

**Meeting Minutes  
Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc.  
Santa Rosa School District Board Room  
5086 Canal Street  
Milton, FL 32570  
September 22, 2022  
10:30 a.m. CT**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

David Bear, Chair  
Bryan Corr, Sr.  
Reynolds Henderson, Treasurer  
David Humphreys  
Collier Merrill, Vice Chair  
Jay Trumbull, Sr.  
Leslie Weiss

Assistant Superintendent David Hicks, Santa Rosa County School District, welcomed the Board to the School District Board Room.

Executive Director Susan Skelton called the roll and announced the presence of a quorum with all members present.

Chair David Bear called the meeting to order at 10:32 a.m. CT.

Mr. Shannon Ogletree, Santa Rosa County Economic Development Officer, welcomed the Board to Santa Rosa County. He invited all members to attend the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Santa Rosa East Industrial Park next week. He said that all parcels in the park are already spoken for and that great things continue to happen in Santa Rosa County because of the support of Triumph Gulf Coast funding.

**Introduction of New Board Member**

Chair Bear introduced the Board's newest member, Mrs. Leslie Weiss, of Crawfordville and welcomed her to the Board. Mrs. Weiss was appointed to the Board by Speaker of the Florida House Chris Sprowls.

Mrs. Weiss is President of Hydra Engineering & Construction, LLC. Mrs. Weiss started Hydra in 2008, providing Engineering, Environmental and Construction Services primarily to Federal and State clients. Mrs. Weiss is a Hispanic American with her mother's family being of Cuban descent.

She became a Certified Building Contractor in the State of Florida in September 2012 and a Certified General Contractor August 2020. She is a registered Professional Engineer in: Florida, Georgia, Alabama, West Virginia, South Carolina, Colorado, Arizona, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas. Mrs. Weiss serves on the Civil Engineering Advisory Board for University of South Florida, the Board of Advisors for the FSU / FAMU College of Civil Engineering and holds Fellow Status with the American Society of Civil Engineers. She is a sustaining member of

Society of American Military Engineers and a Federal Highway Administration Certified Safety Inspector for In-Service Bridges, a Georgia Erosion & Sediment Control Certified Design Professional, a Florida Department of Environmental Protection Qualified Stormwater Management Inspector and is certified under OSHA 30 Hour Construction and US Army Corps of Engineers Construction Quality Management for Contractors.

Mrs. Weiss is on the Board for the Wakulla County Chamber of Commerce.

She graduated at the top of her civil engineering class with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering with emphasis in Water Resources and Environmental Engineering from the University of South Florida in 1993.

In August 2020, Hydra was recognized as the U.S. Senate Small Business of the Week by Senator Marco Rubio. The company won the University of South Florida "Fast 56 Award" in 2022, 2020, 2017, and 2016 for being one of the top 56 fastest growing firms of USF alumni. Hydra won Small Business of the Year in 2016 through the Department of Homeland Security for contracts at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center. The company won the 2017 Florida Companies to Watch award from GrowFL.

Mrs. Weiss and her company have received the 2016 and 2018 Business Excellence Award from the Wakulla County Chamber of Commerce for Professional Services, and the 2014 Business Excellence Award for Environmental Stewardship.

Leslie Weiss has been married to Manuel Weiss since 2020 and has one daughter, Brittany Hope.

Chair Bear recognized Mrs. Weiss for remarks. She said that she is honored and excited to be appointed to the Board and she looks forward to working with the Board and staff to represent the small counties in the region.

**Mr. Collier Merrill made a motion to approve the August 17, 2022 Meeting Minutes as circulated. Mr. Reynolds Henderson seconded the motion which was approved without objection.**

### **Treasurer's Report**

Mr. Henderson and Mrs. Jennifer Davidson, CPA, presented the August 2022 Financial Report. Mrs. Davidson noted that due to the changeover in banking operations, there were no grant disbursements in August. Triumph continues to operate below budget allowances. \$16.5 million has been disbursed to grant awardees this year. **Mrs. Weiss made a motion to approve the August 2022 Financial Report. The motion was seconded by Mr. Jay Trumbull and approved without objection.**

Mr. Henderson reported that the conversion to Centennial Bank has been going very well and that he and others were receiving the necessary training to be able to operate the accounts. He said such training should be completed in the next few days. Mrs. Davidson reported that the accounts were now open and should be fully operational with funds deposited by next week. Both reported that the situation to this point has been very positive with the new bank.

