

**RESTORE ACT
Public Meeting of March 8, 2016**

Attendees: Chris Cowart, School Board Representative, Chairman
John Meeks, Board of County Commissioners, Vice-Chairman
David Pieklik, Economic Development Representative
Leslie Sturmer, Aquaculture
Jack Schofield, Citizen Representative
Bruce Wilson, Tourism Industry Representative
Tisha Whitehurst, Grants/RESTORE Coordinator

Absent: Jolie Davis, Citizen Representative
Richard Streeter, Citizen Representative
Marilyn Ladner, Higher Education

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, Chairman Cowart led the Pledge to the Flag followed by the prayer. The roll of members was called.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

A motion by Comm. John Meeks to recommend Dr. Rayanne Giddis to the Board of County Commissioners to replace Marilyn Ladner who has retired, second by David Pieklik and the motion carried.

Bruce Wilson submitted his resignation from the RESTORE Act Committee as he is leaving the Cedar Key area. Chairman Chris Cowart asked Mr. Wilson to make recommendations for his successor. Mr. Wilson will forward the names of anyone interested.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

RESTORE ACT UPDATE

Ms. Tisha Whitehurst advised the Cedar Key Aquarium project has changed their projected costs to \$600,000.00.

Ms. Whitehurst said the planning assistance application submitted July 31, 2015 is in the final stages of review by the Treasury Department. Ms. Whitehurst said the Tetra Tech contract is being reviewed along with the travel request by Treasury and then the County should receive the award for planning assistance.

Ms. Whitehurst said she attended a seminar regarding CFR ("Code of Federal Regulations") and will have to review the procurement used for Tetra Tech services as there could be a question on the procurement of their services. Ms. Whitehurst said a mandatory audit will be in a couple of years and all issues need to be clarified and resolved. Ms.

Whitehurst added that the Tetra Tech contract and the procurement procedure is being reviewed by Treasury.

Ms. Whitehurst responded to Chairman Cowart that any county which receives over \$727,000 in federal grant money will be audited under the federal grant rules. Ms. Whitehurst said the funds are inclusive of all county departments.

Ms. Whitehurst said she had been in contact with each project manager to see if there are any updates to the submitted projects and Mr. Doug Maple would like to address the Committee on changes they may like to make to their application, Cedar Key Aquarium & Environmental Education Center.

Ms. Leslie Sturmer inquired when the contact was made as she was waiting to respond on one of the projects. Ms. Whitehurst said she had sent a blanket email to each project manager listed on the applications.

Ms. Whitehurst said she had received responses on updates. Ms. Whitehurst said the City of Cedar Key combined its projects as previously presented and there are no other changes; Santa Fe College is providing an update at this meeting on Project ACE; Dan Hilliard of W.A.R., Inc. has been providing updates on the Lower Withlacoochee River Environmental & Restoration Study project.

Ms. Sturmer asked if the applicants had received notification that funding is much less than originally expected. Mr. Jack Schofield said to clarify funding would be about \$200,000 this year. Ms. Whitehurst said at the present there is about \$500,000 with any interest being retained by the Department of Treasury. Ms. Whitehurst said the rules do not allow the County to earn any interest on the money and some of the money is going to planning assistance so that part of the money is not available for any projects. Ms. Whitehurst explained it is her understanding that there will be \$185,000 per year except for the second year being lowered to about \$180,000. Mr. Schofield said the initial \$548,000 has been allocated then roughly \$1.9 million will be disbursed from BP starting in 2017.

Comm. Meeks in response to Ms. Sturmer's comment said there is money that is designated to the panhandle and is Pot 3 funds. Comm. Meeks said information from Gulf Consortium meetings have stated the money is not guaranteed to the counties and it may or may not be seen. Comm. Meeks said Triumph set up by the legislature received two billion dollars and there is no oversight on the expenditure of those funds.

Ms. Whitehurst explained that Pasco County was able to fund its plan without having to wait for planning assistance funds and are awaiting approval by the Governor of their multi-year plan, then they are going to partially fund three projects with County funds. Ms. Whitehurst further explained that it would be her recommendation to start with recommending a small project to the Board of County Commissioners and completing that project to protect the county. In the event an audit of the project finds fault, the county will be required to repay the entire project. Ms. Whitehurst said this will also allow for an understanding of the process required to secure funds and select a project.

