

**RESTORE ACT  
Public Meeting  
January 14, 2014**

**Attendees:**

Chris Cowart, Vice-Chairman, School Board Representative  
David Pieklik, Economic Development Representative  
Leslie Sturmer, Aquaculture  
Andrew Gude, Citizen Representative  
Bruce Wilson, Tourism Industry Representative  
Fred Moody, County Coordinator  
Anne Bast Brown, County Attorney

**Consultants:** Bill Williams, Amber Davis-Williams

**Absent:** Ryan Bell, Chairman, Board of County Commissioners  
Marilyn Ladner, Higher Education Institution (college/university)  
Jolie Davis, Citizen Representative  
Drinda Merritt, Citizen Representative, Resigned

Vice-Chairman Cowart opened the Committee meeting of the Levy County RESTORE Act Advisory Committee at 3:00 p.m. at the Levy County Court House with an invocation and the Pledge to the Flag. Vice-Chairman Cowart called for public comments and there were none.

**Citizen Representative for Committee**

Ms. Amber Davis-Williams advised that a replacement representative is needed for the position held by Drinda Merritt for the Citizen Representative and asked Committee members to submit any recommendations they may have for the next meeting. Mr. Fred Moody said the Board of County Commissioners had been advised of the vacancy and he is trying to get a recommendation from the Inglis/Yankeetown area.

**Project Rankings**

Ms. Davis-Williams said she did not receive all of the rankings for the projects which have been submitted and would contact the members not in attendance to see what concerns there are and then the Committee will discuss the 6 projects at the next meeting.

**Minutes**

Mr. David Pieklik made a motion to approve the minutes of November 19, 2013 for the Educational workshop and Committee meeting, second by Mr. Andrew Gude and the motion carried.

**Project Presentations**

Mr. Kenneth Ihlenfeldt introduced himself as CEO of Pegasus Farms Commercial Aquaponics and Education Center and introduced Dr. Peter J. Rubec, Chief Scientist in aquaculture and associated with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission ("FFWC").

Dr. Rubec gave a power point presentation outlining the plans for the aquaponics and education center. Dr. Rubec explained Pegasus Farms is a commercial operation and they were planning to use the raft aquaponics system for growing crops which has an established operation at the University of Virgin Islands. Dr. Rubec said the Center would educate homeowners and commercial growers on how to establish an aquaponic farm operation. Dr. Rubec said minimal space is needed to grow a large quantity of food while minimizing the environmental impact with a minimum carbon footprint, reduced water utilization and providing optimum freshness in vegetables and herbs. Dr. Rubec said the facility will also grow tilapia combining aquaculture with the aquaponic operation. Dr. Rubec explained the plan is to expand to 12 pods with 3 greenhouses per pod and employ 25 people the first year with an estimated staff of 75 by the third year. Dr. Rubec explained the operation can generate a substantial income while producing food locally without harmful chemicals which will benefit health conscience consumers. Dr. Rubec said their marketing plan was to sell their produce and fish to high end restaurants, assisted living facilities, hotels, farmer's markets and also instructing in home aquaponic farming and providing a working classroom facility. Dr. Rubec said they have had difficulty in securing financing from banks in the current economy.

Mr. Bruce Wilson stated he was familiar with aquaponics and that there has been an increased interest in aquaponic farming.

Ms. Leslie Sturmer explained most of the projects received to date have been from non-profits, chambers of commerce and this is the first for a private enterprise. Ms. Sturmer added that the Committee is mandated to review the projects by the categories provided by the RESTORE Act and rank high for developing a workforce and benefitting the County, therefore, it is the Committee's interest to establish that a business is going to be profitable. Ms. Sturmer said it has been reported in trade magazines that several large commercial facilities have gone bankrupt, also vegetables coming from aquaponic systems can not be certified through the Division of Food and Vegetables, Department of Agriculture and this would limit sales to big box stores and it appears that to increase production would require the need for a larger market outlet. Ms. Sturmer said the University of Florida, IFAS Division is also encouraging researchers to look at some alternative species of fish. Ms. Sturmer said tilapia cannot be sold live and is restricted with conditions for production and sale.

Mr. Jack Schofield inquired if the RESTORE Act funds could be a loan with a repayment schedule. Ms. Anne Bast Brown, County Attorney that the funds will be governed by the treasury rules and a final draft of the rules has not be presented.

Mr. Cowart said it would be an advantage to the county and the state if the purchases of the greenhouses could be retained in Florida.

Dr. Rubec said the vendor they have contacted, Stuppy, Inc. is located in Kansas City, Missouri, but they understand trying to purchase locally.

Dr. Rubec said salaries might be \$30,000.00 annually and they will train staff on site along with classes for the public. Dr. Rubec said the \$427,000.00 would be used to purchase greenhouses, train staff and expand the operation with harvesting occurring year round.

