

**Meeting Minutes  
Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc.  
Northwest Florida State College  
Building 400, Room 302  
100 College Boulevard  
Niceville, Florida  
March 31, 2023  
10:30 a.m. CT**

**Members Present:**

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

Jay Trumbull, Sr. - excused

Chair David Bear called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m., CT. and thanked Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC) for hosting the meeting.

Executive Director Susan Skelton called roll and announced the presence of a quorum.

Dr. Devin Stephenson, NWFSC President, thanked Chair Bear and stated that he was happy to see Mr. Reynolds Henderson here today. He noted that he first met Mr. Henderson while Mr. Henderson served for almost two years on the Northwest Florida State College Board. He stated that it is an honor to host the Board and staff.

Over the years, NWFSC has developed a very strong synergy with Triumph Gulf Coast. While the college is confident in its capabilities to prepare students for lifelong success, the continued confidence of Triumph in this work and the provision of financial resources has exponentially advanced NWFSC's success beyond our imagination five years ago. The evidence of this success is crystal clear. The college is one of only a handful of Florida institutions with increased enrollment for the 2022-23 academic year. In fact, enrollment increased over 6% for this year. Very few institutions across the state, less the nation, can say the same. Dr. Stephenson said that he believes it is in part due to the Triumph Gulf Coast funding provided to the college that has helped to expand student opportunities. He noted that last week the college's men's basketball team was the runner-up in the NJCAA Division One National Tournament and this week, the Lady Raiders basketball team won the National Championship for the second time in three years. He introduced Ramsey Ross, Athletic Director who brought the trophies for the Board to see. Dr. Stephenson said that these championship games appeared on ESPN twice in a span of 48 hours so it brought a lot of notoriety to the institution, which will help with recruiting.

Last fall the college welcomed the inaugural class of fifty 9<sup>th</sup> graders to the high-performing charter school, the Collegiate High School and has already filled the next class of freshman for the 2023-24 year in the Associate of Science track where students can earn up to three industry-recognized certifications. The college has more than doubled the size of our sophomore class from 50 to 125. It is

no exaggeration to say that the college could not have achieved what they have without Triumph's support.

Two years ago, Triumph Gulf Coast awarded the college with a \$7 million grant to create a 27,000 square foot state of the art Workforce Training Center complete with a hangar and lab space at the Crestview airport. The college committed to ensure students earned 1,255 FAA industry-recognized certifications in airframe, power-plant, professional pilot, and unmanned systems training.

Dr. Stephenson reported that the college has already awarded 159 certifications in industry-recognized aerospace certifications, Additionally the college has partnered with Allegiant Airlines at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport with an entry level pay for students of \$30 per hour and Allegiant has offered every one of those mechanics a job. NWFSC is currently seeking FAA approval as a designated mechanics examiner, better known as a DME, certified facility. This will allow both the oral and practical testing to take place in Crestview at our Aviation Center of Excellence.

Triumph Gulf Coast also awarded a \$5.7 million grant to catalyze the talent pipeline in northern Walton County. The mission was to award 1,570 certificates by December 2025. As of March 31, 2023, the college has already awarded 1,074 certificates. This equates to more than 68% of the original goal with more than 2 years remaining in the timeline. The college continues to host cybersecurity, public safety, unmanned aerial systems, construction, and welding courses in Walton County and 85 students from NWFSC's partner high school, Seacoast Collegiate High School, are scheduled to start the Amazon Web Services cloud practitioner certification this coming Monday. Part of Triumph's work has allowed for expansion in both Walton and Okaloosa Counties.

Last fall, Triumph Gulf Coast awarded the college with \$21.8 million to support the renovation of our health sciences building on the Niceville campus. NWFSC was commissioned by Triumph to integrate instructional enhancements to virtual technology, professional development for faculty and increased accessibility of pre-nursing and short-term health sciences coursework to support this pipeline. This was the largest award that's ever been made to this college in its history since it began in 1963. Faculty and staff have moved around to accommodate the remodeling of the building and nearly 300 nursing students are fully engaged in learning right now.

Finally, Dr. Stephenson thanked the Board for its efficiency and the responsiveness of staff and as a board to meet industry and market demand. Comparatively, the Triumph grant award methodology that includes a very judicious review of the metrics and the outcomes of all proposed projects is what he believes to be Triumph's greatest asset. He said that the advice provided to all your applicants and the due diligence on the part of your staff is commendable and welcomed by organizations like NWFSC that want to get it right. However, Triumph should know that your thorough process is really expeditious yet very efficient when compared to other external funders that the college works with. It can take up to two years to process applications and provide liquid resources to actualize our vision to other funders. He said some of your applicants may say that it takes a long time to get through the Triumph Gulf Coast process, but it really doesn't. NWFSC appreciates this tough staff that you put in place that ask the tough questions, but it makes our projects better. Again, thank you for allowing us to host today. Thank you for giving Northwest Florida State College the opportunity to collaborate and partner with Triumph Gulf Coast for the betterment of our students and for Northwest Florida.

Chair Bear thanked Dr. Stephenson again and responded to the comment about the tough staff. He said that the Board tried to find the toughest people they could. Ms. Skelton then pointed out Ms. Therese Baker was at the meeting today as the newest team member of the bulldog team. Chair Bear welcomed Ms. Baker and noted that the Board appreciates her and understands that she has been doing some great work so far.

On a motion by Mr. Collier Merrill, and seconded by Mr. Reynolds Henderson, the January 31, 2023 Meeting Minutes as circulated were approved without objection. Mrs. Leslie Weiss asked staff to check on a possible typographical error. After the meeting, staff was able to assure that the minutes, as circulated, were correct.

## **Project Highlights**

Chair Bear called on Okaloosa County School District to provide an update on the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Learning Institute.

Mrs. Jerral Horton, the program administrator for the Okaloosa County School District's Artificial Intelligence Learning Institutes, spoke to the Board about the Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Python Programming and Data Science program, known as AMPD. She shared outcomes from the first twelve months of the program.

First, Mrs. Horton introduced several individuals that have been a part of the initiative since the beginning: Deputy Superintendent Steve Horton, who wrote the Triumph grant, April Branscome, CTE Program Director, Dottie Holland, AI Teacher Choctawhatchee High School, and Latavia Deliford, AI teacher at Destin Middle School. Ms. Holland and Ms. Deliford have been instrumental in developing curriculum for the first-year program.

Quotes from eighth-grade students about the program:

*"I joined this class because it helped me create future opportunities for myself." (That's a 13-year-old saying this so that's impressive.)*

*"What I like about advanced IT AI is that it teaches you how to code a program and a lot of people can make a career out of coding."*

*"What I liked about this class is how it makes you think, and sometimes it makes you use your brain, and I like that."*

These eighth-grade students are already thinking about their future and thanks to the school district and Triumph, we're giving them that path.

Mrs. Horton provided a report that explained the concept and several real-life applications of Artificial Intelligence. She noted that over 40% of the HR functions being applied across the world are using AI augmented functions. Chatbots are used by businesses to communicate and answer questions from customers. Apple Watch can track your movements, heartrate, steps etc. With the agriculture crisis and farmers struggling to keep up with inflation, an AG engineer at the University of Florida, Yiannis Ampatzidis has developed a low-cost smart tree-crop sprayer that can automatically detect citrus trees, calculate their height, leaf density, and count fruit. Farmers can target their spray more efficiently, so it lands on the trees and leaves. It reduces chemical use by about 30% thus saving money and the environment. AI is being embedded in the workforce. Employees are being retrained to use AI to make data-driven decisions. Currently there are not enough AI experts, data scientists and programmers to fill the need.

