a 26% turnover rate in the last year. He stated that it is hard to retain staff and hard to find qualified candidates, which makes it hard to maintain a continuity of services to the public. He noted that in November, FDEP Deputy Secretary for Regulatory Programs John Truitt presented to the Joint Councils on the Clean Waterways Act Senate Bill 712, which was put into place July of 2020. That presentation included findings of the Stormwater Technical Advisory Committee, which is expected to go into rulemaking in the spring or summer time of this year; and septic tank rulemaking that will be starting very soon. Commissioner O'Bryan asked if Mr. Andreotta could give an update to Council at the next meeting on where FDEP is with the application for designating no discharge zones in the Intracoastal. Mr. Andreotta indicated he would do that.

Ms. Bush noted that they are in the process of updating the Strategic Intermodal System Policy Plan. The plan addresses all the corridors, highways, waterways, railways, hubs, sea ports, intermodal centers, passenger rail terminals, and transportation connectors in the state. She stated that the public comment period for the draft plan closed earlier this month, and they are now working on final revisions and expect to adopt the updated policy plan in the February/March timeframe. Ms. Bush stated the three major themes of the plan are redefining capacity, flexibility, and revisiting the definition of interregional.

Councilmember Bournique stated that future growth in the Treasure Coast region will occur primarily west of I-95 and he would like to find out more about the properties that are owned or are being purchased by the water management districts. He noted that he recently flew over that area and was surprised to see the major changes and shifts to development already underway. He stated that the "who's who" in America are quietly buying big tracts of land to the west. He stated that he believes it would be interesting to plug in the values of the water management district properties and different planning efforts of the local governments to get a general sense of what properties are left.

Councilman Hmara noted that the Village is making an adjustment to the food distribution activities that began as a result of the pandemic. He stated the Village evaluating what has been done in their partnership with Feeding South Florida. He noted that the latest estimate shows that they have distributed over three million pounds of food over 85 weeks, starting back in April of 2020. He stated this is a remarkable statement of a community willing to come together and help those in need. He indicated that not only Village staff has been involved, but citizens and residents

as well, who have helped load over 55,000 vehicles with food. He stated they will continue to do this, but at a slightly slower frequency, going from every Wednesday to the first and third Wednesdays of every month. He also indicated that they are keeping their eye on the “great resignation” and trying to determine why there are so many job vacancies and a lack of applications. To that end, they have teamed up with CareerSource in Palm Beach County to hand out flyers during the food distribution activities and be available to answer any questions about employment opportunities. He indicated that about one year ago the Village did a ribbon-cutting on its first modern assisted living facility, and now they have two facilities. He stated the first was more challenging, but with good work of staff and some understanding on the importance of aging without having to leave your community, they have seen remarkable results.

Commissioner Marino indicated that the County and the City of West Palm Beach are in discussions with the University of Florida and a private owner to bring an urban campus to the County. She noted that there has been a settlement in the opioid lawsuit that will result in money being provided to the County. She stated they need to have 51% participation from the municipalities for the distribution of that and encouraged municipalities to get started on that if they have not yet done so. She said that Tri-Rail and Brightline are in discussions regarding an issue with the construction of the platforms being built in Miami to accommodate both agencies’ trains. She indicated that the County is working with Martin County to have Pal Mar moved up on the Florida Forever needs list. She stated they have had meetings with the environmental representatives from the state and they recognize the importance of Pal Mar and are working to protect the land and use it for water storage. She stated she supports the statewide water resources planning initiative. She noted that GL Homes may be coming to the County to propose swapping preserve land in the Agricultural Reserve for land in the Indian Trail Improvement District near the C-51 Canal. She stated that if the land were given to the County, it would be easier for the County to deal with other governmental agencies for water restoration than it is for a private owner. She noted the Port of Palm Beach has entered into a lease with the County, with the blessings of the City of Riviera Beach, the Town of Palm Beach Shores, and the Town of Palm Beach, to restore the Kennedy bunker and the Coast Guard House on Peanut Island.

