



St. Lucie County: Commissioner Johnson  
Gubernatorial Appointees: Michael Davis  
Ex-Officios: Lois Bush, FDOT  
John Moore, FDEP  
Council Staff: Sarah Kammel

**Agenda Item 3: Agenda Approval**

*Council Action: Vice Mayor Weiss from Palm Beach County moved approval of the Agenda. Commissioner Clarke from the City of Stuart seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.*

**Agenda Item 4: Consent Agenda**

Under public comment, Linda Smithe stated that she was speaking for the Sierra Club Loxahatchee Group, which represents over six thousand members and supporters. She stated that although she has never been to a Council meeting, she knows through her research that Council does critical work related to development. She stated that the Sierra Club is the oldest grassroots environmental organization in the United States, so their concern is always the conservation elements of local government plans, water quality, quantity over water conservation, and preserving the natural systems. She encouraged the development and continuation of the Florida Wildlife Corridor and said they are also concerned about air quality and open space. She asked that when considering bulkheads and seawalls, natural systems should be installed as well to create habitat and extend the life of those structures. She applauded Sewall’s Point on their work to eliminate and phase out septic tanks. She also expressed appreciation for all the communities that use native and Florida Friendly landscaping, which reduces water use, fertilizers, and runoff that is a major contributor to blue-green algal blooms and creates habitats for animals and birds.

Items on the Consent were: 4B1, Financial Report – December 31, 2021; 4B2, Financial Report - January 31, 2022; 4B3, Minutes – January 21, 2022; 4B4, Atlantis Amendment No. 22-01ER (EAR Amendments); 4B5, Indian River County Amendment No. 22-01ESR (Property Rights Element); 4B6, Juno Beach Amendment No. 22-01ESR (Introductory Language and Property Rights); 4B7, Palm Beach Gardens Amendment No. 22-01ESR (Remove References to the Urban Growth Boundary and add Property Rights Element); 4B8, Royal Palm Beach Amendment No. 22-01ESR (Property Rights Element); and 4B9, Sewall’s Point Amendment No. 22-01ER (EAR Amendments).

*Council Action: Commissioner O’Bryan from Indian River County moved approval of the Consent Agenda. Vice Mayor Weiss seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.*

**Agenda Item 5: Regional Passenger Rail Update (Tri-Rail, Brightline, Safety, and Quiet Zones)**

Kim DeLaney, Council’s Director of Strategic Development & Policy, and Ali Soule, Vice President, Community Relations for Brightline, provided updates regarding Tri-Rail, Brightline, Safety, and Quiet Zones.

Dr. DeLaney noted that there has been a substantial amount of discussion underway in the Region with respect to rail service and particularly rail safety, which Council staff has been coordinating amongst the different agencies. She noted that there has been a lot of trespassing activity that has led to incidents with injuries and fatalities along the rail corridor and at grade crossings within the South Florida region. Dr. DeLaney noted that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) held a town hall meeting in Boynton Beach that brought together all the various parties to better understand how we can work together to make a safer corridor and more effectively address trespassing.

Dr. DeLaney noted that the FRA, with Council's assistance, has been facilitating town hall meetings with local governments related to Quiet Zones. She stated that the FRA has begun posting additional information for community outreach, law enforcement training, and other mitigation measures to reduce trespassing along the rail corridor, which will be forwarded to Council members and local governments. They have also been doing diagnostic field reviews to bring FRA staff up to speed on those locations where infrastructure is planned, where additional infrastructure might be warranted, and to enable local governments to evaluate the rail corridor in a different way. She noted that there is a substantial amount of funding available to pay for the additional safety infrastructure that might become prioritized and in discussions with the FRA it is being encouraged that money be made available at 100% and not require a local government match.