Companies are hiring Data Scientists, Gaming Engineers, and Computer Scientists to collect and analyze data. An Indeed.com search yielded over 17,000 jobs locally and all over the world. Jobs were in person, remote or hybrid. She gave several examples of types of jobs that require AI training. The salary range for such jobs is \$60,000-\$192,000 with education requirements ranging from High school diploma/GED through Ph.D.

There are 308 students enrolled in the AMPD program for the 2022-2023 school year. The program is offered in eight middle schools and one high school across the county. Students have earned 81 certifications so far this year and the Triumph deliverable was 50. Three middle schools- Bruner, Okaloosa STEMM Academy, and Ruckel, gave the exam to 103 8th grade students. 63 students passed for a 61% pass rate. Choctawhatchee High School gave the exam to 63 students. 30 students passed for a 48% pass rate. Three of the nine teachers have passed the Knowledge pillars certification. The other teachers and students will be testing soon.

There will be a lot going on during Summer 2023 including some construction and renovations. At Crestview High School an engineering lab will be converted into an AI lab. The district is working with the Okaloosa STEM Academy to update an outdated classroom. Part of the Triumph grant was to carry this program into the elementary school, so program leaders are working with Destin Elementary to develop a 4<sup>th</sup>-grade pull out program for 4<sup>th</sup> grade students to attend once a week. Ms. Deliford is developing that curriculum. The plan is to duplicate the program across the county to all the other 4<sup>th</sup> graders. There is a STEM teacher, Mr. Anderson, at Ruckel Middle School; and the district will be renovating his classroom. He provides the feeder program for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade classes.

The district's standards for FLDOE were submitted in June 2022 and have been approved. Staff will be going before the School Board in April to add the curriculum framework for data science and machine learning. Mr. Jared Carter, Dr. Nancy Ruzycki and Dr. Sharon Chou, members of the University of Florida team that we work with, have been instrumental in getting those curriculum frameworks approved by FLDOE.

Registration for 2023-24 began in February and there are already 242 students signed up for the first-year course. We have 25 students signed up for the second-year course and two of the middle schools have not completed registration yet. There really is no ending date for registration so the numbers are anticipated to increase.

We're going to be working on developing a curriculum manual for the first-year program. We've done a lot this first year in the classrooms, and with the teachers, and trying different things, different lessons, activity strategies, software. From this we are going to put together in a manual. This will be helpful when we have a new teacher come on board and when we start the program at Baker High School. Ms. Holland will be working on the second-year data science class, as well as working with a new teacher we're bringing on because we're starting the program at Crestview High School to solidify that first and second year coursework for the high schools.

All the teachers are going to be attending professional development this summer, and that will be facilitated by Ms. Deliford and Ms. Holland along with our UF consultants, Mr. Jared Carter, and Dr. Nancy Ruzycki. We've been in discussions with Brian Mitchell at the AFRL department at Eglin. As our education consultant, we have been talking about collaborating with them, to have their engineers worked with our AI teachers, either in professional development, guest speakers, and, of course, for the fourth-year program, as we need them to provide internships.

Ms. Horton said that she was glad to provide some insight as to the amazing success this program has had and that the district could not have done it without the support of Triumph Gulf Coast.

Chair Bear thanked Ms. Horton and her team for the hard work, successes, and for the presentation.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Mr. Henderson presented a letter from Warren Averett announcing the start of Triumph's annual financial audit. He then asked Mrs. Jennifer Davidson, CPA, to provide the financial statement for January 31, 2023. Mrs. Davidson noted the report shows Triumph had \$540 million in assets and the total distribution in January was \$4 million. Budget to actual shows administrative costs were under \$13,000. **Mrs. Weiss made a motion to approve the January 2023 Financial Statement as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Henderson and approved without objection.**

Mrs. Davidson also provided the financial statement for February 28, 2023. The report shows Triumph had \$538 million in assets and the total distribution over the past two months was nearly \$6 million. Budget to actual shows administrative costs for the two months were under \$25,000. **Mr. Collier Merrill made a motion to approve the February 2023 Financial Statement as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Humphreys and approved without objection.**

Mr. Henderson noted that interest paid to date to the State was \$33 million. Last month it was nearly \$2 million. He said there is a lot of money that still needs to be spent.

### **Staff Report**

Ms. Skelton said that the Senate and the House will be taking up their appropriations and implementing bills next week. The Senate implementing bill - Senate Bill 2502 – provides one year of Triumph earned interest back to Triumph for purposes of offering grant awards. Senator Broxson is putting in language in the implementing bill to allow Triumph to keep its interest for the 2023-24 fiscal year which begins July 1<sup>st</sup>. Assuming the House matches Senate language in the conference, Triumph will be able to continue to keep the interest and not deposit the interest in the State coffers each month. Staff will be watching Senate Bill 2502 and House Bill 5003.

There are line items in the appropriations bill for projects that Triumph has been participating in. There is a long list that staff is watching in both the House and the Senate. In the House bill, Representative Jason Shoaf has been successful in finding a half million dollars of appropriations to go towards the match for the Wakulla communication system while Senator Corey Simon has \$1 million in the Senate Bill.

The Governor has signed the housing bill, CS for Senate Bill 102. It is now Chapter 2023-17, Laws of Florida. This housing bill allows for more lenient uses of the SHIP and SAIL programs to incentivize developers to create more affordable housing in counties across the state. There are some provisions of the bill that are difficult for the counties. It preempts the county's ability to decide how a piece of property that's already been zoned commercial, or industrial, can be used. If the property has already been zoned commercial or industrial and an applicant files a request to put residential housing on industrial or commercial property and the applicant meets the threshold definition in the bill, then the county cannot refuse that property to be used as housing. There is language in the bill that allows for the Governor's Job Growth Grant fund to support infrastructure for public housing. Since we model after the Governor's Job Growth Grant fund, staff feels that it gives us a sort of pathway to allow Triumph to assist in providing infrastructure for publicly owned workforce housing. Clark Partington has a team that is looking into the ramifications of Senate Bill 102. It is now Florida law.

Staff is watching Senate Bill 1664, an economic development bill by Senator Hooper; Representative Shoaf has a companion bill in the House. The Senate bill deletes the reference to matching funds by local governments in the Rural Infrastructure Fund. Since we have that match capability in our list of award capabilities, this bill and the House bill strike the reference to the local match in the Triumph

statute. Additionally, the Senate bill expands the uses of Triumph awards to include workforce housing as public infrastructure. Staff is still trying to figure out what workforce housing is. It is defined in only one place in the statutes; Clark Partington is looking into this as well.

Committee Substitute for House Bill 5 is a priority bill for the Speaker of the House. This bill eliminates Enterprise Florida (EFI) and provides that all duties, functions, records, pending issues, existing contracts, administrative authority, administrative roles, and unexpended balances of appropriations allocations or other public funds related to the programs of EFI are transferred to the Department of Economic Opportunity. The bill allows certain things for Visit Florida and Florida Sports Foundation to continue to do and the bill repeals a list of approximately 20 different offices and programs that are currently administered by EFI.

