

Minutes of the Franklin County BOCC

RESTORE Workshop

2/16/16 1:30 p.m. EST

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 1:35 p.m.

Alan Pierce, RESTORE Coordinator, introduced Dewberry and Stella Wilson as the presenter for Dewberry and introduced the subject of discussion.

This is not a RAC Meeting; however, RAC members have been invited to attend. The results of this workshop will be presented to the RAC.

Mr. Pierce reported that Gulf County has an approved Planning Grant, but has yet to receive compensation for their consultant support. He said that although Treasury states that the settlement money belongs to the County, when it comes down to requesting it, there is resistance. Warren Yeager, RESTORE Coordinator for Gulf County, is attending a meeting in D.C. with Treasury next week to discuss the slow progress of planning grants. He is hopeful that Treasury issues will be resolved soon and Franklin County can move forward. He reported that to date, no Counties in Florida have received funding from their Transocean settlements.

Commissioner Parish stated that Treasury is delaying the process.

Franklin County has \$23M in direct component pot; however, BP consent decree has yet to be signed. Treasury is saying the approximately \$1.5M will come every year for 15 years as a result of the BP settlement, which would make this a very laborious process. It's possible that some of the funding may be able to be bonded in the future. The details haven't been worked out yet.

Commissioner Lockley inquired as to whether there are guidelines on how to spend the money.

Mr. Pierce reported that there are some broad guidelines and we will discuss those today, but there is a pretty good latitude for the County to decide. Mr. Peirce added that projects that come forth with matching funds should be given higher priority because they're going to do more for the community. For example, if a project comes in with 50% of the funding and only needs 50% of the funding to be completed, the project should be looked upon positively because that means the County money will go further.

Mr. Pierce reported that this money can be used to match federal dollars.

Mr. Pierce turned the presentation over to Stella Wilson, Dewberry.

Ms. Wilson thanked the Commission for having Dewberry at the workshop today. Ms. Wilson noted that Mr. Pierce made some really good points and the purpose of today is to get the Commission thinking of priorities. There is quite a bit of latitude in the Direct Component pot. Franklin County will receive \$3.56M in the first year from the Transocean settlement and the remaining \$19.4M of the total \$23M over a period of 15 years resulting from the BP settlement.

There are several ways to approach the funding schema and different Counties are approaching it slightly differently. The RAC met in December and their first step is to provide feedback on what the most important priorities are for the County. Dewberry has received some feedback and has been cataloging the feedback along with review of important documents. What we want to hear from the Commission today is what your priorities are.

Even though Treasury only requires the MYIP to include a plan for the first year only, Dewberry encourages Franklin County to take a comprehensive approach, so that the County doesn't have to go through the same arduous process every year. It should be a true multi-year implementation plan.

One of the first steps as part of this process is to gather feedback on priorities. Then the information is accumulated and used to develop selection criteria for project selection, in which points will be assigned. A point system will be developed that answers to the County priorities. The Needs of the community are looked at as the issues/problems of the County. The projects submittals from stakeholders should offer potential solutions to those problems.

The project submittals will not be full-fledged projects at first. They will be conceptual. Since these will not be 100% designed, we have to use the information we are provided and ask the appropriate questions in the application process to obtain eligibility and other important information. For example, long term maintenance of projects may be undesirable. What are the Commission's desires?

Regarding leveraging, you should set a RESTORE leveraging goal. For example, if you're leveraging goal is 3.0, you should receive a return of \$3.00 for every \$1.00 of RESTORE dollars spent.

This all starts with a good business plan. Plan for the long term and plan comprehensive to solve your community issues. Think big. Use these funds to apply for additional grant funding to bring in additional dollars.

Key SWOT Resources – built as base of Needs Assessment. These are some of the examples of items that could be incorporated as project selection criteria.

A community market analysis will also be performed as part of the Needs Assessment.

Ms. Wilson introduced Zach Jenkins with the UWF Haas Center as the entity that will be performing the Market Analysis.

Ms. Wilson introduced Paul Johnson with Ecology and Environment as a project team member for Franklin County's MYIP.

The Market Analysis will give you an economic picture of your community.

The Haas Center is also coordinating the Triumph meetings.

The Key to Success – the idea is to not separate the County into silos (i.e. environment, economy, community), but rather to evaluate all projects against all criteria to ensure a comprehensive evaluation.

