

**Gulf County (GC) RESTORE Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes
Gulf County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), Port St. Joe, Florida
September 15, 2015, 4:00 p.m. (rescheduled from September 8, 2015)**

Attendees:

Jim Anderson- City Port St. Joe*

Warren Yeager – Gulf County RESTORE Coordinator (former Board of County Commissioner District 5)

Joanna Bryan – Gulf County BOCC – District 3

Ron Epstein – Gulf County

Tony Justice – City of Wewahitchka*

Jean Treadaway – Gulf County property owner

Suzanne Warrick – Gulf County property owner

Wayne Warrick – Gulf County property owner

Frank Seifert – Citizen

David Warriner – Citizen

Minnie Likely – Director, North Port St. Joe Youth Initiative*

Jennifer Jenkins – Gulf County Tourist Development Council

Eugene Raffield – Port Authority*

Guerry Magidson – Gulf County Chamber of Commerce*

Patrick Farrell – Gulf Coast Property Services

Pat Hardman – Coastal Community Association (CCA)*

Don Butler – County Administrator

Lynn Lanier – Gulf County Deputy Administrator

Jeremy Novak – Gulf County BOCC

Dan Van Tresse – St. Joseph Bay Golf Club

Dewey Blaylock - Gulf County Businessman/ Environmental Issue Interest*

Ward McDaniel – Gulf County BOCC

Stella Wilson – Dewberry

Connie Lasher – Dewberry

Paul Johnson – Ecology & Environment, Inc.

Jade Marks – Ecology & Environment, Inc.

* Denotes official RAC Member

Minutes:

- Meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by GC RESTORE Coordinator W. Yeager.
- Following brief introductions, W. Yeager announced one of the main goals of the meeting were consideration of the final draft Needs Assessment and draft Project Selection Criteria documents. The RAC would vote on whether to recommend these documents to the BOCC for their approval at their September 22, 2015, meeting.

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- W. Yeager explained that the Needs Assessment document is essentially a long list of what the community has elected to focus on. He also mentioned that the documents could be amended with BOCC approval, even after they are initially accepted by the Board, but that it is important to get approval to move the process forward.
- Attendees looked over the final draft Needs Assessment.
- G. Magidson made a motion to submit the Needs Assessment document to the BOCC at their next meeting September 22.
- P. Hardman seconded that motion.
- The RAC unanimously voted to accept the final draft Needs Assessment document.
- The draft Project Selection Criteria document was then considered.
- S. Wilson announced that there were only a few changes to the Project Selection Criteria. However, a “points system” had been added to each category to address the County’s priorities and later evaluate and rank the project proposals eventually submitted.
- W. Yeager reminded attendees that the Project Selection Criteria would determine how projects would get scored.
- P. Hardman asked about the point allocation; what was the basis of assigning some criteria 5 points, while other criteria were worth 10 points?
- W. Yeager explained that the point scoring was meant to reflect the County’s priorities, based on what was discussed at the RAC and BOCC workshop last month and the language in the Needs Assessment document. W. Yeager also explained that proposed projects could potentially receive partial points for any given criteria.
- S. Wilson followed up on this by explaining that every project would be scored for every criterion. Thus, the selection criteria were designed to benefit comprehensive projects.
- D. Blaylock asked about including an environmental outreach and education component in Community Preferences, criteria #4. Blaylock reminded the committee that he had brought this up at the last meeting and the changes were not made.
- A discussion ensued about the language that should be added/ amended under criteria #4. Several attendees were reluctant to limit criteria 4 to “environmental education and outreach.” Alternatively, others thought that the outreach component of Community Preferences should specifically have an environmental focus.
- P. Johnson suggested the use of the phrase “public outreach,” which could encompass environmental outreach.
- In the end, the consensus was to replace the heading “Higher Education” with “Education and Public Outreach” and revise the text to say “...new or improved general and environmental education opportunities.”
- A motion was made by G. Magidson to approve the Project Selection Criteria with contingent changes noted above.
- T. Justice seconded that motion.
- The RAC unanimously voted in favor of approving the Project Selection Criteria with noted changes.
- W. Yeager then gave a brief review of the project application portal that will be created with questions that mirror the language in the Project Selection Criteria.
- S. Wilson explained that the Dewberry team would hold two public workshops, the first of which would function as an information session, where potential applicants could

learn who is eligible to apply, what the eligible activities are, and what the County considers priorities.