CS/HB 5 has a very specific definition of targeted industries and businesses. The definition in the bill specifically precludes any business that is regulated by the Division of Hotel and Restaurants.

House Bill 7053 would make it illegal for the State of Florida to fund Visit Florida. Visit Florida would be funded by local tourist development taxes. Each county that levies that tax would have to remit a percentage of their tax that they collect to the state of Florida to pay for Visit Florida. For a period of three years, this payment would be mandatory; in the third year, it becomes optional. Counties can vote whether they want to send their taxes to fund Visit Florida. Additionally, the bill requires all local governments that levy tourism taxes to hold a referendum with 60% pass rate every six years. Every county will have to put the tourism development tax up for referendum approval every six years. This bill does not have a companion in the Senate.

A couple of other bills that staff is watching include Representative Shoaf with House Bill 407 and Senator Simon with Senate Bill 702; the bills are identical. We talked about this bill at our last meeting with Mayor Brenda Ash from Apalachicola bringing it up. This is the Apalachicola Bay Area of Critical State Concern. The bill would allow specific funding for stormwater and other water projects in the Area of Critical State Concern. It is moving through committees, and staff expects it to pass.

The last bill of interest today is from Senator Wright with a House Companion identical to the Senate from Representative Altman - Senate Bill 1514, House Bill 1455. The bill would allow the use of non-approved drones could be used contingent on the user following a plan for the ending of the use of the drones by July 1, 2026. The effect of that would be to extend the use of drones that law enforcement agencies and schools and other state agencies have for the next three years. These bills have not yet been heard in committees. Staff will continue to watch them.

Mr. Henderson asked about how we have modeled certain things based on EFI and asked If EFI isn't there anymore, what will the Board follow? He said this is why the Committee of the Whole meeting is important so the Board can address these issues. Ms. Skelton stated that the uncertainty in direction is why the Committee of the Whole meeting was postponed. Mr. Henderson agreed that the postponement was wise; he thinks everyone should come to the next meeting with their list of things they want to discuss.

Ms. Skelton noted it is telling that even though the legislature is discussing getting rid of all these programs, they're adding definitions into the statute for what specific things are economic development; it is a pretty extensive definition. While the definition is too long to read into public record, it clearly says that they don't consider anything that has to do with hotels and restaurants as a target industry. Again, Triumph can decide to do what they want to do, but, in the past, we have modeled after what is in the economic development statute to be sure that we don't get too far away from the legislative intent.

Mr. Henderson stated that it might be good for staff to talk with DEO to try to cultivate what they are going to do since they would be the ones taking over everything. Ms. Skelton noted that our Program Administrator, Ms. Henderson, talks to them regularly.

Mr. Henderson asked about the permission for providing local match that is in the Triumph statute. He inquired about the number of projects for which Triumph has provided local match. Ms. Skelton said the Board has not done any local match projects because there have not been any requests.

Ms. Skelton clarified that Senate Bill 1664, and the House Bill 1209 are targeting the Rural Infrastructure Trust Fund which is a state grant program that requires local match. When the Triumph statute was written, it seemed like a good idea to allow Triumph funds to be used to provide the local match portion of a Rural Infrastructure Fund grant. The proposed bills that have been filed provide for 100% state funding without local governments providing match. Mr. Henderson asked if Triumph funds can be used for other match such as federal grants. Ms. Henderson noted that Triumph funds are already being utilized as match for other grants. Ms. Henderson stated that when she was with Enterprise Florida, she served as the designee for the Rural Infrastructure Grant program, so she has first-hand knowledge of how it works.

She provided an example of a recent project in Wakulla County. Wakulla wanted to extend a gas line, and so the county applied to DEO for rural infrastructure funds. They had enough local funds set aside to fund the infrastructure improvement, so they chose to fund it instead of asking Triumph to be their partner. The county could have asked Triumph to be its 25% match, but they had the funds available for that type of project, so they didn't ask. In Gulf County, the county did some work at the airport; they applied for infrastructure grant funds. The county had airport funds that they needed to spend at the airport so they weighed whether they should ask for Triumph funds. The county decided to use their existing resources versus utilizing Triumph. At the local level, they're making those decisions, but we have conversations about which projects would qualify.

Mr. Henderson noted that there are a lot of advantageous grants such as 80:20 match or 70:30 match but local governments don't apply because they don't have the matching funds. He asked if they should come to staff with a pre-application and try to get some of this going. It appears to be a healthy way for Triumph to get some money out, especially if affordable housing is added.

Dr. Harper stated that the Board has already participated with state and federal match partners. For example, with the MRO facility at Pensacola Airport, US Economic Development Administration (USEDA), participated and in fact has a lot of funding in hangars – for two of the four going in there - and the way that the Triumph Board approached that was to approve a motion that Triumph will make an award contingent on the airport lining up the other sources of funding. In the discussions that proceeded with USEDADA, they were very interested and appreciative of the fact that Triumph was willing to commit those funds. The Board didn't obligate the funds, except in the sense of being contingent on the full contribution of the funds that were needed to do the project. Dr. Harper noted that this is one way that this Board has approached the issue of leveraging federal funding by providing match, without being on the hook and having to pay out that money if the recipient can't secure the other dollars. Mr. Henderson stated that it would be good for people to know that as he thinks more people would apply for those federal grants.

Ms. Henderson noted that another example is that the Port of Port St Joe dredge project is contingent. Triumph voted to be the first funder, contingent upon the port finding the rest of the funding. This is an example, especially in a rural community, that needed to show that they had part of the funds already.

Ms. Skelton said that the bills in front of the legislature now just deal with the local match to the Rural

Infrastructure Fund. If the bills pass, there won't be a match requirement to Rural Infrastructure Fund. It would be 100% straight up grant to the rural counties.

Mr. Henderson stated that he is just looking at ways we can make this more flexible to get funding to municipalities and local governments, projects that are going to build their assets. Ms. Skelton noted that the staff mentioned we've already done that with two projects. The Crestview Bypass project would count as well because Triumph is matching FDOT and USDOT funds. Mr. Henderson stated that these projects are outside of what people think is the norm for Triumph funds and understanding the dynamics is very important. Mr. Merrill agreed that this is good information to get out, so folks know about it.

Mr. Merrill said that the Committee of the Whole has already had the effect of reducing some of the match requirements for workforce education proposals which is what the Board wanted to do. We do want to help the small counties that don't have resources to secure match. It will be interesting to see what happens now, especially if the bills pass and there is no match requirement. It takes some of the heat off the Board.

Chair Bear noted that the proposed Visit Florida bill requires a referendum every six years. It does provide some kind of buffer to say if you have bonding sured up by your tourist development tax that bonding is protected, and it will not have to be renewed. He said he is very concerned about the bill and clearly our eight counties are dependent on tourism. The local Tourist Development Tax is an important part of our region's economy, because of the return that it gets through the local option sales taxes that we all collect, that is paid for through our tourism taxes. To have to send a big portion of it to the State would be bad. Visit Florida is very important to the state, so I'm very concerned about how this is going to come out in the end if it does.