Ms. Soule noted that Brightline reopened its southern (Phase 1) service in November after being suspended for 18 months due to COVID. They have hired two hundred people and launched a new service called Brightline Plus, which is a door-to-door mobility solution that is powered by electric vehicles and technology. She stated that Brightline is in the process of building two additional in-line stations at Boca Raton and Aventura, and are talking with Miami-Dade and Broward counties about their desires to implement a commuter rail service on the FEC Railway corridor. She noted that the Orlando connection construction is more than 70 percent complete and expected to be opening in early 2023. This work includes doubletracking the corridor between downtown West Palm Beach and Cocoa, and then building forty miles of new dedicated rail between Cocoa and the Orlando International Airport. She noted that every crossing between downtown West Palm Beach and Cocoa will be upgraded to meet the highest safety standards set by the FRA and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). She indicated that where train speeds are above 79 miles per hour, Brightline will be meeting the FRA guidelines for a sealed corridor, which means that every grade crossing will have either non-traversable medians or four-quadrant gates to prevent motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists from going around the gates. They are also installing vehicle presence detection at those higher-speed crossings. She also noted that they are working with the Coast Guard to finalize dates for the rehabilitation of the Jupiter FEC bridge, and they will be rehabilitating the St. Lucie River Bridge to improve the reliability of the structure.

Ms. Soule indicated that Brightline has partnered with Operation Lifesaver, which is a national non-profit that is focused on reducing grade crossing incidents and they have several efforts to bring the number of incidents to zero, including law enforcement, outreach, and education. She indicated that they installed two pilot red light cameras in North Miami Beach in November to track illegal trespassing in the rail corridor. Since November, they have issued more than 860 warning notices to drivers violating the flashing red lights or going around the gates, with several people receiving 2 or 3 of those notices. She stated that with a better understanding of this behavior, they have taken that data to the police in the area, who are stepping up their enforcement to help implement the law. With respect to funding, Ms. Soule noted that Brightline is looking to partner with FDOT on a federal grant

to enhance safety at all crossings. This work would be beyond what Brightline has already committed to and will include additional fencing and landscaping. She stated they have completed a pilot project in Palm Beach County where additional fencing and landscaping has been installed in seven areas found to have high trespassing rates. As a result, there have been no incidents with these additional deterrents.

Commissioner O'Bryan stated it was mentioned that the FRA views quiet zones as a quality-of-life issue and not a safety issue. He asked if it is not a safety issue, then why are they blowing the horns in the first place. Ms. Soule noted that statute requires locomotive engineers to blow the horn in a distinct pattern as they approach grade crossings to warn the public that a train is approaching. She noted for the quiet zones, additional safety measures are installed to make the crossing safer. The horn provides a warning function that, if removed, means additional safety measures need to be installed to make up for it. However, in a quiet zone an engineer can still blow the horn if there is an emergency such as a pedestrian or a vehicle stopped on the tracks, or if there is construction. Commissioner O'Bryan asked if a quiet zone could be implemented only for freight traffic and not for higher speed passenger rail. Ms. Soule indicated no, you cannot differentiate between a freight and passenger train.

Commissioner O'Bryan stated that it is his understanding that when Brightline begins Phase Two service, there will be thirty-two trains a day from seven in the morning to seven in the evening. He asked if the freight trains will then be running at night. Ms. Soule noted the freight will still run at certain times during the day but have shifted their schedules a bit. Commissioner O'Bryan asked if a "nighttime only" quiet zone could be implemented. Ms. Soule noted it is a possibility and deferred to Dr. DeLaney to continue that conversation at the local government, because the local authority decides what they want to do.

Councilmember Parrish, Gubernatorial Appointee from St. Lucie County, asked if there any statistics or any studies that contrast the Quiet Zone crashes from non-Quiet Zone crashes and fatalities. Dr. DeLaney noted she would ask FRA if that data is available.

