

**Meeting Minutes
Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc.
Northwest Florida State College
Student Services Building, Room 302
100 College Boulevard
Niceville, Florida 32578
June 1, 2021
10:30 a.m. CT**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Lewis Bear, Jr.
Allan Bense (by phone)
Pam Dana, Ph. D, Vice Chair
Don Gaetz, Chair
Ben Lee, Assistant Treasurer
Stephen Riggs, IV, Treasurer
Matt Terry

Chair Don Gaetz called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. CT and welcomed everyone to the meeting. He then called on Dr. Devon Stephenson, President, Northwest Florida State College for remarks.

Dr. Stephenson welcomed everyone to the Northwest Florida State College and thanked Triumph Gulf Coast for the work it is doing across the six campuses and the region. He said that the college has modified its mission statement to create an environment that is a catalyst for cultural, civic, and economic development that ultimately serves the business and industry needs through classes and programming. The college is now targeting career education more than any other area and places a strong emphasis on standing up career education programs with multiple on-ramps and pathways to completion from licenses and credentials to bachelor's degrees. Focus areas include Allied Health, CDL Training and Testing, the Walton Works Training Center of Excellence, and the Aviation Center of Excellence. He said that thanks to the support of Triumph Gulf Coast, the college projects that the Walton Works Center will create 1570 new industry certifications and ten new workforce programs preparing students for high-demand, high-wage occupations. He said that Triumph Gulf Coast committed \$2.76 million for the project that is already making a difference in the region. He said that over 378 credentials have already been awarded on the five-year pathway to 1570.

Dr. Stephenson then discussed the more than \$7 million invested by Triumph Gulf Coast towards the Aviation Center of Excellence which has now been constructed at the Bob Sikes Airport in Crestview. He said that over the next ten years, students will earn 1255 FAA recognized industry credentials through the partnership of many public and private contributors. He concluded his remarks by stating that neither of these important projects would have been possible without the support and commitment of Triumph Gulf Coast.

Program Administrator Cori Henderson called the roll and announced the presence of a quorum.

The minutes of the May 19, 2021 Meeting were approved as distributed.

Chair Gaetz introduced Ms. Jennifer Conoley, President of Florida's Great Northwest for a presentation on the Regional Video Marketing project. Ms. Conoley gave a brief overview and discussed the importance of the research and marketing that is being done to better address site selectors and corporations interested in learning more about the region and the role of Triumph Gulf Coast in bringing new industry to Northwest Florida. She then introduced Mr. Gray Swoope, President and CEO of VisionFirst, to discuss the video and messaging.

Mr. Swoope thanked the Board for its support and said that the way Triumph is set up has been excellent in being fiscally responsible while building a vision for the diversification of the local economy. He said that his company has done work in over 35 other states, and he has seen the way those states have used their BP money and Florida has gotten it right with the Triumph Gulf Coast operation. He said in creating a marketing strategy, one must begin with the facts. He said that working with Dr. Rick Harper, economic advisor, and the Triumph team the foundational work was done to get the facts about the needs of the region. He said the next step is to identify the vision. Triumph Gulf Coast has worked to develop a vision through making sound business choices to address workforce needs. The vision can then be used to develop strategies for moving forward and creating a marketing plan. He said that the remarks by Dr. Stephenson pointed to the work already being done to implement the strategy of creating a solid workforce across the region.

Business development requires producing a "story" of what the region has to offer. VisionFirst has focused on studying not only the past market conditions, but what new trends are developing as the country begins to pull out of the COVID recession. He said that one strong trend that is emerging is the automation of all industries. He said "reshoring" projects are not happening as quickly as first expected due to the deep-rooted nature of supply chains and companies needing to be sure of the feasibility of bringing those jobs back to North America. They are looking at workforce as a major part of that discussion. They are looking for regions that are able to provide long-term partnerships in developing an upskilled and available workforce as they work through their future plans. He said the Triumph Gulf Coast message has to be that not only do we want to diversify, but we want to be long-term partners with industries that choose to come here. The focus audience is the business sector that is looking for opportunities here in Florida.

