

Gulf County RESTORE Advisory Committee (RAC)
Meeting Minutes
Gulf County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), Port St. Joe, Florida
March 15, 2016, 3:00 p.m.

Attendees:

Warren Yeager – Gulf County RESTORE Coordinator
Chris Holley – Gulf County Economic Development Council, Director
Donald Butler – Gulf County Administrator
Tim Croff – The Star (Port St. Joe Newspaper)
Lynn Lanier – Gulf County Deputy Administrator
*Pat Hardman – Coastal Community Association (CCA), President
Jim White – Friends of St. Joseph Peninsula State Park
Bill McGee – Friends of St. Joseph Peninsula State Park
Steve Whealton – Friends of St. Joseph Peninsula State Park
Mike Lister - Citizen
Loretta Costin – Gulf Coast State College
Christie McCleroy – Gulf County Economic Development Council (EDC) member
Sherry Herring - Gulf County Clerk of the Court Office
*Johanna White – Career Sources Gulf Coast
*Guerry Magidson – Gulf County Chamber of Commerce
Stella Wilson – Dewberry
Mike Hanson - Dewberry
Rick Harter – Ecology & Environment, Inc.
Jade Marks – Ecology & Environment, Inc.
* Denotes official RAC Member

Minutes:

- W. Yeager opened the meeting at 3:01 p.m. by announcing another settlement in the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill that would result in an additional \$450,000 for Gulf County in a one-time deposit to their Multiyear Implementation Plan (MYIP) RESTORE account. Anadarko was recently identified as a responsible party in the oil spill, and from the Anadarko settlement, extra funds would become available for the first year projects. Yeager also thanked attendees for their continued involvement with the MYIP process over the many months of workshops and meetings.
- W. Yeager then turned the floor to S. Wilson of Dewberry Engineers, Inc.
- Dewberry provided a PowerPoint presentation (see www.gulfcountyrestore.com website) covering the following items:
 - Review of the MYIP Projects scoring criteria;
 - Summary of the MYIP Project Application Portal metrics;

- A list of the projects submitted to the County's project portal, raw technical scores, and final rankings; and
 - Breakdown of proposed Year 1 Priority Projects, Years 2-5 Recommended Projects, and projects for future consideration (Years 6-10).
- S. Wilson highlighted the fact that all 32 applications received in the County's Project portal by the closure date (November 30, 2015) were complete and able to be considered for further review and eligibility for potential funding.
- S. Wilson briefly reviewed the eligible activities, as established by treasury, and explained that most projects submitted for Gulf County fell into the "tourism" and "infrastructure" categories. She went on to review the scoring criteria and the process by which projects were evaluated by a technical team of subject matter experts.
- M. Hanson of Dewberry elaborated on this topic, reminding attendees that the Dewberry team applied scoring criteria that had been approved by the RAC as a "first cut." In some cases, the Dewberry team tried to assess if a project could be phased in order to fit it into the first year project list.
- The submitted projects would result in a combined leveraging ratio of 3:1. M. Hanson explained that most counties have achieved a ratio of 1.5:1 or 2:1.
- After the raw scores were compiled, the project list was turned over to County staff who further evaluated each project on its timing, eligibility, project complexity, and how the timeline for required permitting tied into the overall timing of project completion.
- M. Hanson explained that it was wise not to pursue exceedingly complex projects in year one, before the County had fully flushed out the project implementation process.
- Additionally, Hanson explained that there were several ineligible projects, which would be difficult to get through the system. These included projects that funded positions or provided deferred maintenance. Several projects were also placed on a list for further consideration, meaning that they involved an overly-complex funding schedule or included some elements that were ineligible. These projects may still be considered as the process evolves, if it is possible to make the project fully eligible.
- The breakdown of projects assigned to Year 1, Years 2-5, and Years 6-10 were then presented. Year 1 projects are high priority, Year 2-5 projects are prioritized, but yet to be decided upon, and Year 6-10 projects are lower-priority projects that may still be funded. The majority of projects selected for Year 1 funding fell under the categories of Environmental and Public Health and Tourism and Economic Development.
- Some projects were combined if they had similar goals, implementation, or proximity.
- Additionally, the Anadarko settlement of \$450,000 will nearly cover the cost of the MYIP Planning Grant, leaving the majority of Year 1 Transocean funding for projects.
- Following this introductory information, discussion ensued concerning individual projects.
- P. Hardman inquired about the large amount of money being allocated for Parks and Recreation land acquisitions. She pointed out that 50% of the total first-year budget would be going to land acquisition under the presented budget. She also suggested that acquired lands come with acquired costs for maintenance, and that the RAC should consider the impact of multiple land acquisitions on future budgets.

