

SWFRPC FY2012 BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

July 7, 2011

The SWFRPC's FY2012 Budget Committee held a meeting/conference call on July 7, 2011 at the offices of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council.

Committee Members

Councilwoman Teresa Heitmann, City of Naples
Vice Mayor Mick Denham, City of Sanibel
Commissioner Karson Turner, Hendry County BOCC
Ms. Laura Holquist, Lee County Governor Appointee
Mr. Bob Mulhere, Collier County Governor Appointee

Members

Mr. Johnny Limbaugh, FDOT, District One

Others

Mr. Ken Heatherington, SWFRPC Executive Director
Ms. Liz Donley, SWFRPC Legal Counsel
Mr. Jerry Murphy, Local Planner
Mr. Dan Trescott, DRI Coordinator
Ms. Janice Yell, Finance Manager
Mr. David Crawford, Principal Planner
Mr. Don Scott, Lee County MPO Director

Vice Mayor Denham called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. and then introductions were made.

Vice Mayor Denham started with stating that the first slide states the challenges for the Committee. The legislative position on the RPCs and the decision by the governor has made this particular situation arise where we need to make some changes. I felt that there needs to be some changes on how the Council's offices operated and has been operating. The Committee also needs to consider whether recommendations for this direction are appropriate.

Vice Mayor Denham stated that if any of the members want to send comments regarding any of the issues to send them to Ms. Donley.

Vice Mayor Denham then reviewed the slide regarding the Council's mission. Mr. Mulhere stated that he feels that the mission does need to be changed, but it is something that could be looked at down the road. Councilwoman Heitmann stated that she concurs.

Ms. Holquist stated that she feels that there should be a short term strategy and a long term strategy for the process. As far as the mission statement itself, it follows with what is going on throughout the state currently, as far as the three major areas for sustainability (environmental, economic and social).

Vice Mayor Denham then moved onto the slide entitled “New Direction.” He asked that the members write some comments down and send them to Ms. Donley on what they feel should be the Council’s direction.

Ms. Holquist stated what she has been hearing from other regions throughout Florida is that Southwest Florida doesn’t have a regional visioning effort and she feels that it needs to be incorporated into the Council. Also, the regional planning councils should be involved in pulling together the economic development efforts throughout the region. The reason that she is bringing it up is because the Governor went to Canada and he wanted representatives from each of the regions of the State to talk to some of the companies in Canada and he couldn’t find anybody from the Southwest Florida region to participate. There isn’t any identifiable entity to do the economic development. So her thoughts and direction is to incorporate visioning in the planning effort and also incorporate and bring together all of the economic development agencies within the region, similar to the MPO.

Ms. Holquist stated that in relation to both the MPO and NEP, she feels that the Council needs to look at why they are housed within the RPC and whether it is the proper place for them. Also, we need to conduct an assessment on how they fit into the Council’s mission statement.

Commissioner Turner stated that there needs to be a central face for Southwest Florida. He then noted that there was a special news presentation on hurricane preparedness done from WINK News and both Hendry County and Glades County emergency operations numbers were left off. This saddened him because WINK TV didn’t have someone to reach out to coordinate on hurricane preparedness.

Mr. Mulhere stated that he didn’t know who the Governor had reached out to within Southwest Florida to make a presentation to the Canadian companies, but he is the Chair of the Collier County EDC and he would have been more than happy to make a presentation. He then stated that he is pretty sure that he didn’t ask the Collier County EDC Director. He explained that there already is a regional entity that has generated funding for advertising and that advertising already exists, which includes Hendry, Glades, Lee and Collier. It is interesting that it doesn’t match the same geography as the Council because economically, for example Sarasota really aligns itself with the Tampa region. So he feels those are important questions.

Mr. Mulhere stated that he feels that the Council needs to include some sort of comprehensive analysis of what kind of services we need to provide as a Council that we can at least recoup some revenue for these costs for providing these services.

Vice Mayor Denham asked that both Ms. Holquist and Mr. Mulhere send their comments to Ms. Donley. He will then attempt to use that information and put it together into the Council’s “New Direction.”

Councilwoman Heitmann stated that the coordination of efforts, which the Committee started to discuss as the Council with the different efforts, whether it be the EDC or a private company in the training and education of green products, farming etc., there needs to be some sort of hub for mutual collaboration in order to eliminate the duplication of these programs, lack of publicity, and/or the minimal attendance and awareness of the efforts in the community.

Vice Mayor Denham stated that he feels that the Committee needs to review the items that we are addressing and make sure that they are appropriate and in line with the Council’s planning mission.

