

Wednesday, February 12, 2025 | 9:30 a.m.

Chair, Nathaniel Birdsong called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. Council Attorney Norman White led the invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. New Member, Michael Scott was sworn into office. Roll was called and the following Council Members were in attendance:

Chair Nathaniel Birdsong, City of Winter Haven
Keith Keene, City of Arcadia
Commissioner Michael Scott, Polk County
Commissioner Michael Sumner, Okeechobee County
Commissioner Kenny Miller, Hardee County
Commissioner Judy Wertz-Strickland, City of Arcadia
Robert "Jeff" Kincart, Gubernatorial Appointee
Commissioner, Steve Hickox, DeSoto County BOCC
Councilman Noel Chandler, City of Okeechobee
Commissioner Stephanie Madden, City of Lakeland
Commissioner Harrison Havery, City of Sebring
Commissioner Don Elwell, Highlands County
Cindy Rodriguez, SWFWMD Ex-Officio
Misty Servia, DeSoto County Ex-Officio
Todd Miller, Hardee County Ex-Officio

A quorum of members was present.

- Norman White led the New Member from Polk County in their Oath of Office
- Jennifer Codo-Salisbury welcomed attendees and thanked DeSoto County for hosting the meeting and for the use of their BOCC Chambers.

1) Opportunity for Public Comments

No public comments were offered.

2) Election of Council Officers for 2025

The Council Nominating Committee (City of Lakeland Commissioner Stephanie Madden, Okeechobee City Councilmember Noel Chandler, Sebring City Councilmember Harrison Havery) met prior to the Council meeting to consider nominations for a Council Chair and Vice Chair for 2025. The Committee Nominations are as follows: Chair, Nathaniel Birdsong. Vice Chair, Don Elwell.

A motion to approve the nominations was made by: Michael Sumner

- The motion was seconded by: Keith Keene
- The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Mayor Birdsong expressed gratitude for being elected chair and for the committee's recommendation and vote of confidence.

3) Council Administration

A) Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by: Keith Keene

- The motion was seconded by: Michael Sumner
- The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

B) December 2024 Financial Report

Jennifer presented a brief overview of the information on the financial report for the Council.

A motion to approve was made by: Don Elwell

- The motion was seconded by: Michael Sumner
- The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

4) DeSoto County Activities Report

Mandy Hines, DeSoto County Administrator, updated the Council on current activities in DeSoto County.

5) City of Arcadia Activities Report

Beth Carsten, City of Arcadia Administrator, briefed the Council on current projects as well as the challenges and opportunities the City is facing.

6) Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) Resilience Project Grant

Jennifer shared with the Board that the CFRPC has received a grant from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to create a plan or guidance manual that will help various entities coordinate regionally when conducting vulnerability assessments, developing adaptation plans, and prioritizing projects for implementation. This grant allows us to look at the Heartland Regional Resiliency project and bring together best management practices.

A motion to authorize the Executive Director to execute agreements and administer the grant was made by: Keith Keene

- The motion was seconded by: Michael Sumner
- The motion was approved by unanimous vote

7) Polk County Adaptation Plan

CFRPC staff issued a Request for Qualifications to complete a Polk County Adaptation Plan consistent with the Florida Adaptation Planning Guidebook and Resilient Florida Legislation. The selected consultant will assess flood risks through advanced mapping and vulnerability analyses. Community engagement will be a critical component of this project to ensure the adaptation plan aligns with local needs and priorities. The Selection Committee has evaluated and ranked the two proposals received and requested that the Board approve the Selection Committee rankings and authorize the Executive Director to negotiate and execute a contract with the top ranked Firm and to authorize the Executive Director to negotiate and execute a contract with the second ranked firm should negotiations be unsuccessful with the top ranked firm.

A motion to approve was made by: Keith Keene

- The motion was seconded by: Don Elwell
- The motion was approved by unanimous vote

8) Economic Recovery & Resiliency Federal Interagency Resource Exchange (FIRE) Listening Session

Beneshea Frazier, CFRPC Program Manager provided an overview of the FIRE Listening Session. The Federal Economic Recovery Support Function, in collaboration with Florida's Regional Planning Councils and the Florida Department of Commerce, hosted a regional convening known as FIRE Listening Session on January 30, 2025. This session brought together local, state, and regional stakeholders with federal agencies to facilitate strategic discussions. The goal was to gather and validate information on the impacts of Hurricanes Helene and Milton and to connect identified needs with available resources.

9) Coastal and Heartland National Estuary Partnership

Jennifer Hecker, Executive Director of the Coastal and Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP), provided an update on regional activities. The partnership’s coverage area overlaps with the CFRPC area including DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands, and Polk counties. Jennifer gave an overview of CHNEP which was formed in 1995 and is one of 28 congressionally designated “estuaries of national significance”.

10) Report on the Florida Regional Councils Association (FRCA) January Policy Board Meeting

The Executive Director and Policy Board Members briefed the Council on the FRCA Policy Board meeting which was held in January in Tallahassee.

11) Executive Director’s Report

The Executive Director reported to the board on Florida Regional Councils Association (FRCA) activities, and Council programs.

12) Updates and Announcements from Local Governments and Agencies

CFRPC Board members, including Ex-Officio Members, took the opportunity to share updates and activities from their communities and agencies.

13) Next Meeting and Other Business.

A) Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 9, 2025 at 9:30 AM, Sebring

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Don Elwell, Vice Chair