



Emerald Coast Regional Council

Meeting Minutes

GoToMeeting, 10:00 am

April 23, 2020

Members Present:

Karen "Kasey" Cuchens, Chairwoman
Mayor Dick Rynearson, Vice-Chair
Commissioner Tray Hawkins, Washington County
Mayor Pam Henderson, City of Callaway
Councilmember Sal Nodjomian, City of Niceville
Councilmember Skip Overdier, City of Destin
JD Smith, Governor Appointee
Mayor JB Whitten, City of Crestview

Others Present:

Austin Mount, ECRC Staff
Dawn Schwartz, ECRC Staff
Renee Quick, ECRC Staff
Mary Beth Washnock, ECRC Staff
Mary Jo Gustave, ECRC Staff
Ada Clark, ECRC Staff
Tammy Neal, ECRC Staff
Tiffany Bates, ECRC Staff
Brittany Ellers, ECRC Staff
Cory Wilkinson, HDR
Ben Faust, DRMP
Councilmember Bill Schaetzle, City of Niceville
Daryl Boudreaux, NWFLWMD
Maria Showalter, FDOT

Members Not Present:

Mayor Margo Anderson, City of Lynn Haven
Mayor Tracy Andrews, City of Chipley
Commissioner Steven Barry, Escambia County
Councilmember Elizabeth Brannon, City of Freeport
Councilmember Roger Brooks, City of Bonifay
Commissioner Robert Carroll, Bay County
Commissioner Robert Cole, Santa Rosa County
Brett Cyphers, Executive Director NWFL Water Mgmt. District
Commissioner William T. Dozier, Bay County
Shawn Hamilton District Director, FL Dept. of Environmental Protection
Commissioner Danny Glidewell, Walton County
Shawn Hamilton, FL DEP
Commissioner Carolyn Ketchell, Okaloosa County
Councilmember Charlotte McKamy, City of Mary Esther
Councilmember Robert McKnight, City of DeFuniak Springs
Commissioner Sam Parker, Santa Rosa County

Olen Pettis, FDOT
Kurvin Qualls, Governor Appointee
Commissioner Billy Radar, City of Panama City
Councilmember George Robertson, Town of Ponce De Leon
Councilmember Hector Solis, City of Panama City Beach
Commissioner Earl Stafford, Holmes County
Mayor Victor Starling, City of Vernon
Councilmember Andy Terhaar, City of Pensacola
Mayor Hayward Thomas, City of Paxton
Commissioner Doug Underhill, Escambia County
Commissioner Charles K. Windes, Jr., Okaloosa County

Call to Order

Chairwoman Cuchens called the meeting to order.

Call for Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance

The prayer was led by Commissioner Tray Hawkins and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Roll Call and Recognition of Call-In Members

Chairwoman Cuchens welcomed those in attendance and asked all in attendance to introduce themselves. Introductions were made.

Action Item 1: Resolution 2020-01 Emergency Operations Relating to COVID-19 – Austin Mount, ECRC Chief Executive Officer

Chairwoman Cuchens introduced Austin Mount, ECRC Chief Executive Officer. Mr. Mount asked for approval and adoption of Resolution 2020-01, supporting the Stay at Home Order Declaration by Governor Ron DeSantis related to COVID-19 and authorizing the utilization of virtual meeting capabilities in the interest of providing additional emergency protective measures related to the virus. Mr. Mount stated many cities and counties have adopted such measures affirming the governor's orders to operate virtually.

Councilmember Overdier moved to approve and adopt Resolution 2020-01, supporting the Stay at Home Order Declaration by Governor Ron DeSantis related to COVID-19 and authorizing the utilization of virtual meeting capabilities in the interest of providing additional emergency protective measures related to the virus. The motion was seconded by Mr. Smith and was unanimously approved.

Action Item 2: Approval of the November 20, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Chairwoman Cuchens asked for approval of the November 20, 2019 meeting minutes as written.

Mayor Whitten moved to approve the November 20, 2019 meeting minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Overdier and was unanimously approved.

