

NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL (NCFRPC)

MEETING NOTES (UNOFFICIAL)

January 22, 2015

**ROBERT W. WILFORD, ALACHUA CITY COMMISSIONER
ALACHUA CITY COMMISSION LIAISON TO NCFRPC**

The monthly meeting of NCFRPC was conducted on January 22, 2015, at the Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites in Lake City. Ms. Allison Megrath, AICP, Manager, Real Estate, Plum Creek Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT), made a presentation to the council concerning the proposed "North Florida Intermodal Park," which is also certified as a "Mega Industrial Park." The site is located east of Lake City with three miles of frontage property situated just south of Highway 90 in Columbia County. Ms. Megrath reported that:

- Plum Creek, whose primary business is to grow, harvest, and sell timber, is the largest land owner in the United States with over 6.8 million acres and 1,200 employees. Its corporate offices are located in Seattle, Washington.
- Plum Creek was the first company in the nation to exceed mandatory guidelines to ensure all of its timberlands were certified by a third party to meet the "Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)" standard which is a comprehensive forestry management program that combines sound business practice and adherence to environmental responsibility. The SFI program is a comprehensive system of principles, objectives, and performance measures developed by professional foresters, conservationists, scientists, and others, which combines the perpetual growing and harvesting of trees with the long-term protection of wildlife and soil and water quality. In addition, the SFI program values the support of conservation groups to include The Conservation Fund, NatureServe, Ducks Unlimited, and the American Bird Conservancy. Labor groups, family forest owners, scientists, and universities nationwide also are supportive of the SFI program and believe in its ability to supply wood adequately while ensuring the preservation of forestland for the future.
- Since 1989, Plum Creek has committed nearly 1.5 million acres of its lands across America to conservation and its foundation provided \$1,847,000 in financial support to nonprofit organizations in 2013.
- Plum Creek entered Florida in 2001 when it merged with The Timber Company (Georgia-Pacific Timberlands). Currently staffed by 20 employees, the company:
 - has more than 418,000 acres of forestland in 21 counties in the state,
 - planted more than 6.9 million seedlings in the state in 2013,
 - provided more than \$217,000 in grants to Florida's community organizations and \$12,000 in scholarships to Florida students in 2013, and
 - designated more than 98,000 acres in the state to conservation in the past 14 years.
- During the growing cycle, which takes an average of 25 years for pine trees to grow from planting the seeds to harvesting, the young trees provide a habitat for Florida's native wildlife such as bears, turkeys, deer, and migrating birds. In addition, Plum Creek's recreational lease programs make most of the company's Florida lands accessible for hiking, bird watching, fishing, and seasonal hunting.
- The expansion of the Panama Canal will greatly increase the flow of international goods through Florida which will provide an unprecedented economic development opportunity for the region by attracting various industries, supporting job

creation, and serving as an inland port for the Southeastern United States. As a result, the North Florida Intermodal Park has designated 500 acres as a “Rural Area of Opportunity (RAO)” catalyst site, “Rural Enterprise Zone,” and future “Foreign Trade Zone Magnet” site for JAXPORT as an “Inland Port or Intermodal Logistic Center (ILC).” The park in Columbia County is one of three RAOs in the state and is named the “North Central RAO.”

- The 500-acre catalyst site is a part of the larger 2,622-acre site that is designated as a “Mixed-Use District” with approval for up to eight million square feet of industrial use, 100,000 square feet of commercial land use, and 300 dwelling units.
- An ILC’s general purpose is to relieve transportation congestion by providing a hub to sort and process goods as a point of transfer. Columbia County is a prime strategic location to serve these emerging trade flows due to the close proximity to two interstates (I-10 and I-75), two railroads (CSX and Norfolk Southern), an airport, and location within 60 miles of a deep sea port with JAXPORT which is designated as a “Foreign Trade Zone.” The ILC concept was developed with the recognition that the Port of Jacksonville will need facilities away from the coast to support the increased freight traffic that will result from the aforementioned expansion of the Panama Canal which is scheduled to be completed in 2016.
- Because of the previously noted economic development designations, which are aimed at creating jobs that will benefit a 14-county region in North Florida, businesses that locate at the site in Columbia County may qualify for a variety of tax credits and incentives. It is envisioned that the jobs created will attract both semi-skilled and skilled workers to include GED and high school graduates, vocational school graduates, college undergraduates, and college advanced degree graduates up to and including the Ph.D. level. The fourteen counties comprising the “North Central RAO” are: Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Putnam, Suwannee, Taylor, and Union.

