

DRAFT Franklin County Restore Act Committee (RAC)
RAC Meeting Notes
Franklin County Courthouse Annex, Apalachicola, Florida
February 21, 2017, 5:00 p.m. ETZ

Attendees:

*Van W. Johnson Sr. – Mayor of Apalachicola
*Rose McCoy-Thomas – Citizen of Apalachicola, Former City Administrator (Retired)
*Brenda La Paz – Mayor of Carrabelle
Greg Kristofferson – Citizen of Carrabelle
Robin Rickel Vroegop – Ecotourism Industry
Bill McCartney – City of Apalachicola
Eric Lovestrand – University of Florida/ Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences County Extension
Office, Franklin County Extension Director
Falan Goff – Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University Cooperative Extension
Joe Taylor – Franklin's Promise Coalition, Executive Director
Alan Pierce – Franklin County RESTORE Coordinator
Stella Wilson – Dewberry, Inc.
Jade Marks – Ecology and Environment, Inc.

*Denotes official RAC member

Minutes:

- A. Pierce opened the meeting at 5:04 p.m. (ETZ) by welcoming those in attendance and noting that the full RAC was not in attendance, thus the meeting did not have a quorum and no votes would be made during the meeting. A. Pierce also commented that two RAC members, Lynn Martina and Ottice Amison, have missed two consecutive RAC meetings and that he would be making additional efforts to contact them and determine if they would continue to participate as RAC members or if new members should be appointed.
- A. Pierce then introduced S. Wilson, who would discuss the Franklin County Selection Criteria and RAC member scoring, as well as the next steps in the Multi-Year Implementation Plan (MYIP) process.
- S. Wilson thanked the RAC members for submitting their score sheets and explained that the Dewberry team will average the RAC scores once all score sheets are received and will report back to the RAC.
- S. Wilson explained that the updated Needs Assessment, which incorporates the RAC and public comments from the January 17, 2017 RAC meeting is currently going through the Dewberry quality control/quality assurance process and is now undergoing editing and formatting. Although the updated Needs Assessment was not available at the meeting, S. Wilson assured attendees that she would post the revised version on the Franklin County Restore website (www.franklincountyrestore.com) and send out an e-mail notifying the RAC of its availability.
- R. Vroegop asked if the RAC meetings were being advertised in the newspaper.

- S. Wilson explained that a RAC meeting advertisement is run the week before each meeting in the Thursday paper.
- B. La Paz inquired about “oyster recovery and/or improvement” which falls under “tourism” on the Selection Criteria. B. La Paz noted that intuitively, oyster recovery should fall under restoration; although the County does promote oysters.
- S. Wilson explained that in the RESTORE Act, the category is actually “tourism, recreational fishing, and local seafood.”
- A. Pierce added that oysters are a commodity that is developed as a product and sold in the County, which qualifies it as part of the “tourism” category.
- B. La Paz indicated that the logic was sound and suggested that budget statistics from the Tourist Development Council (TDC) Board (of which she is a member) may be helpful for determining how funds are distributed. B. La Paz noted that the TDC has a \$1.6 million annual budget, of which approximately \$1 million is spent on promotion. The TDC provides sustaining grants for seven non-profits each year and a fair amount of their revenues are put towards tourism development.
- S. Wilson agreed that this would be good information for the RAC to have moving forward.
- A. Pierce and B. La Paz briefly discussed the availability of TDC funds for the purpose of leveraging and B. La Paz indicated that although much of the money is already allocated, with advanced notice the TDC could provide some funding for RESTORE projects.
- B. McCartney indicated that he had e-mailed S. Wilson concerning additions to Needs Assessment, and that the Port of Apalachicola should be added as priority under “Update existing assets.” B. McCartney also asked why the Frog Pond was mentioned in the Needs Assessment.
- S. Wilson confirmed that she had received B. McCartney’s e-mail and the Port of Apalachicola would appear in the forthcoming updated Needs Assessment. She also indicated that the Frog Pond was removed from the Needs Assessment, as it was deemed too specific.
- B. McCartney also suggested that the Selection Criteria be amended to include something that focuses on “enhancing current state designations.” He gave the example of areas in the county that are designated as Enterprise Zones and Areas of Critical State Concern.
- S. Wilson made note of his suggestion.
- R. McCoy asked if S. Wilson could confirm that vocational training had been added to “workforce development and job creation” in the Needs Assessment.
- S. Wilson assured her that it had been and that she would double-check before the updated Needs Assessment was published on the Franklin County Restore website.
- The RAC discussed whether some Direct Component (“Pot 1”) funds could be used to pay down debt. However, S. Wilson reminded the RAC that debt services are not an eligible activity and that the Treasury had issued an official statement on this matter.
- B. McCartney asked A. Pierce if all RESTORE funds are reimbursable or if some of the money is available up front.
- A. Pierce explained that it is possible, though significantly more difficult to get money upfront. Everything has to be done through the County and then, like most grants, reimbursement will occur when milestones are achieved.