## Staff Report

Ms. Skelton reported that the Legislative Budget Commission had met recently and awarded funding to multiple projects across the region. Among those getting funding were AMI Kids Maritime Academy in Panama City, FSU Health Academic Research Center, the HSU Foundation, IHMC HVAC replacement, the Bay ARC Empowerment Café and Inklusion Coffee Shop at GCSC, and the Whiting Airpark Apron/Taxiway paving.

Staff continues to work with the Auditor General's Office and respond to requests for information from them.

Chair Bear appointed Mr. Henderson, Mr. Collier Merrill, and himself to the Executive Director Performance Review Committee for the purpose of reviewing her job performance pursuant to her contract. This is an annual review that is required by that contract. He said that all Board members are welcome to attend the publicly noticed meeting.

Ms. Skelton reported that Triumph Gulf Coast has hired Mrs. Therese Baker as our new part-time Administrative Specialist. Mrs. Baker is a resident of Okaloosa County and has worked with many members of our staff in previous jobs. Ms. Cori Henderson, Program Administrator, oversees Mrs. Baker's work. We are all very pleased to have her on our team and look forward to working with her.

Ms. Skelton asked for permission to go forward with the annual review of professional services contracts with Clark Partington, the Tipton, Marler CPA Firm, the Warren Averett CPA Firm, and Mr. Randy Lewis, AIA. **Chair Bear directed Ms. Skelton to proceed with those annual contract reviews.**

## Legal Report

Mr. Scott Remington, Legal Counsel, explained that each year Triumph Gulf Coast purchases a Directors and Officers Insurance Policy, and that Clark Partington has, in the past, taken that request for such insurance into the market to receive bids for service. He noted that each year the cost has gone up due to the fact that each year the Board has awarded more and more funds which increases exposure should there ever be a problem with an award. He asked for permission for Chair Bear and the law firm to take the request to market and to try to focus on specialty insurance markets to find a good fit for the Board. **Mr. Merrill made a motion to direct counsel to pursue the insurance policy renewal. The motion was seconded by Mr. Henderson and passed without objection.**

Mr. Alan Manning, Legal Counsel, reviewed the Grant Award Negotiations for Proposal #273 – Bay Economic Development Alliance / BOCC – Project Cast for \$3,675,000. The project is for the purchase of a building to house a boat manufacturing company. The building was previously home to a boat manufacturing company that did not return after Hurricane Michael, so this project will replace jobs lost after the hurricane. Mocama Marine, LLC has signed a performance agreement with Bay County to produce the necessary jobs to allow the county to take on this financial responsibility.

Mr. Ben Moorman, Bay County Economic Development Alliance, spoke about the proposal on behalf of the Bay County Board of County Commissioners. Mr. Moorman said that the company produces Action Craft Boats and Southwind Boats. The project will produce 105 jobs and \$2.5

million in capital investment to the county. **Mr. Jay Trumbull, Sr., made a motion to approve the Grant Award Agreement. The motion was seconded by Mr. Henderson.** Chair Bear asked if there was anyone from the public that wished to comment on the proposed Grant Award. No one came forward to speak. **The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote (7-0.)**

Mr. Trumbull asked Mr. Moorman what the timeline was for getting the project up and running. Mr. Moorman noted that there was some retrofitting that needed to occur but that the company plans to be in operation by early 2023.

Mr. Manning then moved to his review of the Proposed First Amendment to Proposal #227 – Panama City Port Authority – Intermodal Distribution Center Expansion – NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS REQUESTED. He noted that the amendment would simply adjust some of the budget line items to allow for a more efficient use of Triumph funds.

Mr. David Humphreys announced that as a tenant of the Port of Panama City, he would be abstaining from any conversation or voting on this, and any other items, related to the port operations. He has filled out a Form 8-A document that will be filed along with these minutes outlining his abstention from voting.