Mr. Ilenfeldt said they have several contracted employees at this time and will be starting classes in February with an introductory course for a back yard system and are preparing a more in depth course for integrated farming systems.

Ms. Davis-Williams read the description of the City of Williston Block 12 Parking Lot and Street Improvements project submittal. Ms. Davis-Williams said the project was to purchase the interior property from the property owners in Block 12 and develop parking for downtown businesses to stimulate the economy in downtown Williston.

Mr. Adam Hall, City Planner for Williston said the Williston CRA has been interested in the project but at this time they are still completing previously approved projects. Mr. Hall said the property is estimated at a value of \$4.50 per square foot and the additional costs would be for clearing the property, engineering and construction of the parking lot. Mr. Hall said all property owners were in favor of selling the property in theory. Mr. Hall added that prior to the city purchasing the property an appraisal would be completed.

Ms. Sturmer explained that the Committee must look at the scope of the project and review how it relates to the RESTORE Act and the highest self ranking is a 3 for promotion of tourism and recreational fishing. Ms. Sturmer commented that this project encompasses a large percentage of the funds that the County possibly could expect.

Mr. Hall explained the goal is to use one source and may be able to obtain USDA funding.

Mr. Hall said there would need to be extensive signage to direct people to the parking area and that was not included in the project's budget.

Mr. Hall said the project for the City of Williston Horseman's Park Expansion located on the airport property would consist of the construction of 2 new arenas with one arena with seating for 3,000; 2 stables with 20 stall blocks and a 2000 square feet service facility with public restrooms. Mr. Hall said this would be a recreational assistance program and would be a good attractor for horse shows. Mr. Hall said complaints have been heard concerning the lack of good facilities in the region for the horse shows. Mr. Hall explained that there has not been a market study completed at this time to determine the need for the expansion.

Mr. Wilson asked if there would be a conflict between the horses and the airport.

Mr. Hall responded that the airport is mostly general aviation related and the Williston Shooter Club is also located with the horses being used to the noise.

Mr. Cowart said there does need to be a feasibility study and suggested contracting Carol McQueen with the Tourist Development Council ("TDC").

Mr. David Pieklik said a feasibility study for a hotel is currently being prepared.

Ms. Davis-Williams said the TDC could possibly assist in providing research relating to the tourism and economic impact of a sports arena in a rural area.

Mr. Pieklik said that Citrus County has recently appointed a sports director instead of using their TDC or parks department.

### **RESTORE Update**

Ms. Davis-Williams said there has been discussion of the treasury rules being available by March, 2014.

Mr. Bill Williams said it is possible that the court case in Louisiana will be completed in March. Mr. Williams said the treasury rules are in the comment period and the Consortium sent a delegation but there are no major changes being anticipated. Mr. Williams said the Treasury Department will be contacting each county for monitoring and site visits and also working with the clerks of the small counties to have them compliant with federal law. Mr. Williams said there is a Consortium meeting on January 24 in Tallahassee and will be a joint meeting with the Florida Association of Counties ("FAC") which will include an update on the treasury rules and there will be vendors present related to the scope and RFP of the state-wide plan.

Mr. Williams discussed a presentation Pasco County gave to Escambia and Okaloosa counties and the discussions he has had on an environmental unit that would include the Department of Health and Environmental Health which would include Hillsborough, Pinellas counties up to Citrus County. Mr. Williams discussed meetings he had with the Tampa Bay partnership and Regional Workforce Board and recommended possibilities that could be considered by Levy County.

Mr. Williams said the Dixie and Taylor counties have had their first meetings with their local committees and recommended that the Committee meet with those members to share information and discuss possible regional projects.

Ms. Davis-Williams recommended considering commencing conversation on the comp plan now that some projects have been received and leave the 3<sup>rd</sup> deadline for projects open and proceed with compiling the comp plan.

Mr. Wilson asked if a committee member could present a project. Mrs. Davis Williams responded that a committee member could present a project but that voting/ranking restrictions may apply based on the type of entity proposing the project and whether or not the committee member financially gained from his/her involvement with that entity. Mr. Williams stated the county attorney would need to review each situation individually.

Mr. Andrew Gude said he is pursuing funding to hire a professional consultant to prepare a nature resource basic economics study of the Big Bend area from Levy County up to a small portion of Jefferson County including Dixie and Taylor counties. Mr. Gude

said this would provide a "snap shot" of the nature resources.

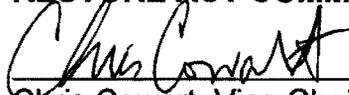
With no further business presented the next Committee meeting will be held on February 11, 2014 at 3:00 p.m. at the court house.

Ms. Davis-Williams requested the scores on the applications submitted by January 31, 3014.

**Public Comments**

There were no public comments and the meeting was adjourned at 5:04 p.m.

**RESTORE ACT COMMITTEE**



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Chris Cowart, Vice-Chairman