

**RESTORE ACT  
Public Meeting  
April 23, 2013**

**Attendees:** Ryan Bell, Board of County Commissioners  
Shenley Neely, Board Employee Representing County's Interest  
Chris Cowart, School Board Representative  
Marilyn Ladner, Higher Education Institution  
Leslie Sturmer, Aquaculture  
David Pieklik, Economic Development Representative  
Bruce Wilson, Tourism Industry Representative  
Andrew Gude, Citizen Representative  
Vacancy, Development/Job Creation Representative  
Bill Williams, SCG Governmental Affairs  
Fred Moody, County Coordinator

Comm. Ryan Bell opened the meeting at 3:00 p.m. The invocation was given by Chris Cowart followed by the Pledge to the Flag.

Mr. Bill Williams provided an update on Senate Bill 1024 that was introduced by Senator Gaetz and sponsored by Senator Gardner. Mr. Williams explained the Senate bill creates a non-profit council under the Department of Economic Opportunity ("DEO") and is headed by a non-elected board to control any funds that develop from lawsuits that come from outside the RESTORE Act. Mr. Williams said the funds in question are those that are directed to the eight (8) hardest hit counties. The funds would be used for economic development and the council would determine who received the funds and how they would be used with no rules developed by DEO or control by DEO. Mr. Williams explained the council would set up a 30 year cycle with 1 percent of the money for administrative management. Mr. Williams said that there were numerous parties speaking at the committee meeting opposing the bill with a specific request for lines 1259 and 1260 to be stricken. Mr. Williams said a representative for US. Senator Bill Nelson's office addressed the committee and advised that it was the intent of Senator Nelson and those who prepared the federal RESTORE Act bill for the funds to go directly to the counties that were affected and that the state could not redirect federal dollars. Mr. Williams indicated that Senate Bill 1024 was addressing the 75 percent of funding for the eight (8) counties and not the 25 percent which is to be distributed among the 15 coastal counties. Mr. Williams advised that he would be providing copies of the Senate Bill 1024 with the amendment to the RESTORE Act Committee by Friday.

Ms. Leslie Sturmer explained she had attended a meeting for the Florida Sea Grant Restoration headed by Doug Darling and John Hankinson of Gulf Coast Economic Resource Restoration and they defined the key points of the money referred to as Pot 1, Pot 2 and Pot 3. Ms. Sturmer said the explanation was that Pot 1 and Pot 3 money did not have a deadline but that Pot 2 money required the projects to be submitted by July. Ms. Sturmer said it was her understanding that the Pot 1 funds stayed in escrow until the county

expended the funds and that Pot 2 required an initial plan by July and was a competitive process. Ms. Sturmer said the Pot 2 funds were very critical to the coastline for shellfish restoration and a concern for her, however, it appeared the RESTORE Act Committee should be focused on the funds coming through Pot 1.

Mr. Williams agreed this as the process and that the Department of Environmental Protection ("DEP") under the auspice of Pot 3 had requested all projects be submitted to them to be included in the state plan that they have been charged with formulating. Mr. Williams said DEP had sent out inquiries for submissions from state agencies, county and municipal governments, private enterprise, colleges and universities. Mr. Williams said this plan being prepared by DEP will be submitted to federal government for the July 6 deadline for the Pot 2 funds. Mr. Williams clarified that the County receives the Pot 1 money no matter what the settlement is but recommends to review projects and if there is a possibility for a state-wide project it may be a suitable submission for Pot 2 and Pot 3 funds.

Ms. Sturmer commented that the rural counties are the ones that do not have a lot of the information needed and need to join with stakeholders, water management districts, and universities to put their plans together. Ms. Sturmer said from her viewpoint the Big Bend area was more of an area to focus on for Levy and Dixie counties on the oyster farming but including Taylor county for more of the Big Bend area. Ms. Sturmer said she felt South Florida was a different area from the Big Bend area and would prefer to focus on the Big Bend area as being more suitable for Levy county's coastal area.

