

**Gulf County RESTORE Advisory Committee (RAC)
Project Submission Public Workshop Minutes
Gulf County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), Port St. Joe, Florida
November 4, 2015, 4:30 p.m.**

Attendees:

Jeremy Novak – Gulf County BOCC Attorney
Warren Yeager – Gulf County RESTORE Coordinator
Donald Butler – Gulf County Administrator
Jim Anderson- City Port St. Joe*
Dewey Blaylock - Gulf County Businessman/Environmental Issue Interest*
Tim Croff – The Star (Port St. Joe Newspaper)
Lynn Lanier – Gulf County Deputy Administrator
David Ashbrook – City Port St. Joe Commissioner
Minnie Likely – Director, North Port St. Joe Youth Initiative
Pat Hardman – Coastal Community Association (CCA), President*
Penny Easton – CCA member
Natalie Shoaf – Historic Port Theater
Towan Kopinsky– Gulf County Tourist Development Center (GCTDC)
Bill Carr – Gulf County Schools
Chuck Livengood – Port St. Joe - Port Authority
Jessica Swindall – Florida Coastal Conservancy
Clay Smallwood – Preble Rish, Inc.
John Matous – Port St. Joe Citizen
David Warriner – Tapper and Company Properties Management, Inc., Port. St. Joe Citizen
Kenneth Wood – St. Joe Bay Golf Club
Mike Barrett – Retired firefighter, Port St. Joe Citizen
Lorinda Gingell – Gulf County Chamber of Commerce
Roni Coppock – Gulf County Chamber of Commerce
Julia Cunningham – Coastal Realty Group, Port St. Joe Citizen
Ron Hardy – Gulf World Marine Park
Mike Dombrowski – MRD Associates
Loretta Costin – Gulf Coast State College
Stella Wilson – Dewberry
Rick Harter – Ecology and Environment, Inc.
Jade Marks – Ecology and Environment, Inc.
* Denotes official RAC Member

Minutes:

- W. Yeager opened the meeting by voicing his appreciation for those in attendance, stating that the Multi Year Implementation Plan (MYIP) development is a long process, but that public involvement is critical.
- Following brief introductions of those in attendance, S. Wilson announced that the workshop would provide similar information as the October 13, 2015, workshop, but would allow more time for questions and discussions.
- Dewberry (S. Wilson) provided a PowerPoint presentation (see www.gulfcountyrestore.com website) covering the following items:
 - Today's agenda.
 - A summary of the MYIP schedule and where Gulf County is in the overall process.
 - Walk-through of the Project Application Portal (Portal).
- W. Yeager and S. Wilson gave a brief overview of the Direct Component (Pot 1) and described where Gulf County is in the MYIP development process:
 - Approximately \$2.846 million is in the U.S. Treasury following the Transocean Settlement.
 - A total of \$18.408 million will be allocated directly for Gulf County MYIP over the course of 15 years.
 - The BOCC has approved:
 - 1) County Needs Assessment, and
 - 2) Project Selection Criteria.
 - Both documents can be accessed on the Gulf County RESTORE website (www.gulfcountyrestore.com).
 - The County Needs Assessment identified issues of local significance, while the Project Selection Criteria identified potential solutions.
 - Proposed project should be pathways to those solutions, and submitting those projects is the next step in the Selection process.
 - The Project Application Portal opened on October 19, 2015, and will close on November 30, 2015, meaning applicants must have "everything and anything" related to their proposal in the online system by November 30.
 - Questions and technical issues should be directed towards S. Wilson.
 - Additional public meetings will be held after the Portal closes to discuss rankings.
- Following this overview, S. Wilson went on to summarize the eligible entities and eligible activities. This list comes directly from the RESTORE Act and is a U.S. Treasury requirement.
 - The list of eligible activities is broad; therefore, it is easier to identify "what you can do than what you can't do."
 - In the application Portal, there is a drop-down menu with three categories:
 - Local government/utilities,
 - Public and Higher education, and
 - Non-profit (must have tax exempt status from the IRS).
 - Applicants must self-identify as one of these three eligible entities to submit a project.