Mr. Swoope then introduced Nancy Blumheintz to present the marketing materials that have been developed. She noted that the campaign is targeted to an external audience that we want to think that Northwest Florida is a great place to live and do business, and we want them to come here and invest in our local economy. She said the goal is to set the region apart in a global environment. She said that key findings were that Triumph Gulf Coast is the only such fund of its kind and provides distinct advantages to Florida. The success of Triumph is built on its partnerships and the fact that it is apolitical in its operations. Triumph has allowed its workforce and education partners to become more innovative in bringing its "product" to the market. She noted that while other states used the BP Settlement funds to fill budget gaps. Florida had the vision to use the funds for transformational economic diversification. Triumph is truly operating at the speed of business in its ability to put projects to work in real time.

Ms. Blumheintz said that the theme that the marketing team came up with was "Beyond Our Beaches", an educational campaign that focuses on not only the incredible natural environment of Northwest Florida, but on the blooming industry opportunities that are uniquely available due to the presence of Triumph Gulf Coast and its ability to work with local governments and businesses to provide innovation in the workplace. She presented several print materials and a video of the "Beyond the Beaches" campaign.

Chair Gaetz asked about the method of distribution of the print and video media. Ms. Conoley said that the materials will be shared with site selectors, interested parties at trade shows and other venues including visits to corporations around the nation and internationally as well as in response to any inquiries to economic developers in the region. Chair Gaetz asked when all of the materials will be available. Ms. Blumheintz said that the target is the end of June. She also noted that the media is designed to layer with each other to create a strong targeted message to prospective industries. The combination of in-person visits, print media, digital messages and focused emails provides that level of intense marketing meant to drive the businesses to the region.

Mr. Lewis Bear asked for an example of what the message would be to an aviation business looking to relocate to the region. Ms. Blumheintz said that there will be an aviation specific video and an all-encompassing video that will be used. Mr. Bear said that the video that was presented was very well done and thanked the team. Dr. Harper noted that the point made by Mr. Swoope about the change in the workplace model works well with the focus that Triumph Gulf Coast has been able to maintain on upskilling the workforce to be ready and able to work with more complex machinery and equipment in the future.

Staff Report

Chair Gaetz noted that staff is working on the June 2021 Draft Semi-Annual Report to the Governor and Legislature and asked the Board to allow him and staff to send a draft report to members for approval in the coming days and to be allowed to finalize and deliver the report prior to the June 30 due date. Mr. Allan Bense made a motion to allow staff and the Chair to complete the report and present it to the Governor and Legislature. Dr. Pam Dana seconded the motion which was approved without objection.

Ben Lee reported that he and staff are continuing to work on specific language for a resolution to address recommendations made by the Business Continuity Committee to implement new procedures for compliance cost recovery and would have more to report at a future meeting. Mr. Scott Remington, legal counsel, said that the next time this would come before the Board would be in the form of a Term Sheet with the new language incorporated into the document, and that there was no need for any additional formal Board action or change to policy to implement the contemplated changes.

Legal Report

Mr. Remington presented the Second Amendment to Grant Award Agreement #98 – Walton County Sheriff's Office – to increase construction funds by \$200,000, add 60 new certifications to metrics, and shift funds between categories. The amendment is being requested due to added construction supply and labor costs related to COVID related shortages. After a brief discussion Chair Gaetz asked if any member of the public wished to be heard on the issue. No one spoke. **Dr. Dana made a motion to adopt the amendment. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bear and passed unanimously (7-0.)**

Mr. Remington then presented a proposed Grant Award Amendment for Proposal #209 – Santa Rosa County Board of County Commissioners – First Amendment to Grant Award Agreement to adjust performance metrics: increasing required number of jobs from 90 to 100 with a complementary adjustment to wage rate from 150% to 115%. Dr. Harper explained to the Board that the original principal tenet is largely dependent on federal funding which is still not secured. Mr. Shannon Ogletree, Santa Rosa County Economic Development Director, said that another

project is continuing to move forward, and others are still considering the park, so it is important to keep moving on the infrastructure construction. He reported that the Whiting Field Park continues to move forward with much activity involving the Leonardo project coming in the next few months. He said that the adjustments contemplated in the amendment will make the park even more inviting to several of the companies interested in the area. He said his organization is pushing out the messaging from Florida's Great Northwest and VisionFirst about the benefits of Triumph Gulf Coast partnerships for the region when they are talking to site consultants and companies around the country.