Mr. Alex King, Director of the Port of Panama City, spoke about the amendment and the important relationship that has developed between the port and Triumph Gulf Coast. He explained that this amendment will assist with the upgrades to the Intermodal Port Facility, an inland distribution component of the Port of Panama City. The project will ultimately produce an additional 52 acres of heavy industrial, rail served, locations that will be able to serve as a distribution hub for the region. An additional 22 acres will expand the logistics capabilities of the inland facility. Even with price increases for construction materials and supplies, the project is on target for completion in February 2023. **Mr. Bryan Corr made a motion to approve the amendment. The motion was seconded by Mr. Trumbull.** Chair Bear asked if any member of the public wanted to speak about the proposed amendment. No one came forward. **The motion passed on a roll call vote (6-0) with Mr. Humphreys abstaining from the vote.**

Ms. Skelton noted that Mr. King had recently been named as Vice-Chair of the Florida Seaport Transportation Economic Development Council (FSTED). Chair Bear congratulated him on this important new role.

Mr. Manning proceeded with his review of Term Sheet Negotiations for Proposal #271 – Okaloosa County School District – Health Academy of Northwest Florida for \$1,291,000. This certificate program will issue at least 432 CAPE approved nursing program certificates for high school students in Okaloosa County.

Ms. April Branscome, representing the Okaloosa County School District thanked the Board on behalf of Superintendent Marcus Chambers and the School Board for consideration of this program. She said that the district has already started implementing the program and already has over 40 students enrolled. She said that the district is looking forward to providing this pathway to get students into the workforce as soon as possible. **Mr. Henderson made a motion to direct staff and counsel to proceed to Grant Award negotiations. Mrs. Weiss seconded the motion.**

Chair Bear asked if anyone from the public wished to speak on this proposal. No one came forward to speak. **The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote (7-0.)**

## **Program Administration**

### **Program Administrator's Report.**

Ms. Cori Henderson, Program Administrator, began her presentation by noting that instead of giving her normal progress highlights and updates, she would speak about how proposals are reviewed by staff once a pre-application and application are received before they are brought to the Board for consideration and then how we monitor implementation of executed grants.

The printout of the Awards section of Triumph's statute, 288.8017, and the first few pages of the Triumph application include:

- The statute language from 288.8017 identifying the 7 categories of grants that are eligible to receive Triumph funds,
- Additional statutory categories for consideration when reviewing eligible requests,
- And a list of discretionary priorities the original Triumph Board members identified as elements that make a strong Triumph grant application

The first formal step in a grant application to Triumph is a pre-application. The purpose of the pre-application is for staff to simply evaluate if a proposal falls in to one of the seven categories of eligibility and meets the criteria in s. 288.8017(2), F.S., that says:

- Awards may not be used to finance 100 percent of any project or program.
- Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc., may require a one-to-one private-sector match or higher for an award, if applicable and deemed prudent by the board of directors.
- An award may supplement but may not supplant existing funding sources.

Prior to each Board meeting Susan, Dr. Harper, Triumph's Economic Advisor, our legal team, and I review each pre-application received since the previous Board Meeting to make the eligibility recommendation that's in the Program Administrator Report.

Staff's recommendation about eligibility *is not a recommendation on if the proposal meets any discretionary considerations or priorities, is economically viable or a guarantee of funding.* It's purely a recommendation on if the information provided meets one of the seven awards categories and the criteria in s. 288.8017(2) F.S.

Most of the time pre-applicants provide enough information for staff to make a recommendation and you'll see that recommendation in the Program Administrator report, but sometimes the pre-applicant doesn't provide enough information. When that occurs, we reach out to them for additional information and bring our recommendation to you at a later meeting.

Staff views grantees and future grantees as partners and the pre-application and application process as collaborative. Between the submission of the pre-application and application, Dr. Harper, Dr. Frank Fuller, Triumph's Education Advisor, and Ms. Henderson spend considerable time working with applicants. And it's not unusual for that collaborative work to continue after an application is submitted.

Staff's role in the process is to maximize the impact of the Triumph funds based on the criteria in the statute and the priorities shared by the Board.

Many times, maximizing the dollars means breaking down old ways of doing things, encouraging new partnerships, or even shrinking the scope of a proposal to allow a grantee to gain some success before coming back with a larger or more complex request in the future. Once that collaborative work is complete a score is assigned to the proposal and staff brings an application to the Board for consideration.