For example, if a proposed project was primarily to improve water quality (environmental), it will still receive scoring in the economic category.

Some counties have debated whether to allocate percentages to certain categories. To date, no Counties Dewberry has worked with have utilized percentage allocations for different categories.

The result is a comprehensive accumulation of projects with scoring that addresses each criterion.

Then the top ranked projects are evaluated for funding for inclusion into the first year MYIP submittal. The remaining projects can then be evaluated for consideration in future funding years, up to 5 years or more.

Commissioner Watson inquired as to what the “Community” category means.

Ms. Wilson explained that the RESTORE Act does not outline community issues as being specifically eligible; however, if these items are coupled with other projects as an element or minor element which is extremely important, that these items may be considered part of an eligible activity, such as addressing poverty and crime issues.

Commissioner Lockley stated he represents District 3 and that they need help in that community. Not everyone can work on the water. And they need long term solutions.

Ms. Wilson stated that there have been project team discussions regarding what economic activities could be successful in Franklin County. She noted that the County’s work with Florida’s Great Northwest is being used to prepare for Triumph Gulf Coast and that the information in the MYIP process can also be used to inform future potential Triumph projects. Projects that are eligible through Direct Component may also be eligible through Triumph Gulf Coast.

Mr. Pierce stated they we don’t know when Triumph funding will be availability. No projects will be approved through Triumph that don’t bring matching funds to the table.

Commissioner Parish confirmed that Triumph wants their money to go further just like the County is trying to do with the Direct Component funding.

Commissioner Parish stated that several project are going on with NRDA and NFWF that are environmentally focused and asked why the County would waste Direct Component funding and include environmental projects on top of those? He further explained that the State of Florida has jurisdiction and responsibility over the Apalachicola Bay system. He further stated the County’s habitat restoration goals are being met by state and federally implemented projects. Small local water quality projects from municipalities may fit well in Pot 1, but the grand scheme of water quality is a bigger issue that will take significant involvement from the state and feds and is being funded with other monies.

Commissioner Parish stated that he understands the concept of a multi-year plan, but things change in a community from year to year and doesn’t want to waste time planning. Having \$23 million in the bank doesn’t mean spend it all today. The County should wait to earmark those funds to address future issues that arise which may be considered emergencies. Funding should be preserved for future generations. He understands the process will have to be repeated each year. Commissioner Parish stated this would

allow for resiliency within the County. Commissioner Parish would like to see projects which benefit the whole community.

Commissioner Watson inquired as to whether a long term plan would be 5 years long like an FDOT Work Plan.

Ms. Wilson confirmed a 5 year plan would be considered long term. Ms. Wilson further explained that if Franklin county wishes to have funding for emergency situations, those funds would have to be planned for now to be accessible when needed because every dollar spent requires an extensive planning process through Treasury, taking 6 months or more. If the activities are planned out now, they can be grabbed as needed, whereas if you try to access funds when needed, all of the required paperwork would need to be completed first. You have to go through the planning process each time you want to add an activity for funding. Planning can be and should be done ahead of time.

Commissioner Lockley inquired as to what would happen if a project in the Plan doesn't work out and stated that the County would have to move on to another project.

Regarding the Consortium Pot of RESTORE funding, Commissioner Lockley further inquired as to whether Dewberry will be coordinating with other agencies on the health of the Bay.

Mr. Pierce stated that the State has its own consultants and that the State hasn't asked Franklin County or coordinated with Franklin County on the local issues or needs.

Commissioner Lockley asked whether the State is waiting on Franklin County.

Mr. Pierce stated he can't answer that question. He stated the County has gotten some shelling money, but nearly enough for what is needed.

Commissioner Lockley stated that the State needs to move forward so the County can decide what its priorities are for the Direct Component pot.

Commissioner Sanders states that the MYIP will be a public process whereby everyone can submit their opinion. She inquired as to whether the State would be involved in the County's MYIP process. Commissioner Sanders further inquired as to how much public scrutiny will be involved with the Consortium pot and whether Franklin County would get a say as to what will be done with the State monies.

Mr. Pierce answered, "No."

Commissioner Sanders stated that we should have a public process inclusive of all pots. Right now, the public only has participation in the local process. She wants to make sure the County is in a position to at least be able to have an opinion as to what the funding will be spent on.