COMMISSIONER WILFORD NOTE: Although Alachua County is not included in the designated 14-county North Central RAO, residents of the City of Alachua will likely be able to benefit from this ambitious jobs creation effort since it is only an estimated 30- to 45-minute commute to the work site in Columbia County from all locations in Alachua’s city limits. In addition, other residents of Alachua County should be able to take advantage of the jobs created by this project provided they are able to make the estimated 45- to 60-minute commute to the work site depending on their specific location within the county. The commute to the work site for residents of High Springs, Lacrosse, and Waldo is relatively short while residents of Gainesville and Newberry have an approximate driving time of 45 minutes. Residents of Archer, Hawthorne, Micanopy, and the unincorporated areas of Alachua County south and west of Gainesville have driving times closer to 60 minutes (estimated).

- Strategic partnerships have been forged with a number of entities at the local, regional, state, and national level in the pursuit of this ambitious project. A partial list of partners include: State of Florida, North Central RAO, Columbia County, City of Lake City, Plum Creek, CSX, JAXPORT, and Florida Power & Light. It is anticipated that many more partnerships will be forthcoming as the project moves forward.

Minutes of Previous Council Meeting

A motion was approved to accept the December 11, 2014, minutes.

Consent Agenda

Financial Reports for Previous Council Meetings. The financial reports for November 2014 and December 2014 were reviewed. No “red flags” were noted and the condition of the council remains sound. A motion was approved to accept the November 2014 and December 2014 financial statements.

Purchase Order for Council Services. The Florida Division of Emergency Management contracted with the Northeast Florida Regional Council to coordinate the statewide update of regional evacuation studies. This task will focus on updating transportation evacuation data using “Transportation Interface for Modeling Evacuation” software. A motion was approved to authorize the council to provide services pursuant to a purchase order with the Northeast Florida Regional Council to assist in updating the “Statewide Hurricane Evacuation Study” for a fixed-fee amount of \$8,000.

Transportation Disadvantaged Program Local Coordinating Board Appointment. A motion was approved to appoint Commissioner Marion Poitevint as Chair of the Gilchrist County Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board.

Chair Report

Introduction of New Council Members. The following new members were introduced: Ken Cornell (Alachua County Board of County Commissioners), Scarlet Fresina (Columbia County Board of County Commissioners), and Lee Pinkoson (Alachua County Board of County Commissioners).

Resolution of Appreciation. A resolution was approved recognizing Commissioner Rusty DePratter, Columbia County, for his commitment and concern for the growth and development of the North Central Florida area since January 2011.

Committee Appointments. A motion was approved to ratify the appointments of Commissioner Patricia Patterson to the Clearinghouse Committee and Commissioner Scarlet Frisina as Vice Chair to the Program Committee.

Committee Reports

Executive

A resolution was approved recognizing the 50th anniversary of the City of Fanning Springs. The city is located at the site of Fort Fanning which was built in 1836 and was named after Major Alexander Campbell Wilder Fanning who was a West Point graduate and veteran of the War of 1812 and the First Seminole Indian War. Fanning Springs State Park and the Tri-County Suwannee Valley Livestock Pavilion, which hosts an annual youth fair and livestock sale, are located here. In addition, Fanning Springs is designated as a “Blue Way Community” by the Florida Paddling Trails Association.

A motion was approved authorizing council staff to issue a press release to regional news media outlets regarding the ongoing check fraud issue with Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.

COMMISSIONER WILFORD NOTE: Detailed background information regarding this check fraud issue is contained in the “Check Fraud Status Report” topic under the Executive Director’s agenda item.

Clearinghouse

A motion was approved regarding a Dixie County Comprehensive Plan Draft Amendment (DEO No. 15-1ER).

A motion was approved regarding a City of Gainesville Comprehensive Plan Adopted Amendment (DEO No. 14-3ESR).

Regional Planning

Each Florida regional planning council is required every five years to perform an “Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR)” of its strategic regional policy plan in a manner similar to the process that is required by local governments. The due date for NCFRPC’s next EAR is January 1, 2016.

The purpose of an EAR is to evaluate the progress of the strategic regional policy plan relative to achieving its goals in implementing policies. An EAR identifies those areas of the plan in need of revision based upon new information, new or changing state comprehensive plan policy, or changing regional trends and conditions. The specific guidance for performing an EAR review is provided in *Rule 27 E-5, Florida Administrative Code*. An EAR consists of two steps. The first step involves the preparation and adoption of the EAR itself while the second step involves the preparation of amendments, if applicable,

to the strategic regional plan. Such amendments are required by the guidelines specified in the aforementioned *Rule 27 E-5, Florida Administrative Code* to occur within one year of the EAR due date.

The NCFRPC strategic regional policy plan contains of five subject areas of concern. They are: Affordable Housing, Economic Development, Emergency Preparedness, Natural Resources of Regional Significance, and Regional Transportation. In addition, the plan contains lists and maps of regionally significant resources and facilities, a coordination outline, an appendix which contains the council's dispute resolution rule, a glossary of terms, maps of natural resources of regional significance, and descriptions of the listed species' habitats. The following section outlines the conditions and trends, problems, needs and opportunities, and goals and policies for each subject area of concern except for the Regional Transportation subject area:

➤ **Affordable Housing**

Conditions and Trends

Over 50 percent of the region's low-income households spend more than 30 percent of income on housing.