The score, as Dr. Harper notes in his analysis, is based on the project's potential to generate increased economic activity – specifically increased household income across the region. The scoring process has allowed the \$350 million of Triumph funds awarded so far to generate \$800 million annually in increased household income across the eight-county region.

Once a project is awarded, staff monitors its implementation. The statute in your packet requires that *Awardees must regularly report to Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc., the expenditure of funds and the status of the project or program*. All Triumph agreements require an Annual Report, and some require quarterly reports.

For construction projects that use Triumph funds, the Grantee is required to report quarterly during the construction. Those reports are reviewed by Mr. Randy Lewis, AIA, Triumph's Construction Management Advisor, as noted in his report at the conclusion of the Program Administrator report.

Workforce Education projects report quarterly in their first year so that Dr. Fuller can monitor their implementation.

Staff includes these reports in the Program Administrator Report, and during the Annual Report period we provide you a summary of all active grants.

At the conclusion of Ms. Henderson's explanation, Mr. Henderson asked if what staff was recommending was to expand the categories for project funding. Ms. Henderson replied that staff just wanted to be sure that Board members were aware of what the categories for funding were and to point out that the former Board had established discretionary priorities that staff will continue to follow unless or until the current Board makes changes to those priorities. She explained that the first seven criteria are established in statute and include the categories of funding for public infrastructure and workforce education among others. She clarified that the

other categories are not discussed regularly but are there if proposals come in to fit them. Mr. Henderson asked about tourism marketing proposals. Ms. Henderson and Mr. Manning clarified that such proposals would need to come through Visit Florida or Fresh from Florida according to the language in the statute. The only marketing proposal that has been funded was a partnership to provide research to Triumph Gulf Coast about the types of certificates that should be funded based on market needs across the region, and to parlay that information into targeted marketing by Florida's Great Northwest to site selectors and out of state corporations that might be looking for relocation opportunities. There has been no direct marketing to tourism consumers funded by Triumph.

Mr. Henderson said that if there are more real avenues for funding that might generate additional interest in applying for Triumph grants. Chair Bear noted that it might be appropriate for the Board to have a more in-depth discussion of the types of awards that are possible, along with a review of the prior Boards' discretionary priorities to consider if any changes might be recommended by the current Board. Ms. Skelton noted that the original Board had a lot of discussion and spent a lot of time developing not only the discretionary priorities, but also the application itself. She said that the purpose of setting those priorities was to assure that Triumph was maximizing the funds for the best economic outcomes for the region.

Mr. Henderson asked about the fact that Triumph has not funded hospitality proposals. Ms. Skelton explained that the reason for that position has been that, as a rule, the hospitality related jobs do not produce the high wage jobs that the Board has historically asked for in consideration of the overall positive impact to household incomes. The Board has studied this issue in the past and found that the pay for hospitality jobs is not high enough to qualify for consideration of Triumph funding. While there are some jobs that might qualify, for the most part the minimum wage jobs associated with the industry would not provide the increase to household income that Triumph has required. Mr. Henderson said that one consideration should be that Walton County is an anomaly in this market because the hospitality industry locally is having to pay high wages to keep its restaurants and hotels open.

Ms. Henderson then moved forward in presenting the Program Administrator's Report. **Mr. Henderson made a motion to approve the Program Administrator's Report. Mr. Merrill seconded the motion. The report was approved without objection.**

## **Economic Advisor's Report**

### **Regional Economic Forecast Presentation by Dr. Rick Harper**

Dr. Harper gave a presentation on the Region's Economic Forecast with a focus on future health care needs. He said that across the eight county Triumph Gulf Coast region, there are approximately 600,000 jobs. He said the average earnings per job is below the national average. It is about \$50,000 per job across the region, but that number varies substantially by economic sector and location. He said that Government and Manufacturing are the highest paid sectors in the region and the urban counties pay more per job. This disparity leads to the

problems faced by the more rural counties in drawing high wage jobs due to the lack of infrastructure assets that are in place in the larger counties due to the higher level of population density that affords both a broader tax base and a larger workforce from which to draw.