Ms. Skelton pointed out that there's some concern about the way the local tourism taxes work when initially established. You must have a voter majority vote on a referendum to support the tax in the county. But after that first foundational tourism tax is in place, all the other incremental taxes that come on top of it, the high impact taxes and all the other taxes that can be levied, only require the approval of the County Commission. There's some concern at the state level, that these taxes on taxes on taxes are being stacked in the tourism arena. And there's some concern at the local level that the state wants more control over how that works. The new six-year referendum would be for all the taxes. The part that is most frightening to the local governments is the fact that Visit Florida would become an optionally funded agency at the third year. It should be frightening as it relates to rapid response at the state level; for example, during COVID or after Hurricane Ian, Visit Florida was in there immediately saying to the national media that the rest of the state is not closed. We remember that during Hurricane Michael people thought that everything was closed and the messaging that came out with BP oil spill. Their rapid response capability is what the local governments would be investing in if in fact this bill were to pass.

Chair Bear stated that one of the mandates in the statute is that Triumph can fund tourism through a specific mechanism that refers directly to Visit Florida. If Visit Florida disappears, He asked if that piece of statute disappears? Ms. Skelton noted that if Bill 7053 were to pass in some form and Visit Florida were to go way at year 4 or whenever it was to happen, then Triumph's ability to partner with Visit Florida would go away with it. That would be another change to our statute.

Mr. Henderson stated that, thinking about the money Triumph has in the bank, one of the reasons that they are going after a lot of counties they collect the TDC funds that they sit on. This seems to be the atmosphere with the legislature which is why there needs to be a little bit of a sense of urgency in trying to get more projects out. He appreciates that the staff is tough and appreciates all the work done by



staff, but we have got to figure out as a Board how to do things where we are getting more money out. Ms. Skelton noted that first Triumph needs people to apply. That's the step we are in right now where we are looking for applications.

## Legal Report

Mr. Scott Remington, Legal Counsel, provided a review of **Grant Award Negotiations for Proposal #276 – Bay District Schools – Triumph Training Center for \$8,075,000** to construct an 11,500 square foot technical education building, and an exterior ancillary space that will house eight programs in the construction and health science fields at Arnold High School. The program will deliver 3,200 industry recognized CAPE certificates or bundles and provide salary and personnel costs for management of the grant. The total amount of the project is \$16,063,930, roughly a 50:50 match. The grant award agreement is consistent with the Term Sheet that the Board approved at its last meeting. Staff recommends the approval of this grant award.

Ms. Beth Patterson, Bay County School District Career and Technical Education Supervisor, Mr. Jonathan Moore, and Mr. Britt Smith appeared on behalf of the School District. Ms. Patterson commented that she is excited that Triumph is considering this grant and for the opportunities it will provide to the students in Bay County. Ms. Patterson announced she is retiring and introduced Mr. Jonathan Moore, her replacement. Mr. Britt Smith, Principal of the J.R. Arnold High School, was present as well.

Mr. Moore stated that he was formerly a student on this NWFSC campus and that it is exciting to see how the Triumph Board has been such an integral part of making this campus what it is today. It inspired him to see what Bay County Schools can do with Triumph support. Mr. Smith echoed the school's appreciation for the Board's consideration and support. **Mr. Henderson made a motion to approve the Grant Award Agreement as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Humphreys,** Chair Bear asked if anyone from the public wished to be heard on the proposal. No one came forward to speak. **The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote (6-0.)**

Mr. Remington reviewed the **Proposed First Amendment to Grant Award Agreement #46 – Okaloosa County – Southwest Ocala Bypass.** The proposed amendment increases the overall project cost by approximately \$3 million, to be paid with additional matching funds. No additional Triumph funds are being requested. There are some adjustments in budget categories. Since no new project funds are being requested from Triumph and the grantee is adding matching funds, staff recommends approval.

Mrs. Weiss asked if they are asking to extend the period of performance. Mr. Remington stated that the amendment doesn't extend the period of performance but there was a price increase. The grant states that if price goes up by a certain metric, the county must come back to Triumph for approval. Because they found the funding from another source, they're not asking us for additional money. As the construction budget gets more and more detailed, they're switching money or moving money from different categories. Mr. Henderson asked if the grantee was able to provide the documentation required. Ms. Henderson stated that this amendment will help solve some of those issues. Some of the discrepancy relates to timing in their match because this is such a large construction project. Staff continues to work very closely with the county, and this should alleviate some documentation issues by switching the timeline of the match. Staff is working with the grantee to assure they provide all the required documentation per their record retention policies.

Ms. Faye Douglas, Okaloosa County OMB director, noted this project is over \$200 million and the

Triumph grant is almost a third of the project so the county could not have done this without Triumph Gulf Coast support. If you drive through Crestview right now, it seems like the entire city is under construction. The whole landscape of the city has changed. She thanked the Board for the amendment and said she is thankful to Ms. Henderson and Ms. Baker for their assistance. Ms. Skelton asked Ms. Douglas to comment on the overall cost increases seen in the supply chain and how that is affecting the overall project cost. Ms. Douglas stated that COVID really changed the entire procurement process. Bid estimates were much lower than actual proposals are now costing coming. Getting prices for certain products has all changed.

**Mrs. Weiss made a motion to approve the Proposed First Amendment to Grant Award Agreement #46 – Okaloosa County – Southwest Crestview Bypass. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bryan Corr.** Chair Bear 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 (6-0.)**

Mr. Remington presented **Proposed Second Amendment to Grant Award Agreement #206 – AMIKids Panama City Marine ~~Institute~~– STEM and Business Entrepreneurship Labs.** This is popularly known as AMIKids Panama City Project. The grant award recipient is PCMI Properties, Inc., which is the corporation formed by AMIKids to run this project. PCMI stands for Panama City Marine Institute. There is no new Triumph funding requested in this amendment. It is just a re-allocation of money between different categories. The matching funds and the total budget stay the same. Because there is a shift in funds from one budget category to another, they are required to seek Board approval.

Ms. Henderson noted that this is a good news story. The project got started a little bit late, because they were going through the charter process with Bay District Schools. In the meantime, they recognized the need for forklift training in the community. They are requesting to use some of the training funds from the earlier years while they were still getting their charter underway to instead buy simulators for forklifts and start training students in forklift. Dr. Frank Fuller has reviewed their plan and agreed to bring it to you for your consideration.

**Mr. Henderson made a motion to approve the Proposed Second Amendment to Grant Award Agreement #206 – AMIKids Panama City Marine ~~Institute~~– STEM and Business Entrepreneurship Labs. The motion was seconded by Mr. Humphreys.** Chair Bear 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 (6-0.)**

Mr. Remington gave a review of **Proposed Second Amendment to Grant Award #216 – Northwest Florida State College –Airframe and Powerplant.** No new Triumph funds are being requested. The amendment is a re-allocation of dollars among existing budget categories, with no changes to the total project cost or additional matching funds. This specific project is affiliated with the Aviation Center for Excellence.

Ms. Henderson noted that this budget was put together before Triumph streamlined its process. The budget had a lot of categories which didn't allow for a project of this size to have much flexibility. Prices have shifted, which alters the planned budget. The budget amendment allows the college to have a little more flexibility in their match categories by rolling a lot of categories together. They are not spending money on things we didn't expect them to, just things cost more or less than originally anticipated.