Commissioner Linden thanked Dr. DeLaney for her presentation on the work being done to renovate the old Twin City Mall property. He noted that the Nautilus 220 project has finally started moving dirt, and they have already pre-sold over 30% of the units.

Councilman Bonna stated that he is excited to be back on Council, noting that he previously represented St. Lucie County on Council, and excited to work for the City of Port St. Lucie. He noted that things are progressing well in the Southern Grove job corridor, noting that in the past year FedEx, Cheney Brothers, and Accel International Holdings have all located there. He noted that there are also 7,400 residential units planned over the next decade for the area. He indicated that the sale of City Center to the City has been approved and the City will soon begin master planning efforts that will involve extensive public input. He stated that the City has seen an upward trend in permitting activity over the past five years, with an increase of 88% since 2017. Additionally, the City has approved a new city-wide speed limit of 25 miles per hour for neighborhood streets.

Commissioner Mitchell thanked staff for attending the groundbreaking for the construction of the new shared-use trail through the Indian Hills Recreation Area. He indicated that the County

received good news from Tallahassee that the Canal-23 and Canal-24 projects will be funded with over a billion dollars.

Councilmember Minuse indicated that at the last meeting she reported the City of Vero Beach had enacted an ordinance for panhandling that was questioned because of possibly being in conflict with First Amendment rights. She stated that the intent of the ordinance is to ensure safety and she has been able to identify two other cities in Florida, St. Augustine and Riviera Beach, that have implemented similar ordinances. She noted that in December the City passed a resolution to support proposed legislation that authorizes local governments to restrict smoking within the boundaries of its public beaches or parks. She noted that the City also passed a resolution in opposition to Senate Bill 1078 (House Bill 783) that proposes to abolish all soil and water conservation districts in the state. She noted that these districts serve as the local voices, are non-taxing, and non-partisan, comprised of elected officials that do not receive compensation. She stated that if this legislation passes, Florida will be the only state in the union that does not have soil and water conservation districts.

Commissioner O'Bryan noted that on Wednesday FAC held their legislative day in Tallahassee and they are working through several bad bills. The first is Senate Bill 280 (House Bill 403) that will require any local government to conduct a financial impact statement before passing a local ordinance. If the ordinance has a negative financial impact on businesses, then the local government will have to notify those businesses prior to passing the ordinance. Commissioner O'Bryan indicated that is not terribly bad until it is looked at with Senate Bill 620 (House Bill 569) that states if a local ordinance does have a negative impact on a business and reduces their profits by 15%, the business can sue the local government for damages, and future revenues up to seven years. He noted that these two bills would essentially require the local government to do the financial impact statement, and then provide it to the business so they can then sue the local government. Additionally, Senate Bill 620 makes no allowances for actions local governments take regarding negative impacts on the community. For example, in 2010 many local governments passed ordinances to shut down pill mills. Commissioner O'Bryan stated that if this bill had been in effect, and the local government passed an ordinance to shut down those pill mills, they would have had to pay millions of dollars in compensation to those doctors. He noted that bill only requires that a business be in the State of Florida for three years to be able to challenge an ordinance, which would mean even if they are not located within that local government's jurisdiction, they can say they are planning to locate there and the ordinance will have a negative impact on their business, thus allowing them to sue. Additionally, no matter the outcome, the attorney fees for both sides must be borne by the local government. He indicated that unfortunately both of these bills are leadership priorities. He noted that in talking with the legislators they will be supporting the bills, but have indicated that there could be some amendments done that will make the bills better.

Commissioner O'Bryan also noted that Senate Bill 1 should also be of interest to local governments because it is proposing additional homestead exemptions to first responders, which will basically create a different class of taxpayers. He noted that if you look at the proposal, the 20-year veteran firefighter making a high salary, and probably owns his home, will get the benefit, but the one hired last week, at the low end of the salary range and most likely renting, will have his rent go up, because there will be a need for local governments to shift the taxes lost onto the other taxpayers. In lighter news, Commissioner O'Bryan noted that the Senate Rules Committee favorably passed a bill to change the state fruit from the key lime to the strawberry. He noted there

were also proposals to change the state bird and the state song from Suwanee River to Disney's *It's a Small World* in honor of Disney's 50th anniversary. He noted that both of those amendments were shut down.