Action Item 3: Approval of October 2019 – February 2020 Financial Statements

Chairwoman Cuchens asked for approval of the October 2019 – February 2020 financial statements as included in the agenda.

Mr. Smith moved to approve the October 2019 – February 2020 financial statements as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hawkins and was unanimously approved.

Action Item 4: Resolution 2020-02 Adoption of the Emergency Preparedness Plan & Continuity of Operations Plan – Austin Mount, ECRC Chief Executive Officer

Chairwoman Cuchens asked Mr. Mount to address this item. Mr. Mount explained that the Emergency Preparedness Plan & Continuity of Operations Plan, (COOP), provides instruction and guidance on how staff and ECRC would operate in instances such as, a natural, man-made or unforeseen event. Mr. Mount stated staff researched COOP's from other organizations and took best practices from them in addition to adapting them to ECRC's plan.

Mr. Smith moved to approve Resolution 2020-02, adopting the Emergency Preparedness Plan & Continuity of Operations Plan as written. The motion was seconded by Mayor Whitten and was unanimously approved.

Action Item 5: Resolution 2020-03 Approval of Interlocal Agreement with TPO's – Austin Mount, ECRC Chief Executive Officer

Chairwoman Cuchens asked Mr. Mount to explain. Mr. Mount stated this was an Interlocal Agreement between ECRC and the Florida-Alabama TPO, the Okaloosa-Walton TPO, the Bay County TPO, along with Holmes County and Washington County designating ECRC as the designated Regional Transportation Area to serve the regional needs of Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Bay, Holmes, and Washington counties, per section 339, *Florida Statute*. Mr. Mount explained the ECRC currently manages the three Metropolitan Planning Organizations across the Florida Panhandle. The three TPO's, Florida-Alabama TPO, Okaloosa-Walton TPO and Bay County TPO, entered an interlocal agreement to create the Northwest Florida Regional Transportation Planning Organization (NWFLRTPO), and the Bay Gulf Holmes Washington Partnership (BGHWP), to be managed by the ECRC staff. The purpose of these entities was to create a Regional Transportation Area in order to apply for and receive certain FDOT funding. Due to combined lack of work products from dwindled funding and applications, the NWFLRTPO and BGHW Partnership find it difficult to obtain a quorum on a regular basis, thus preventing progress.

Mr. Mount stated in order to remedy the situation and streamline the processes and also relieve some administrative burden on the ECRC, staff suggests that ECRC become the designated Regional Transportation Area. This will assist in the ability to establish a quorum and provide for more efficient use of staff time, while lessening administrative burdens.

Mr. Smith moved to approve Resolution 2020-03, an interlocal agreement with the Florida-Alabama TPO, the Okaloosa-Walton TPO, the Bay County TPO, Holmes, and Washington Counties designating the Emerald Coast Regional Council as the Regional Transportation Planning Organization and the Regional Transportation Area. The motion was seconded by Councilman Overdier and was unanimously approved.

Action Item 6: Resolution 2020-04 Approval of Interlocal Agreement with Counties – Austin Mount, ECRC Chief Executive Officer

Chairwoman Cuchens asked Mr. Mount to present and explain. Mr. Mount asked for approval of an interlocal agreement between Bay, Escambia, Holmes, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton and Washington counties, and Emerald Coast Regional Council (f/k/a West Florida Regional Planning Council). Mr. Mount explained that this interlocal agreement is being proposed to supersede any previous interlocal agreements which may or may not have been approved by the seven counties within the boundary of ECRC.

Mr. Mount went on to state the primary purpose and intent of the interlocal agreement is to satisfy a request from Escambia County to place ECRC on a "partner agency" list via interlocal agreement for budgeting and financial purposes. By being placed on the county's partner agency list, it allows

Escambia County to document the type of entity ECRC is, the various aspects and services in which ECRC is mandated and simplify the county's budgeting process.

Mr. Mount explained that not only will the interlocal agreement solidify the creation of ECRC in addition to state statute, it will from time to time, have benefits to ECRC operations to function by virtue of an agency created by interlocal agreements with the counties. All nine other RPC's in the state have interlocal agreements with their member counties; ECRC does not. Mr. Mount stated that by entering the interlocal agreements with the counties, the name change to Emerald Coast Regional Council from West Florida Regional Planning Council will be reaffirmed.