Councilmember Bournique, Gubernatorial Appointee from Indian River County, asked if there is a site that coordinates the different transportation options for individuals from out of town that may want to travel to an event, such as from West Palm Beach to a Miami Dolphins game. Dr. DeLaney noted that Tri-Rail and Brightline do provide information for special events, but there is not currently a way to do that on a regular basis, such as with a cell phone app. Ms. Soule noted that in South Florida they are working to integrate the three county transit systems to provide information on how to use the different systems to get to a destination. They are also planning to integrate payment to make it a seamless experience for guests. Dr. DeLaney noted that, pre-COVID, Tri-Rail had a number of dedicated shuttles at several stations that would be waiting to take passengers to major employers and key destinations. During COVID, many of those shuttles were put on hiatus, and Tri-Rail has again begun to explore a pilot program that is focused on ride sharing.

Mayor Gerwig from the Village of Wellington noted that it was stated that if a gate is stuck in the down position, there is an emergency number posted for drivers to call and report this. She asked how long someone should wait before calling the number. Ms. Soule noted that all the crossings have a constant warning time, which is federally mandated. This means the crossings have to be down for a minimum amount of time before the train goes through. She stated that if you are sitting there for longer than two or three minutes, it is safe to call. She noted that it is important to remember that it

takes less than 45 seconds for a Brightline train to clear a crossing and freight trains can take 2 to 3 minutes. She stated that after that time, you can make a call and they will either provide an update or send somebody to the scene to investigate.

Under public comment, Mr. Richard Stowe noted his excitement about Brightline service on the FEC corridor and encouraged Brightline to site a station at the Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International Airport and at the Lake Worth Beach location to service the Street Painting Festival that occurs with special service. He encouraged planning studies to consider grade separated tracks in Palm Beach County, where community support exists. Regarding any future Tri-Rail service that may occur on the corridor, he encouraged all the stakeholders and agencies to look at setting a standard of high-level platforms on the FEC/Brightline corridor and for Tri-Rail trains to use Diesel Multiple Unit train sets.

### **Agenda Item 6: South Atlantic Coastal Study (SACS) Draft Release – Ashleigh Fountain, Army Corps of Engineers**

Ms. Ashleigh Fountain from the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (Corps) Jacksonville District, and Regional Project Manager for the South Atlantic Coastal Study (SACS) provided Council a presentation on the draft findings and recommendations of the SACS. Ms. Fountain thanked Council staff for efforts to build a collaborative exchange of information with stakeholders, and provide critical data used to build the risk and vulnerability parameters for study areas. She noted that the project was authorized and funded by the Water Resources Development Act. She noted that the findings and recommendations will be presented to the U.S. Congress. She explained that the four-year project (expected to be completed in July of 2022) encompassed six states with an area covering 65,000 square miles of tidally influenced estuaries and coastal shorelines.

Ms. Fountain explained that the goal of the SACS project is to provide a common understanding of risk and vulnerability that coastal storms and sea level rise pose as threats to local and state governments, infrastructure, and community populations, and provide mitigation practices and recommendations for flood risk-reduction to increase resiliency. The Study defines resiliency efforts completed and current plans and projects underway across the region to identify coastal storm risk reduction actions. The study is based on exposure of population, infrastructure, the environment, historical resources, and social vulnerability to inundation hazards and was developed through local stakeholders development and prioritization of actionable risk management strategies and initiatives that can be implemented along the Treasure Coast shorelines.

Ms. Fountain stressed the inclusion of sea level rise impacts above normal storm surge and other flood events and discussed the local and regional plans currently in place such as the Community Rating System, the Post-Disaster Redevelopment Plan, and the Local Mitigation Strategy that identify hazards, risks, vulnerabilities, and potential mitigation projects in the Region. She explained that several products emerged from the study beyond maps, including tools that allow planners to examine risk and vulnerabilities associated with flooding types relevant to their local areas. She noted that Economic and Risk Assessments and identification of priority environmental areas, biological resource habitats, coastal hazards systems, and estimated risk to these assets are expressed as dollar damages to public and private property and critical infrastructure. This allows the cost of mitigation projects to be compared to the value of damage avoided through mitigation. She noted that the Corps is releasing the Study draft findings and recommendations to gather additional public input on the documents prior to the official release of the final Study in August 2022.