Chair Gaetz asked if there was any public comment on the proposed amendment. No one spoke. **Mr. Bear made a motion to adopt the amendment. The motion was seconded by Mr. Riggs and passed unanimously (7-0.)**

Mr. Remington presented an amendment to Grant Award Agreement #213 – Florida's Great Northwest (FGNW) – Second Amendment to Grant Award Agreement (increase DOE research component of grant by \$68,000) to compensate for additional salary requirements from the Department of Education to house a research analyst in the data collection office. After a call for public comment, of which there was none, **Mr. Bear made a motion to approve the amendment. Mr. Riggs seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (7-0.)**

Program Administrator's Report

Ms. Henderson reported that Santa Rosa County has submitted a pre-application for Phase 2 of the Whiting Field Aviation Park and a pre-application for infrastructure improvements to the Milton Interchange Industrial Park. She said staff has been working with Northwest Florida State College on minor adjustments to funding categories on the Walton Works project. She noted that the adjustments are within the range of staff approval and staff recommends moving forward with those adjustments. **Dr. Dana made a motion to approve the report and Mr. Bear seconded the motion. The motion was adopted without objection.**

Public Remarks by Port of Panama City Director Alex Kelly

Mr. Alex Kelly, newly appointed Director of the Port of Panama City, presented the Board with a plaque honoring the work of Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. in making the new additions to the port possible. He noted that the plaque was originally presented to Mr. Ben Lee at the dedication ceremony at the port several weeks ago, but that he wanted to bring it to make a formal presentation at this meeting. He said that project doubles the land area of the East Terminal and doubles the berth capacity for large ships at the port.

Recognition of Service

Chair Gaetz offered remarks and made presentations to Board Members whose terms of office expire on June 2, 2021. The members are:

Mr. Lewis Bear, Jr. – Governor's Appointee

Dr. Pam Dana – Attorney General's Appointee

Mr. Stephen Riggs, IV – Chief Financial Officer's Appointee

He noted that each of the members have brought unique talents and insight as business leaders to the Board over the years.

Chair Gaetz pointed out that former Attorney General Pam Bondi made a very well-considered appointment of Dr. Pam Dana to the Triumph Gulf Coast Board. As the person who created the Economic Development function of the State of Florida under the leadership of Governor Jeb Bush, Dr. Dana is uniquely qualified to lead economic development in Northwest Florida. Her successes in economic development across the state are well known, including the Whiting Field Aviation Park. Her own business, a charter fishing company, is recognized for its environmental and recreational successes. Mr. Allan Bense said that he had worked with Dr. Dana over many years of service in Tallahassee and Northwest Florida and that has been his honor to work with her and that he has deep respect for her and all that she has done for the State of Florida and for our region.

Dr. Dana said that her ability to serve on the Board has been one of the most fulfilling things she has done. She said it has been an honor to serve, and as much of an honor to have served with such fine and dedicated individuals as the other members and professional staff and consultants. She thanked the Board and everyone present for the recognition.

Chair Gaetz said that when Triumph Gulf Coast was established it was a given that financial responsibility would be something that the Board would have to live with every single day of its existence. He said that accountability was extremely important to the organization's success. Chair Gaetz said that the decision that former Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater made to appoint Stephen Riggs, IV, to Triumph was critical to our success. He said that CFO Atwater chose Mr. Riggs because he is part of the future of Northwest Florida. He is a dynamic new leader of the region and will be one who will see all of the work of this board come to fruition. As a CPA with a particular specialization in public audit work, he has made sure that governments don't screw up their finances. He has served as Treasurer of this \$1.5 billion enterprise since its inception and has made sure that we have abided by every law, rule, and procedure during his tenure here. He has made it possible to establish and operate Triumph Gulf Coast in a sound financial capacity. Chair Gaetz noted that the Auditor General of Florida "lives with us." He said that annual operational audits are required and ongoing because of the substantial amount of money that Triumph Gulf Coast handles. He said that the reason that the Auditor General has never found anything wrong in our audits is the high standard that Mr. Riggs holds us to in operations and accounting for all funds.