Chairwoman Cuchens asked Mr. Mount if he planned to attend the county government meetings in order to present the interlocal agreement. Mr. Mount replied he would be attending, depending on Governor DeSantis' Executive Orders, either virtually or in person. Chairwoman Cuchens asked Mr. Mount about the anticipated timeframe of accomplishing this. Mr. Mount replied that he anticipated it could take anywhere from 60 – 120 days to complete the process. Chairwoman Cuchens asked Mr. Mount to provide feedback and the progress made at the next ECRC board meeting.

Chairwoman Cuchens asked for comments from the board. Mayor Whitten asked if all counties will be notified of the proposed interlocal agreement and if so, what are the comments? Mr. Mount responded that once Escambia County approved the agreement and there were no substantial changes to be brought before the ECRC board, Mr. Mount would then bring forth to other county commissions in the region. Mr. Smith and Commissioner Hawkins agreed to the importance the agreement was for budgeting purposes and to explain the role of the ECRC. Board members agreed that a face-to-face meeting would be well received.

Mayor Henderson moved to approve Resolution 2020-04, approving the Emerald Coast Regional Council entering into an interlocal agreement with Bay, Escambia, Holmes, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton and Washington counties outlining and solidifying the requirements and duties of the Emerald Coast Regional Council. The motion was seconded by Mr. Smith and was unanimously approved.

Information Item 7: Celebrate the Wins – Austin Mount, ECRC Chief Executive Officer

Chairwoman Cuchens asked Mr. Mount to present the item. Mr. Mount introduced Ms. Mary Jo Gustave, ECRC Public Involvement Manager and Ms. Brittany Ellers, ECRC Public Involvement Coordinator. Ms. Ellers presented a video highlighting the ECRC staff's status or operating on a virtual basis during the current pandemic of COVID-19 and demonstrating their gratitude.

Information Item 8: ATMS/ITS Presentation – Ben Faust, VP DRMP, Inc.

Chairwoman Cuchens introduced Ben Faust, VP DRMP, Inc. Mr. Faust presented information on a Florida-Alabama TPO project called Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), also referred to as Advanced Traffic Management Systems (ATMS). Mr. Faust explained that ITS is the blanket term for deploying technology into transportation networks; ATMS is the science and practice of improving traffic by utilizing the ITS. Mr. Faust went on to explain that after conferring with FDOT and learning that the project had not advanced due to the lack of a lead agency, the Florida-Alabama TPO, by unanimous vote, agreed to assume the role to deliver the project.

Mr. Faust stated the strength of ATMS lies in the collection and use of big data. This information can be housed in a TMC (Traffic Management Center) and accessed through powerful dashboards for a variety of purposes. The system can also be used to create jobs and private investment to exemplify the efforts of the city/county/TPO.

Mr. Mount added that delivering the ITS/ATMS project will ultimately be the backbone for launching ECRC into the next wave of business and services for the future, a future of close, integrated relationships with the cities and counties. Mr. Mount went on to say with this system, the region will be prepared for autonomous vehicles, be effective towards achieving the “vision zero” fatality goal and be looked at as the resource center for all partner agencies.

Chairwoman Cuchens recognized Maria Showalter, representing FDOT. Ms. Showalter stated the Florida Department of Transportation and its partners are updating the Florida Transportation Plan (FTP). The FTP is a plan that affects every resident, business, and visitor. Ms. Showalter will be sending out information to the cities and counties to solicit input.

Information Item 9: Audit Communication Letter – Austin Mount, ECRC Chief Executive Officer

Chairwoman Cuchens asked Mr. Mount to present. Mr. Mount stated this item is for review and no action is needed. The audit communication letter was sent by Saltmarsh, Cleaveland & Gund, the auditing firm procured by the board, to confirm the audit is currently underway. Mr. Mount stated the audit will be presented at the next board meeting for approval.

Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:17 a.m.