

**Executive Director Search Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 31, 2022**

Members Physically Present:

Commissioner Chris Cloudman
Commissioner Victor Ramos
Councilwoman Christine Power
Commissioner Jason McGuirk
Mayor Bill Partington
Council Member Billie Wheeler, Chairperson
Council Vice Chairperson Barbara Girtman

Representing:

DeLand
Deltona
Edgewater
New Smyrna Beach
Ormond Beach
Volusia County
Volusia County

Others Present:

Debbie Stewart, Recording Secretary
Colleen Nicoulin
Stephan Harris
Anna Taylor
Rakinya Hinson
Doug Thomas

Representing:

TPO Staff
TPO Staff
TPO Staff
FDOT
FDOT
Strategic Government Resources (SGR)

Others Virtually Present:

Pam Blankenship
Gary Huttman

Representing:

TPO Staff
MetroPlan Orlando

I. Call to Order / Roll Call / Determination of Quorum / Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting of the River to Sea Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) Executive Director Search Committee was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Chairperson Billie Wheeler. The roll was called and it was determined that a quorum was physically present. Due to the COVID-19 virus, the meeting was held in a hybrid format with seven voting members physically present.

II. Public Comment/Participation

There were no public comments.

III. Business Items

A. Discussion of Executive Director Candidate Search and Next Steps

Mr. Doug Thomas, SGR, reviewed the Executive Director search process to-date and the status of the remaining final candidates. He explained that three of the five final candidates withdrew from the search which left one candidate with the other candidate unable to participate in the in-person interviews. Both remaining final candidates indicated they are available for the back-up date for in-person interviews during the week of April 11, 2022.

Commissioner McGuirk stated his preference would be to put the search on hold; Ms. Nicoulin has done a great job as Interim Executive Director and shown leadership qualities. He would like to extend her Interim Executive Director status for six months and give her the authority to hire a Finance Manager and planners. He would like her to provide a strategic plan for the TPO moving forward within three months and then evaluate the situation.

Chairperson Wheeler asked if Ms. Nicoulin would be interested in extending her Interim Executive Director status.

Ms. Nicoulin replied yes, with support from the committee and the ability to hire the needed staff.

Chairperson Wheeler discussed Ms. Nicoulin's Interim Executive Director status and the challenges she has had to overcome in the last eight months; she has forged through all the challenges thrown at her, she has the relationships with the local stakeholders and the collaboration the TPO needs. This committee tied her hands on some things that she could have been even stronger on.

Council Vice Chair Girtman agreed and added she would prefer to work with Ms. Nicoulin as she has a better understanding of the position and has established the relationships the TPO needs. Ms. Nicoulin has shown the grit needed and if she has the support of the board, she believes she will be successful. She would rather invest in Ms. Nicoulin than to take a chance on someone from elsewhere that may have a different attitude and expectation.

Councilwoman Power asked Ms. Nicoulin if she would be interested in the long-term position as Executive Director or if she wanted to only extend the Interim Executive Director for six months as Commissioner McGuirk suggested.

Ms. Nicoulin replied she is interested in the long-term; initially, she did not feel that she had the support to be successful so she focused on the invoicing and finance issues the TPO had which took a significant amount of time. She is interested in the long-term if she can bring in the needed resources; either hiring staff or outsourcing to consultants. She explained that the TPO was two planners short when the prior Executive Director left followed by the resignation of the Finance Manager; at least one planner position needs to be filled immediately. She will also evaluate current staff positions and shifting some duties.

Members discussed the term length of the extension of the Interim Executive Director position. They commented on the great job Ms. Nicoulin has been doing and that she needs the committee's support.

Mr. Thomas noted if the search is paused, SGR will invoice for expenses thus far. If it is decided later to renew the search, SGR will not charge another professional fee, only the cost associated with advertising the position and other expenses. He noted that one of the final candidates had already booked airline tickets and will need to be reimbursed. He referred to the vacant planner position and offered to conduct a digital talent marketing effort and use SGR's network for advertisement of that position; responses would come to the TPO.

The EDSC accepted his offer.

MOTION: A motion was made by Commissioner McGuirk to suspend the Executive Director search, reimburse final candidate airfare, and extend Ms. Nicoulin's Interim Executive Director status for nine months. The motion was seconded by Council Vice Chair Girtman.

Members discussed the length of the Interim Executive Director extension; six months versus twelve months and if a formal agreement is needed. Ms. Nicoulin noted she would like an evaluation at six months and to have some type of agreement in place.

AMENDED MOTION: An amended motion was made by Commissioner McGuirk to suspend the Executive Director search, reimburse final candidate airfare, to enter into an interim agreement to extend Ms. Nicoulin's Interim Executive Director status for six months, for Ms. Nicoulin to provide a strategic plan moving forward within three months and to allow Ms. Nicoulin to hire a Finance Manager and planners as needed.

Commissioner Cloudman stated it needs to be clear to the full TPO Board that the intention is not to go back to a search in six months; that the EDSC has confidence in Ms. Nicoulin and that the recommendation will be to remove the interim status in six months.

The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Power and carried unanimously.

Commissioner Cloudman stated that his city has worked with SGR in the past and noted that having an outside person negotiate terms was very helpful; he asked if that is something the committee would like to have Mr. Thomas engage in.

Mr. Thomas replied that his job is to find the right person for the position whether that is internal or external so if the committee would like that, SGR will include negotiations as part of their agreement.

Commissioner McGuirk stated the next thing the committee needs to do is to develop the Interim Executive Director agreement; he would like the Executive Committee members to be provided with a copy of the prior Executive Director's contract for next week's Executive Committee meeting. He agreed that bringing Mr. Thomas on for the negotiations is a good idea as well as including the TPO's attorney.

Mr. Thomas explained that if SGR was going to go through to completion of the process, negotiations would be included as part of the final fee; since the TPO is not going to that step, he can provide some agreement templates. The goal is to terminate SGR's expenses through today. If SGR will be drafting the document, then a fee would be charged to cover that but if he will just be putting together a terms sheets and reviewing what the attorney drafts there will not be a fee.

Ms. Nicoulin noted that the agenda for the April 6, 2022 Executive Committee meeting will be revised to include a discussion on the terms of the Interim Executive Director agreement and will provide the previous Executive Director's contract will be provided.

Chairperson Wheeler stated there will be more discussion at the Executive Committee meeting and noted that these are the recommendations to the TPO Board.

Ms. Nicoulin thanked the EDSC members for their confidence and support and she is excited for the opportunity.

Mr. Thomas stated he will release the two remaining final candidates.

Chairperson Wheeler stated that it was important the EDSC went through the search process; it was needed to show that every effort has been made to find a new Executive Director and that during the search time, Ms. Nicoulin has proven herself.

IV. Staff Comments

There were no staff comments.

V. Executive Director Search Committee Member Comments

There were no member comments.

VI. Adjournment

The EDSC meeting adjourned at 9:59 a.m.

River to Sea Transportation Planning Organization

**VOLUSIA COUNTY COUNCIL MEMBER BILLIE WHEELER
CHAIRPERSON, RIVER TO SEA TPO**

CERTIFICATE:

The undersigned duly qualified and acting Recording Secretary of the River to Sea TPO certifies that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the March 31, 2022 regular meeting of the Executive Director Search Committee (EDSC), approved and duly signed this 6th day of April 2022.

**Debbie Stewart, Recording Secretary
River to Sea Transportation Planning Organization**