

**DRAFT Franklin County
RESTORE Act Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes
Franklin County Courthouse Annex, Apalachicola, Florida
October 18, 2016, 5:00 p.m. ETZ**

Attendees:

Alan Pierce – Franklin County RESTORE Coordinator

*Lynn Martina – Seafood Industry (Lynn's Quality Oysters, Eastpoint)

*Brenda LaPaz – Mayor of Carrabelle

*Van W. Johnson, Sr. – Mayor of Apalachicola

*Erik Lovestrang – UF/IFAS County Extension Office, Franklin County Extension Director

*Ottice Amison – Seafood Industry (Amison Seafood, Inc., Apalachicola)

Robin Rickel Vroegop – Ecotourism Industry

Michael Perry Vroegop – Citizen of Apalachicola

Bill McCartney - City of Apalachicola

Joe Taylor - Franklin's Promise Coalition, Executive Director

Creighton Brown - Citizen of Apalachicola, Save our Shotguns Inc.

Holly Brown – Citizen of Apalachicola, Save our Shotguns Inc.

Pam Richardson – Citizen of Apalachicola

Peter Gallant – Citizen of Apalachicola

Greg Kristofferson – Citizen of Carrabelle

Valentina Webb – Career Source Gulf Coast

Stella Wilson – Dewberry Engineers, Inc.

Rick Harter – Ecology and Environment, Inc.

Jade Marks – Ecology and Environment, Inc.

Minutes:

- A. Pierce opened the meeting at 5:00 p.m. (ETZ) by introducing Stella Wilson (Dewberry Engineers, Inc.) and explaining that the purpose of the meeting was to review the Multi-year Implementation Plan (MYIP) process and discuss the Draft Needs Assessment, which the Dewberry team had prepared based on preliminary research and the recommendations of the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC).
- A. Pierce explained that although Franklin County (the County) is not as far along in the process as other affected counties in the Panhandle, the money set aside for Franklin County is guaranteed to go to Franklin County. Franklin County can take advantage of the learning curve set by other counties to make their process move more efficiently. He reminded attendees that although some counties have already submitted their MYIPs to the U.S. Treasury, no funds have been released.
- A. Pierce also indicated the RAC would not be making a formal vote to approve any of the documents discussed. He then turned the floor over to S. Wilson who called for introductions of those in attendance.

- Following introductions, S. Wilson thanked R. Vroegop for filming the meeting. She informed attendee's that the video would be available on the Half Shell YouTube channel which can be found via a link on the Franklin County RESTORE website (www.franklincountyrestore.com).
- S. Wilson reiterated that the meeting was intended to generate discussion and allow RAC members and the public to get questions answered.
- Dewberry (S. Wilson) provided a PowerPoint presentation along with a printed handout for BOCC members. This presentation has been posted at www.franklincountyrestore.com, the Franklin County website, and is available to the public.
- S. Wilson introduced the 5-Step MYIP process that was endorsed by the Franklin County BOCC.
- A. Pierce explained that the 5-Step MYIP process was not something the County came up with, it was the process that other counties have been successful with in their MYIP process.
- S. Wilson then explained that the 5-Step process is a way to meet the Treasury requirement and includes measures to satisfy the public input requirement.
- Franklin County is at the first step in the process which is assessing the County's needs and developing criteria for selecting projects to be included in the MYIP.
- Public input is emphasized throughout the MYIP process, and will be accomplished through:
 - The Franklin County RESTORE website;
 - Public RAC meetings;
 - The online portal, where public entities can submit project ideas;
 - An e-mail alerts list to keep the public informed on the process; and
 - A 45-day public review period after the draft MYIP is completed.
- S. Wilson explained that attendees could get on the e-mail alerts list by indicating that they wanted updates on the RAC meeting Sign-In sheets. Furthermore, the draft Needs Assessment and all other documents would be posted on the Franklin County RESTORE website for public review.
- S. Wilson then explained that as part of the Treasury requirements, all projects in the MYIP must be selected based on some type of criteria. The Needs Assessment will ultimately inform the selection criteria.
- R. Vroegop asked if the RAC and the Dewberry team anticipated more frequent meetings now that the Needs Assessment is in progress.
- S. Wilson said that she anticipated the RAC would soon be holding monthly meetings.
- B. McCartney suggested that for the next draft of the Needs Assessment, the Dewberry team should review the City Commission meeting minutes for both Apalachicola and Carrabelle and interview elected officials from both cities, as these individuals have a pulse on the public needs.
- S. Wilson assured B. McCartney that the Dewberry team would review meeting minutes from both cities and explained that the BOCC wanted to focus the MYIP on projects with a county-wide benefit.
- S. Wilson then reviewed the concept of eligible applicants and explained the approach that other counties have taken: all municipalities, non-profits, and institutions of education are eligible to submit a project to the county's RESTORE Portal. S. Wilson then went on to explain project eligibility: that all projects must fall under the eligible activities designated by the RESTORE Act. Additionally, other counties have made leveraging of funds part of their selection