Because he feels that the Council should be in the process of deciding on the most important topics, because the Council can't do everything for everybody, we need to be somewhat more restrictive in all of the things that we tend to take on as a mission. Simply because we don't have the resources and the funds, so we need to be much more cautious.

Vice Mayor Denham went onto the proposed Council's Key Competences which the Council would promote to their customers/business developers.

Ms. Holquist stated that she feels that the Council's "New Direction" needs to be defined first before the key competences. Vice Mayor Denham agreed.

Vice Mayor Denham reviewed the proposed re-focusing effort. He stated that he feels that the Council needs to look more into the future and also work closely with our partners, which classifies as working with the counties and cities and also the customers (i.e., developers). What needs to be done differently is to work closely with those individuals in order to generate more income.

Mr. Mulhere stated that he agrees with Vice Mayor Denham. However, the cities and counties are both partners and potential customers. With respect to some of the core competences, there have been some constraints on staffing at the government local level to the degree which the Council can participate or assist in that process, i.e., planning, policy, etc. There may be an opportunity for the Council to recoup some reasonable costs if it can be demonstrated that the Council is the "go to" agency for that assistance. Vice Mayor Denham stated that he agrees with that statement.

Vice Mayor Denham stated that as a committee he feels that their role is to try to put together a statement to the Council about where we are going on these issues.

Ms. Holquist stated that we need to include the communities as well. Vice Mayor Denham stated that there is some image building needed as well.

Vice Mayor Denham suggested sending a letter to the Governor on who represents Southwest Florida. In the letter it should state what the Council does and who it represents.

Vice Mayor Denham stated that the next slide illustrated the proposed structure of the Council. It listed four principal functions and all of the functions had a strong focus on customers and partners.

Ms. Holquist stated that it seemed to her that the whole emphasis was put on planning and there needs to be a social economic side called community support.

Commissioner Turner asked for some examples of the social support network and how the Council should provide services and be a catalyst for it for the region. Ms. Holquist stated that she would incorporate the disaster planning and economic development support to different businesses and cities and counties, etc. For longer term, many regions within the state have visioning efforts and are incorporating the Florida Chamber's six pillars, social, environmental, and economic aspects and many of the regional planning councils are spearheading the effort.

Vice Mayor Denham asked the Committee if anyone had any questions regarding the organizational proposal. He stated that he doesn't feel that the Council needs a full-time HR staff member or a full-

time MI staff support. He feels that the Committee needs to review the size of the organization and also the management function of the organization to see whether it is appropriate.

Mr. Mulhere noted that from personal experience as his business had to downsize to address the economic downturn, there were some administrative functions that were unable to be continued and were ultimately out sourced. Human Resources and IT were the two departments which were out sourced. He recommended obtaining estimates for out sourcing those two services. He then stated that he feels that the Committee needs to look at the highest levels of management (Executive Director and Planning Director) and determine if both positions are necessary. Vice Mayor Denham stated that he has also posed that question, but is not willing to answer that question.

Ms. Holquist stated that she feels that Committee first needs to define the Council's new direction. Without knowing the Council's new direction it is hard to determine what is needed for staff. For example, the visioning effort will require IT support. Vice Mayor Denham stated that his argument would be that it is a short term project and then IT could be out sourced.

Councilwoman Heitmann stated that she feels that the Council's direction needs to be reviewed in detail.

Ms. Holquist noted that even though it is shown that the Executive Director is eliminated there is still a need for an Executive Director. Vice Mayor Denham stated that if there is a change made and there will be an Interim Executive Director for a period of time.

Vice Mayor Denham explained that after conversations with both the Finance Manager and Ms. Donley it was estimated that \$400,000 was the amount to focus on.

Mr. Mulhere stated that he agrees that there could be some potential savings with an Interim Executive Director, especially when there is going to be some new focus and direction moving forward and also finding a new Executive Director. Vice Mayor Denham explained that the reason for the \$400,000 was to cover the expense for the new Executive Director.

Ms. Holquist stated that she has had discussions over the last couple of days with developers throughout the community to get their input, thoughts and feelings. They have feel that the Council's planning staff could be cut back by at least one person. There was also a concern if there was the need for a Planning and/or Deputy Director of Planning.

Vice Mayor Denham asked Ms. Holquist to help put some thought into the administration of the Council on what she feels is important, what should be emphasized on or eliminated.

Commissioner Turner stated that he would like to receive a clear and concise answer on how many planners the Council has. He feels that due to the current economy and downturn in development that there should be a reduction in the planning staff.

Mr. Mulhere stated that he had also had conversations with developers within the community and he had received the same concerns and comments. The Committee needs to look at the Council's overall structure and organization.