### **Agenda Item 7: CDBG-Mitigation Regional Planning Councils Joint Resiliency Project**

Kathryn Boer, Council's Emergency Programs Director, gave a presentation on the joint Regional Mitigation and Resiliency Planning project that seeks to advance mitigation assessment and planning through regional collaboration. She explained this is the first regional approach to mitigation and resiliency planning within the State that includes six regional planning councils. Ms. Boer noted that the project has been awarded \$1.499 million from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) Rebuild Florida Community Development Block Grant-Mitigation Program to look at the enhancement of on-going regional assessment and mitigation modeling and planning efforts in coastal counties, with expansion to inland counties. She explained this project is using a consistent methodology applied to all regions and will assess risk and identify vulnerabilities and potential impacts from extreme rainfall, sea level rise, and storm surge events through interactive modeling. Through a collaborative effort with local stakeholders and agencies, regional planning council project teams will develop a framework for multi-jurisdictional and cross-county border mitigation planning through creation of a regional best practices template, interactive flood mapping tools, and small area mitigation project plans. This three-year project is estimated to be completed in September 2024 and each regional planning council will conduct workshops/webinars to roll out results and products to the local governments and stakeholders within their region.

### **Agenda Item 8: St. Lucie County Resiliency Action Plan – Sandra Bogan, St. Lucie County Climate Resiliency Navigator**

Sandra Bogan, St. Lucie County Climate Resiliency Navigator, provided an overview of the St. Lucie County Resiliency Plan. This local initiative will benefit from the regional and federal data and analysis previously presented as a plan is developed. The plan will encompass the County and its three municipalities that are experiencing impacts from disasters that affect the ability to recover quickly, preserve infrastructure, and protect communities. She explained that re-occurring storm and flooding issues during and after emergencies and disasters have weakened the ability of local governments to recover quickly and maintain public operations and services. She stated that sea level rise is influencing these natural hazard events and compounding the impacts to assets and infrastructure as well as community and business environments, extending short-term recovery periods and return to normalcy. In June of 2019, Council staff helped St. Lucie County facilitate a resilience planning workshop that resulted in consensus among the county and municipalities to work on these issues. She noted the County was awarded a \$75,000 grant in 2018 through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Resilient Coastlines grant program to establish and convene a resiliency committee that in-turn initiated a vulnerability analysis to identify risk within the County and begin outlining the development of the St. Lucie County Resiliency Plan. This led to the current plan effort which is funded by a \$600,000 CDBG award.

### **Agenda Item 9: Discussion of Topics for Southeast Florida Summit in October 2022**

Mr. Lanahan stated that traditionally Council has had joint meetings with the South Florida Regional Planning Council (SFRPC) at least once a year. In 2020, even with the pandemic, the two Councils met twice virtually. He indicated that when he began discussions with Chair Townsend and the chair of SFRPC regarding the joint meetings for this year, the thought was to expand the meeting format

by identifying two topics where the Councils can work collaboratively and have breakout sessions at the meeting so it can be more interactive.

Mr. Lanahan indicated that one of the topics could be workforce/affordable housing since this is an issue that is important to all local governments throughout both regions. Councilman Hmara from the Village of Royal Palm Beach stated he thinks that is a good topic and would like to see not only discussion, but development of some possible solutions. He stated that we currently have a lot of money available, so we need to take advantage of sharing ideas and taking advantage of all opportunities.

Councilmember Bournique stated that he has been advocating to the City of Fort Pierce and St. Lucie County to allow a large citrus grower to build a state-of-the-art housing facility for the agricultural workers, noting that this individual has already developed such a project in the Orlando area. He indicated that this is a tough topic because the state's population is continuing to grow and with all industries expanding they will need hard-working people who will need somewhere affordable to live.