- An attendee then asked about non-profit organizations. A tax exempt status 501(c) 9 is listed in the Portal as an example. S. Wilson confirmed that all of the nonprofits identified by the federal government are eligible.
- S. Wilson reminded attendees that there is a point value associated with each topic on the Project Selection Criteria, which reflects the County's priorities. This information can be found on the Gulf County RESTORE website (www.gulfcountyrestore.com).
- W. Yeager took a moment to elaborate on the concept of leveraging funds, explaining that an applicant could receive two bonus points for every 10% of funds leveraged, up to 18 points.
- S. Wilson also explained the difference between "cash match" and "in-kind match" and that both will be considered.
- S. Wilson then provided a brief live demonstration of the Application Portal:
 - Applicants are encouraged to follow the Guidance Document, step-by step. This document can be found on the Gulf County RESTORE website (www.gulfcountyrestore.com) or under "Downloads" in the Application Portal.
 - It is recommended that applicants fill out the blank application provided as a Microsoft Word document on the Gulf County RESTORE website (www.gulfcountyrestore.com) and copy and paste their answers into the Portal.
 - The first step in submitting a project is registering an account:
 - The Portal does not have a built in e-mail verification, so it is important to make sure the provided e-mail address is correct.
 - Passwords must contain one capital letter, one lower case letter, one number, and one special character.
 - If the Portal accepts the e-mail address and password, the applicant will be returned to the main screen. Otherwise, an error message will occur.
 - Dewberry can reset passwords, but cannot recover them.
 - After selecting "Add a Project" the applicant will complete four steps (which occur as four tabs across the top of the Application Portal website). The third tab, Attachments, is optional.
 - First, applicants must name their project (limit of 30 characters).
 - Applicants must then provide a verifiable/validated address for their project.
 - For projects lacking a street address (for example, projects that include an expanse of shoreline), an office address may be used.
 - There are two ways to provide an address:
 - ✓ Type in the address; and
 - ✓ Type in a zip code or city name and edit the location by dragging the yellow dot on the interactive map to the project area. After the dot has been dropped near the project site, press enter. The nearest verified address will be filled in automatically.
 - Once an applicant has saved their project address, they can navigate to other tabs.
 - After registering an account, the applicant will be taken directly to the log-in screen.

- After logging in, the applicant will use four tabs across the top of the page to navigate through the application process.
 - Then, the applicant will answer a series of Programmatic Criteria questions, which are required by the U.S. Treasury, before answering the Topical (Project Selection) Criteria questions that address the needs outlined by the County.
- R. Hardy asked if there was a character limit for each question.
- S. Wilson explained that the word limit is listed next to each question in both the Portal and on the blank Microsoft Word Application Document.
- R. Harter reminded attendees of the word-count functions in Microsoft Word. Specifically, highlighting a section of text will generate a word-count number in the lower left-hand corner of the screen.
- S. Wilson then discussed Tab 3: Attachments:
 - Attachments could include before-photos, site plans, and letters of support, among other project documents.
 - Applicants are limited to three attachments at 2 MB maximum each; however, documents may be combined, as long as the size requirements are not exceeded
- S. Wilson also explained that applicants will not receive a confirmation e-mail once their projects are submitted. Applicants can go to “My Projects” on the Application Portal and check the status of their project. Un-submitted projects will be labeled as such.
 - The system will not allow an applicant to submit their project until all questions are answered.
 - Applicants may write N/A if a certain question does not pertain to the project at all; however, N/A must be entered, or the application cannot be accepted as submitted.
 - Project Selection Criteria is set up to promote comprehensive projects, so it is recommended that applicants avoid using N/A so they may score as many points as possible. Applicants should try to relate their project to all criteria as much as possible.
- T. Kopinsky asked how applicants should select a name and/or address for their project if it will be executed in multiple locations.
- S. Wilson recommended selecting one primary address and expanding the description of the location in the Programmatic Criteria, which requires a statement of how the project will be completed within the Gulf Region.
- R. Harter suggested that projects with more than one location could submit a project map as an attachment.
- R. Harter also reminded applicants that attachments could be combined in order to maximize the number of documents included within the 2 MB limit. For example “10 letters of support could be combined into one file.”
- S. Wilson followed up on this idea, by stating that 2 MB is a fairly large file size and that applicants should not find themselves limited by this requirement. However, applicants should choose their files wisely. For example, “Don’t upload a 400-page study, because it is unlikely that the reviewers will have time to read it. Instead, extract the relevant information and include it in the text of the application itself and cite it.”

- R. Harter also reminded applicants that the formatting of the Portal system does not allow the use of bullet points or symbols.
- An attendee then asked about the possibility of submitting multiple related projects at once.
- S. Wilson explained that one organization can submit more than one project, but the only projects that should be combined are those that have the same focus area.
- R. Harter added that under these circumstances, applicants would have to make strategic decisions on partnering. Similar projects should be combined into one to minimize redundancies. Because leveraging is such an important part of the scoring, it is beneficial for everyone to know about everyone else's projects and align partnerships. Partners can "combine and conquer" during the writing process, ultimately producing a more well-written proposal. When the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) receives a very well-written proposal, as opposed to many that are hard to connect, it should make the decision process easier.
- S. Wilson reinforced this idea, stating that "partners are very important" and "partnered entities would be viewed better at the BOCC level."
- M. Barrett inquired why public safety was not included as one of the County's priorities. He raised the point that "it's great to have parks and boat ramps, but those places need to be safe," and that as a community, "we have an obligation to add the police, firefighters and EMT's into the fold when funding becomes available."
- S. Wilson explained that the federal government has specific Congressional restrictions on what MYIP money can be spent on. She also suggested that beach patrol and beach safety may be integrated into a proposal in some way, but that the project must fall under one of the Eligible Activities designated by the U.S. Treasury.
- W. Yeager expanded on this, stating that the MYIP is for oil spill money, and thus must be tied back into resources that have been directly impacted by the spill. Public safety may tie into tourism, but as S. Wilson explained, the project must be tied into one of the eligible activities.
- M. Barrett then inquired about the vetting process.
- S. Wilson and W. Yeager explained the process:
 - Submitted projects will undergo the feasibility and scoring process. Applications that are saved but not submitted will be disregarded.
 - Every project will be evaluated by a subject matter expert for each criteria.
 - The subject matter experts will provide whole-number scores for their criteria.
 - Scores for each criteria will be compiled into a total score, and projects will be ranked according to those scores.
 - Dewberry will then provide those scores and a slate of projects to the RAC, along with a dollar amount of funds available to put towards those projects.
 - The RAC will chose which projects they would like to include in the MYIP, which will then go to the BOCC for final approval before submission to the U.S. Treasury.
- M. Barrett summarized Wilson and Yeager's explanation as a "tiered system."
- J. Anderson inquired about bonding projects from year to year.
- W. Yeager explained that the U.S. Treasury has been asked for a ruling on bonding, but had not provided an answer. He also reminded attendees that originally the RAC and BOCC did not realize that the MYIP was going to be a 15-year process; they were anticipating a four- to five-

