

**RESTORE ACT
Public Meeting
July 16, 2013**

Attendees: Ryan Bell, Chairman, Board of County Commissioners
Chris Cowart, Vice-Chairman, School Board Representative
Marilyn Ladner, Higher Education Institution (college/university)
David Pieklik, Economic Development Representative
Vacancy, Development/Job Creation Representative
Vacancy, Citizen Representative
Fred Moody, County Coordinator
Anne Bast Brown, County Attorney
Amber Davis, Statecraft

Absent: Leslie Sturmer, Aquaculture
Bruce Wilson, Tourism Industry Representative
Andrew Gude, Citizen Representative

CALL TO ORDER WITH INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

Comm. Ryan Bell opened the Town Hall meeting of the Levy County RESTORE Act Advisory Committee at 6:05 p.m. at the Inglis Community Center. Mr. Chris Cowart gave the invocation followed by the Pledge to the Flag.

Town Hall Meeting, Inglis, FL

Chairman Bell welcomed all attendees and requested them to sign in and to identify themselves when they addressed the Committee. Chairman Bell advised that there are two (2) vacancies on the Committee and anyone interested is welcome to apply. Chairman Bell said the vacancies were Workforce Development/Job Creation and Citizen Representative. Chairman Bell said the Committee is governed by the Sunshine and the meetings are public and minutes are taken. Chairman Bell explained how the RESTORE Act Advisory Committee was formed by the Board of County Commissioners to be a point of contact for the public, and to review project applications for Pot 1 funds. Chairman Bell said the Committee could assist in directing projects to the appropriate Pots for funding that may be better suited for other funds available through other funding Pots controlled by state and federal agencies. Chairman Bell introduced Ms. Amber Davis, consultant for the County.

OVERVIEW RESTORE ACT

Ms. Amber Davis said there will be two (2) more Town Hall meetings on Tuesday, August 13 in Williston at the City Hall and August 23 in Fanning Springs at the City Hall . They will start at 6:00 p.m. Ms. Davis explained the purpose of the Town Hall meetings is to share the information that has been received

Ms. Davis explained the establishment of the Levy County RESTORE Act Advisory

Committee and the need to be aware of various funding methods with the Committee acting as the liaison to educate the public on the issues that will affect Levy County and funding opportunities. Ms. Davis explained how the funds will be penalties imposed on BP from the oil spill which triggered the Clean Water Act and the subsequent enactment of the RESTORE Act which provides funding to the five (5) affected states for ecological, environmental damages. Ms. Davis said this legislation was handled differently in Florida where a percentage of the funds will go directly to the affected counties who sustained actual damage from the oil spill and the coastal counties who were indirectly affected. Ms. Davis emphasized that the funds and the amount allocated will not be known until the completion of the criminal trial in Louisiana.

Ms. Davis presented a power point which explained the percentages on the breakdown of the possible funds to be expected from penalties and fines and how those funds can be applied to local, regional and state-wide projects.

Ms. Davis explained that the funds in Pot 1 would be local funds that will be specifically for Levy County and that the RESTORE Act Advisory Committee has been charged with informing the public on how those funds can be applied for, creating an application and process for scoring the projects, reviewing and recommending specific projects to the Board of County Commissioners for approval. Ms. Davis said in response to an inquiry by Mr. Drew White, that the funds will remain in a trust fund held by the federal government and will be disbursed as projects are approved and will not be held in County coffers. Ms. Davis further clarified that the funds received for Pot 1 (Local funds) will be a specific amount allocated to the affected counties by a formula that has been devised relating to population, severity of impact and distance from the spill site.

Ms. Davis further described how the funds will be divided and how the 4 pots of funds will be controlled with Pot 1 being local, Pot 2 federal, Pot 3 state and Pot 4 federally controlled headed by NOAA and US Fish and Wildlife for establishment of Centers of Excellence. Ms. Davis explained that the State of Florida has structured the division of funds differently from the other states which were affected whereas funds are coming directly to the affected counties. Ms. Davis said in the four (4) other affected states the funds will go to the state for disbursement and there will be no local input on the use of the funds.