Commissioner Johnson from the City of Fort Pierce stated that he supports developing more workforce housing, but there is also emerging growth in the transient and homeless populations. He stated there needs to be some type of housing that provides critical need services for those that are living in the parks and streets of our communities. Additionally, we should address the needs of the fifty-five plus individuals that are retired or semi-retired and are struggling to meet current rent demands.

Councilmember Minuse stated that we need to think out-of-the-box and look at some of the vacant structures such as the big retail stores that have gone out of business. She stated that she thinks there are creative ways in which these can be re-purposed to meet some of these needs.

Councilmember Parrish noted that potable water and sewage/solid waste reclamation could be a topic of discussion at the joint meeting. Councilmember Bournique concurred.

Commissioner O'Bryan stated that he supports the topic of housing and affordability, noting that he has not seen a lot of clear-cut solutions. He said this is where the two Councils should spend some time, particularly with the booming real estate market. He asked how do you incentivize a developer to build 1,500 square foot homes to sell for \$150,000 when they can build a 3,000 square foot home and sell it for \$400,000 and make a much better profit. He stated that he believes we have a good handle on the topics of water and waste disposal, we just need to find the funding for implementation.

Chair Townsend noted that the topic of education for the workforce was also mentioned as a possible topic for discussion. Commissioner O'Bryan stated that there are already a lot of workforce training programs available, but he does not see the demand or will of the workforce to look for this training. Councilman Hmara noted that part of the housing discussion needs to focus on transportation as well. Additionally, funding needs to be identified because we cannot depend on the Sadowski funds.

Commissioner Clarke indicated that there is a program in Martin County, House of Hope, that deals with transportation for individuals who are experiencing economic hardships. She stated she would like to have Mr. Rob Ranieri be part of that discussion.

## **Public Comment**

Ira Core, President of Government Services Trust, indicated that he represents the Horton Group who has developed a byproduct from petroleum that when hardened is stronger than concrete. He noted that the structures they want to build for affordable housing are factory made and have already passed Dade County testing facilities standards for up to two hundred miles an hour winds. He indicated that he is in the process of locating a site in South Florida to build a factory to manufacture this housing. He stated that he is prepared to enter into discussions with local municipalities to form a public private partnership to produce these homes. He stated that they will contribute 50% of the profits to the local government with the intended purpose of creating a soft second loan to create forgivable loans to qualified home buyers.

## **Agenda Item 10: Announcements**

Mr. Lanahan noted that Vice Mayor Reed from Palm Beach Gardens won the Safe Streets Champion Award at the Annual Safe Streets Summit for her efforts advocating for increasing safety in our streets for all users. He noted that the Village of Palm Springs won a Community Award for their efforts to increase safety for all users of the roads, including the Lake Worth Road project that Council assisted them with.

Mr. Lanahan noted that in the Communication Package there is an article on the Southern Grove Legacy Park Logistics Center in Port Saint Lucie, which has made national news for all the work that is happening to bring jobs to that area.

Mr. Lanahan noted that Council will be hosting a joint meeting with SFRPC on March 18<sup>th</sup> at the Clayton Hutcheson Center in West Palm Beach.

Mr. Lanahan reminded everyone that on March 25<sup>th</sup> Council is having a Regional Economic Development Summit. This will be an all-day event to gather information to inform the five-year update of Council's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Plan and it will be held here at Indian River State College.

Mr. Lanahan noted that he will be presenting at the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council meeting in March to request support for Council's resolution to adopt coordinated statewide water system planning.

## **Agenda Item 11: Chairman's Comments**

Chair Townsend noted that in the future she would like to see a limitation on presentations at Council meetings. She also commented that attendance has been low due to the ability to attend virtually, which is a problem for achieving the required in-person attendance.

Chair Townsend stated that one of the things St. Lucie County is looking to do is extend its urban service boundary to the west. The County is also rebranding its airport.