- S. Wilson went on to explain that the project submission link is on the left-hand side of the Gulf County RESTORE (<http://gulfcountyrestore.com>) website and applicants should try to respond to as many questions as possible to maximize their potential points. Additionally, applicants will be able to include attachments, such as documentation of partnerships and leveraged funds. The portal will be open for 45 days, during which time a second public workshop will be held. The second workshop will be more of a technical session where applicants can have their technical questions about project submission addressed.
- P. Farrell then inquired about the status of previously vetted projects.
- S. Wilson confirmed that individuals who had submitted pre-proposals would need to re-submit their proposed projects.
- Another question was posed about the efficacy of proposed projects. In other words, how will it be insured that project submitters are providing accurate information?
- S. Wilson reassured the attendees that Dewberry will be doing a technical review of each project to make sure they meet the criteria. The RAC will then be able to choose projects and potentially amend the scoring using Dewberry's initial technical scoring and recommendations.
- S. Wilson also explained that there would be a Guidance Document to walk project submitters through the process. This document would specifically point project submitters to the County's Project Selection Criteria and stress that they should focus their efforts on those criteria.
- P. Hardman recognized that it is unlikely that any project will get 100 points.
- W. Yeager built on this point by explaining that if the Board sees a project that addresses a priority or current problem, they will be able to prioritize that project even if it scored below something else.
- With this thought, W. Yeager opened the floor for public comment.
- E. Raffield had a specific concern about following up on research that has direct impacts for Gulf County. In particular, E. Raffield was concerned about a NOAA study highlighted in a recent newspaper article about the herring population collapse in Alaska following the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Raffield explained that his company has observed the same reduction of sardines and cigar minnows documented in the NOAA study, and yet there are no historical data on this subject from Gulf County. Raffield stressed that Gulf County is an epicenter for bait fisheries throughout the Gulf and that he would like to see "more research done here in Gulf County, not elsewhere."
- D. Blaylock supported this point, noting that no one is currently doing marine research in Gulf County and inquired about the funding available to investigate this.
- P. Johnson stated that the RESTORE Act already has dedicated money for *Deepwater Horizon* spill impact research purposes through the established Centers of Excellence (which gets 5 percent of Clean Water Act fine money plus one-half the interest of the entire settlement amount). In Florida, the Center of Excellence is the Florida Institute of Oceanography in St. Petersburg, and they are actively researching fishery impacts to the Gulf now.

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- W. Yeager explained that there will be future Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) funding to apply to this type of research and impact recovery, if necessary.
- D. Blaylock suggested that Gulf County should solicit universities to work in the county.
- W. Yeager followed up on this idea by pointing out that Gulf County could build a research center.
- Returning the discussion to the project submission process, P. Hardman brought up the point that some of the projects submitted for Pot 1 funding may actually be better suited to other Pots. She inquired if the RAC is going to help project submitters get funding from other Pots that are more viable.
- S. Wilson reiterated B. Griffith's words from the previous RAC meeting and BOCC Workshop presentation, reminding attendees that "there are no losers" and that every project that helps the County will receive equal consideration.
- W. Yeager stated that the RAC should be thinking about other grant programs and leveraging Pot 1 funds with those other opportunities. He suggested that Pot 1 funds could be seed money for leveraging other Pots.
- P. Hardman also asked if the RAC is going to encourage people who have similar ideas to bring their projects together, to encourage the "marriage" of ideas and potential partners.
- S. Wilson explained that the RAC should be wary of offering too much assistance/guidance when it came to "marrying things together" but that other counties have proposed a mediator to address these situations.
- An attendee asked if beach restoration could qualify for Pot 1 funding. A brief discussion reminded everyone how the MYIP works and what Pot 1 funds are for.
- A question then came up about the importance of leveraging other funds (the Dewberry team has been stressing fund leveraging) but leveraging of funds is only a 2-point category on the present Project Selection Criteria form. Some attendees noted that a project that can leverage a substantial amount of funding should score higher than a comparable project that leverages none or fewer funds.
- S. Wilson remarked that situations like this offer the opportunity for the committee to shift priorities or points. However, another option would be to create a separate category for "bonus points" that allotted say, 10 points for the amount of money leveraged. This bonus category could take into consideration the total dollar amount of leveraged funds, the proportion of the total budget covered by leveraged funds, and the level of commitment of those funds.
- All were in agreement that creating a Bonus Points category was a good idea; however, there was some debate about whether the Project Selection Criteria could be approved and put to the BOCC as originally agreed upon with the pending change.
- Several, including P. Hardman, believed it was better to add the Bonus Section and approve the Project Selection Criteria before the BOCC meeting, because there is only one BOCC meeting each month, and another opportunity to propose the Selection Criteria to the Board will not occur until October.
- Others, including D. Blaylock felt that the RAC needed more time to determine how the points for leveraging funds would be calculated/ distributed.
- After some discussion on this point, J. Novak suggested that a project could receive 2 points for every 10 percent leveraged.

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- There was a general agreement that this was the best strategy and a motion was made by G. Magidson to accept the Project Selection Criteria with contingent changes (Bonus Points section and previously discussed changes to the language of #4 under Community Preferences).
- T. Justice seconded the motion, and the RAC voted in favor of accepting the Selection Criteria.
- S. Wilson will revise and repost the revised accepted Project Selection Criteria on the Gulf County RESTORE website (<http://gulfcountyrestore.com>) before the BOCC meeting on Tuesday September 22, 2015.
- L. Lanier confirmed with S. Wilson that language in the Project Selection Criteria could be amended as soon as the meeting was over, and suggested the inclusion of leading question, such as “Do you know of other funding sources?”
- W. Yeager confirmed that project applicants would be asked if they have money in hand, stressing that it is acceptable for applicants to reference anticipated funds at the time of submission, but in order to receive funding through the MYIP, the project must have that leveraged funding in hand or they may get dropped or re-ranked.
- S. Wilson wrapped up the meeting by reminding the attendees that the next RAC meeting would be held October 13, 2015, and that a Project Submission workshop would be held sometime after the meeting.
- Notable Items of General Consensus:
 - Approval of the Needs Assessment document, to be presented to the BOCC on September 22, 2015, at the 9:00 a.m. Board meeting.
 - Approval of the Project Selection Criteria, also to be presented to the BOCC on September 22, 2015, pending the following changes:
 - Language in Community Preferences criteria #4 amended to include “Environmental and Public Outreach”
 - The addition of a Bonus Points section in which leveraging of funds will be considered separately for a total of 10 points. Projects can receive 2 points for every 10 percent leveraged.
- The meeting adjourned at 4:54 p.m.