Mr. Williams explained South Florida has had many years to formulate plans for the Everglades and congressionally authorized estaurine projects, however, some of these projects have been submitted and have not addressed economic issues, tourism or increase in work forces. Mr. Williams said the County can use these projects as models and needs to focus on stakeholders to begin compiling projects and then determine which projects fit Pot 2 and Pot 3 funds and still have the Pot 1 funds for programs that do not meet guidelines for Pot 2 and Pot 3 funds.

Ms. Marilyn Ladner expressed concern from her position as Provost of College of Central Florida and projects that may come before the Committee which she may have a conflict. Chairman Bell clarified that she would not be able to vote on those issues in which she had a conflict. Ms. Ladner said she did not want the college to be precluded from Pot 1 funds. Chairman Bell explained the Committee is an advisory board and the Board of County Commissioners would make the final decision on the funds in Pot 1 for expenditures.

Mr. Williams said the committee needed to look at existing data and plans as at this time there are still no federal rules and recommended to start with the water management district.

Mr. Fred Moody said Levy County is intersected and that Suwannee River Water Management District is the western portion of the county and Southwest Florida Water

Management District begins with CR 337 up to the Alachua County line. Mr. Williams said the water management districts may be able to provide data for projects. Mr. Williams said an agreement is needed to use those projects that water management districts, the university and any other agency that may have plans already prepared.

Ms. Sturmer explained she had worked on several projects with Suwannee Valley Partnership, Levy County Soil and Water District, Oystermen's Association, the Aquaculture Association in series of meetings since 2004 looking at several funding opportunities.

Mr. Williams requested formal action from the Committee to formally request submittals for projects.

Mr. Andrew Gude explained the County is behind and at the federal level they manage land and water and their projects are for purchasing land conservation easements, eco-system services with the intent to purchasing land into perpetuity, retaining the forests and protecting the eco-systems. Mr. Gude said they do not yet have an approved list. Mr. Gude suggested looking at the 57 projects that have been compiled by DEP and select those that may benefit the county.

With further discussion among the members of the Committee, Suwannee River Water Management District, Southwest Florida Water Management District, College of Central Florida, University of Florida, Lower Suwannee Wildlife Refuge, U.S. and FL Fish and Wildlife state and federal lands, state preserves under DEP, land and water managers, regional planning councils, Withlacoochee Regional Planning Council, Citrus, Marion & Levy Workforce, Tourist Development Council, Nature Coast Business Development Council, Pure Water Wilderness, timber owners Plum Creek, Usher Land & Timber, Andrews Timber, Central Florida Electric Co-operative, Duke Energy (f/k/a Progress Energy) and any agriculture consortiums as possible stakeholders were discussed.

Mr. Williams said a list would be compiled and a formal letter from the Chair could be sent for submittal of possible plans. Chairman Bell said the individual Chambers of Commerce would be beneficial in getting the information to the private industry.

Chairman Bell added that Team Levy had a vision for economic growth for the County and that Ms. Ladner and Mr. Pieklik had this information. Chairman Bell said a press release would be the best way to notify the Chambers.

Ms. Ladner said an ambassador group would be able to notify people and to let them know they had an equal opportunity for their plans.

Mr. Williams said that a two page summary request is on the DEP website and can be viewed for information on how DEP is requesting projects be submitted. Mr. Williams said he would also provide a sample copy of Pasco County's grade sheet with weighted values which show the ten (10) criteria points and shows which project may best fit Pot 1, 2 or 3.

Mr. Moody said he had contacted Ms. Mills of A & N and after careful consideration she declined to accept a seat on the RESTORE Act Committee due to being unable to take further commitments. Chairman Bell recommended contacting Rusty Skinner of Workforce and see if he had a recommendation. Ms. Ladner agreed to contact Mr. Skinner to see if he could delegate someone from the Ocala office for the vacant seat.

Chris Cowart moved to approve the minutes of the April 9, 2013 meeting, second by Leslie Sturmer and the MOTION CARRIED.

Mr. Williams said he was recommending preparing a Request for Proposal ("RFP") for an engineer. Chairman Bell said the Board of County Commissioners placed a cap on funds to be expended and wanted to see more progress before addressing the issue for additional funds. After further discussion it was decided to proceed with preparing a RFP for a project overview to be prepared and have competitive projects.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:24 p.m.

**RESTORE ACT COMMITTEE**

  
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Ryan Bell, Chairman