criteria. S. Wilson explained that Pot 1 funds can be used as the “local match” to leverage other grants.

- S. Wilson told the meeting attendees that the BOCC does not intend to allocate all \$23 million at one time, rather they want to allocate a few million dollars in year-one to address the County’s immediate needs and reserve the remaining funds to address future needs, which are likely to change over time.
- A. Pierce elaborated on this decision, explaining that the Treasury will not authorize any projects that exceed the dollar amount in the year-one budget.
- B. McCartney asked how much money would be coming to the County in year-one and if that includes the Transocean settlement (in addition to the BP settlement).
- S. Wilson confirmed that the year-one budget includes the Transocean and Anadarko settlements and the total amount coming to Franklin County in year-one would be approximately \$4.2 million. S. Wilson then explained that many counties are choosing to write one-year plans because of how long it is taking the Treasury to approve the MYIP and release funding.
- E. Lovestrang asked if the MYIP would cover all 15 years of the settlement pay-out.
- S. Wilson explained that the MYIP is for year-one only. This is based on the language of the RESTORE Act itself, which states that a county cannot submit plans for money that is not in their budget. The reason this seems inefficient is because the RESTORE Act was written before the 15-year pay-out was established.
- S. Wilson then introduced R. Harter who explained the process of compiling resources for the draft Needs Assessment.
- R. Harter described the types of resources the Dewberry team had compiled for the draft Needs Assessment including the County comprehensive plan, various management plans, academic peer-reviewed journal articles, the latest news articles from regional papers and national headlines, as well as the BOCC and RAC meeting minutes since the oil spill and inception of the RAC. The team also reviewed the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) State Deepwater Horizon Project Portal, focusing on those projects that were proposed specifically for Franklin County. The team also consulted the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Gulf Ecosystem Restoration Council websites.
- R. Harter presented a pie chart of all the projects proposed for Franklin County in the FDEP portal categorized by primary eligible activity. R. Harter reminded attendees that projects may fall under more than one eligible activity. He provided the example of an infrastructure project in a park that also promotes tourism.
- Mayor LaPaz told the Dewberry team that many of the City of Carrabelle’s planning documents were not included in the resource list and that they should be reviewed for the second draft of the assessment.
- S. Wilson assured Mayor LaPaz that the team would review the City of Carrabelle’s Comprehensive Plan and other city documents including city commission meeting minutes for the second draft. S. Wilson reminded attendees that one of the goals of the meeting was to solicit feedback and to determine what was missing from the assessment.