Dr. Christi Kedroski, Vice President of Northwest Florida State College, said that Ms. Henderson did a great job of outlining some of the changes to the budget. In total, NWFSC put forward a budget that

included about \$800,000 in match and had itemized funding among the partners. Some of those partners did not come in at the level that they had estimated at the time that the budget was initially put together and submitted. She stated that once the college can reconcile the budget and the categories, it stands ready to submit for review \$900,000 in match. NWFSC is already working to favorably reflect match in this project and changing the categories will just button up some of the maintenance items associated with the project.

**Mr. Henderson made a motion to approve the Proposed Second Amendment to Grant Award #216 – Northwest Florida State College –Airframe and Powerplant. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Weiss.** Chair Bear 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 (6-0.)**

Mr. Remington gave an update on **Proposal #290 - Escambia County Board of County Commissioners – OLF-8 Phase1 Infrastructure.** Triumph was in the process of approving an up to \$14,200,000 grant to the project when the county received unsolicited proposals to buy the property from two regional homebuilders. The county continues to be in negotiations with those home builders. There is uncertainty in what the county will decide to do – retain the property and continue with the project, sell the property, restrict the future use of the property and if it does, what the impact of the new housing law will have on those restrictions. The County Commission will be meeting soon to hear presentations from interested parties; there may be more information after that meeting and more knowledge about whether the direction will include Triumph.

Mr. Henderson asked if the proposed Legislation that changes Triumph statute were to pass, would Triumph come back in to play on affordable housing. Mr. Remington noted that it is possible depending on the plan of the private development. If the county sells the land to a private developer, adding infrastructure to this land would not be as high on the county's priority list. The county may then shift what they ask Triumph to fund in the county.

Chair Bear noted that he attended a County Commission meeting approximately a month ago when the county had received its first proposal. During the meeting, the Commission received its second proposal and the first proposal countered. Chair Bear told the County Commission that if the property is sold to a private investor, the Triumph portion of that project would no longer be viable because Triumph funds are for public infrastructure. Since the meeting, Chair Bear has spoken to all County Commissioners individually about how Triumph plays a part in public property and if sold, it would not meet the statute. He noted that Mr. Remington had spoken with the county attorney about that portion also. Mr. Bear further noted that because of the new law signed by the Governor this week that allows private investors to utilize commercial or industrial land for home building at the highest density and highest height restrictions that the county allows, if the county sells this property it could lose control of those portions that they put into a master plan that would be restricted or reserved for commercial and industrial land for construction to create the jobs on the property. Chair Bear noted that Mr. Remington has spoken to the county attorney about what the county is considering but there still no assurance that it would protect the land if they sold it even with restrictions or covenants, that the statute could override.

Mr. Remington stated that since that initial meeting, so much of the landscape has changed because of legislative activity. The affordable housing bill is now a law. It is still uncertain whether the Triumph statute will be amended to allow workforce housing and the difference between affordable housing and workforce housing is still unclear. The only way for the county to move forward with the project to avoid possible litigation is to retain the industrial and commercial portions of the property and serve as the master developer.

Chair Bear noted before the legislative activity came to light, the county was excited about the potential. The county's current investment is about \$13M and has received offers up to \$38M. The county could receive a large sum of money that they could put into other infrastructure projects needed in the county. The county recognizes that with the new legislation that it could possibly lose control because those developers were initially planning to follow the master plan to do some industrial and commercial projects.

Ms. Skelton stated that it is important to note that the County Commission assumed that the Triumph \$14M would travel with the property. She noted that Chair Bear spoke specifically to that issue at the meeting and Mr. Remington has reiterated that repeatedly to the county attorney that the Triumph money is not a given. If the county sells the property, Triumph cannot participate in private industrial development. The county has a land deal and the developers thought they were buying the land deal with the Triumph money included. She noted that Chair Bear and Mr. Remington have made it clear that the Triumph money is not automatically included. If it is private industrial area, Triumph cannot be included.

Mr. Merrill stated the Chair Bear did a great job at the County Commission meeting. He noted that there was still some confusion as the offers kept coming in mentioning Triumph. He has spoken to three of the Commissioners and there may be a hybrid option that could work. He stated that it has been made abundantly clear that the Triumph money will not go with the private side.

Mr. Bryan Corr asked for clarification that all that has been done so far is that Triumph has approved a Term Sheet. This isn't a binding contract, as affirmed by Mr. Remington, so to depend on getting Triumph funds seems ludicrous. Mr. Remington stated that the message has now gotten through to the county attorney explaining to all that the Triumph funds are not included. He anticipates that the offers they will discuss will not include the Triumph funding unless the county breaks the property into pieces. Chair Bear noted, to Mr. Corr's point, the county is still not guaranteed Triumph funds as there is no agreement in place.

Ms. Weiss stated that even if we were at the stage beyond the Term Sheet, they would have changed the conditions by selling the property, making it null and void. Mr. Remington said this would be likely or the county would be in breach as they couldn't perform once they alienated the property. Ms. Skelton stated that timing became very important in this conversation because had Triumph gone the next step, we would have been perhaps in a different posture than we are now.

Mr. Humphreys asked if there is a definition of workforce housing or of affordable housing. Mr. Remington stated that the housing bill that passed has clear definitions of what affordable housing means. The Senate bill that inserts additional language in Triumph's bill does not say affordable housing, in reference back to the definitions, it says workforce housing. Many may see these as synonymous, but they are not necessarily synonymous. We don't know if this will get cleaned up or whether that language is even included in the Triumph statute. Mr. Humphreys asked if there is a general definition of the two terms as workforce housing seems vague. Mr. Remington noted that there is one chapter in the Florida statute that contains the definition of workforce housing, but he is not sure whether it will apply. Chair Bear noted that there is a statute that defines what affordable housing is for based on four different categories.

Ms. Skelton provided definitions from the staff analysis on the housing bill that is now law. Affordable housing is defined in terms of household income resident eligibility for Florida state and federally housing programs is typically governed by area median income (AMI) levels. These levels are published annually by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for every county and metropolitan area. Mr. Humphreys asked if this means that based on the classification,

you pay a certain amount of rent. Ms. Skelton stated that the person's rent is prorated based on income levels.

Mr. Henderson added that it seems that the difference between affordable and workforce housing is more of a stylistic view. Workforce housing isn't Section 8 housing. Workforce housing is designed for working families but there are no metrics that define the workforce. Affordable housing is based on federal guidelines. There are very competitive programs which Florida housing runs through federal HUD. Affordable housing is the catch-all; workforce housing sounds better but is not well defined. Ms. Skelton stated that in the entire Florida Statutes, there is only one reference to workforce housing. It is in the community workforce housing loan program. This reference is only in areas of critical state concern which is a very tiny definition of workforce housing. She stated that as legislation moves forward, staff is trying to verify what workforce housing is and stated that it would be helpful to have the definitions fleshed out more by the legislature.