Ms. Sturmer recommended that at least 5 of the applicants be invited to the next Committee meeting to provide updates of their projects and see what they can or can't do

with the expected fiscal constraints. Ms. Sturmer said by contacting the applicants personally it allows them time to review their project and see what may be cut, where other funding may be secured to make the project a more viable project to consider.

PROJECT REVIEW

PROJECT ACE - Ms. Heidi Lanham of Santa Fe College provided a update of the application for augmenting open houses at Seahorse Key and to provide marine resources experience to students, local residents and visitors to the area. Ms. Lanham said the application was submitted with eight proposed open houses and this could be reduced to four. Ms. Lanham said the proposed plan also includes the involvement of local vendors and local boat captains during the open house. Ms. Lanham said they did an informal survey at their last open house and of more than half of the people who came to the open house, approximately 51% stayed over night in the area with most people completing the survey being from other areas outside of Florida or from other areas of Florida with very few from Levy County. Ms. Lanham said the project would be a good anchor for an ambitious education plan with year one funding providing for a pavilion, touch tanks, kayaks, picnic tables, fencing and a traveling education booth for the county and surrounding area. Ms. Sturmer recommended that Ms. Lanham review the proposed budget and the costs for year one and then for year two. Mr. Bruce Wilson asked that a proposal on the costs of the next event be provided. Ms. Sturmer concurred with Mr. Wilson and added to consider subtracting the capital investment, expanded time frame, and consider if it could continue to be ongoing project and not consume all of the budget. Mr. Wilson added to review if the project would ever be self-supporting. Mr. Jack Schofield suggested the possibility of an entrance fee at Seahorse Key for those who come by their own transportation.

CEDAR KEY AQUARIUM & ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER - Mr. Doug Maples explained the original proposal was for a 1.2 million dollar budget and it has now be revised. Mr. Maples introduced Ms. Mindy Allen, representative of the University of Florida Nature Coast Biological Station. Mr. Maples explained the University of Florida had purchased the old Gulf Breeze Motel and would like to submit a revised application including UF Nature Coast Biological Station with a separate proposal and revised budget. Mr. Maples said the goals and objectives are the same but did not come prepared to provide a full proposal. Mr. Maples explained the new plan would not include a land purchase as they would utilize the property owned by the University.

Mr. Schofield inquired if an admission fee was being considered. Mr. Maples said he wanted to keep a low entrance fee to encourage families and children to come. Chairman Cowart asked Mr. Maples to revise his application and to consider the limited amount of funds that would be available and to investigate private and corporate donations. Ms. Sturmer explained there may be other sources of funding available.

A representative with Santa Fe College explained that the College is ½ owner of the property where the Gulf Breeze Hotel is and it encompasses a larger organization than Mr. Maples is presenting.

RESTORE COMMITTEE

Chairman Cowart directed Ms. Whitehurst with the consensus of the Committee to

contact the project managers on the 13 applications personally and advise they need to revise their project applications as to time lines, funding possibilities, total costs and to inform them of the limited amount funds that will be available.

Ms. Whitehurst said she would schedule for the applicants to do their presentations in April and May. Ms. Whitehurst added that there should be planning assistance funds by May and it will allow for a recommendation of projects to be prepared for the Board of County Commissioners consideration.

MEETING SCHEDULE

It was a consensus of the Committee that the next meetings of the RESTORE Act Advisory Committee will be April 19, 2016 and May 17, 2016, commencing at 3:00 p.m. in the Board of County Commissioner's meeting room at the Levy County Court House.

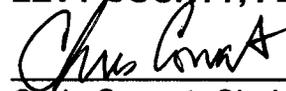
PUBLIC COMMENTS

The Santa Fe College representatives will review the plan considering a reduction of vouchers that would be available, four open houses in lieu of eight and review other ways that costs can be reduced and possible alternative funding.

MINUTES

Comm. Meeks moved to approve the minutes of November 10, 2015, seconded by Ms. Sturmer and the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 3:51 p.m.

**RESTORE ACT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
LEVY COUNTY, FLORIDA**



Chris Cowart, Chairman