- W. Yeager responded to Hardman’s comment by explaining that the ample budget would allow the County to act on an acquisition when a willing seller and property at appraisal price became available, rather than having to go through an additional 45-day public comment period. The larger budget also allowed the County to pursue purchases across different river systems as well as projects on the bay.
- P. Hardman reminded Yeager of previous missed opportunities for land acquisition, and voiced her approval of setting aside funds for strategic purchases. However, she also pointed out that the land acquisition project on the list for Years 2-5 specifically called out Howard Creek as the target property. No sites were specifically mentioned in the Year 1 project.
- J. White inquired if this meant there was a willing seller and right price?
- P. Hardman expressed that she would rather see a landing on the creek, rather than purchasing the entire property. The Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWFMD) is interested in this property because it hosts extensive wetlands. Harman suggested it may be in the County’s best interest to not pursue the purchase, let the NFWFMD purchase the property, and maintain an access point to avoid the associated maintenance costs.
- W. Yeager pointed out that many other projects will come with associated maintenance costs, including the widely agreed upon sewer upgrades for Port St. Joe and Wewahitchka. He also explained that the original request for land acquisition was \$540,000.
- C. McElroy pointed out that the RAC had encouraged “shovel ready” projects, but if the land for acquisition has not already been identified, it is technically not shovel ready. McElroy asked if the land acquisition could be for the EDC projects. She was also concerned that the Port project was not on the Year 1 list, despite the fact that it was more “shovel ready” and that tourism had been identified as a County priority.
- W. Yeager brought up the fact that \$753,000 had been released from the Department of Transportation (DOT) for Port development, thus the priorities shifted to projects that did not have an immediate funding source.
- S. Wilson also commented that part of the Port application involved funding a position, which is an ineligible activity.
- C. McElroy explained that DOT money could be used for monitoring and preparation, but additional financial backing would be necessary for dredging.
- A discussion ensued on the Port project, including its complexity, the need for finite projects in the MYIP rather than nebulous goals (like land acquisition), and the role of DOT funds.
- A compromise was reached when the RAC decided to expand land acquisition not just for Parks and Recreation, but for economic development as well, allowing for strategic purchases that would attract businesses.
- W. Yeager did point out that sites for economic development would need to be evaluated, which could lengthen the acquisition process.
- P. Hardman pointed out that \$300,000 won’t go very far, given the cost of coastal properties.
- W. Yeager suggested that it is prudent to limit the funds going to land acquisition, in case the County can’t identify a property and a willing seller.
- P. Hardman did not anticipate this being a problem.