Commissioner Sanders concurs that some of the money should be saved for future use.

Commissioner Sanders stated that how can Franklin County know what to do if they don't know what the State or Federal government is doing, especially when it comes to the Bay.

Commissioner Sanders believes that the State funding will go through so many layers of government administration that it won't be that much once it trickles down to the local level.

Mr. Pierce stated he agrees and those are the layers of government. How the funding will be divided at the state level is yet to be determined.

Mr. Pierce explained an example project of polluted runoff coming from local municipal outfalls, which greatly affects water quality, but wouldn't be an issue the State would look at. This could be an example of a local water quality restoration project that the County could consider; but the whole picture of the Bay would take much more collaboration and is way beyond Franklin County's scope.

Commissioner Parish stated that the County needs a list of all NRDA, NFWF, and GCER projects so that efforts are not duplicated. The RAC needs to be aware of these projects. The County needs to use their funding wisely. He wants to make sure this information is part of the comprehensive research conducted and part of the multiyear plan.

Commissioner Lockley added that the public needs to be made aware of the ongoing and planned projects at the NRDA/NFWF/GCER level as well.

Ms. Wilson stated that Dewberry has this list of projects and will provide it to the RAC at their next meeting.

Ms. Wilson also stated the Consortium process has been slow as with the other pots.

Commissioner Sanders stated it has been an argument and a fight at every step of the way and it's not over.

Mr. Pierce stated that the only money they've seen flowing is the early restoration money from NFWF and NRDA and that the Consortium and Council pots have not been allocated.

Commissioner Lockley stated that the County need not duplicate the efforts of NRDA and NFWF, but should focus on furthering goals such as the health of the Bay and water access for the public.

Commissioner Lockley further stated that perhaps the County should prioritize areas that are not receiving financial assistance from NRDA and NFWF and then make a comprehensive judgment of how to move forward.

Ms. Wilson stated that Dewberry will also look at geographic areas that have not been addressed to date.

Commissioner Watson stated the total cost of these projects will be helpful information.

Commissioner Lockley stated that there are a lot of bad areas in Apalachicola that are derelict and blighted.

Mr. Pierce stated that HUD/SHIP funding could be used to address blight issues in the County and that maybe RESTORE funding could be coupled to tackle larger issues and leverage overall funding. There are several programs that currently can't be maximized because the County doesn't have any matching money.

Commissioner Sanders added that CDBG would be one of those programs and that RESTORE dollars could be allocated to a purpose which fits within CDBG and then RESTORE funds could be used to meet the match requirement of grant applications.

Commissioner Sanders said that dating back to 2010 and 2012, the BOCC stated that restoration of the Bay and restoration of the economy were the number one priorities for the County. An example is the expansion of the airport property.

Ms. Wilson stated that yes, maximizing the funds, is a great goal to have and is absolutely achievable.

Commissioner Lockley stated that workforce development and industry development is great, but the County also needs workforce housing.

Ms. Wilson stated that in inventory and assessment of derelict issues in the County could be the first step towards housing rehabilitation.

Ms. Wilson further stated that this is the exact approach of the comprehensive plan discussed earlier. Another example would be septic to sewer conversions, which at first blush, seem like an infrastructure project, but really achieves multiple goals across categories, including ground water and surface water quality improvement.

Commissioner Lockley stated that if an industry locates to the area, the residents need to be trained.

Mr. Pierce stated that Treasury will not allow workforce development that's not industry focused.

Ms. Wilson agreed that industry focused training is more favorable and that workforce gaps should be identified first. Focus should be on what training is actually needed.

Commissioner Parish agreed that training is needed, but for what? An obstacle for job training has always been what should the workforce be trained for coupled with no direct 4-lane highway access.

Commissioner Parish stated that while it's desirable to create more jobs in the environmentally sensitive County, it's not easy, it's not fast, and there are a lot of obstacles to jump through. All of the details that go into job creation must be understood well before it happens.

Ms. Wilson stated that she understood the chicken and egg scenario. Should the 4-lane highway go in first or should targeted industries be recruited first? A lot of planning comes before successful execution. A way to go down that path is to identify what you know now, identify the gaps, and use RESTORE to your advantage to help fill those gaps.

Commissioner Parish stated that the Commission needs to think about where the County wants to be in 5, 10, 20 years and not rely solely on seafood. The County needs industry diversification. RESTORE plays a huge role in this process.

