



**West Florida Regional Planning Council**  
Meeting Minutes  
Crestview City Hall  
January 19, 2016 3:30 p.m.

Members Present: Thomas Abbott, Mayor, City of Callaway  
Kasey Cuchens, Councilwoman, City of Freeport  
J.D. Smith, Governor Appointee  
Wilson Robertson, Commissioner, Escambia County  
Kurvin Qualls, Mayor, Town of Jay

Others Present: Christina Coger, Northwest Florida Water Management District  
Linda Little, FDOT  
Claire Sunquist, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission  
Jason Hight, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission  
W.C. Henry, Burke Blue  
Austin Mount, WFRPC Staff  
Kate Daniel, WFRPC Staff  
Renee Quick, WFRPC Staff  
Dawn Schwartz, WFRPC Staff  
Gina Watson, WFRPC Staff  
Rob Mahan, WFRPC Staff  
Tamie Mahan, WFRPC Staff

**Agenda Item I: Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance**

Chairman Abbott called the meeting to order. Mayor Kurvin Qualls led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Agenda Item II: Telephone Roll Call**

No one participated by telephone. Chairman Abbott introduced and welcomed Freeport City Councilwoman Kasey Cuchens as the newest member of the WFRPC board.

**Agenda Item III: Consent Agenda**

- a. Approval of the November Minutes
- b. Approval of September Financial Statements
- c. Approval of 2016 Meeting Schedule

*Mr. J.D. Smith moved to approve the consent agenda. Commissioner Robertson seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.*

Chairman Abbott said the order of Agenda Items 6 and 7 will be switched.

#### **Agenda Item IV: Executive Committee Report**

Chairman Abbott reported that he and Mr. Mount would be attending the FRCA meetings the following week in Tallahassee and would report back to the board at the February 16 meeting. He said FRCA provides a conduit for RPC communications and mutual support at the statewide level.

Chairman Abbott said changes to the WFRPC Employee Handbook have been made and submitted in draft format for review. He said legal review of the document is underway, so far with no issues to address. He said pending the results of the complete legal review the Council will consider approval.

Chairman Abbott said the Executive Committee reviewed the lawsuits that have been filed by Santa Ynez regarding claims of breach of contract and he then called on Mr. W.C. Henry to provide an update.

#### **Agenda Item V: Santa Ynez vs. Bay County TPO/WFRPC Lawsuit**

Mr. W.C. Henry introduced himself and provided a brief history of the breach of contract suit filed against the Bay County TPO by Santa Ynez, the former operator/contractor of the Bay Town Trolley. He said the WFRPC was later added to the suit. He said there is currently a motion to dismiss filed and he expects that the judge will grant the dismissal. However, an additional civil rights violation lawsuit was filed in December in the federal courts. Among the defendants are the Bay County TPO and WFRPC Chairman Abbott. A motion to dismiss has also been filed. He said procedures can take longer at the federal level and all those that were to be notified of the suit have been. He said he has been counsel during the breach of contract suit, but would like to know if the board would like his firm to also represent the WFRPC in the federal matter. Chairman Abbott asked Ms. Schwartz for clarification on whether the WFRPC currently has legal representation in this new civil case. Ms. Schwartz said they do not. Commissioner Robertson supported keeping the same law firm on the case because Mr. Henry is already aware of the issues.

*Commissioner Wilson Robertson moved to retain the services of Burke Blue for legal representation in the federal civil rights case filed against WFRPC and other defendants by Santa Ynez Valley Transportation Services LLC. The motion was seconded by J.D. Smith and it was unanimously approved.*

#### **Agenda Item VI: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and Florida's Imperiled Species**

Chairman Abbott called on Ms. Sunquist. Ms. Sunquist provided a PowerPoint presentation on the imperiled fish and wildlife species in Florida. The goal of her group is to prevent federal listing/extinction of qualifying species. She said there are currently 57 species in the state's management plan and provided some local examples. Commissioner Robertson asked how a species is determined to be rare. Ms. Sunquist explained that observation and a pre-determined set of criteria are among the determinants. Chairman Robertson asked about the Perdido Key Beach Mouse, stating that preservation of the mouse has halted development in that area. Ms. Sunquist said the mouse is a federally listed species. Chairman Abbott explained a similar issue with the Panama City Crayfish. She introduced her colleague, Jason Hight to further present.