year payout. W. Yeager also reminded attendees that projects could be phased with activities extending up to five years.

- S. Wilson added that there would be no earmarking of funds.
- W. Yeager followed up by suggesting that someone could submit a plan to save money, so that larger projects could be executed once the next year's funding becomes available.
- D. Warriner asked about the timeline for actually receiving funds. He remarked that if a project really needs to be done this year, the MYIP is not the place to look for funding because actually acquiring the money from the federal government is a process in-and-of itself.
- S. Wilson confirmed D. Warriner's concern. She then proceeded to briefly explain the timeline for U.S. Treasury approval.
 - Once the MYIP is approved, individual grant applicants for each project will have to be submitted to U.S. Treasury.
 - Funds will likely not become available to individual projects until 2017
- D. Warriner then asked if applicants with multi-year projects would have to resubmit each year.
- S. Wilson explained that the U.S. Treasury has not provided guidelines on this issue, but that the way the process is set up now, projects will need to be resubmitted each year.
- P. Hardman asked "What are the odds on bonding?"
- W. Yeager stated that bonding of federal grant money has been allowed in the past and that every entity of the federal government has its own rules. The U.S. Treasury is still learning how to execute this process as well. However, every county has asked about bonding because it will greatly influence our decision as a committee. Yeager stated that he expects a 50/50 chance.
- M. Barrett inquired if interest on Pot 1 funds goes to the federal government.
- S. Wilson explained that the interest is added to another Pot.
- M. Dombrowski then asked about the time frame for reimbursement.
- R. Harter explained that according to the U.S. Treasury, reimbursement to the County should occur within three days (once the County requests it from the U.S. Treasury).
- S. Wilson went on to clarify that the entire process is to select "*what* will be funded, not *who* will be funded." This means that the County will be required to go through a bidding process to select which entities will execute the selected projects.
- W. Yeager elaborated, stating that "Treasury is watching every dollar. Because this is federal grant money, "we have to dot every *i* and cross every *t*."
- R. Harter added that every step of the MYIP processes must be in accordance with federal procurement rules.
- P. Hardman then asked, "Let's say that I'm a 501(c)3 and I want to build a new golf course, who owns that golf course at the end? This could be a concern for some applicants, particularly those interested in restoring the Port Theater."
- S. Wilson stated that for each agency, the rules are different, and, to date, the U.S. Treasury has no formal rules yet. Federal money can be used for private property, but there are restrictions.
- R. Harter reminded attendees that any property that has no public access and no public interest would not qualify for Pot 1 funding.

- P. Hardman then asked if a project still qualifies if it is publically accessible and in public interest, but it generates profit.
- R. Harter and S. Wilson explained the difference between a facility and a program, and that different federal agencies have specific regulations for reporting for-profit dollars.
- S. Wilson remarked that U.S. Treasury has not made a rule about reporting for-profit entities.
- There were no further questions, so W. Yeager made the following closing remarks:
 - There are many other Pots that Gulf County will have access too, and there is already money being spent on projects that affect Gulf County.
 - The Council Pot has committed money for a buoy system to guide boats and protect seagrass beds in Port St. Joe and St. Andrew's Bay (Note: This is a Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) project funded through Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)).
 - The Gulf Consortium has funding for four to five NRDA projects. (Note: The DEP is managing the NRDA projects, as mentioned above.)
 - A restoration project to improve water flow and water quality across 18 acres in Money Bayou has been funded. (Note: This is a proposed Gulf Council project on their draft Funded Priority List of projects to potentially be funded through Transocean settlement funds.)
 - By the second year of this process, everyone involved will have an understanding of what we can and cannot do.
 - The MYIP process is long, but there are already changes happening.
- The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.