Mr. Riggs said his desire to serve on the Board had everything to do with wanting to help his community. He wanted to bring his expertise to provide opportunities to the region. He thanked the Board for all of the work that they had been able to accomplish as a team and he thanked the professional staff for its assistance. He specifically thanked Ms. Jennifer Davidson and the team at the Tipton, Marler CPA firm for support and encouragement in performing the duties of Treasurer. He said that part of the success of Triumph Gulf Coast was a result of the partnerships with the local economic development teams and their commitment to going out and finding the transformational opportunities for our region. He said that he is very grateful for all of the work that those groups do to make good things happen in the community. He said it was important to understand that Triumph Gulf Coast is not a short-term endeavor and was never meant to be used as a way to plug the holes in local budget needs, but as a way to exponentially improve the future of our area.

Chair Gaetz said that Lewis Bear, Jr. is someone who brings to the table the power of analysis, the power of success, and the respect as the CEO of the oldest family run corporation in the

state of Florida. Their family picked this area and has invested and committed to the betterment of our region for many, many decades. The company has continued to grow and prosper. He noted that the Bear Family Foundation has contributed millions of dollars in philanthropic support over the years doing extraordinarily good work for the families and children of Northwest Florida. Chair Gaetz pointed out that Mr. Bear's insistence on getting to the details of proposals has led us to a number of the resulting good projects that Triumph has been able to do over the last several years. He said to have someone of the caliber of Mr. Bear, whose company has created thousands and thousands of jobs for our region, bringing his business expertise to our Board, has resulted in many of the successes that the Board has had to date.

Mr. Bense said that he was so pleased to have served with all three of the members who are leaving today and said that the appointing entities truly have big shoes to fill.

Mr. Bear said that he appreciated all of the hard work that the Triumph professional staff and consultants do to make the work of the Board possible. He said that when the oil hit the beach everyone across the eight counties panicked. Then Senate President Don Gaetz worked to appropriate \$30 million to the region for recovery through the University of West Florida economic recovery initiative, but that significant funding was critical to getting the recovery started. He said that without the leadership of Chair Gaetz the recovery of the region would not have happened. He said he had never worked on a better board that had a better chair than Chair Gaetz who was more respectful of the viewpoints of each individual member and thanked him for his leadership. He said it has been an honor and a pleasure to serve on this board.

Announcements

Chair Gaetz said that he, Dr. Harper, and Mr. Remington had had the pleasure of meeting with Senators Broxson and Gainer, and the county administrators of the eight Triumph counties to hear from them on their interactions and experiences with Triumph Gulf Coast. He said that we expect to receive additional feedback from that meeting that we will be responding to, but that the meeting was a very good one and he wanted to report on it to the full board.

He said that Attorney General Ashley Moody has appointed Mr. Collier Merrill, a very successful and well-known business leader from Escambia County to the board and he is hopeful that we will receive the appointments from Governor DeSantis and CFO Patronis prior to our next meeting.

Mr. Matt Terry said that he is still working with the Port of Port St. Joe on their application and hopes to have updates at our next meeting. He thanked the departing board members for their service.

Mr. Lee agreed and specifically thanked Dr. Dana for her service in chairing several committees during her tenure. He said that it has been a pleasure to serve under her leadership on those committees. He said that Mr. Riggs actually wrote the policies that help us legally get the funds to the recipients of our grant awards and he thanked him for the many hours he has given in his role as Treasurer. He thanked Mr. Bear for his many years of leadership across the entire region.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:56 a.m. CT.