Ms. Wilson stated that it's important to have a message of what Franklin County needs and wants, especially when speaking with the State and Feds. If the State does ask, does Franklin County know what to say? If you craft your message and begin to move forward, you can really

rally other State and federal resources around your cause by keeping a consistent and unified message. The last thing the State or Feds want to do is participate in a plan that they're not fully bought in on and are not sure if the County is either. A solid plan is key to moving forward.

Mr. Pierce cited an example of NRDA funding for sea turtle monitoring as a decision the State made without the County's input.

Commissioner Sanders stated that is the purpose for a consultant.

Ms. Wilson emphasized that Dewberry will assist Franklin County in crafting its message by assessing County needs and goals through the MYIP process. Currently, the MYIP is stalled due to delays at the Treasury review level.

Commissioner Lockley said he wants to make sure the public is very involved in the MYIP process and inquired as to who could apply to put in a project at the County level.

Ms. Wilson stated that the plan right now is for eligible entities to include valid non-profit agencies, governments, and quasi-government agencies. Ms. Wilson stated that Escambia County chose to allow individual citizen submissions and they received 124 project submissions. In Gulf County, the public participated in workshops with eligible entities that have the capacity to submit grant applications, which reduces the paperwork commitment for individual every day working citizens.

Mr. Pierce added that individuals will not be allowed to apply or receive funding from Treasury and only organizations with the proper capacity will be allowed to manage projects.

Commissioner Parish added that municipalities and NGOs will have the added capacity to bring matching funds whereas individuals will not.

Ms. Wilson stated that all organizations involved in project implementation must follow Treasury and OMB guidelines strictly and the County will ultimately be responsible for making sure they do so, so applicants should be well qualified.

Commissioner Lockley inquired as to what happens after the BOCC decides on a project list.

Mr. Pierce explained that Treasury will review the projects and as long as they're eligible, they will be approved. Ms. Wilson added that projects involving natural resources should be based on best available science and all projects should have public involvement in the decision making process.

Commissioner Parish emphasized the buck stops with the County and that Treasury is also watching their back and that all projects should be practical and feasible.

Ms. Wilson stated that all projects have to meet the same guidelines that other federally funded projects would have to meet and Franklin County can basically look at this as a mini grant process if they choose to have other organizations implement the projects.

Ms. Wilson noted that some Counties have separated the "what" from the "who." For example, in Escambia County, project evaluations are based on the merits of the project and not who

submitted them. Then the project implementation evaluation will happen at a later date through the regular County procurement process.

Commissioner Parish stated that the Escambia County method is too cumbersome. He asked that Dewberry be vigilant in helping the County through this process.

Commissioner Lockley asked if Dewberry will be available “on the ground” when the projects are being implemented. He stated that the County would need someone on a daily basis.

Ms. Wilson stated that Dewberry can absolutely be available as needed throughout project implementation.

Mr. Pierce stated that Dewberry’s funding to prepare the MYIP is being covered by the Planning Grant, but he wasn’t sure how that would work post-MYIP.

Ms. Wilson added that the County is allowed to include funds in the MYIP for program management and project management for project implementation.

Commissioner Parish stated that the County will definitely need someone to be managing that part of the process and the County does not have the staff to do it. Even if the County did want to add more staff, he doesn’t feel the community would support it.

Commissioner Lockley stated that he doesn’t want all the money spent on consultants.

Mr. Pierce wrapped up the discussion by stating that potential project applicants should rally around requirements and pay attention to the process.

Commissioner Parish opened that floor to public comments.

Public Comments:

Henry Hunter, 136 Ninth Street, Apalachicola, stated he is from Franklin County and he is with FAMU School of the Environment. He represents BP clients individually who had dispersant exposure. He is concerned about the area known as “the Hill” in Apalachicola and hopes that NGOs will identify the borders of the Hill so that monies can be allocated to the area.

Creighton Brown, resident of the Hill, Apalachicola, thanked the Commission for the good job they’re doing with this process. He stated that he’s been working with the City on SHIP applications, but SHIP is underfunded for the needs. He thanked Commissioner Lockley for bringing up that the community needs jobs and housing. He further stated that the County needs disaster preparedness. A survey of housing is currently being conducted at the Hill. A revolving fund should be set up to restore housing.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:49 p.m.