Ms. Holquist stated that she heard it was mentioned at a previous Council meeting and also throughout the development community in regards to bringing in an Interim Executive Director. She wanted state that she feels Mr. Wayne Daltry would not be a good candidate for Interim Executive Director because if the Council needs to be brought to a new direction and into the future; by bringing back Mr. Daltry you would bring in the past and doesn't bring the Council into the future, the positive things, newest things, new direction, etc. Vice Mayor Denham stated that is certainly a suggestion. Ms. Holquist then noted that when Mr. Heatherington was named Executive Director it was a meeting which was advertised to be appointing an Interim Executive Director and Mr. Daltry had spoken with a number of Council members which he really supported Mr. Heatherington be given that post. She believes that she was one of the few members who voted against that because she felt that there needed to be a broader search and effort before a decision was made.

Vice Mayor Denham asked for the Committee members to give input on what they felt should be done from an interim view point and also from a longer term view point.

Commissioner Turner asked if Commissioner Mason has officially resigned. Ms. Donley stated that to this date staff has not received any official notification of resignation. Vice Mayor Denham stated to Commissioner Turner that Commissioner Mason should be encouraged to stay on at least for the next few weeks. Commissioner Turner agreed.

Mr. Mulhere stated that it was some merit with having a governor appointee since it provided some balance to the Executive Committee.

Mr. Mulhere volunteered to participate on the Executive Committee.

Commissioner Turner stated that he was planning on proposing to nominate Ms. Holquist. Ms. Holquist explained that her term has expired already and she is waiting to hear from the Governor's office on the status of term. She explained that she considered reapplying but she has not sent in the application.

Vice Mayor Denham stated that he will work closely with Ms. Donley and revise the presentation in accordance to the comments received.

Councilwoman Heitmann suggested to Vice Mayor Denham that the Committee review FRCA's Policy Board and determine the Council's actual relationship with FRCA and its Policy Board and the decisions that they are making. Because she doesn't recall any communications of what FRCA actually decided upon. For instance, FRCA just made a decision, which she is part of that board, to hire more support staff for lobbying in Tallahassee; she feels that there is something missing from that point of view in working with the other RPCs in cooperating with their efforts.

Commissioner Turner stated that he attended the FRCA meeting in Orlando and there were so many red flags. He was miss-notified of when the meeting was going to begin three different times and he couldn't find Mr. George Mazzarantani, the agenda had been adjusted and it did not have a set date and now he is being told that they want to hire more support staff. He said that a loud message has been sent from the legislature with a \$250,000 reduction in funding to the RPCs and it states to "wake up and justify your existence."

Mr. Limbaugh spoke on behalf of the CHNEP and Lee County MPO which are housed with the Council and pay to the indirect of the Council. He explained that the Lee County MPO's CAC has a subcommittee

who is looking at whether or not the Lee County MPO should or shouldn't continue to be housed within the Council. With the new direction, he feels that it may be appropriate to have the Committee restructure the Council as to what services those two entities need from the Council and is it still a good idea for them to still be housed within the Council. From the MPO's side, FDOT reimbursement to the MPO to the Council was approximately \$170,000 last fiscal year in indirect costs. That was the cost which the MPO pays for the services which they receive from the RPC. If the MPO decides to move to another entity it will be a big hit to the Council's overall indirect budget. The MPO is looking at ways to cut their indirect costs.

Vice Mayor Denham explained to Mr. Limbaugh that it was brought up at the beginning of the meeting and it will be taken into consideration.

Councilwoman Heitmann stated that she hopes that the MPO doesn't decide to leave the Council because she sees that there are benefits of having both the MPO and CHNEP housed within the Council. She would like to have either staff from the MPO, CHNEP or RPC give a presentation on what are the benefits of having the MPO and CHNEP being housed within the Council. She then stated that it would be important to have a list of the services for the Committee to review.

Mr. Don Scott stated that he would like to present those benefits to the Council because it seems that the last two meetings which he had attended, Sarasota County made it sound like the MPO is a burden on the Council and that it costs the Council money, so he feels that from that side it would be nice if he could present what the MPO pays and what he feels the benefits are. The MPO is still dealing with the CAC's recommendation of which is to have the MPO move out of the Council, but that is an MPO board decision at a later date.

Vice Mayor Denham asked Mr. Scott if he would be willing to help the Committee with that. Mr. Scott replied yes.

Vice Mayor Denham stated that he would like to review the revenue side of the equation at the next meeting.

Ms. Donley announced that the next two meetings have been scheduled for:

- Tuesday, July 12th at 12:00 p.m.
- Friday, July 15 at 12:00 p.m.

Mr. Mulhere asked if a comparison has been done with another RPC of similar size.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.