Ms. Henderson provided an update on **Proposal #291 – Escambia PEDC - Project LASER - \$6,000,000**. Ms. Henderson noted there was a presentation on Project 291 at the last Board meeting. The partners are now working through the contracts and agreements with Space Florida and Pensacola State College. Once those are completed, PEDC will come back to Triumph, which they envision as the last step in the processes. Going to the earlier question about how to help projects move forward, the Board's agreement to move to Term Sheet was what the project needed to get other partner agreements in place. Staff expects to see this on the agenda for late spring or early summer.

## **Program Administration**

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

Ms. Henderson noted that with over \$400M dollars of Triumph investments made during the past five years, Northwest Florida's economic recovery, diversification, and enhancement momentum is quickly gaining speed.

Behind the scenes Triumph staff engages with the region's local government economic development partners to work on the exciting job creation projects the region is competing for. But staff recognizes that most of this does take place behind the scenes, which means the Board doesn't always get to see the full impact of your investments.

Using an Economic Development tool as a backdrop, Ms. Henderson highlighted the effect these investments are having across the region and how that impacts future Triumph grants.

First, she shared three tenets of the Economic Development Profession:

1. Economic Development is a Team Sport
2. Economic Development is a Long Game
3. More Incentives don't make a bad deal good

When most people think about economic development and recruiting companies, they think about the big incentive packages and project announcements. In reality, incentive negotiations and project announcements come at the end of a very long game process.

Staff provided an Economic Development process map that the Florida Economic Development community affectionately refers to as the "Swoosh". This process map, or Swoosh, was created

several years ago at Enterprise Florida.

There are four steps that Triumph has the most impact on:

- Build Competitiveness
- Marketing to prospects and consultants
- Present and sell Florida and the region to clients
- Negotiate and Approve Incentives

To date, Triumph's investment has had the greatest impact on step 1, building the region's competitiveness. Another early step in the Swoosh is Marketing. As competition for high wage job creators increases, effective well-funded marketing campaigns are necessary to set states, regions, and communities apart from their neighbors and competitors. The Triumph Board recognized this and funded Florida's Great Northwest to attract the attention and interest of prospect companies and site consultants, and to educate them about the region's assets. Jennifer Conoley recently updated you on the success she and the region's economic developers are having using the marketing assets Triumph has funded to develop project leads. Staff anticipates a request to extend FGNW's marketing grant in the near future.

An example of a project that entered the process with a cold marketing call from FGNW and ended with a Triumph supported project announcement was Project Lightning Strike, aka Central Moloney who located in Bay County after being courted by the team effort of FGNW and the Bay EDA. Once a company like Central Maloney enters the Swoosh it can take anywhere from months to years to reach the next two steps that Triumph participates in:

- Present and Sell
- Negotiate and Approve Incentives

Florida has a great reputation for being business friendly and having a low tax climate, but the Legislature's lack of support for economic development and state incentives makes it easy for competing states to undermine Florida sites during the site selection process.

Triumph staff lends expertise, and the Triumph Board's commitment to high wage job creation, to help keep Northwest Florida sites from being cut during the "*Present and Sell*" step. Some Board Members have participated in this step with your local Economic Developers. Your continued proven commitment to high wage job creation is making a real difference. Not only are sites in Northwest Florida being considered for projects when they were never looked at before, but they are staying on the list and making it to the final rounds of consideration.

This means Triumph is participating in the next step, "*Negotiating Incentive Packages*", much more often. While doesn't win them all – yet - as a team we are gaining great additional insight into what investments will make the region more competitive. Which brings us back to step one of the Swoosh, Build Competitiveness, and Triumph as Northwest Florida's not so secret weapon.

Back in 2015, before Triumph received its first dollars, the region joined together to focus on its competitiveness and the development of a strategy, funded by US EDA, titled "Northwest Florida Forward." The goal of the report was to "drive economic vitality and growth for the region." With "business, government, educational and community leaders –working together" to build the region's competitiveness. Very well attended community meetings were held here at NWFSC. Ms. Skelton participated on behalf of Triumph, Ms. Henderson participated on behalf of Enterprise Florida, Dr. Rick

Harper, currently Triumph Economic Advisor, participated on behalf of the Haas Center at UWF, and Mrs. Therese Baker, currently Triumph's Administrative Specialist, hosted the effort on behalf of Florida's Great Northwest.

The report's collaborative and comprehensive nature led the original Triumph Board to include the findings as questions in the Triumph application. The Northwest Florida Forward report contained a Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat (SWOT) analysis – from which Ms. Henderson highlighted a few examples.

In the weakness category, the region's deficiency of industrial sites and buildings was noted. The Threat category noted this weakness is exacerbated by our proximity to Alabama and Georgia and their well-funded state economic development programs. As a response, in partnership with three County Commissions, Triumph Gulf Coast has funded the creation of six industrial parks and made possible the purchase of a number of public buildings for high wage, target sector job creation projects. The speed at which land in these industrial parks is being committed to by job creators and the continued lack of available buildings suggests additional Triumph investments for the creation of public industrial sites and buildings will continue to contribute to the region's competitiveness.

The Opportunity category included *Leveraging federal and private R&D assets*. One of the first Triumph projects the region worked on as a team was an R&D project with a Fortune 100 company. While that project didn't move forward it was an important learning experience that led to Triumph funding for the Apalachicola Bay Oyster project and IHMC's Human Performance research, Pegasus Labs expansion and Project LASER all in Pensacola. Those projects have elevated the region's R&D profile, thereby building competitiveness, with the result being a new and exciting R&D project anticipated to come forward soon.

Other Opportunities noted in the report to increase the region's competitiveness were to *strengthen the cradle to career education system and create a demand-driven workforce development initiative*. Triumph has addressed these opportunities with gusto. In addition to the AI success the Board heard about from Okaloosa Schools and the transformational projects here at NWFSC, Triumph has funded Career and Technical education starting in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in rural elementary schools, encouraged and funded the creation of the FSU-Panama City Charter Lab High School that just invited its first class of students to begin in the Fall, and significantly expanded the opportunity for adult learners to gain industry certifications in high demand, high wage jobs across the region in fields that include Aviation, Cybersecurity, Nursing and the Construction Trades to name a few.

Finally on the SWOT analysis there was a great list of the region's Strengths. One that stands out was the list of Industry specialization assets: Aerospace & Defense, Financial Services, Water Transportation, Cybersecurity, Advanced Manufacturing, AI/Robotics, and Unmanned Systems. This list, developed in 2016, includes the same industries in which Triumph continues to invest significant funding for workforce training and job recruitment. On the surface it would be fair to say that many of the report's recommendations to build competitiveness can probably be found in economic development plans across the country. But what's different in Northwest Florida is that the region's economic developers, county commissioners, education institution leaders and the business community have stayed committed to implementing the plan's vision with the support of the Triumph Board and Triumph's investments.

Eight years later, Triumph is spending more time in the "negotiating incentives" and "Announcing Job Creation Projects" stages because this plan, and the collaborative vision to build the region's competitiveness, isn't just sitting on a shelf.