Dr. Harper noted that government employs about 17% of the workforce in the region with very high wages. Government wages are exceeded only by manufacturing wages. Examples of such manufacturing jobs include shipbuilding, upstream chemical manufacturing, downstream chemical usage, and paper mills. The manufacturing sector represents only about 4-5% of the jobs in the region at this time. Government contracting accounts for approximately \$3.3 billion per year across the eight counties, including Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security. Northwest Florida has a vibrant aerospace cluster including the Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) jobs which has experienced a good rate of growth, as well as the traditional aviation strengths that stretch from Pensacola to Panama City and beyond.

The fastest growing sector in the region is financial services, due largely to the large number of personnel employed by Navy Federal Credit Union in Escambia County. Navy Federal is the largest single credit union in the world. The company now supports a 10,000-person campus in the county. Construction is another strong sector and is expected to grow between 2020 and 2030 by about 15% per year, but the federal reserve tightening rates, with an estimated additional 75 basis points in November, 50 in December and probably 2.25 basis point increases at the first of 2023, effects will definitely be felt in the homebuilding sector. While Dr. Harper said most forecasters are predicting that the country will avoid recession for the remainder of this year, but there are many extenuating circumstances that could affect that prediction including supply chain induced factors, reduced expansion of the labor market, the war in Ukraine, and higher energy prices that lead to higher agriculture and food production costs. All of these factors must be taken into account when risk of recession is calculated for 2023. At this point, that risk appears to be somewhere over fifty percent.

Dr. Harper said that Leisure and Hospitality is a large sector in our region, with a projected growth rate of 13% from 2020 to 2030. Earnings in this sector tend to be below average with average reported wages in the range of \$26,000 to \$28,000. He said that one approach that staff has looked at relative to proposals in this sector would be to carve out any higher wage jobs that could be created within the industry (such as management) and provide Triumph support based on those jobs only. The amount that would qualify for Triumph funding would be substantially less, but it would not violate the mandate of creation of higher wage jobs to support higher household income.

Government, Manufacturing, Aerospace and Aviation, Financial Services, Construction, and Leisure/Hospitality sectors are considered to be “traded” sectors, meaning that they are interchangeable with other regions throughout the country. Traded sectors make up about a third of the workforce. The remaining two thirds are “non-traded” sectors, including locally produced goods and services such as doctors’ offices, local restaurants, hospitals, etc. A reason to focus on these sectors is the long-standing Triumph philosophy that what we want to model is what the Department of Economic Opportunity and Enterprise Florida do on a statewide level in identifying sectors to keep in step with what the Legislature has deemed as appropriate workforce and economic development investment. He said that while the state’s programs have diminished in scope over recent years, Triumph Gulf Coasts affords the Northwest Florida region with the only economic development toolkit in the state for targeting of growing industrial sectors. Triumph’s partnerships with local governments to provide public



infrastructure to assist with bringing new jobs to the regions, and to train a ready workforce have proven to be a valuable asset for the region.

An important sector for every economy is Health Care. This sector makes up approximately 18% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and is one of the “three legs of the stool” for the Northwest Florida economy along with military/civilian government contracts and tourism related employment. The numbers of jobs created in these sectors are about equal. The goal of Triumph Gulf Coast has been to diversify the economy. In looking across the state and across the Metropolitan Statistical Areas in our region as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and based on commute related employment, we see interrelationships between workers across county lines. For example, it is normal for persons working in Escambia County to reside in Santa Rosa County, for persons living in Wakulla County to work in Leon County, and for persons living in Gulf County to work in Bay County. An MSA is determined if more than 25% of persons living in an adjacent county work in that county.

The demand for Health Care jobs across the region is projected to grow more rapidly than the overall job demand. For example, in the Pensacola MSA (Escambia and Santa Rosa) the overall job growth between 2021 and 2029 is projected to be 8.7% while the health care sector is projected to be 12.4%. Likewise in the Crestview/Destin/Fort Walton Beach MSA overall job growth is projected to be 13.2% while health care jobs are projected to increase by 16%. The same disparity holds true in the Panama City MSA with overall growth at approximately 10% and health care at 17.9%. Dr. Harper says that there are approximately 70 categories of health care jobs tracked by the U.S. government. The categories that have both high wages and good projected growth rates include Registered Nurses (RN), with a statewide 12.3% increase in needed jobs, or 731 job openings across in the Panama City MSA, 1029 in Okaloosa/Walton and 2068 in the Pensacola MSA through 2029 to account for both population growth and attrition due to retirement and relocation. Other job categories that have both good growth projections and high wages include Nurse Practitioners, Clinical Lab Technicians, and Pharmacy Technicians.

