

**MINUTES OF THE
SOUTH FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL
January 27, 2025**

The South Florida Regional Planning Council met virtually and in person on this date at the Murray E. Nelson Government Center, 102050 Overseas Highway, Key Largo FL 33037. Chair Geller welcomed everyone, called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m., and asked Councilmember Cates to lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. The recording of this meeting can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S6p61NSao7o>.

I. Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call

Chair Steve Geller
Councilmember Frank Caplan*
Councilmember Craig Cates
Councilmember Joseph Corradino**
Councilmember Beam Furr**
Councilmember René García**
Councilmember Oliver Gilbert, III**
Councilmember Cary Goldberg*
Councilmember Denise Horland
Councilmember Samuel Kaufman*
Councilmember Michelle Lincoln
Councilmember Kionne McGhee*
Councilmember Michael Udine*

* Virtually Present

** Absent

SFRPC Executive Director Isabel Cosio Carballo and Legal Counsel Sam Goren were present.

The following Ex-Officio Members were virtually present:

Megan Rutter for Sirena Davila, representing the Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Dat Huynh, representing the Florida Department of Transportation, District VI
Armando Vilaboy, representing the South Florida Water Management District
Ken Walia for Victoria Peters, representing the Florida Department of Transportation District IV

Sam Goren, Legal Counsel, explained the legal requirements for a quorum and stated the meeting would be held as an Executive Committee meeting.

II. Welcome by Chair Geller and First Vice Chair Councilmember Michelle Lincoln, and special guest Monroe County Commissioner Holly Merrill Raschein

Chair Geller thanked Councilmember Horland and the SFRPC staff for traveling to Monroe County for the meeting and thanked Councilmembers Lincoln, Kaufman, and Cates for making the trip to the northern counties for their respective meetings. Chair Geller recognized Monroe County for hosting and introduced

Monroe County Mayor Jim Scholl, who welcomed everyone virtually. Chair Geller introduced Monroe County Commissioner Holly Merrill Raschein and gave a summary of her professional background. She welcomed everyone to beautiful Key Largo and commended Chair Geller for his commitment and support for his community and county. She mentioned the importance of today's presentations, the newly established Resiliency Project, workforce housing, transportation, and the future of development in Monroe County, and upping the income threshold for the School Readiness Programs. Commissioner Raschein highlighted the significant childcare challenges faced by families in the Monroe County area, particularly those with low incomes. Many families are forced to choose between work and childcare, impacting both their financial stability and their children's early development. Commissioner Raschein has spoken with Senator Rodriguez and Representative Mooney to sponsor legislation that would increase the state median income threshold for childcare eligibility, focusing specifically on Monroe County. This initiative aims to support hundreds of families and is not considered a member project. Chair Geller shared his optimism about the collaboration with Senator Albritton and House Speaker Perez. Chair Geller explained the CEDS committee's work on transit-oriented development within the SFRPC, acting as the Economic Development District for Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce. He invited interested parties to contact them for involvement.

Chair Geller thanked everyone and yielded to Chair-Elect Lincoln, appreciating the in-person attendance, and highlighting the importance of collaboration between Monroe, Broward, and Miami-Dade counties. Chair-Elect Lincoln proposed holding next year's meeting in Marathon, Monroe County, at their new Emergency Operations Center. Chair Geller agreed to the suggestion.

III. Special Guests and Presentations (Time Approximate: 11:00 AM)

Hanna Koch, Ph.D., Director Artificial Reefs Monroe County BOCC, presentation on Monroe County's Artificial Reef Program

Rhonda Haag, Chief Resilience Officer, Monroe County BOCC, presentation on "Roads to Resilience in the Florida Keys"

IV. Action Items

A. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Chair Geller motioned to approve the Meeting Minutes for the January Council Meeting. The motion was carried by a unanimous vote.

B. Financial Report

The Director of Finance and IT Leo Braslavsky Soldi presented the Financial Report in detail.

Chair Geller motioned to approve the Financial Report. Councilmember Udine moved the motion and Councilmember Horland seconded the motion, which was carried by a unanimous vote.

C. Consent: Comprehensive Plan Amendment Reviews (*Property Rights)

Legal Counsel, Sam Goren, read the Comprehensive Plan Amendment Reviews, Proposed.

Proposed:

- Miami-Dade County 24-04ESR
- Town of Golden Beach 24-01ER
- City of Hialeah 24-01ESR
- Islamorada, City of Islands 24-04ACSC
- Islamorada, City of Islands 24-05ACSC

Public Hearing

Chair Geller opened the Public Hearing and asked if there were any comments or questions.

Public Comments

There were no comments or questions from the public in person or virtually.

Chair Geller motioned to approve the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendments. Councilmember Lincoln moved the motion and Councilmember Horland seconded the motion, which was carried by a unanimous vote.

Legal Counsel, Sam Goren, read the Comprehensive Plan Amendment Reviews Adopted.

