

Cultural Resources Branch – Lee County Recovery Task Force

Meeting Minutes

8:30 – 10:00 AM | JULY 12, 2023 | COLLABORATORY | 2031 JACKSON STREET, SUITE 100, FORT MYERS, FL 33901 | PUBLIC MEETING

Call to Order

At 8:32 AM on July 12, 2023, Jon Romine, facilitator, convened the Cultural Resources Branch meeting. The following members were present:

- Matt Johnson
- Janel Trull
- Charles Barnes
- Lydia Antunes Black
- Liz Bello-Matthews

Facilitators and Branch Support:

- Jon Romine, Collaboratory
- Ilani Fernandes, Hagerty Consulting
- Robbie Heere, Hagerty Consulting

Introductions

Mr. Romine provided a review of the work of the Recovery Task Force (RTF) and its Branches. Mr. Romine reviewed the timeline for the RTF, indicating the project is nearly halfway complete and emphasizing the transition to Phase Two of the Recovery and Resilience Plan (the Plan), which includes identifying and confirming Initiatives to align with Branch-specific Priorities. He noted the purpose of the meeting was to review the Initiative matrix and identify Technical Briefs as needed.

Branch Initiative Discussion

Mr. Romine reviewed the purpose of developing Initiatives to support Branch Priorities that will be incorporated into the Plan. He reminded Branch Members of their role in Initiative

development including confirming the prioritization of current Initiatives, identifying gaps in Initiatives that need to be addressed, as well as assigning Initiative leads, measures of success, implementation steps, and funding mechanisms, to achieve Branch priorities.

Ms. Black stated that the short-term capital investment for immediate needs, programmatic capacity, and long-term sustainable funding sources are separate. She suggested splitting the Initiatives to support short-term recovery.

Mr. Johnson discussed the issue of catching up on disaster damage over the last four years and long-term deferred issues. He stated the importance of long-term sustainable funding for ongoing resiliency and growth. Ms. Trull stated that each facility did not fair the same post-disaster due to deferred maintenance. Ms. Trull stated that funds often become available for short-term needs due to disasters, however, long-term sustainable funding sources should be available.

Members discussed the convening and formalizing of the arts and culture communities. Ms. Black summarized the need for local artists to have identified creative spaces, which could help retain artists, and suggested that the County identify physical spaces. Mr. Johnson stated that an art district should be created in an area that has existing art spaces. Members suggested developing an asset map of existing cultural facilities and resources to prioritize the resilience of the community.

Mr. Johnson stated that when the beaches closed, tourists shifted their focus to the inland arts that were available, and cultural properties saw increases. Members acknowledged the importance of overall community resilience.

Mr. Johnson stated that creating an Arts Advisory Committee could help to overcome barriers associated with public records and other issues and supported a public-private partnership model for the region. He also suggested seeking other funding sources as an alternative to the bed tax. Ms. Black stated that a county-level representative is needed to prioritize and include the community. She summarized the need for acknowledgment at the county level. Mr. Johnson suggested a public-private partnership with a contracted director to spend institutional funding. Ms. Bello-Matthews stated that from a municipality point of view, the funds should live within the County, and offered the example of Miami-Dade's funding. She stated that the City of Fort Myers is looking to support the area but stated the issue of funding. Ms. Bellow-Matthews stated that rehabilitating and hardening structures are identified priorities and a central institution should be implemented that can house the funds for the arts and cultural community.

Branch Technical Briefs

Ms. Bello-Matthews stated that Sarasota and St Petersburg have evolved over the past 20 years. She stated that there are pockets of art and creativity, but additional information is needed to get buy-in from the local governments to move the process forward. Ms. Black discussed the different types of models that exist in Sarasota and elsewhere across the State of Florida. Mr. Johnson stated that these models began with public investment and then private investment followed.

Ms. Bello-Matthews stated that Miami Dade County focused their efforts on specific communities to development arts and cultural sites. She suggested focusing on specific communities (e.g., Palm Beach Boulevard and Martin Luther King Boulevard) and supporting the beautification of those areas to build upon the organic culture of the region. She stated that unless an arts and culture division is created at the County level, this Initiative may not move forward. Ms. Trull stated that an outside source to implement the Initiative without political implications is necessary.

Mr. Romine summarized that this is more involved than a Technical Brief and requires a regional vision.

Questions and Next Steps

The next Branch meeting is scheduled for July 19, 2023, from 8:30 AM to 10:00 AM.

Public Comment

No public comment request.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Mr. Romine thanked the members for attending and then adjourned the meeting at 9:38 AM.