The region's wages increased at a rate less than the average mortgage increase.

Problems, Needs, and Opportunities

Need to reduce the percentage of low-income households spending more than 30 percent of income on housing.

Need to update Development of Regional Impact (DRI) housing analysis methodology.

Goals and Policies

To reduce the percentage of the region's very low-, low-, and moderate-income households spending 30 percent of annual household income on housing.

To mitigate significant affordable housing impacts associated with DRIs.

➤ **Economic Development**

Conditions and Trends

Few urban areas in region have excess water and sewer capacity.

Not all of the region's urban areas have municipal water and sewer systems.

Most North Central Florida Counties are near or at the maximum 10 mil rate cap.

Problems, Needs, and Opportunities

Tourism development opportunities exist.

Skilled labor source needed.

Additional infrastructure needed especially for water and sanitary sewer elements.

Regional cooperation opportunities exist.

Goals and Policies

To diversify the economy of the region thereby increasing the level of employment opportunities and decreasing out-migration of productive members of the labor force including non-traditional job sectors and high-skill/high-wage job sectors.

To guide infrastructure to areas where needed and where development would not strain already overloaded infrastructure.

To encourage regional or multi-county cooperation wherever possible to avoid duplication and to lower costs.

➤ **Emergency Preparedness (Goals and Objectives not Included in Handout Material)**

Conditions and Trends

Planning for coastal storms.

Riverine and fresh water flooding.

Tornadoes.

Regionally-significant emergency preparedness facilities.

Mutual aid agreements.

Problems, Needs, and Opportunities

Weather radio station needed in Suwannee County.

Weather monitoring buoy needed in Gulf of Mexico to be located 10- to 50-miles southwest of the Steinhatchee River.

Warning sirens needed in several coastal communities.

An opportunity to make flood hazard insurance available in all North Central Florida local governments.

➤ **National Resources of Regional Significance**

Conditions and Trends

National resources of regional significance total 213.

Sizes range from one acre (a spring) to the entire region (Florida Aquifer).

Classified as coastal and marine resources, groundwater resources, natural systems, planning and resource management areas, and surface water systems.

No-drill buffer coastline off of Dixie and Taylor Counties and Big Bend sea grass beds.

High aquifer recharge area maps in Alachua and Columbia Counties based on county-prepared aquifer vulnerability maps.

Regional ecological greenway is a natural resource of regional significance.

Problems, Needs, and Opportunities

Big Bend coastal and marine resources need to be preserved.

Adequate groundwater supply for future generations needs to be maintained.

Survival of native flora and fauna needs to be ensured.

A balance of environmental concerns with industry requirements needs to be ensured.

Goals and Objectives

To use the natural resources of the region in a sustainable manner.

To encourage the use of low impact development techniques.

To encourage the use of energy design principles.

To discourage the transfer of water between water management districts until receiving jurisdiction has implemented all practicable supply alternatives and conservation measures.

To encourage cooperative efforts in developing local and regional water supplies within water management districts instead of transporting water across district boundaries and using sources nearest the area of use whenever practicable.

To discourage the transfer of groundwater and surface water across water management districts where current and projected water needs of the transfer area cannot be met.

To encourage water management districts to take into account minimum flows and levels of adjoining districts.

➤ Regional Transportation (Handout Material Did not Include Information on Conditions and Trends, Problems, Needs and Opportunities, and Goals and Objectives)

Regional Transportation Facilities

Public transportation service providers.

Regional rail lines.

Gainesville regional airport.

Regional road network.

Regional Transportation Planning Best Practices

Enhanced road network connectivity.

Promotion of access management strategies.

Development of multi-modal transportation systems.

The proposed schedule of committee meetings to address each subject area of concern and finalizing the EAR is:

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
January 2015	Overview of the EAR Review Process and Adoption of Committee Review Schedule.
February 2015	Affordable Housing Subject Area.
March 2015	Economic Development Subject Area.
April 2015	Emergency Preparedness Subject Area.
May 2015	Natural Resources of Regional Significance Subject Area.
June 2015	Regional Transportation Subject Area.
July 2015	Regionally Significant Resources and Facilities. Appendix. Executive Summary. Introduction Coordination Outline.
August 2015	Committee Approval of Draft EAR. EAR Forwarded to Council for Consideration at September 2015 Council Meeting.
September 2015	Council Adoption of EAR. EAR Forwarded to Executive Office of the Governor, State Agencies, and Local Governments.