Mr. Henderson noted that this model works well for the well-developed counties that have a well-developed economic development programs and have been working on this for years. But the smaller counties like Wakulla, Franklin, Gulf, and Walton get lost in this. The two underfunded counties right now are Franklin and Walton. Some of the steps that the bigger counties are in is great, but the ones that aren't need the first steps. They need the small business to grow where it can and attract more competitiveness. He stated that he is open to this model, but EFI definitely does not have to pay attention to our small counties. It just makes no sense for a big business to come to Walton or Wakulla – maybe Wakulla because of its proximity to Tallahassee - but not to come to Gulf or Franklin. Mr. Henderson hopes that we can adapt this in a way that builds the assets of the smaller counties.

Ms. Henderson noted that the great news is the State of Florida recognizes that and agrees with him. At the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), they have a competitiveness program specifically for rural cities and counties, and many of our communities and Walton and Gulf counties have participated in it. Most of them have. She said not to discount Wakulla's Economic Development Team, Gulf County is having some very quiet successes that the Board hasn't heard about yet, and with the new economic development leadership in Walton, there are opportunities to participate in this program. She said Northwest Florida's inland rural counties are having great success. Around Marianna, they have announced multiple exciting projects recently. So do not discount the small counties' abilities and efforts to utilize this model that is used all over the country.

Mr. Henderson stated that he isn't discounting anything but, in all reality, there's a leg up by the well-developed counties. He stated that we need to try to help these smaller counties help themselves grow into what they want to grow and not grow into a manufacturing county when they have no desire to be a manufacturing county. Ms. Skelton noted that Walton County has recently hired a new economic development person. Staff has been working with him on developing some exciting new ideas with him and we're thrilled to be working with him. She also noted that staff is happy to report that we got a cold call from Franklin County Administrator saying that the county wants to all work together. Ms. Weiss is working with us to schedule a meeting with the Franklin County, Apalachicola and Carrabelle mayors and county administrative folks to put together a plan for Franklin County. She noted that it's taking them longer because they're not as well equipped, but there is movement, and that's exciting. She said that staff is heavily engaged with Wakulla County. She said that sometimes it's frustrating because it doesn't happen as quickly because the infrastructure is not in place as well as it is in the other counties. One of the things that Ms. Henderson talked about was we recognize now that there is a sort of "if we build it, they will come" component here. She also noted that one of the things that staff would want to talk to the board about are some projects that we have had interest in that would involve maybe some spec building in some of the more rural counties.

Ms. Skelton made the point that it is not a coincidence that four of the people that participated in that 2015 process are sitting here at the table as Triumph staff. Triumph's original board made some good decisions in hiring and those experts are sitting here today. We are proud to have been a part of this process from the inception of 2015, and Ms. Baker was leading that charge at that point. With that said, we hear the concern. We are beginning to see some movement in a positive direction. Mr. Henderson is glad to hear that and said he hopes more is to come.

**Ms. Henderson** noted that staff has regular conversations with Mr. John McKnight in Gulf County, and they just had a great conversation about a prospect. Gulf County did something unique. They recognized that Healthcare is not a target industry for Florida - the direct providing of health care - but, because it was important in their community, to expand actual healthcare providers, they created their own incentive program, they used their own county resources. And so, they're seeing success from that. While we can't induce that, instead we are funding the nursing schools that surround it so that there will be employees for these companies that they recruit to provide direct health care. We are



finding unique ways to work with our rural counties and their priorities that might not fit the State priorities that we tend to follow. Ms. Skelton noted that Gulf County had a ribbon cutting last week for the brand-new dialysis center so now they can provide residents of their community with the vital services needed in the area and that's a result of the conversations Ms. Henderson mentioned.

Dr. Frank Fuller, Education Advisor, stated that with the small rural counties, one of the fundamental issues that drives growth is the workforce training. In visiting Franklin County Schools last week, he said they had a thousand students in the high school. Three-and-a-half years ago there were zero involved in any career technical education. As of this week, a third of the high school students are taking those training courses. Next year it will be brought to the elementary students. If you don't have the workforce, it doesn't really matter who comes down trying to put a business in, because the first question they're going to ask is: Is anybody trained to do these things? In the backdrop, we've done a lot of work in those rural counties to train the workforce in anticipation of the potential businesses that we've brought to the area.

Ms. Henderson moved on to the formal Program Administrator report. She noted that as of now, Triumph has 47 active projects totaling over \$400 million of investment, and those represent committed dollars.

Since 2017 Triumph has received 298 pre-applications totaling over \$2.3 billion and 121 applications totaling over \$997 million.

Currently, there are 13 pre-applications that do not yet have applications and 11 applications are pending staff review and/or Board approval.

Triumph has received five new pre-applications since the last meeting. Staff recommends pre-applications 297,298, 299 and 300 as statutorily eligible, and pre-application 292 is not eligible.

The quarterly reports that were due through December 2022 were reported by the listed entities no later than January 31st. Dr. Fuller, Mr. Randy Lewis, Construction Advisor, and Ms. Henderson have reviewed all these reports and recommend that the projects continue to move forward. A snapshot of the project statuses is included along with Mr. Lewis' s report of his work for Triumph since the last Board meeting.

Mr. Henderson asked how many of the 121 applications for \$997 million are advancing. Ms. Henderson noted that 47 are active grant awards, eight have been completed, and one is on this agenda. The rest of the applications are archived or are part of the eleven still under review. Mr. Henderson stated that it would help him to see how many are active. Ms. Henderson guided him to the second paragraph at the top of the page in italics. Mr. Henderson asked if the Board could get a list of the applications. Ms. Henderson noted that they are listed on our website, but she can print them if needed. Mr. Henderson asked if a list can be provided at the Board meeting as it helps him to understand what is coming in the pipeline. Ms. Skelton offered to read him the list from the website. He stated that he would review the website but that it would be helpful as he looks at the reports but doesn't need to see the \$2.3 billion, only to see what we are looking at.

**Mrs. Weiss made a motion to approve the Program Administrator's Report. The motion was seconded by Mr. Henderson and passed without objection.**

### **Economic Advisor's Report**

Staff continues to work with applicants and pre-applicants to bring projects before the Board. At this meeting, there are not any items that need action by the Board.

Ms. Skelton noted that the Board had been provided with copies of *850 Magazine* which has an article about bringing research projects to market. She also noted that the editor of the magazine is interested in learning more about Triumph so she may be directing some of you to him about projects that are ongoing. Most importantly, the article on the research to market is a great example of the types of research funding that Triumph supports.

## **Public Comment**

Mr. Mike Barker, City Manager for DeFuniak Springs, thanked the Board for consideration of the City's Triumph Application Project 284. He said as a former Walton County Commissioner, he voted to allocate \$5.5 millions of county funds for the \$10.5 million expansion of runway 9-27 to over 5,000 feet to accommodate larger aircraft and increase use of airfield. That was because he believed in the City of DeFuniak Springs and the potential for that airport. What is planned for the airport development will be transformational, not only to the city and Walton County but for the entire Panhandle region. While the city had hoped to focus on Triumph funding for a workforce training program, it has provided Triumph's staff with the city's list of eight airport infrastructure projects and hopes that funding from Triumph would be possible. On behalf of the City Council, He thanked Triumph for its willingness to work with the city's professional consultants and legal counsel on Project #284. Mr. Henderson mentioned that if you look at Crestview Bypass and some other projects, you must build the infrastructure before they come. There has been a lot of money put into this project, and if Triumph can help finish this thing out where they can succeed, it will be a strong project. It will attract revenues and future jobs, and hopefully, workforce training groups. Mr. Henderson is excited about the possibility and hopes that it will come before the Board soon. Ms. Skelton stated that Triumph is looking forward to working with Mr. Barker in his new role and congratulated him on his new position. Chair Bear noted his many conversations with staff and the consultants over the last several months. He said everyone has been working, hand in hand, trying to figure out how to get to yes, because it is an important project for our area. He said Triumph hopes to have an application from the city in front of us soon.