Adopted:

- Miami-Dade County 24-03ESR
- Monroe County 24-03ACSC
- Islamorada, City of Islands 24-01ACSC
- Islamorada, City of Islands 24-03ACSC
- City of Miami Springs 24-01ER

Public Hearing

Chair Geller opened the Public Hearing and asked if there were any comments or questions.

Public Comments

There were no comments or questions from the public in person or virtually.

Chair Geller motioned to approve the adopted Comprehensive Plan Amendments. The motion was carried by a unanimous vote.

The meeting then continued with the Special Guests and Presentations

III. Special Guests and Presentations (Time Approximate: 11:00 AM)

Rhonda Haag, Chief Resilience Officer, Monroe County BOCC, presentation on “Roads to Resilience in the Florida Keys”

Chair Geller introduced Ms. Rhonda Haag, Monroe County's Chief Resilience Officer, and summarized her 14 years of service, leadership in resilience projects, and her involvement in the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact Steering Committee.

Ms. Haag detailed the Regional Resilience Program: Roads Elevation Program, Road Vulnerability Analysis and Adaptation Plan: funding, costs and timeline, design and construction costs, and the Twin Lakes Project: flooding and community access, and impacts. There was discussion on tidal and hurricane flooding due to the road elevations and pumps. Her presentation can be found on the SFRPC website: <https://sfregionalcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/RPC-Presentation-January-2025-Haag.pdf>

Hanna Koch, Ph.D., Director Artificial Reefs Monroe County BOCC, presentation on Monroe County's Artificial Reef Program

Chair Geller introduced Dr. Hanna Koch and summarized her professional background, noting her responsibility for overseeing a program to create a series of artificial reefs. He also mentioned the SFRPC and TCRPC in advocating for the state to take a more active role in reef preservation.

Dr. Koch's presentation, *Monroe County Artificial Reefs: Mitigating the Loss of Quality Habitat in the Florida Keys*, highlighted grant funding from the Florida Wildlife Commission in partnership with Monroe County. She explained the program focused on planning, constructing, monitoring, and maintaining habitat support structures, which are essential for fostering healthy, productive, and resilient ecosystems. Dr. Koch discussed various causes of habitat loss and degradation, including structural complexity, changes in habitat landscape, community composition, coral and reef fluctuations, and fish biomass. She also presented new synergistic management strategies aimed at improving the ecological conditions of the region. She stated the goal is to design, deploy, and evaluate habitat support structures that create long-term, stable habitats and enhance the resources and overall health of the Florida Keys marine environment. Councilmember Cates shared that, throughout his lifetime, he has observed both positive and negative impacts from ships docking along the shoreline, which has caused fish to change their habitats and other difficulties. He agrees that this is an exciting time to lead this program. He thanked Dr. Koch for her expertise and clear explanation of the program.

Her presentation can be found on the SFRPC website:

<https://sfregionalcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/SFRPC-Jan-2025-Artificial-Reefs-Koch.pdf>

Chair-Elect Lincoln thanked Dr. Koch for her presentation and mentioned the importance of Monroe County's lead in saving the coral reefs.

D. Regional Issues: Comprehensive Plan Amendment Review

None

E. Traditional RLF – Angela Dawson-Angela L. Dawson, P.A. (Borrower) – Litigation Settlement & Partial Write-Off – Ratification

Legal Counsel, Sam Goren, provided a summary of the Litigation Settlement for Angela Dawson-Angela L. Dawson, P.A. He did not go into specifics, as the details were included in the Memorandum in the Council packet and the settlement document. Mr. Goren reviewed the history of the legal work and negotiations, noting that the matter is now ready for settlement. He summarized the litigation's history, and the modifications made. Mr. Goren read the motion into the record. The SFRPC loan will continue to be secured with a mortgage on the pledged collateral. Additionally, as a result of the proposed settlement, \$25,000 in principal will be subject to a write-off as a result of the reduction of outstanding principal due from \$144,598 to \$119,598. Furthermore, each party will be responsible for their respective legal fees. A discussion followed regarding the possibility of Ms. Dawson reviving any claims against the SFRPC. Mr. Goren stated that to the extent that this is a public record, and the settlement document does speak to the truth of the conclusion being reached, there are specific obligations on both sides of the table. Ms. Dawson will execute a general release of any and all claims against the SFRPC, including its current and former employees, board members, and attorneys, as it pertains to the case. The document was signed by Ms. Dawson on January 16, 2025. Mr. Goren stated that litigation would end the conversation. Mr. Tart thanked Mr. Goren and his office for their persistence and knowledge in the legal matter.

Chair Geller motioned approval of the proposed litigation settlement and the write-off in the amount of \$25,000, as a result in the reduction of outstanding principal due from \$144,598 to \$119,598. Furthermore, each party will be responsible for their respective legal fees. Councilmember Cates moved the motion and Councilmember Horland seconded the motion, which was carried by a unanimous vote.