- C. McElroy inquired whether Parks and Recreation could offset some of their costs by charging a small access fee at boat ramps and landings.
- W. Yeager said that he didn't see the County charging for boat ramps, but it wouldn't be too late to use P. Hardman's suggestion and allot more money to land acquisition for both parks and economic development, while reducing the amount of funding allotted to Parks and Recreation for improving dune walk-overs and other park structures.
- Once this issue was resolved, Jim White, who was involved with the St. Joseph Peninsula State Park Bike Path Extension project, said that he had been contacted by someone at Dewberry asking about their funding requests for additional years. He said that the application only focused on the engineering phase, but more funding would be necessary for the completion of the project.
- W. Yeager told Mr. White that there will be opportunities for amendments to the MYIP.
- M. Hanson reminded attendees that although amendments are possible, anything that didn't go through the public vetting process of the MYIP development would need to go through a 45-day public notice process. He also reminded attendees that there are many decisions yet to be made about funding, particularly in future years.
- B. McGee asked if the 45-day public notice period was necessary for projects on state lands.
- M. Hanson confirmed that every project has to go through the vetting process.
- S. Wilson reminded attendees that during the first year of the MYIP, the County will be able to "nail down the nuances of the process." She suggested that it will be easier to get direct answers from the U.S. Treasury once they get something on paper.
- M. Hanson expanded on that idea by pointing out that the Treasury is an auditing entity. They are attempting to prevent things that they have seen go wrong under different circumstances in the past. He used bonding as an example.
- P. Hardman returned the conversation to the Howard Creek Landing project, reiterating that it might be wiser to pursue "a landing on the river" rather than a large, more expensive land acquisition.
- The suggestion was made to change the wording in the project title to "a landing on the Apalachicola/Chipola River System."
- Johanna White asked about the Gulf County Wayfinding project (currently listed for Years 2-5), and what that project would entail.
- W. Yeager explained that the Wayfinding project involved signage for the County's roads and highways.
- Several attendees did not think the Wayfinding was an efficient use of the County's RESTORE funds.
- W. Yeager reassured the attendees that it is an eligible project, but suggested it could be moved to the Years 6-10 list instead.
- C. McElroy pointed out that the Wayfinding project has a lower score than other projects on the Years 2-5 list, such as the two artificial reef construction projects on the Years 6 -10 list.
- W. Yeager pointed out that those reef construction projects were practically in Bay County, but were receiving no support from Bay County, despite the fact that they would benefit from the

project. Yeager also reminded attendees that the main goal of the meeting was to agree on Year 1 Priority Projects, which they had accomplished. He stressed the fact that putting local government projects in the Year 1 list would likely expedite the treasury approval process.

- M. Hanson and S. Wilson announced that the Dewberry team would move forward with making the changes suggested by the RAC and draft a package to send to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) for approval. Once the BOCC approves the project list, the Dewberry team will begin drafting the MYIP document.
- The tentative timeframe for the MYIP process is as follows:
 - March 22, 2016 – BOCC will be presented with the list of priority project for approval.
 - April 11, 2016 – Pending BOCC approval, the MYIP document will be drafted, and the public comment period will begin on April 11th. Comments can be made in-person during public meetings or in writing. Treasury requires a transcript of every public comment.
 - May 27, 2016 – Public comment period closes.
 - June 14, 2016 – The BOCC will be presented with the MYIP for approval.
 - Pending BOCC approval, the estimated timeframe for treasury review and approval of the MYIP is three months.
 - Following Treasury approval, the County must prepare project-specific grant applications.
 - Dewberry estimates that funds will actually become available in April of 2017 for project implementation.
- B. McGee inquired about the process for changing the Bike Path project application to reflect the need for multiple years of funding.
- W. Yeager explained that the County would be accepting applications in the future, and would be reconsidering further projects throughout the process. He also stated that, although it is unclear if the format for the application will change, the scoring criteria and eligible activities would not change.
- M. Hanson reminded attendees that Treasury is interpreting the RESTORE legislation, and the first year will resolve many unanswered questions related to the process.
- W. Yeager thanked attendees again for their involvement and commitment to the MYIP process.
- P. Hardman asked if the RAC would be able to see the amended project list before it was presented to the BOCC.
- M. Hanson assured RAC members that they would be able to view the amended list before the BOCC meeting, and inquired what the RAC would like to see in the package that would be presented to the board.
- W. Yeager suggested that the presentation Dewberry had just given would be appropriate, and that it was unnecessary to provide further detail on the various projects as that information was publically available on the Gulf County RESTORE website (www.gulfcountyrestore.com) in the All-Projects-w-Attachments document (<http://www.gulfcountyrestore.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/All-Projects-w-Attachments.pdf>).
- M. Hanson confirmed that Dewberry would tweak and finalize the list of recommended MYIP projects and their presentation based on the RAC's recommendation.

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- W. Yeager announced that he would hand-deliver the project list to the BOCC prior to the March 22, 2016 meeting.
- The meeting was adjourned at 4:26 p.m.