Mr. Drew White inquired who was the representative for Levy County for the Gulf Consortium. Chairman Bell explained he was the representative for the County and Mr. Fred Moody was the alternate. Chairman Bell said there have been meetings almost every month with some alternating and the meetings are located in one of the affected gulf coastal counties.

Mr. Drew White asked if there was any evidence of oil coming into contact with Levy County shoreline and Ms. Davis explained that DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) was not releasing any records on the contamination.

Chairman Bell explained that funding will be directly affected by a matrix formula that has been designed and is greatly weighted. Chairman Bell added that the consultant is assisting the County since larger counties have shovel-ready projects. Chairman Bell said there are expenditures, however, when funds become available the County should be able to recoup costs. Chairman Bell said Pot 2 is competitive whereas Pot 1 has no time line on expending funds that are received. Chairman Bell added that the County needs to be ready with proposed projects and the Committee is trying to pool applications as some non-profit and government projects may not be suited for Pot 1 funds and should be submitted for Pot 2 or Pot 3 funds.

Ms. Davis said Pot 2 funds are more of a regional approach and that Florida is competing with the other affected states for those funds. Ms. Davis explained that partnering with other counties or agencies will make a project more competitive. Ms. Davis reiterated that there still are no treasury rules and it should be understood that everything is progressing on what is known to date and when the treasury rules are released the projects may have to be revised to meet those rules. Ms. Davis reviewed the 10 categories that a project will be scored on. Ms. Davis said the application is basically three (3) parts in which an applicant will describe the project, self-rank the project and reflect how the project meets the criteria. Ms. Davis said the information is available on the County website and includes the application and schedule of meetings. Ms. Davis said the project is not expected to meet all of the criteria and the goal is for the selection of the most beneficial and solid project. Ms. Davis added that there will be a workshop on September 10 at the College of Central Florida, Chiefland location from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. and interested applicants can discuss their project application with a committee member or consultant. The application will then be submitted on line at levyrestore@gmail.com. Ms. Davis said the first group of applications will be reviewed and scored by the Committee by November 15.

Mr. Jack Schofield inquired if the applications submitted become public records. Chairman Bell said the applications will become public record and an application may be submitted for all 4 pots of funding. Chairman Bell said the goal of the Committee is to get as much information as possible in order to obtain the most benefit to the County.

Ms. Davis explained that the Pot 2 funds are federally controlled and the Restoration Council will review and award applications and will consist of large scale regional projects heavily weighed for environmental restoration; Pot 3 funds will be controlled by the state and the Gulf Consortium which consists of appointees from the 23 affected counties is the executive body and will be looking for projects which improve ecosystems or the economy. Ms. Davis said those projects must be consistent with established comprehensive plans and the governor and federal council will have to approve to prevent competition with federal projects. Ms. Davis said the funds for Pot 4 is for research and mitigation strategies and intends to establish Centers of Excellence in each of the five (5) states and funding of projects will be controlled by NOAA and U.S. Fish and Wildlife.

Chairman Bell clarified that funds from Pot 1 will not be restricted and could be used

for matching funds for grants through CDBG, USDA or also projects submitted to Pot 2 and Pot 3.

Mr. Dan Hilliard commented on the criteria and how a project could be an economic enhancement and protecting of the environment.

Chairman Bell explained that the Committee would be looking at all projects submitted and the projects do not have to be tied to the oil impact, but that sustainability will weigh heavily.

Mr. Fred Moody explained that the initial costs to establish the Committee is being funded by the Board of County Commissioners and that a Request for Proposals (RFP's) for engineering services has just been completed and the Board of County Commissioners will interview the proposers on July 30.

Chairman Bell had to leave the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Vice Chairman Chris Cowart responded to an inquiry by Mr. Drew White that the Pot 1 funds is a designated source and will be awarded based on a formula that has been created and will not be impacted or reduced by projects being submitted to the other Pots for funding.

Ms. Davis reiterated that the schedule of meetings were July 23 at the College of Central Florida, Cheifland location, August 13 at the Williston City Hall, August 23 at the Fanning Springs City Hall and the workshop on September 10 at the College of Central Florida, Cheifland location.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

RESTORE ACT COMMITTEE

Ryan Bell, Chairman