- A. Pierce also indicated that there may be an exception if a County can prove that they do not have sufficient funds to complete a project.
- A. Pierce also reminded attendees that the Treasury will only approve projects for funds that have been received to date.
- B. McCarthy asked about land acquisitions and if this was considered a one-time project.
- A. Pierce agreed, but reminded B. McCarthy and others that it may take up to six months to get the MYIP approved and that Franklin County was already a little behind their intended schedule.
- B. McCarthy pointed out that Okaloosa County submitted their MYIP in May and it was still not approved.
- A. Pierce suggested that MYIPs with fewer projects are likely to be approved faster; he gave the example of Gulf County which submitted an MYIP with one beach nourishment project.
- S. Wilson explained that in order to stay on schedule, the RAC should continue meeting more frequently. S. Wilson displayed a proposed schedule with meeting dates every two weeks.
- There was some discussion concerning the date and time of the next meeting, and the date of Wednesday March 8, 2017 at 4:00 p.m. was decided upon.
- S. Wilson explained that in March the Dewberry team will go back to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) and inform them of the RAC's progress, at which point they will ideally endorse, approve, or comment on the Selection Criteria and allow the process to move forward.
- B. La Paz asked if the BOCC will see the scores that the RAC decided upon and S. Wilson confirmed that they would.
- S. Wilson explained that the majority of the process thus far has been planning. Once the Selection Criteria is finalized, the Dewberry team will turn the Selection Criteria into questions on an application form where eligible applicants can submit their projects. Based on new Treasury guidance, the Dewberry team will aim to make the Franklin County application mirror the application that will be submitted to Treasury.
- B. McCarthy asked S. Wilson to clarify that this meant rather than having one application for the County and one for the Treasury, the application process would be consolidated, so that information could be transferred straight into the MYIP.
- S. Wilson confirmed that this was the plan; in other counties, the user-submitted information has appeared significantly different when submitted to the Treasury; however, the Dewberry team is hoping to generate an application that satisfies both what the County and the Treasury want at the same time.
- S. Wilson presented the proposed schedule (stressing that it was merely proposed and that dates may change based on RAC progress and availability), and reviewed the remaining steps in the process:
 - Once the Selection Criteria is approved and the project application is developed, the Project Portal will open.
 - The online portal is typically open for 30 days.
 - During that time the Dewberry team will host two public workshops, which will be heavily advertised. One workshop will occur just before the portal opens to help ensure all potential applicants understand how to submit their projects. The workshop will be an opportunity for people to collaborate, allowing people with complementary ideas to

- connect with partners with leveraging funds and institutional capacity to facilitate projects.
- A second workshop to address any questions or technical issues that come up during the application process will be held after the portal has been open for a while.
- The target dates for these workshops will depend upon the Selection Criteria development and approval.
- A. Pierce noted that it would be good for the RAC to stay on schedule so that projects can be selected before the County's budget is approved during the summer.
- S. Wilson mentioned that in her experience with other counties, everyone is generally in agreement until project scoring commences.
- S. Wilson explained that the Dewberry team will conduct a budget analysis and eligibility analysis for all projects and submit those results to the RAC to prevent the RAC from wasting their time evaluating projects that are ineligible for funding based on Treasury requirements.
- S. Wilson gave the example of the "Grasses in Classes" project submitted for the Okaloosa County MYIP; while many applicants will understand whether their project is eligible as a whole, they may not be able to evaluate whether every component of the project is eligible. In the "Grasses for Classes" project, the portion of the project that funded staff salaries ended up not being eligible.
- Additionally, the Dewberry team will complete a high level environmental review for each project, which will involve identification of obvious conflicts with federal documents and laws such as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act, etc.
- Every project will receive a final numeric score that will determine which projects go on the final project list. The BOCC will approve the list before the MYIP can be submitted.
- B. McCarthy asked if applicants will have the opportunity to give presentations on their projects.
- S. Wilson agreed that this was a good idea, and it would, in part, depend upon whether the RAC and BOCC think that enough information has been provided on the project application. If the application is well-written, a presentation will not be necessary. However, the RAC or the BOCC may choose to have the top three or top five applicants present their projects.
- B. McCarthy suggested the RAC may choose to use a monetary threshold to determine which applicants have to present. Those projects requesting more than \$100,000, for example, may be required to present on their projects.
- S. Wilson suggested that it may be wise to wait to until all applications have been received to decide whether to have presentations.
- A. Pierce said that he did not anticipate many small projects.
- B. La Paz asked if the RAC would review the applications together or individually.
- S. Wilson explained that the application portal will be live, so anyone can review projects after they are submitted. S. Wilson anticipates that it will take the Dewberry team four weeks to complete the eligibility, budget, and environmental reviews for all submitted projects and return those results to the RAC. Although the RAC and BOCC are welcome to look at the submitted projects at any time, the results of the initial review will likely impact the RAC's scoring.
- B. McCarthy asked if the Dewberry team would also fact-check all of the applications.

