

Meeting Minutes
Triumph Gulf Coast Board Meeting
Wakulla County Community Center
318 Shadeville Highway
Crawfordville, Florida
November 8, 2017
1:00 p.m. ET

Members Present:

Allan Bense, Chair
Bob Bonezzi (by phone)
Stan Connally, Jr.
Pam Dana, PhD
Don Gaetz
Stephen Riggs, IV
Jason Shoaf

Chair Bense called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Executive Director Susan Skelton called the roll and announced that all members were present.

Wakulla County Commission Chair Ralph Thomas welcomed Triumph Gulf Coast Board members to the county and noted his appreciation for all of the work that has been done by the board and the legislative delegation.

Mr. Jason Shoaf made a motion to approve the minutes of the October Board Meeting. Dr. Pam Dana seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote (7-0).

Dr. Dana made a brief report from the Application Drafting Committee. She noted that the draft application and pre-application were discussed at the previous meeting. She said the pre-application form has been released and the cut-off date for the first round of pre-applications is November 15. She reminded everyone that the pre-application is for the purpose of identifying projects to be sure that the project meets the minimum criteria. She said that pre-applications and applications would continue to be accepted on a rolling basis. Ms. Skelton noted that while only four pre-applications have been accepted as of this date, she was aware of numerous others, as indicated from several county commissions that have put forth recommendations. She said she expected many pre-applications to come in over the next week.

Senator Gaetz reported that the Program Administration / Economic Advisor Selection Committee, comprised of Dr. Dana, Mr. Jason Shoaf, Chair Bense, and Senator Gaetz, met on October 20 to review a process for engaging a program

administration team, a scoring team and an Economic Advisor for Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. He noted that the outline of that process is available on the website in the form of a memo from himself to Ms. Skelton. He said that the committee is recommending that Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc., engage an Economic Advisor to provide advice and guidance to the board, engage or employ a Program Administrator to oversee the application process and performance review management of projects for the duration of a successful project, and an evaluation panel made up of on-call subject area experts to score applications. Dr. Dana said that she has spoken with Enterprise Florida and the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) to determine what method those entities were using for scoring applications for the Florida Jobs Growth grant program due to its similarity to the Triumph Gulf Coast criteria and process. She said the applications come in and there is a person who assures the documents are intact and provides interface communications between the agency and the applicant through the process. DEO has an evaluation team of approximately five individuals with expertise in the subject area of the application. She said that the agency indicated that having this model of diverse subject area experts is working well. Senator Gaetz clarified that the committee is not recommending using DEO to do the evaluations; rather, it is recommending adopting the methods that have proven successful for the agency in evaluating a similar grant program. The idea would be not to keep a full-time staff of experts "sitting around," on staff, but to have on call those subject area experts that could work as needed based on the type of application to be reviewed.

Regarding the position of Economic Advisor, the committee discussed several options and settled on pursuing some type of arrangement with Dr. Rick Harper, a well-respected economist currently serving on the faculty of the University of West Florida.

Senator Gaetz said that at the direction of the committee he reached out to Dr. Harper who indicated that he would be interested in assisting. Senator Gaetz pointed out that Dr. Harper helped in drafting the original legislation forming Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc., and that he was the economic expert who assisted the Attorney General's legal team in making the case that resulted in the current settlement with BP and the State of Florida. Senator Gaetz indicated that while talks with the university to engage Dr. Harper on a half-time basis have been productive, the discussion is still going through the layers of protocol to work out a mutually agreeable contract with all parties involved. As such, he said that the committee was not able to recommend such a contract at this meeting, but would continue to work through contract issues with the University and Dr. Harper. He asked legal counsel, Mr. Scott Remington, for any comments. Mr. Remington said that he thought that there should be a motion to direct Senator Gaetz to continue to negotiate, on behalf of Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc., to reach an engagement agreement with the university for the services of Dr. Harper. Chair Bense asked if there was a timeframe for successful negotiation of a contract. Senator Gaetz indicated that he thought that one week would be sufficient, and if

an agreement could not be reached in that period, it would be time to move in another direction.

Dr. Dana indicated that she fully supported moving ahead with negotiations with Dr. Harper, and that it is important to engage the Program Administrator, as well. Senator Gaetz noted that if negotiations with the university were successful, Dr. Harper could begin work as early as the first week or so of December. Mr. Connally commended the committee on the work that has been done, and asked about filling the role of the Program Administrator. Senator Gaetz said that both Dr. Harper and Dr. Dana have ideas about filling that role, and that once the Economic Advisor position is filled, the two of them can make recommendations on that position. Mr. Shoaf asked if there were any other economists that would be available in the event that Dr. Harper has to recuse himself. Senator Gaetz said that he did not know a specific name, but that Dr. Dana could make recommendations. Dr. Dana said that there were several, including Vision First and Gray Swoope, that could do the work. She said she has reached out to several entities for the role of Program Administrator. She noted that there are many smart people across the region that can do that job. Chair Bense said that while it might take a little while to get the team in place, these decisions are critical to the success of the overall program, and that it is very important to get the best team possible in place going forward.