COMMISSIONER WILFORD NOTE: The members serving on the Regional Planning Committee representing Alachua County are: Commissioner Charles Chestnut, IV (Alachua County Board of County Commissioners), Commissioner Randy Wells (Gainesville City Commission), and Commissioner Robert W. Wilford (Alachua City Commission). Commissioner Wells will chair the committee and Steven Dopp, NCFRPC Senior Planner, will serve as staff liaison to the committee.

Ex-Officio Member Reports

Carlos Herd, Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD)

The Florida Water and Land Conservation Initiative (Amendment 1) implementation issues will be addressed in the near future. This amendment, which was passed in November 2014, was designed to dedicate 33 percent of net revenue from

the existing excise tax on documents to the “Land Acquisition Trust Fund (LATF).” The LATF was developed to acquire and improve conservation easements, wildlife management areas, wetlands, forests, fish and wildlife habitats, beaches and shores, recreational trails and parks, urban open space, rural landscapes, working farms and ranches, historical and geological sites, lands protecting water and drinking water resources, and lands in the Everglades agricultural areas and protection area. This fund was designed to manage and restore natural systems and to enhance public access and recreational use of conservation lands.

Russell Simpson, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP)

Training will be held in Jacksonville on February 13, 2015, regarding the disposal of hazardous waste materials.

Citizen Comments

There were no citizen comments.

Executive Director Report

Florida Regional Councils Association (FRCA) Monthly Activity Report. Florida’s 11 regional planning councils have been in existence since the early 1960s. The FRCA is the statewide organization of the 11 regional planning councils existing to strengthen its individual and collective efforts, partner with government and business entities thereby enhancing regional economic prosperity, and improve the consistency and quality of regional planning councils’ programs to ensure they add value to state, regional, and local initiatives. A policy board, which is comprised of three representatives (county, municipal, and gubernatorial) from each regional planning council, governs the association while the executive directors of the 11 regional planning councils advise the policy board. The following NEFRPC members are currently serving on the FRCA policy board: Commissioner Daniel Riddick (Bradford County), Mayor Carolyn Spooner (City of Starke), and Charles Williams (Hamilton County Gubernatorial Appointment). FRCA is committed to:

- Ensuring regional planning councils are effective service organizations to the state, its local governments, and the citizens they serve.
- Ensuring regional planning councils are consensus builders and problem solvers who serve as conveners of the region by helping to articulate multijurisdictional issues that need resolution.
- Encouraging and promoting opportunities for regional planning councils to become partners in state programs and initiatives while observing the unique themes of each region within the state and legislative environments.
- Monitoring substantive state and federal legislative issues for the benefit of its members and promoting mutually supportive policy positions among the regional planning councils.
- Representing regional planning councils in national and regional organizations such as the National Association of Regional Councils, National Association of Development Organizations, and Southeast Regional Directors Institute.
- Fostering and coordinating relationships with state, regional, and national associations and organizations, nonprofit entities, public-private partnerships, the governor’s office, state agencies, and others related to issues of mutual interest and concern mirroring FRCA’s goals and programs.

The monthly activity report, which was prepared by Sheri Coven, FRCA Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, includes the following outreach, resource development/capacity building, legislative support, and association management activities for December 2014:

Outreach

Provided support to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity to assist in the completion of its application for a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Special Merit Grant. If awarded, a small amount of funding will be provided to the regional planning councils to increase community resiliency capacity at the local level through a variety of training tools.

Participated in a teleconference meeting with staff representing the Florida Division of Emergency Management and each of the regional councils to resolve the Hazardous Materials Emergency Management contract reporting issues and address periphery concerns.

Continued to coordinate with staff of the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity on its application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for the National Disaster Resiliency Competition.

Joined VisitFlorida's Partnership Program.

Resource Development/Capacity Building

Participated in a meeting of the Sadowski Coalition and in Enterprise Florida's monthly teleconference for its economic development partners that focused on identifying issues for the upcoming 2015 legislative session by taking into account Governor Scott's comments regarding the state's economic condition.

Participated in the Florida Chamber Foundation 2015 Future of Florida Forum Partners meeting to begin the planning process for next year's forum.

Participated in a planning meeting for the Florida Civic Advance inaugural conference which is an initiative of the Florida Consensus Center.

Distributed funding announcements from the Kresge and Robert Wood Johnson Foundations, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, National Endowment of the Arts, VisitFlorida, and U.S. Department of Agriculture to various entities around the state.

Reviewed pertinent legislative bills and issued the initial legislative bill tracking report of the upcoming 2015 legislative session.

Association Management

Welcomed Commissioner Frank Meeker, Flagler County (NEFRC), to the FRCA Policy Board.

Finalized a draft of FRCA's initial Strategic Operating Plan for consideration by the policy board at its January 9, 2015, meeting in Tallahassee.

Participated in the December 2-3, 2014, FRCA meeting at the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council.