Mr. Darien Schaefer, President and CEO of Visit Pensacola, stated that today he is speaking as the new Chair for the Northwest Florida Beaches Tourism Council. His goal is just to make sure that the Board is aware of the organization and what it does because the organization has been talking about submitting an application and working with Visit Florida to promote this region and establish it as one of the best adventure destinations in the United States. Northwest Florida Tourism Council has been in existence since 2002 and represents all eight counties from Escambia to Wakulla. The brand that it uses is "Adventure within Reach." Every county has the ability to tie into that adventure message. As an organization, the last few years coming out of COVID, there has been a significant partnership amongst the counties to do not only destination marketing through digital and social media, but co-operative trade show programming together as well, both domestic and international. They are inviting people that are not familiar with the area, not familiar with the region, and the response has been fantastic. Soon the organization plans to apply to Triumph as an opportunity to really bring new families into our market for the first time that can become new and repeat loyal visitors.

Mr. Merrill stated that he had met with Mr. Schaefer and the two of them spoke with Dr. Harper talked about how it's very exciting that the eight counties are working as a group on advertising the region. There is a real market for travelers that want to come for a week and visit the whole area. Mr. Merrill noted that Triumph has to see what happens with Visit Florida or approach from another angle. He said that perhaps Triumph can assist in getting that group together and get them a paid administrator to

market the region and establish some continuity. Mr. Henderson echoed what Mr. Merrill said. This could be a real regional marketing effort. It would be outstanding, and he hopes more things like this will come before the Board so the region can do outreach.

### **Closing Remarks**

Mr. Merrill noted that if the Chair's father were here, he would say that he didn't want to talk about this. Mr. Merrill wanted to say something about a member who has since passed on, Mr. Lewis Bear. Enough can't be said about him. Mr. Lewis Bear has been engaged for a long time in different things and when he gets engaged, he is fully engaged. He did his term at the chamber years ago then came back at 72 years old, starting again doing economic development. Mr. Merrill begged him to take the chamber back and when he got back into the economic development arena, he did it literally until the day he died. Mr. Bear could have done anything he wanted. Mr. Merrill considered him a very good friend. While he is closer in age to Mr. Bear's children, Mr. Merrill was very close to Mr. Bear, and he just wanted to recognize Mr. Bear today. He said that Lewis Bear could be tough but if he was on your side, he was on your side.

Mr. Humphreys noted that he never met Mr. Lewis Bear but does wish to offer condolences. He was happy to see J.R. Arnold High School getting its grant together. Also, he is happy to see this new kind of trend towards certificate training within high schools; like the apprentice model that we see in Europe. He thinks it is a good direction. We are all looking forward for the legislature going on summer break as it seems like they have been awfully busy.

Mr. Henderson offered his condolences to the Bear family and stated that Mr. Lewis Bear was a larger-than-life figure in this region. He had the pleasure of being invited by Superintendent Russell Hughes to the Miami Valley Technology Center in Ohio. The center serves a four-county area, but it's 600,000 square feet of every CTE course you can imagine from agricultural to manufacturing, welding, veterinary, business entrepreneurship and graphic design. It is top level with academics and the success rate they have with placing these kids that they graduate with these certificates jobs is almost at 100%. He said he liked hearing Dr. Stephenson talk about Allegiant Airlines hiring the people out of the program here because that is exciting. The certificates are great, but the jobs are the end goal. He recommended that anybody who wants to look at something that is phenomenal check out the Center. He also noted that the Wall Street Journal today had an infographic where for the last 10 years, they have been polling people going into the college and asking if it is more important to go to a four-year university, or to get skill training. It has clearly flipped that it is more important now to not be riddled with debt, but to have a skill and to be able to get a job. It is exciting that we live in a time right now where we're seeing this happen. Hopefully we will get more projects that come and spend more money.

Mrs. Weiss expressed her condolences to the Bear family as well. She thanked the staff for the detailed analysis work, especially with the legislature, to discuss the issues. She is really excited about meeting in Franklin County and getting some of those smaller counties involved and wanting to get the Triumph money spent. She noted that it is great that Triumph may get to keep some of the interest money and maybe we can incorporate that into more projects.

Mr. Corr stated that he still considers himself new to this board. Each time he gets a Board packet in, he has to reference previous projects and refresh himself on what a term sheet is and what is already in place as some projects sound familiar. He appreciates the Okaloosa County Schools presenting here to tell us what is happening on the ground. And, the Northwest Florida State College having several projects going on at once, so it becomes more challenging to remember what we're working on right now, what's already in process. He liked having staff presentations from projects already up and

running.

Ms. Skelton said that staff will try to focus on projects wherever the Board is meeting, things that are happening in their communities, so that you can continue to be refreshed on what Triumph has done before, as the Board moves forward in the new ideas. It is something that staff is very interested in doing.

Ms. Skelton noted that when the Governor appointed Lewis Bear to the Triumph Board his reputation preceded him, and he was a powerhouse. But then she watched Mr. Bear, and his wife Belle, as they came to all our Board meetings together and she realized this man had level of commitment to his family and his community that was almost untouchable. It was just a really special commitment. Lewis had a bucket list that didn't involve skydiving or climbing Mount Everest. He just wanted to make sure that the projects that he needed to get done in Northwest Florida got done for this region. And the most important project that he had of all the projects, he came to Triumph and after months and months and months and months of trying, it became obvious that we couldn't get to an agreement with the party. That was very difficult and after all the good faith efforts by Triumph and the applicant, we just couldn't get to the end. She recalls Mr. Bear calling her and telling her to let it go. He was so gracious and respectful of the Triumph process. That was greatly appreciate it aby staff. She went on to say how thankful she was that he was a part of Triumph and that he convinced Chair Bear to be a part as well. He truly taught his children well, and his legacy of service to North Florida lives on. She thanked the Bear family for letting him be a part of what we do.

Chair Bear replied that he didn't think his father would've given them a choice. He then thanked the staff for a lot of information today, for great reports and to the Board for lively discussion about the items and the issues. It makes for a good, maybe long but a really good board meeting. He thanked all the public for their comments and participation. He thanked Dr. Stephenson again for hosting the meeting.

He thanked everyone for their generous and kind comments to him and for his family about his father. He said that except for the true, but funny remarks he made at the beginning of his father's eulogy, his remarks really said what Susan just said, that he wanted to provide opportunities for our community, for his family. He did it, and I don't think any of us would be in this room today, if it was not for Lewis Bear Jr. and his tenacity to make sure by working with Senate President Gaetz that this money didn't get squandered and that it was spent for this economic recovery. His partnership with Senator Gaetz is why we are here. He wanted to thank his father publicly for that and noted that he is going to miss him a lot. He said hopefully he taught me well so we can carry on the tradition that helps support this community and this region.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:47 p.m. CT.