Mrs. Weiss asked about the training for Registered Nurses and noted that her daughter received a four-year degree to become an RN. Dr. Harper explained that there are different levels of degrees that result in becoming an RN, with two-year Associate of Science degrees, four-year Bachelor of Science degrees and advanced education with Masters levels of training.

After completing his presentation on the Economic Forecast, Dr. Harper moved on to his recommendation on Proposal #270 – Northwest Florida State College – Nursing Program Expansion for \$21,787,560 to expand delivery of nursing credentials in the region over the next twelve years. At the end of the twelfth year, the program will have produced a minimum of 4000 industry recognized certifications for an increased health care workforce across the region. The cost to Triumph Gulf Coast will be \$5447 per certificate. Northwest Florida State College will provide matching funds of \$21,855,260 so that the Triumph share of the proposed project is 49.9%. The match includes \$13 million in state Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) funds to be spent in the first three years of the project. The project funding will support the development of cutting-edge training tools such as artificial intelligence driven training that will reduce the amount of real time clinical training required in hospital settings. This clinical training requirement has been a disincentive to growing nursing training due to the lack of dedicated available person hours in hospital settings. Students will still get the real-life training, but it will be enhanced with virtual reality training that will allow for the reduction of “hospital hours” required to meet minimum training requirements, thus allowing for an expansion of the training pipeline for these high demand jobs. The expected discounted total increase in household

incomes will be \$15.3 for every Triumph dollar invested. For this reason, staff gives this proposal an A in terms of economic return on investment.

Mr. Henderson asked about the parameters for the certifications and whether they would be four-year or two-year degrees, and how the jobs would be tracked upon completion of the certification training. Dr. Harper said that the proposal includes several degree programs embedded in the training, including Associate of Science and Bachelor of Science, as well as several health care support CAPE certifications so given that these programs are industry recognized and validated, there will be several different timeframes in play relative to program outcomes. He said that performance metrics will be tracked over the entire twelve-year project, with certificate outcomes expected to begin in the third year due to construction completions that would need to occur prior to training start up. Mr. Henderson asked if Triumph dollars would be expended at the beginning of the period. Dr. Harper explained that due to the nature of the funding requested, to provide assistance with acquiring and deploying the equipment needed for the program, that a large part of the Triumph funds would be expended at the front end of the project.

Dr. Devin Stephenson, President of Northwest Florida State College, spoke in support of the proposal and thanked the Board for consideration of this cutting-edge training program. He said that the proposal is designed to allow for “stackable” training for nurses to advance from the certification level, to two- and four-year degrees, and in the future, for them to be able to advance to higher levels of training, all while continuing to be able to be employed and generate household incomes for their families. He recognized several NWFSC Board members, college administrators and faculty, and representatives of Rep. Patt Maney’s office who assisted in securing the PECO funding, who were present at the meeting for their support of the program. He said that Florida hospitals are concerned that there is a 70% staffing shortage in the nursing profession and that he is glad that NWFSC can bring some relief to that shortage through this training program. Dr. Stephenson that he was approached by former Triumph Gulf Coast Chair Don Gaetz about the critical shortage at a Triumph meeting about a year ago. Chair Gaetz told him of his extreme concern about the shortage and told him that by the year 2035, the projected shortage in Florida would be in the range of 60,000 nurses. Chair Gaetz then asked him to put together a proposal for closing that gap. Dr. Stephenson said that NWFSC has been working on this proposal ever since that request was made. He said that the college’s track record is already very good, and this program will serve to enhance that success. He noted that the college’s online BSN program is currently ranked #15 in the nation.

Dr. Stephenson said that the program will add additional simulation capabilities as well as augmented and mixed reality training, which has never been done in the nursing field to date in the state. Such training reduces costs, increases training efficiencies, shortens time to degree completion and supports continuing education for incumbent workers in the health care field. He thanked the Board for consideration of the proposal.