Finalized preparations for the series of FRCA events which are scheduled to take place on January 8-9, 2015.

Florida Regional Councils Association (FRCA) Annual Report. Highlights from the 2014 annual report include:

- A 2014 National Association of Regional Councils Award was bestowed on FRCA for launching a new economic scorecard website regarding regional metrics in partnership with the Florida Chamber Foundation.
- NCFRPC received a 2014 National Association of Development Organizations Innovation Award for incorporating safety into its transportation planning project.
- From January 2005 to September 2014, through regional planning councils, the U.S. Economic Development Administration invested \$64.5 million in 36 projects in Florida, to create 4,759 jobs and retain 10,310 jobs while leveraging over \$600 million in private capital investment.
- In 2013-14, through revolving loan fund portfolios composed of federal and state funds, four regional planning councils loaned a total of \$2.35 million to grow small businesses and encourage business retention and expansion resulting in the creation and retention of 270 jobs. Over the past ten years, these same regional planning councils have loaned \$39.9 million resulting in the creation and retention of 3,544 jobs.
- In 2013-14, regional planning councils conducted 92 regional impact analyses and studies, often in support of local economic development organizations, helping them compete nationally and globally for investment and skilled jobs. A total of 507 regional planning council economic analyses have been completed in the last 10 years.
- In 2013-14, regional planning councils trained 3,691 first responders and other emergency management personnel. A total of 34,577 first responders and other emergency management personnel have been trained in the past ten years.
- In 2013-14, regional planning councils reviewed 992 projects under the Federal Consistency Review Program ensuring access to hundreds of millions of federal infrastructure and economic development investment dollars. A total of 11,988 projects were reviewed in the past ten years under this program.
- In 2013-14, the annual budget for NCFRPC was \$1,969,300. The governing board consisted of 48 members representing 14 counties. Thirteen employees performed fulltime equivalent (FTE) duties at NCFRPC.

Florida Regional Councils Association Policy Board Meeting. Commissioners Spooner and Riddick and Scott Koons, NCFRPC Executive Director, attended the policy board meeting held on January 9, 2015, in Tallahassee. Presentations to the policy board were made by:

- Joanna Turner, Executive Director, National Association of Regional Councils.
- Mark Wilson, President, Florida Chamber of Commerce.
- Amy Baker, Coordinator, Florida Office of Economic Demographic Research.
- Jim Wood, State Transportation Administrator, Florida Department of Transportation.
- Lisa Hurley, Legislative Director, Florida Association of Counties.
- David Cruz, Legislative Advocate, Florida League of Cities.

The policy board made appointments to its Nominating Committee for Fiscal Year 2015-16 and adopted the board's legislative agenda for the upcoming 2015 legislative session. Using the Florida Chamber Foundation Scorecard as the guiding principle in setting priorities, the policy board adopted the following issues:

Commissioner Wilford Note: Detailed background information relative to the Florida Chamber Foundation Scorecard is contained in the "Florida Chamber Foundation Scorecard" topic under the Executive Director's agenda item.

Talent Supply and Education

- FRCA supports enhanced economic competitiveness which must include an emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) in public education and training programs that are aligned with existing and emerging job markets and industry clusters.

Innovation and Economic Development

- FRCA supports full funding of regional planning councils to leverage, at a minimum, the role of regional planning councils as federally designated economic development districts and to provide support to state and regional economic development initiatives and activities, assistance to local economic development organizations, and efforts in covering the costs of statutory requirements.

Commissioner Wilford Note: Funding for the regional planning councils has not been included in the governor's budget over the past several years although funding has been included in the final legislative budget(s) to keep Florida's regional councils operational over this time span.

- FRCA supports legislation that reauthorizes the Enterprise Zone program which is due to sunset on December 31, 2015.

Infrastructure and Growth Leadership

- FRCA supports a continued state and regional role in assisting local governments accommodate future growth while ensuring economic prosperity and preparing for and responding to emergencies and natural disasters.
- FRCA supports future transportation corridors, a diverse and competitive statewide multi-modal transportation network, and sustainable sources of transportation funding that are consistent with and support regional visions and further the regional comprehensive economic development strategies of Florida's federally designated economic development districts.
- FRCA supports maintaining and protecting the integrity of all trust funds for their stated use.

Business Climate and Competitiveness

- FRCA supports a strong, but fair, development impact mitigation process that addresses extra-jurisdictional impacts and impacts to natural resources of regional significance and other regional sources and facilities, preserves the role of regional planning councils as conveners and their right to collect fees for services, utilizes regional planning councils' dispute resolution processes, and protects the entitlements and vested development rights necessary for long-term financial investments.
- FRCA supports changes to the sector plan process that would provide regional planning councils with a fee for service funding mechanism to allow them to participate in the process in a more meaningful capacity, requires regional planning councils to convene all affected parties in the process, and creates a role for regional planning councils in the detailed specific area plan process to ensure all regional issues are addressed.
- FRCA supports the unlimited ability of a regional planning council to provide planning and technical services for a fee in furtherance of its mission.
- FRCA supports streamlining state regulatory review processes while ensuring regional and local interests are taken into consideration.