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- S. Wilson also informed attendees that RAC member, Rose McCoy, was unable to attend the meeting do to a family emergency, but had asked Wilson to reassure the RAC and the public that she would be involved in the process and would be submitting written comments on the draft Needs Assessment. In her initial review, McCoy stressed the importance of natural resources in Franklin County's economy, as well as the need for job creation and workforce development.
- B. McCartney explained that the Apalachicola Bay Area has been designated by the State of Florida as an Area of Critical State Concern.
- S. Wilson told the attendees that the HAAS Center for Business Research and Economic Development is also a part of the Dewberry team and is currently developing a market analysis for Franklin County to help the County evaluate their resources and look towards their future.
- Mayor LaPaz suggested that the Carrabelle airport, which consists of a 4,000-foot runway and a 6,000-gallon aboveground fuel storage tank, is an existing asset, along with the City of Apalachicola's airport. With the improvement of additional hangers, these airports are an avenue for tourism, as the owners of small aircrafts tend to have disposable incomes.
- Mayor LaPaz also identified the City of Carrabelle's 6,700-square-foot, 15-acre industrial park as an underutilized asset.
- B. McCartney asked Mayor LaPaz if the city owned any port resources.
- Mayor LaPaz and Mayor Johnson indicated that both cities have marinas on navigable waters with 9 foot channels capable of accommodating large transient vessels.
- A. Pierce reminded the RAC that the County and cities must determine their priorities and then determine which pot of money is most appropriate for funding each priority. For example, Pot 3 is more focused towards job creation, while Pot 1 is very diverse.
- S. Wilson told the RAC that she would provide a graphic on the Franklin County RESTORE website to help visualize the eligible activities for each pot of money. This will help the RAC steer Pot 1 funds to places where there are funding gaps.
- A. Pierce also pointed out that the Triumph fund requires a 100 percent local match.
- S. Wilson told attendees that the BOCC recognized that there is not a lot of targeted industry in Franklin County. The BOCC stressed the need for training, both vocational and job specific, as well as on-the-job training.
- C. Brown asked if Pot 1 funding could be used to attend to housing needs. Specifically, by training residents to build homes.
- S. Wilson told attendees that social projects such as K-12 education are not eligible, but if the project could be framed as workforce development by training construction workers, than it may be eligible.
- B. McCartney suggested that aquaculture should be part of the needs assessment.
- S. Wilson reminded attendees that there are two parallel economic development studies ongoing in Franklin County, including the HAAS Center study and a regional (four-county) economic study being conducted by Chris Holley in the Department of Economic Opportunity.
- A. Pierce said that the study would address opportunities for creating a freight logistics zone to link local ports to the airport and Interstate 10.

- Mayor Johnson informed S. Wilson that the City of Apalachicola meeting minutes, which are available on the city website, document the city's economic development concerns and priorities and should be included in the Needs Assessment.
- R. Vroegop asked if all community health projects are ineligible.
- S. Wilson explained that they are indeed ineligible, unless the project is a recreational or infrastructure project. For example, projects in State Parks qualify as recreation projects, while projects in County Parks must be eligible under a different category, such as restoration of ecological resources.
- O. Amison asked S. Wilson to confirm that no schools or hospitals can apply for projects through Pot 1.
- S. Wilson explained that these entities could apply, but that their projects would have to be eligible under the RESTORE Act. She provided the example of Okaloosa County, where an elementary school applied to do a project where children learned to grow and plant shoreline grasses.
- J. Taylor informed S. Wilson that Franklin's Promise Coalition has documents concerning the importance of coastal resilience, need for seafood safety, studies on displaced seafood workers, and the need for job training for the County's youth that should be included in the Needs Assessment. J. Taylor expressed that there was already support from federal organizations including NOAA for the types of projects the Youth Conservation Corps is undertaking.
- J. Taylor expressed interest in seeing job training that would be applicable to state jobs such as hydrologic restoration. Projects such as the restoration of Tate's Hell and Money Bayou would need local skilled workers such as heavy equipment operators, surveyors, and fire fighters to do prescribed burns.
- O. Amison agreed that it is important to focus on the resources the County already has and keep them in the County. He gave the example of his wife who is a nurse, and how she travels outside of Franklin County for work.
- Mayor LaPaz suggested that it is important to target the youth – grades 3 through 5 – and open their minds to new career paths; show them that it is possible to do something other than what their parents and grandparents did for a living.
- J. Taylor stressed the importance of developing transferable skill sets.
- B. McCartney asked if the BOCC has established a definition for "county-wide benefit" so that the cities and other applicants could tailor their projects and requests.
- S. Wilson explained that the BOCC had discussed including the number of people the project benefits in the selection criteria, but no formal definition or number had been decided upon.
- S. Wilson reviewed the infrastructure component of the Needs Assessment and told attendees that she was shocked to learn that Franklin County has no emergency shelter and no properly functioning Emergency Operations Center (EOC). S. Wilson explained that this was a point of concern and high priority for the BOCC.
- B. McCartney offered that the Apalachicola Chamber of Commerce and Apalachicola Main Street would also be good sources of information for the second draft of the Needs Assessment.
- J. Taylor brought up the potential of a spat hatchery and nursery for reseeding the Apalachicola Bay and for economic development.