Councilmember Davis, Gubernatorial Appointee from Palm Beach County, noted that his firm has been asked to look at mobility in downtown West Palm Beach. He stated that in light of all the development that is occurring there, they have created a group that includes the Downtown Development Authority, the Palm Beach Transportation Planning Agency, the Chamber of the Palm Beaches, the City of West Palm Beach, and the County to look at the broader area. This will also include the proposed University of Florida campus and the possibilities of what that brings to the downtown. Mr. Davis indicated that he is concerned about Senate Bill 148 that relates to how race is taught in our public schools. He indicated that it states that if private businesses teach anything related to race, they can be held liable. He noted that his firm has made diversity, equity, and inclusion a priority nationwide and has hired a speaker who will be teaching this to their executive leadership team. He stated that if this bill is enacted and someone is uncomfortable with her presentation, the firm could be sued. He also noted that his consulting firm is also seeing the challenge of hiring qualified individuals. He indicated that they have four full-time national recruiters, working in-house, to fill positions in their small firm of seven hundred employees. He stated the strategy that has worked best for them is to buy existing firms. For example, he stated he was negotiating a contract with the Army Corps of Engineers for a five-year contract that will limit them to a 3.5% escalation clause. He noted just last year they paid 5% raises to their employees and to stay competitive will need to do raises in both March and August of this year. He stated that this will result in the costs being passed on to the client, which is quite often local governments.

Commissioner Smith noted that another topic that we need to keep on the forefront is biosolids management and the development of new technology. He indicated he has had good conversations with the legislative delegation and the Governor's office related to this. He suggested convening representatives from all the counties to talk about a regional project. He noted that there is significant federal funding coming in for wastewater infrastructure and also a fair amount of money at the FDEP that could fund some innovative technology for a biosolids facility.

Chair Townsend recognized that Keith Jordano, member of the Indian Trail Improvement District Board of Supervisors, was present at the Council meeting.

Commissioner Clarke from the City of Stuart thanked Council staff for all the work they are doing in the City. She encouraged everyone to come out for the walking tour. She agreed with Commissioner Smith that we need to look into what needs to be done with respect to biosolids management in the Treasure Coast.

Agenda Item 14: Public Comment

Lucdwin Luck, the new regional manager for the Florida Department of Financial Services, introduced himself. He stated that his role is to engage the community businesses and government entities to provide the department's services and assistance. He stated that he is available to help with any matters and will be attending the Council meetings monthly.

Drew Martin from the Sierra Club noted that they do not support the land swap mentioned by Commissioner Marino because the Agricultural Reserve was established through planning and zoning measures that required a 60% preservation of land and to allow 40% development. He stated that what this will do is take land from that 60% and transfer it out of the Agricultural Reserve up to a separate tier. At the same time, it is taking some of the best agricultural land that has been preserved in conservation and developing it, particularly land on the west side of State Road 7 that is currently active agriculture and serves as a buffer to the Loxahatchee Wildlife Refuge. He stated the Sierra Club believes the County wanting to purchase this land is a very “pie in the sky plan,” which may work at some point in the future without giving up existing agricultural land. He believes they should purchase the land separately. Mr. Martin stated that his telephone service to his home is done through a copper-based landline and the phone company is telling him they will not do repairs. He stated these lines suited him very well during hurricanes because they do not require electricity, so when the power was out they stayed in service. He stated that now he will have to go to a cell phone that will require him to provide battery backup on his own. He asked if there are any efforts being done in the state to protect homeowners who have landlines in terms of maintenance, or is it going to be the policy of the state to remove all landlines for a new technology such as 5G, which he stated the airline presidents have all said could potentially cause airplanes to crash. He indicated that he is not against the new technology, but believes that it would be nice if people could keep their current landline if they so choose. He also indicated that he is glad to see water issues being discussed.

Agenda Item 15: Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Cathy Townsend adjourned the meeting at 11:30 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 January 21, 2022 meeting of the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council.

Date

Signature