Mr. Hight explained how his group of biologists work with groups such as regional planning councils in areas such as comprehensive plan development and amendments. They look at such species and conservation lands and ask if the specific change being requested will have adverse effect on them. They usually do not. Mr. Hight further explained and provided the state statute that governs these responsibilities.

Ms. Sunquist wrapped up the presentation by providing contact information and asked that the members provide any input they may have.

Commissioner Robertson asked why the Perdido Key Beach Mouse is on the federal, rather than the state, list. Ms. Sunquist said the original petitioner took the request to the federal government and the species met the federal criteria. Commissioner Robertson said he felt Escambia County could probably have worked better with the state on the issue.

#### **Agenda Item VII: Washington County Staff Services Contract**

Chairman Abbott called on Ms. Daniel. Ms. Daniel explained that the WFRPC is fulfilling a request by Washington County to provide temporary planning services (Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays) following the retirement of their county planner. She said there have been nothing but positive comments received from the county staff and the citizens. She said there is a possibility to extend the contract. Chairman Abbott spoke positively about staff's effort and stated that this is an example of a type of service the WFRPC is available to provide the local governments.

#### **Agenda Item XIII: Chipley Comprehensive Plan Contract**

Chairman Abbott called on Ms. Daniel. Ms. Daniel said staff has been approached about completing the future land use map component of the City of Chipley's comprehensive plan update, which would include updated mapping (GIS) files. She said the capital improvement element would also be updated. She said the Chipley City Council approved paying \$30,000 for the contract. Staff can begin the work immediately if the board approves the contract.

*Commissioner Wilson Robertson moved to approve a staff services contract in the amount of \$30,000 with the City of Chipley to produce the future land use map and capital improvement elements of their comprehensive plan update. The motion was seconded by J.D. Smith and it was unanimously approved.*

#### **Agenda Item IX: WFRPC Handbook Revisions**

Chairman Abbott called on Mr. Mount. Mr. Mount said revisions made to the employee handbook are before the board members for consideration, however, the human resources attorney has not yet provided comments.

*Mr. J.D. Smith moved to approve the amended employee handbook pending legal review. The motion was seconded by Mayor Qualls and it was unanimously approved.*

#### **Agenda Item X: Executive Director Briefing**

Chairman Abbott called on Mr. Mount. Mr. Mount provided the following:  
Lots of changes have been made internally, including software upgrades and staffing changes.

The board was surveyed regarding preferred meeting date, time and location and the majority of responses lead staff to keep the same schedule as before.

A staff retreat is being planned for March, 2016.

The salary stipend distributed in December was well-received

Mr. Mount explained that staff has been spending a large amount of time and money renting vehicles in order to complete the work of the WFRPC. He provided a cost analysis that compared daily, as needed rentals and a weekly rental to owning a vehicle. Mr. Mount explained that the comparison took into account the amount of staff time and lost productivity involved in making reservations, picking up cars, returning them, and completing required paperwork/dealing with invoices. Mr. Mount showed that owning a company car would be a financial benefit and asked that the WFPRC allow staff to purchase a car. He said he would provide a purchase/lease comparison for the executive committee members that were present.

Commissioner Robertson said he had no problem with such a purchase, but asked if staff could use their own personal vehicles for reimbursement. Mr. Mount said that this is sometimes an option. Chairman Abbott and Commissioner Robertson noted that there is a lot of traveling necessary at the staff level. Mr. Mount agreed that ultimately there is a need for three vehicles, but that he would like to start with one.

*Commissioner Robertson moved to allow staff to lease or purchase a company car, not to exceed a \$25,000 purchase price. The motion was seconded by Mr. J.D. Smith.*

There was discussion and the board asked that Mr. Mount look at the state list to see if there are any options there.

There were no other speakers.

**Next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, February 16, 2016. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.**