

Natural Resources Branch – Lee County Recovery Task Force

Meeting Minutes

10:30 AM – 12:00 PM | JULY 14, 2023 | COLLABORATORY | 2031 JACKSON STREET,
SUITE 100, FORT MYERS, FL 33901 | PUBLIC MEETING

Call to Order

At 10:31 AM on July 14, 2023, Terry Mazany, Facilitator, convened the Natural Resources Branch meeting. The following members were present:

- Dan DeLisi, Branch Lead
- Bethany Brosious
- Matt De Paolis (on behalf of James Evans)
- Chad Chustz
- Ryan Berger
- Fred Forbes
- Joanne Ribble
- Justin Mahon
- MaryBeth Saunders
- Maya Robert

Facilitator and Branch Support:

- Terry Mazany, Collaboratory
- Robbie Heere, Hagerty Consulting
- Shanna Snider, Hagerty Consulting
- Laura Munafo, Hagerty Consulting

Introductions

Mr. Mazany provided a review of the work of the Recovery Task Force (RTF) and its Branches. Mr. Mazany reviewed the timeline for the RTF, emphasizing the move from Phase One to Phase Two of the Recovery and Resilience Plan (the Plan).

Commented [SS1]: @Robert Heere @Katie Toskey -
this was a tough one to summarize! Would you
two give this a read through to make sure it all
makes sense?

He noted the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Branch Initiative Matrix and identify Technical Briefs as needed.

Branch Initiatives Discussion

Mr. Mazany introduced the Initiatives and Ms. Snider encouraged members to think beyond funding. Mr. DeLisi expressed the need to address the Priorities and feedback from the RTF. He suggested that the Initiative to identify feasibility studies and areas for protection can be summarized as land acquisition and the second Initiative can be summarized as natural resource policy improvements. Mr. Delisi expressed that the Infrastructure Branch should consider multi-use paths and Rails to Trails programs. Mr. Mazany described the development of comprehensive plans or policies to coordinate efforts with the water management district as a Natural Resources overlay. Ms. Saunders suggested land management and water quality as two large Initiatives. She noted water quality projects are not prioritized.

Mr. DeLisi summarized the three priority themes as direct actions, policies, and educational programs. Members reviewed projects to align each with the most relevant priority theme. The Members identified land management, water quality and identifying coastal wetlands to reduce impact on future storm events as direct actions. It was determined that the project to identify feasibility studies should be communicated to an additional Branch.

Mr. Mazany conveyed that projects reinforce the Initiatives and interact with direct actions. Members reviewed projects line by line to determine which priority theme they are best aligned with. Mr. Forbes asked if adoption of the 20/20 funding and criteria could be reviewed. Members questioned the ability to make recommendations to evaluate the use of the 20/20 funds.

Mr. DeLisi stated that Low impact development would require a policy change and further elaborated the Density Reduction Groundwater Recharge (DR/GR) area was established in 1989. He provided the historical areas that are preserved with areas for ground water supply. Mr. DePaolis stated this is an opportunity to evaluate DR/GR as there is pressure to build developments in the area and groundwater recharge is being addressed. He continued to elaborate that there should not be a method to give away water to recharge areas and Lee County needs a policy to protect and assess certain areas. Mr. DeLisi provided background on DR/GR and discussed the policies supporting both coastal and inland development. Mr. DePaolis stated the goal is to make the Lee County region resilient therefore future developments need to continually evaluate natural resources policies. Mr. Forbes stated the importance of recognizing the differences between areas within the

DR/GR highlighting the downstream effects on Bonita Springs neighborhoods. Members agreed to consider the policy later.

Ms. Roberts stated that low impact development should identify sites to purchase for conservation. Members discussed state preemptions of mangrove destruction. They agreed to consolidate the project on mangroves and conservation purchases to incentivize the preservation of mangroves as a resilient barrier. Mr. Berger suggested the Initiatives should include protection and restoration of mangroves as a resilient barrier. Members discussed unintended consequences of water and seawalls along the Beach and the need for better education. Members discussed Septic to Sewer conversion and the challenges to implement the policy including remediation in environmentally sensitive areas. The impacts of trails and the considerations of trail building were discussed, and the Members decided to relay the Initiative to the Infrastructure Branch for consideration. Mr. Forbes provided some background on the MPO feasibility study. Members strongly supported a focus on Rails to Trails and Mr. Delisi stated the Branch needs to engage with the water management district and the county.

Branch Technical Briefs

Mr. Mazany explained the development of Technical Briefs, Branch Action Plans, and Initiatives in the development of the Plan.

Questions and Next Steps

The next Branch meeting is scheduled for July 21, 2023, from 10:30 AM to 12:00 PM.

Public Comment

No request for comment.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Mr. Mazany thanked the Members for attending and then adjourned the meeting at 11:52 AM.