## **Agenda Item 12: Council Member Update**

Councilmember Bournique noted that in the St. Lucie County area there have been three ribbon cutting ceremonies for massive water storage retention areas. He stated that this water storage and farming in the region will be helpful to offset some of the impacts to the Indian River Lagoon. He said that there is still a lot of work to be done, however it is heartwarming to see the support from St. Lucie County, the Water Management District, and Indian River County.

Councilman Hmara noted that as he has been campaigning he has had the chance to hear people's concerns, which include traffic congestion and the lack of affordable housing. He stated that the good news is that the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council staff, with their expertise, is conducting three studies in central Palm Beach County related to redevelopment of commercial corridors and improvements along a major roadway. He stated that there are some old cliches about politics being local, but everyone needs to work together because the ramifications of growth are not as obvious as they might be until they happen.

Commissioner Linden from the Town of Lake Park indicated that the Lake Park Diversity and Inclusion Council is one of three finalists for the National League of Cities Cultural Diversity Award. He noted that the City has received an \$11 million grant for infrastructure improvements. He also noted that the Town had a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the completion of a three year project to completely redo Lake Shore Drive, which is one of the main arteries in Lake Park.

Councilmember Minuse from the City of Vero Beach stated that the City recently enacted both a Marina Master Plan and an Airport Master Plan. She indicated that they also recently had a symbolic ribbon cutting for Safe Space, which is a wonderful program that received a substantial donation from Gabby Petito's parents. She also reported that the City was awarded the 2021 Municipal Landscape Award from the University of Florida.

Commissioner O'Bryan noted that the County is completing a six-month visioning process for their western lands to determine how development should look there and also consider extending the urban service boundary.

Commissioner Adams from Indian River County noted that one of the other things they looked at through the visioning process is ways to encourage infill development and redevelopment. She noted that there will also be a ribbon-cutting ceremony in Fellsmere for a community refrigerator, which will make food available for those in need. The Solid Waste Disposal District is working with community partners and non-profits to keep the refrigerator stocked and the area clean.

Commissioner Moss from Indian River County agreed with public comment that native plants play an important role in improving water quality. She stated that with the encouragement and support of her colleagues, they now have a native plant garden in front of the county administrative complex that has labels on the different plants to serve as an educational tool for the community.

Commissioner Johnson noted that the City, in conjunction with the Highwaymen Foundation, just completed a successful panel presentation in Tallahassee before the Arts and Humanities Committee. He stated that it looks very favorable that they will get grant funding to provide the needed infrastructure to repurpose a building on Avenue D for the home of the Florida Highwaymen Museum, which is part of their efforts to revitalize the corridor.

**Agenda Item 13: Public Comment**

Samuel Cintron, representing the Sierra Club, stated that he was present to ask that there be consideration for the Florida Wildlife Quota Act of 2021. He stated that southeast Florida faces the danger of sea level rise, which can cause the salination of our fresh waters, like the Everglades, and the flooding of our cities, which provides some existential threat to our way of life. He stated that we must protect our native flora and fauna and enforce the urban growth boundaries.

Richard Stowe from Lake Worth Beach stated that he is looking for Council’s support for addressing safe streets and vulnerable users, particularly in relationship to FDOT policies and reticence for utilizing safe intersections, such as mini roundabouts. He stated that FDOT also has a policy that discourages lane diets even though it is in the FDOT manual under the Complete Streets Program, and there are miles and miles of Highway 441 that are being converted from twelve foot to 10-foot lanes. He indicated that he rode his bicycle to the meeting from Lake Worth Beach and passed by some stunningly beautiful countryside, part of which was Jonathan Dickinson State Park. He noted that in areas there is no South Florida drought tolerant native tree canopy along the roadway. He stated Bridge Road in Hobe Sound is a good example of such canopy.

Councilmember Minuse asked to correct her previous statement to indicate that the Marina and Airport plans were not enacted, but adopted.

**Agenda Item 14: Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Cathy Townsend adjourned the meeting at 12:50 p.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 February 25, 2022 meeting of the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council.

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Date

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Signature