Civic and Governance Systems

- FRCA supports the positions and policies of organizations that share a common membership, and have mutual interests of concern, with regional planning councils including the Florida Association of Counties, Florida League of Cities, Small County Coalition, and the Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council.
- FRCA supports efforts to improve efficiency and collaboration among agencies tasked with multi-jurisdictional planning throughout the state.

Quality of Life and Quality Places

- FRCA supports regional visioning as a means to guide the future of Florida, build public-private coalitions to implement key regional and statewide initiatives, and serve as the basis for strategic statewide planning and budgeting initiatives.

Florida Chamber Foundation Scorecard. The Florida Chamber Foundation developed the Florida Scorecard to provide state leaders with the metrics needed to secure Florida's future. In performing this task, the Florida Chamber's primary objective is to develop a 20-year statewide strategic plan which requires a commitment to measuring the state's current status toward accomplishing the stated goals of the "Six Pillars" which were established to measure trends and progress. The "Six Pillars" incorporate the strategic thinking of a diverse range of stakeholders including Century Commission for a Sustainable Future, Florida Council of 100, Enterprise Florida, Florida State University, Workforce Florida, 1000 Friends of Florida, and others. Metrics for each of the "Six Pillars" are reported on a regular basis in the Florida Scorecard and are benchmarked to the nation's other 49 states for relative comparison of success. The six pillars are:

- Talent Supply and Education.
- Innovation and Economic Development.
- Infrastructure and Growth Leadership.
- Business Climate and Competitiveness.
- Civic and Government Systems.
- Quality of Life and Places.

The Florida Scorecard for January was reviewed. Florida continues to fare well in five of the pillars. However, in the Talent Supply and Education pillar, Florida still ranks around 38th in the country and there remains a critical need for increasing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) skills in the state.

Commissioner Wilford Note. It is impressive to point out (brag) that Florida ranks first in the country in fourth grade reading and second in the world in fourth grade reading only ranking behind Hong Kong in this subject/skillset area.

Following are relevant facts regarding Florida's business climate as highlighted in the January scorecard:

- Since December 2010, Florida's private sector businesses created 651,300 jobs resulting in the state's unemployment rate dropping from 11.1 percent to 6.1 percent.
- Since April 2012, Florida has experienced 50 consecutive months of positive job growth which has been better than the nation's rate.
- Nine of the 10 major industries across Florida experienced positive growth over the year through September 2014 with only government employment showing a decline.

- Sixty-six of Florida's 67 counties experienced a drop in unemployment through September 2014.
- Florida job creators added 12,800 private sector jobs this past September which helped lower the state's unemployment rate to 6.1 percent.
- Forecasts from the July 2014 meeting of the Florida Economic Estimating Conference suggest that the state will add approximately 200,000 new jobs this year assuming no significant changes occur.
- Based on estimates of the Florida Chamber Foundation, it is projected that 2,000,000 new net jobs will need to be created across the state to maintain a six percent unemployment rate in 2030.

North Florida Water Supply Partnership. In September 2011, the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD), Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD), and Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), entered into an agreement that formalizes the coordination of water resource management in North Florida. The North Florida Regional Water Supply Partnership was the name designated to identify this coordination effort. The Stakeholder Advisory Committee, which was formed in May 2012, serves as an advisory body to offer different viewpoints from stakeholder groups representing the SJRWMD, SRWMD, and FDEP in regard to the region's water supply issues. This committee is structured so that a wide range of public interests are included while keeping the committee small enough to be effective and productive. Committee representatives coordinate closely with the constituencies they represent. Committee meetings are open to the public in order to provide the interested citizens an opportunity to attend and participate. District staff members who are coordinating activities with the committee are Carlos D. Herd, Division Director, Division of Water Supply, Suwannee District, and John Fitzgerald, Initiative Leader, Division of Strategic Deliverables, St. Johns District. The Stakeholder Advisory Committee members are:

- **Public Water Supplier**
 - Ray O. Avery, Clay County Utility Authority.
 - Stephen Roberts, Lake City Utilities.
- **Agriculture**
 - Kates, Florida Fruit and Vegetables.
 - Thomas Harper, Harper Farms.
- **Commercial/Power Generation**
 - Bud Para, Jacksonville Electric Authority.
- **Environmental**
 - Dr. Patrick T. Welsh, University of Florida and Save Our Lakes.
 - James Cornett, Cornett's Spirit of the Suwannee, Inc.
 - Jacqui Sulek, Audubon Florida.
- **Industrial/Mining**
 - J. Michael O'Berry, Vulcan Materials Company.
 - Terry L. Baker, P.E.