Senator Gaetz made a motion to have the board approve the committee's plan of operations (as stated in the Gaetz Memo to Skelton) which lays out an Economic Advisor, a Program Administrator and an Evaluation Panel; to authorize legal counsel to continue to negotiate with the University of West Florida on a contract for half of Dr. Harper's time at half of his salary (and benefits), not to exceed the statutory caps, is such a contract can be worked out, and if not, then to authorize Senator Gaetz to review other options. He said that the committee will come back to the next meeting with a completed proposal for Economic Advisor. Mr. Shoaf seconded the motion. Mr. Stan Connally said that it is important for the committee to keep the board apprised of the amount of negotiated salaries and contracts so as not to exceed caps. Mr. Stephen Riggs, Board Treasurer, said that he would work with the committee, and will be bringing a proposed operating budget forward at the next board meeting that will include any of these negotiated amounts. **The motion passed unanimously (7-0).**

Ms. Skelton told the members that the new Triumph Gulf Coast email addresses should be ready for release and distribution at the end of the week, that each member will have an email address, and the format will be (first initial)(last name)@myfloridatriumph.com.

Ms. Skelton reported that she is working with 2KWebgroup to make all pre-applications, and eventually all applications, available for viewing on the website. She noted that projects will be searchable by date and county, and there will be

an indication of whether a project is recommended by a Board of County Commissioners. She said there would be some cost incurred in the design, not to exceed \$2000. She asked for permission to expend those funds. Ms. Skelton said that the application has not yet been posted, but will be on the website soon.

Mr. Riggs moved approval of expenditure not to exceed \$2000 website design of the searchable pre-application and application project list. Dr. Dana seconded the motion.

Mr. Shoaf asked if the website would be interactive. Ms. Skelton responded that it is not intended to be interactive, but would provide a way for the public to see any of the pre-applications and applications, similar to what DEO and Enterprise Florida has for the Florida Job Growth grants. Dr. Dana thanked Enterprise Florida and DEO for working with our web team to assist in designing the solution. **The motion passed unanimously (7-0).**

Mr. Remington said that the legal team has continued to work with the committees, and met with several local governments to assist them with the pre-application process. He noted that the team is continuing to shop for a Directors and Officers policy and has found a large disparity in policy prices. He said they were waiting for a few more quotes before making a final recommendation, and indicated that no board action was required today because the board had previously authorized Chair Bense to execute such a policy.

Mr. Riggs gave the financial report, and October Financial Statement as provided by Tipton, Marler and Chastain CPA Group. He said very few expenditures have been made, and interest income was basically the same. He noted that the proposed operating budget that he will discuss at the next board meeting would include detail on any new engagements that occur. He said YTD interest is approximately \$4 million, but that the money is held in trust at DEO. **Mr. Connally made a motion to approve the October Financial Statement.**

Senator Gaetz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

PUBLIC COMMENT

Keith Wilkins – City of Pensacola, noted that the city has filed the Center for Dynamic Ocean Technologies project, that he said would be transformational and is ready to go.

Bobby Pearce – Wakulla County School Superintendent, welcomed the board to Wakulla County and said they are very excited about the workforce development opportunities that Triumph Gulf Coast can bring, and look forward to working with the board.

Letha Mathews – City of Port St Joe PAC, asking for support of the pre-application.

Dr. Jack Rudloe – Gulf Specimen Marine Lab and Aquarium, noted that they are a stand-alone educational facility providing marine education for over 20,000 school children each year. He appreciates the focus on environmental issues and that the oil spill has had a major impact on the marine environment. He said impacts from the dispersant are ongoing. He said money should be spent on teaching our children about the environment that they live in on the coast. He said his organization needs assistance with keeping the operations going, and asked for help from Triumph Gulf Coast.

Alan Pierce – Franklin County RESTORE Coordinator, thanked Scott Remington for his help with meeting with the local commissioners. He said that Franklin County would probably have approximately 12 applications over time and appreciate the assistance that Triumph Gulf Coast staff has offered in the process.

BOARD COMMENT

Senator Gaetz noted that Ralph Thomas and Alan Pierce spoke about the importance of Franklin and Wakulla Counties being included. He said that everyone needs to know that Senator Bill Montford fought to get those counties included as part of the Triumph Gulf Coast region, and that he deserves all of the credit for those counties having this opportunity.

Dr. Dana asked about the next board meeting. Ms. Skelton said that the next meeting is scheduled for Friday, December 8 in Panama City.

Mr. Remington said that while pre-applications are now being accepted, once the application is posted on the website, entities could begin working on those documents, understanding that the pre-application is a mandatory step in the process and should be completed first. Senator Gaetz noted that the pre-applications and applications would not be reviewed until the economic advisor team is in place. Mr. Connally asked if there was an acknowledgement being sent. Ms. Skelton indicated that while it has not been done yet, she could do so by return email upon receipt of the pre-application. Dr. Dana reiterated the importance of having the Program Administrator in place to take up this part of the process going forward.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:53 p.m. ET