- S. Wilson gave the example of a successful new program in Mobile Bay that is funded through Auburn University and the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant.
- R. Vroegop commented that everyone is “holding their breath” on the Judge’s decision concerning the current water wars and inquired about ongoing monitoring efforts in the Apalachicola Bay.
- S. Wilson and A. Pierce explained that the Apalachicola Riverkeeper, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS), and SMART Committees actively monitor the bay, and that DACS opens and closes portions of the bay based on those findings.
- There was some discussion concerning whether there was any evidence that the water quality in the bay was improving and several were in agreement that based on the reports they had read, water quality was staying the same at best or still declining.
- S. Wilson told attendees that Commissioner Parrish had been speaking with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) officials and that the FWC was “coming around” to the idea of reinstating check stations for oyster harvest size limits on the bay, and that if an arrangement could be made, this was a high priority for the BOCC.
- B. McCartney asked how Pot 1 and Pot 2 projects would be coordinated.
- S. Wilson explained the somewhat confounding situation where the language of the RESTORE Act indicates that the MYIP must explain how the County intends to use or leverage other pots; however, the RAC is not supposed to discuss other pots during the direct comment (Pot 1) MYIP planning meetings.
- S. Wilson suggested that the needs assessment and the selection criteria could be applied to other funding sources.
- O. Amison asked if the cities got money directly through RESTORE.
- A. Pierce explained that the cities did not get their own money, and will have to participate through the MYIP process to get funding for their needs.
- Mayor LaPaz presented a predicament related to current funding for sewer upgrades in the City of Carrabelle. The Mayor explained that the City had secured funding from the Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWFMD) for installing sewer lines. It would be cost effective and efficient to install water supply lines at the same time, perhaps using Pot 1 funding, however, she voiced reluctance to hold off on the sewer line repairs to use NFWFMD funds as leveraging because it could be some time before Pot 1 funds become available.
- R. Harter suggested proposing a phased project in order to accomplish this.
- B. McCartney asked how long it would be until funds became available to Franklin County.
- S. Wilson explained that it would take approximately two years:
 - Eight to ten months to complete the MYIP;
 - Three to six months for Treasury approval;
 - Several months for the submission of individual grant applications; and
 - Additional time for Treasury to review those applications.
- S. Wilson also explained that the Treasury’s role as an auditing agency made them a less than ideal choice to handle grant distribution.

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- Some discussion ensued about the date of the next RAC meeting, but due to scheduling conflicts, the RAC and the Dewberry team resolved to schedule the meeting at a later time and provide public notice at that time.
- S. Wilson voiced her appreciation for the RAC and public input and assured those in attendance that the documents and resources they had brought to her attention would be integrated into the second draft of the Needs Assessment which would be posted on the Franklin County RESTORE website. She also reminded attendees that once the Needs Assessment was adopted, it would be part of a federally approved plan and could be put to many other uses.
- There were no further questions or comments.
- The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:26 p.m. ETZ.