➤ **Local Government**

- Commissioner Gene Higginbotham, Dixie County Board of County Commissioners.
- Commissioner Lee Pinkoson, Alachua County Board of County Commissioners.

The current initiatives/activities of the North Florida Regional Water Supply Partnership are:

- **Engaging a Stakeholder Advisory Committee.** This committee is comprised of representatives of various groups, organizations and other entities who have an interest in the region's water supply. It advises the SJRWMD and SRWMD as well as the FDEP to ensure that all interests are considered and the process is inclusive.
- **Developing a Shared Tool to Predict and Assess Water Resource Impacts.** Water managers can develop more consistent information for water supply planning and water use permitting decisions by using a common model. The SJRWMD, SRWMD, Georgia Environmental Protection Division, and a stakeholder steering and technical committee are developing a North Florida-Southeast Georgia Regional (NFSEG) Groundwater Flow Model that encompasses several counties in North Florida and Southeast Georgia. The science-based NFSEG model will be used to predict and assess potential water resource impacts in a more accurate manner.
- **Studying the Regional Groundwater Decline in North Florida.** The SJRWMD and SRWMD agree that there have been changes in the level of configuration of the potentiometric surface of the Upper Floridan aquifer in Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia. Both districts recognize that additional data and analysis are necessary to understand more concretely the factors causing these changes and the potential impact to the water resources in both districts. A joint study is being conducted to evaluate the changes. The two districts, if necessary, will engage the Water Science and Technology Board (WSTB) under the auspices of the National Research Council to review the co-authored report of findings and provide recommendations regarding data collection and a medication of scope of work.
- **Creating Consistency and Coordination in Setting Minimum Flows and Levels.** The SJRWMD and SRWMD are considering a coordinated and consistent approach in setting minimum flows and levels (MFLs) which are water flows and levels for surface water and groundwater designed to ensure that water withdrawals will not cause significant harm to water resource or the ecology of the area. Water managers and area stakeholders are currently working collaboratively to develop long-term comprehensive strategies to achieve MFLs in the Western Clay County-Putnam County portion of the SJRWMD.
- **Collecting and Sharing Science-Based Data.** The SJRWMD and SRWMD are working together to collect additional data and fill information gaps in areas where data is limited. This work includes the installation of new monitor wells at key locations and rehabilitation of several existing SRWMD monitor network wells. In addition, U.S. Geological Survey high-resolution topographic mapping in Alachua, Bradford, Clay, Putnam, and Union Counties will provide more accurate ground elevation data for the area.
- **Developing a Regional Water Supply Plan.** A regional water supply plan will be developed for the North Florida area that will identify:
 - Water use demand projections.
 - Water resource impacts that could occur if future demands were met solely from existing groundwater supplies.
 - Water conservation opportunities.

- Potential water supply development projects that may be needed to supplement groundwater supplies.
- **Related Initiatives.** In addition to collaborating on various projects and initiatives, each of the two districts is working on unique efforts that will benefit all of North Florida.
 - **Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD).** Establishment of MFLs for the lower Santa Fe River, Ichetucknee River, and associated springs is moving forward. The district is also in the process of conducting MFL work for the upper and middle Suwannee River Basin and associated springs as well as Lakes Butler, Crosby, Rowell, and Sampson. These efforts are vital to determining sustainable water supply for the region. Modernization of the district's Floridan aquifer system monitoring network will help ensure consistent and reliable data is made available for important water management decisions.
 - **St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD).** The North Florida Aquifer Replenishment Initiative is a cooperative effort seeking to protect and maintain regional aquifer levels by capturing significant quantities of water to recharge the upper Floridan aquifer strategic locations. Replenishment of this aquifer will benefit lakes, springs, and wetlands and contribute to a sustainable water supply for the region. This initiative will be a key component to achieving MFLs in water bodies that are currently not meeting their MFLs or are projected not to meet their MFLs within 20 years.

The committee met on December 15, 2014, and reviewed and approved a groundwater demand methodology for use in the development of the 2035 regional water supply plan.

Sadowski Housing Coalition. The Sadowski Housing Coalition is a nonpartisan collection of 30 diverse statewide organizations. They are:

➤ **Business/Industry Groups**

- Associated Industries of Florida.
- Coalition of Affordable Housing Providers.
- Florida Apartment Association.
- Florida Bankers Association.
- Florida Chamber of Commerce.
- Florida Green Building Coalition.
- Florida Home Builders Association.
- Florida Manufactured Housing Association.
- Florida Realtors.
- Florida Retail Federation.