- S. Wilson confirmed that the Dewberry team would fact-check all applications. The review team consists of subject matter experts including environmental and restoration specialists at Dewberry, Ecology and Environment, Inc., and the University of West Florida Haas Center for Business Research and Economic Development, who are qualified to evaluate the economic qualifications of an application.
- R. McCoy asked if the Dewberry team has a process to authenticate an applicant's leveraging funds.
- S. Wilson explained that the Dewberry team will review what kind of leveraged funds the applicant has (in-kind vs cash assets) as well as the level of commitment from the funding agency. Leveraged funds will fall under three categories or tiers: the first tier included projects that are anticipated to receive funds, the second tier included projects that have a letter from the funding agency confirming the funds, and the third tier included projects with money currently in the bank.
- B. McCartney asked if salaries are eligible as an in-kind matching.
- S. Wilson explained that salaries are technically eligible and can also be used as in-kind matching. The only stipulation is the employee's time must be 100% dedicated to the MYIP project. In Okaloosa County, the salary they were attempting to fund through Pot 1 was the salary of a teacher who was also working part-time as the coordinator for the "Grasses in Classes" project. Unfortunately, because education is not an eligible activity, funding the teacher's salary was not eligible and had to be removed from the project.
- S. Wilson explained that after the MYIP is complete, it will undergo a 45-day public comment period. After which the RAC and BOCC will review and respond to the comments before the MYIP can be submitted to Treasury. Once the MYIP is approved, the County will still need to complete grant applications for Treasury.
- B. McCartney asked if there was any advantage or disadvantage to spending Pot 1 funds as they come in; for example, if the County receives \$5 million, they could chose to fund \$2.5 million worth of projects and reserve the other \$2.5 million for future use.
- S. Wilson indicated that reserving some funds for future use would be a wise decision. Some of the smaller counties, such as Jefferson and Dixie, which are receiving only a small sum of money are not doing any projects with their first year funds, but rather waiting for their RESTORE money to accumulate in order to complete a more meaningful project for their community.
- A. Pierce and S. Wilson explained that any time the County wants to access funds or amend their MYIP, they will have to go through the entire process again. This is one reason for the robust process the County has been undertaking; establishing the Needs Assessment and Selection Criteria will make the process simpler to execute.
- S. Wilson explained that although Gulf County only chose to fund a single project, they already have their list of additional projects ready to go because they went through the robust MYIP process.
- S. Wilson also commented that keeping with the aggressive schedule presented, the MYIP would still not be ready for submission until November.
- A. Pierce added that it could take Treasury three months to review and approve the MYIP, meaning that funds would not become available until 2018.

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- A. Pierce also pointed out that the individual grant applications for Treasury are more robust than the applications for inclusion in the MYIP. The County's contract with Dewberry is only for the MYIP development, thus the responsibility of submitting grant application will fall to the County. Some counties have asked the individual grantees to submit their own applications, but this is problematic because Treasury only wants to deal directly with County personnel. In fact, the Treasury has refused to speak directly to S. Wilson. Additionally, the Treasury's new website (<https://home.grantsolutions.gov/home/>) is known to have a number of technical issues that have been reported, but were never resolved.
- A. Pierce suggested that there would be a need for someone interested in gaining grant management experience to assist in the role of submitting individual applications.
- B. McCarthy asked if the BP funds were already distributed to the Treasury.
- S. Wilson and A. Pierce explained that although the funds are collectively referred to as the "BP funds," the money that the Treasury has in-house is from the Transocean and Anadarko settlements. BP is anticipated to make its first deposit in April 2017. The Treasury will receive all the money for every state and will distribute it. However, interest on funds for all three settlements will go toward other RESTORE "pots" (4 and 5).
- S. Wilson reiterated that the upcoming public workshops would be heavily advertised and that the community will be enthusiastically encouraged to participate.
- There were no further questions or comments. The meeting concluded at 5:45 p.m. ETZ.
- The presentation provided to the RAC has been posted at www.franklincountyrestore.com, the Franklin County website, and is available to the public.