**Mr. Corr made a motion to direct staff and counsel to proceed to term sheet negotiations with the applicant. The motion was seconded by Mr. Merrill.**

Mr. Henderson asked about the college’s relationship with Vertek, a company that may provide artificial intelligence training support, and if this type of training had been employed anywhere else. Dr. Dedra Price, Vice-President of Academic Affairs for NWFSC, said that the college already incorporates simulation training into its programs. In partnership with Vertek, the college intends to introduce augmented and virtual reality tools into the training. The college’s subject matter experts would work with the company to develop the new training platforms. Such

technology is used across other fields, such as flight training, for training on repetitive skills, and would be developed, uniquely, to be used in the nursing training context. The technology infrastructure used in other fields will be used to develop the infrastructure for such nursing training.

Mrs. Weiss asked if the college works with the area high schools. Dr. Price explained the articulation agreements with the surrounding high schools and said that the college definitely works with the local school districts to support high school training opportunities.

Mr. Humphreys asked about how the local hospitals could handle the influx of new students into the facilities. Dr. Charlotte Kuss, Dean of Health Sciences, said that the use of the new technology will reduce the number of required hours in clinical sites, as has already been seen in the use of simulation. She said that new technology will never replace in hospital clinical training, but the use of the technology will allow for the reduction of those needed hours in hospital, allowing for the increase in the number of students that can participate in the program. Mr. Henderson asked which hospitals Dr. Kuss thought would employ the most newly trained health care professionals. She said that she that HCA Fort Walton Beach, HCA Twin Cities, North Okaloosa Medical Center in Crestview, and Ascension Sacred Heart in Walton County are the biggest employers, but other hospitals and medical facilities across the region would benefit from the increased workforce availability. She said that historically a vast majority of their nursing students stay in the area.

Mr. Corr asked if Dr. Kuss was familiar with the DaVinci surgical technology. She said that she was not a surgical nurse, so she did not have explicit knowledge of the technology but understood that it is well regarded. Mr. Corr asked Dr. Harper what rate he uses as a discount rate for household income. Dr. Harper replied that he uses the rate of 4%, which is the rate used by the State of Florida for its economic analyses.

Dr. Christi Kedroski, Vice President of NWFSC, clarified that there are other providers of virtual reality training, but not in the state of Florida at this time. She said that on the point of how the technology would be shared, intellectual property developed as a result of this project will be available to any other educational partner in the Triumph region at no cost.

Chair Bear commended the college for bringing the project forward. He said the benefits to household income, and the job market in the health care industry across the region is remarkable. He asked if anyone from the public wished to be heard on the proposal. No one came forward to speak.

### **The motion passed on a unanimous roll call vote (7-0.)**

Chair Bear asked if there was public comment about any Triumph business. No one came forward to speak.

### **Closing Remarks**

Mr. Trumbull said that he was excited about a lot of new projects. He said the CAST project is going to be a great benefit to Bay County and he thanked Alex King for the good work he is doing at the Port of Panama City.

Mr. Corr said that he thought it was important to recognize how much work goes into the development of these proposals by the applicants and staff before they ever reach the board level. He says that it is encouraging to know how much thought goes into the review process.

Mr. Merrill welcomed Mrs. Weiss and thanked Walton County School District for hosting the meeting.

Mr. Henderson said that he is excited about having a workshop so that the Board can further discuss the process. He congratulated NWFSC for bringing forth this project and thanked the staff for the hard work that went into getting the project to this point. He reminded everyone that Walton County still needs to bring more projects and highlighted one that is in the queue for staff review for the City of Defuniak Springs airport facility.

Mr. Humphreys echoed Mr. Trumbull's kind words for Project CAST and thanked Dr. Harper for the economic review of the region. He said he was particularly happy to see the innovation offered in the NWFSC nursing proposal to create more job opportunities using new training technologies.

Mrs. Weiss said that she wanted to thank the staff for all the work that goes into bringing these applications forward. She said that she is working with Wakulla County and staff to improve project match on upcoming proposals from that county.

Chair Bear thanked staff for their hard work and said that the benefit of having Triumph as a funding source really gives the region an advantage in economic development.

Ms. Skelton announced that the next Board meeting will be in Destin on November 3, and the following meeting will be in Panama City on December 15.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:27 p.m. CT.

**Adjourn**