➤ **Advocates for Elderly/Veterans/Homeless/Special Needs**

- AARP of Florida.
- Florida Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials.
- Florida Coalition for the Homeless.
- Florida Housing Coalition.
- Florida Legal Services.
- Florida Supportive Housing Coalition.
- Florida Veterans Foundation.

- Florida Weatherization Network.
- LeadingAge Florida
- The ARC of Florida.
- United Way of Florida.

➤ **Government/Planning Organizations**

- American Planning Association (Florida Chapter).
- Florida Association of Counties.
- Florida Association of Local Housing Finance Authorities.
- Florida League of Cities.
- Florida Redevelopment Association.
- Florida Regional Councils Association.

➤ **Faith Based Organizations**

- Florida Catholic Conference.
- Florida Impact.
- Habitat for Humanity of Florida.

The *Sadowski Act* was enacted in 1992 thereby creating a dedicated revenue source to fund affordable housing programs and the catalyst program for training and technical assistance. Documentary stamp increases paid on real estate transactions were increased in 1992. Seventy percent of the funds raised are for the Local Government Housing Trust Fund for the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) program. Thirty percent of the funds raised are for the State Housing Trust Fund for Florida Housing Finance Corporation programs such as the State Apartment Incentive Loan (SAIL) program. The following information highlights relevant *Sadowski Act* facts:

- SHIP funds can be used for rehabilitation/renovation of existing housing stock for seniors to age in place or to provide retrofitting for persons with special needs.
- SHIP funds can be used to move the existing housing stock and provide first time homeownership with down payment and closing cost assistance as well as rehabilitation and retrofit costs.
- SAIL funds can be used to rehabilitate existing apartments in dire need of repair or to build new units where needed for Florida's most vulnerable populations such as the frail elderly and persons with disabilities.
- SAIL and SHIP programs span from homelessness to the moderate income essential workforce.
- Over 900,000 very low-income Floridians pay more than 50 percent of their income on housing making them vulnerable to becoming homeless.
- Florida has the fourth largest homeless population in the nation.
- SHIP and SAIL are highly leveraged with private sector loans and equity providing four to six dollars for every one dollar of state funding thereby greatly increasing economic impact.
- The appropriation of an estimated \$267 million in the state and local housing trust funds in fiscal year 2015-16 into Florida's housing programs will create 24,950 jobs and \$3.1 billion in positive impact in the state.

The Sadowski Housing Coalition is urging the legislature to use all of the housing trust fund monies for housing programs in this year's state budget.

Original Florida Tourism Task Force. The mission of this task force is to promote the natural, historic, and cultural attractions of the area in order to increase the number of visitors to the region and extend their stay while visiting/ vacationing here. The primary goal of the task force is to enhance the economy of the area through increased revenues and employment opportunities. Staff services for the task force are provided by NCFRPC to assist them in implementing their work programs. In order to increase tourism generated revenues for the North Florida region, the task force implements campaigns to increase tourist visits to this area. The task force has recently completed a new springs brochure and a bicycle trails map by county which are available on the "Natural North Florida" website. A visitor survey is also included on this website. In addition, trips to travel shows in partnership with VisitFlorida are planned for 2015. These travel shows will include trips to Atlanta, Berlin (Germany), Chicago, Madison (Wisconsin), New York, Philadelphia, and Washington (District of Columbia). Trips to travel shows in Florida are planned for Jacksonville, Tampa, and The Villages.

Check Fraud Status Report (Wells Fargo). The council remains in litigation with Wells Fargo over a disputed check in the amount of \$49,523 which the bank honored on March 20, 2013, that was not approved or signed by an authorized NCFRPC signatory. After many months of legal maneuvering, a hearing was held on January 24, 2014, in the Eighth Judicial Circuit in and for Alachua County on the motion to compel arbitration filed by Wells Fargo to resolve the dispute between NCFRPC and Wells Fargo. At the conclusion of the hearing, the court granted the motion to compel arbitration which will be binding on both parties. Following one year of additional legal maneuvering (haggling) regarding the selection of an arbitrator, both parties, NCFRPC and Wells Fargo, mutually agreed earlier this month to select an arbitrator who is located in Jacksonville. In contesting the action of Wells Fargo in this matter, the legal fees for NCFRPC as of November 2014 are \$31,076. Upon receiving a question from the floor concerning the reimbursement of legal fees providing NCFRPC is successful in prevailing in this dispute, NCFRPC's legal representative, Jonathan Wershow, Attorney at Law, indicated that reimbursement of his legal fees would be requested as part of the settlement but would be a difficult proposition.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of NCFRPC will be held on February 26, 2014, at 7:30 p.m., at the Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites in Lake City.

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NOTE: In addition to representing the Alachua City Commission on NCFRPC, Robert W. Wilford, Alachua City Commissioner, serves as a member of the council's Board of Directors and Regional Planning Committee.