Mr. Goren stated that given the legal vote to approve and ratify the conclusion of the matter, this would authorize Mrs. Cosio Carballo, SFRPC Executive Director, to sign the appropriate documentation.

F. Florida Association of Counties Legislative Priorities

Chair Geller introduced the incoming Florida Association of Counties Chair, Chair-Elect Lincoln. Chair-Elect Lincoln updated the Council on the Florida Association of Counties (FAC) Legislative Action Plan, which reflects the counties' collective priorities and positions. Developed through input from county elected officials, staff, and stakeholders. The process includes policy development through committees where county officials discuss, vote, and refine policy statements. The action plan is divided into two parts: guiding principles, which are long-term issues relevant across multiple years, and policy proposals, which address specific legislative issues. Chair-Elect Lincoln mentioned the seven policy committees: Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Community and Urban Affairs (co-chaired by Senator Geller), Federal Policy (co-chaired by Senator Rene' Garcia), Finance Tax and Administration, Health Safety and Justice, Future Technology, and Water and Environmental Sustainability (chaired by Commissioner Holly Raschein). The

Water and Environmental Sustainability Committee adopted policies related to private wells and septic tanks, trail improvements, phosphorus reduction, and one-water initiatives for holistic water management. She stated that FAC will continue to protect local flexibility and oppose state preemptions, recognizing that "one size does not fit all" in Florida.

Mrs. Cosio Carballo acknowledged the Florida Association of Counties (FAC) for their policy support of the Regional Planning Councils as critical partners. She noted that the Florida Regional Councils Association (FRCA) supports FAC.

G. Nominating Committee Report / Election of Officers

Chair Geller summarized the Nominating Committee Report. He explained the nominating process and named the Nominating Committee: Councilmember Cates representing Monroe County, Councilmember Garcia representing Miami-Dade County, and himself representing Broward County. At its January 17th meeting, the Nominating Committee unanimously voted to recommend the following slate of officers for 2025:

- Chair – Michelle Lincoln (Monroe County)
- First Vice Chair – René García (Miami-Dade County)
- Second Vice Chair – Cary Goldberg (Governor's Appointee, Broward County)
- Treasurer – Denise Horland (Municipal Appointee - Broward County)
- Secretary – Frank Caplan (Municipal Appointee – Miami-Dade County)
- Immediate Past Chair - Steve Geller (Broward County)

Chair Geller explained the history of his Chairmanship and the history of the SFRPC's changes in legislation throughout the years in detail and hoped that he accomplished his goal of making the SFRPC relevant. He mentioned his involvement with the SFRPC over the years when Carolyn Dekle was the Executive Director and remained involved with the SFRPC because he believed he could restore its relevance. He stated the need for regional planning and the SFRPC to be recognized as a key authority on issues important to Southeast Florida. During his three-and-a-half terms as Chair, he increased collaboration with the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (TCRPC), establishing regular joint meetings and conferences of importance. As Chair of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Program with a Blue Ribbon Commission, they made the CEDS document one of the best in Florida. The SFRPC hosted conferences on vital topics, noted for its quality and impact. He worked to change the SFRPC, ensuring it became an active, relevant organization. He was proud of the progress made and the impact of his efforts, dedicating thousands of hours to the role. Chair Geller felt confident handing over the leadership to Chair-Elect Michelle Lincoln, who shares his vision for the SFRPC's future. Despite increasing the workload for staff, he believes in their ability to handle the challenge. He mentioned the many years he and Isabel had known each other, commending her as an excellent Executive Director. He stated that he could not have accomplished his goals without her leadership. He thanked the entire Council staff, naming them individually and highlighting their specific program achievements. He also thanked Sam Goren, widely known, ethical, and respected. There was a standing ovation.

Chair Geller motioned to ratify the Nominating Committee's recommendation of Executive Committee Members for 2025. Councilmember Geller moved the motion and Councilmember Caplan seconded the motion, which was carried by a unanimous vote.

Councilmember Geller announced that Councilmember Lincoln is now Chair of the SFRPC. Chair Lincoln thanked Councilmember Geller for his unwavering support not only for his community and county but for the entire State of Florida. She stated that Senator Geller is the true definition of a public servant, and highlighted his service as a senator, mayor, commissioner, and Chair of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Steering Committee and hoped that Senator Geller would continue as Chair of the CEDS. She thanked him and the SFRPC for their leadership and guidance. Chair Lincoln acknowledged the challenge of filling Senator Geller's shoes but expressed confidence in her ability to do so with the help of the SFRPC's dedicated staff. She opened the floor for others to comment. Mrs. Cosio Carballo thanked her friend and Past Chair Geller for his support throughout the years and who has been a pleasure to work with. She stated that they have accomplished a lot over the years thanks to his unwavering support and help. She also thanked his staff, Jackie and Barbara, for their constant assistance and dedication.

Councilmembers Horland and Cates agreed with Chair Lincoln. They commended Senator Geller as a great example of public service, acknowledging his efforts to make a difference and leave the community better. They are impressed by his memory, achievements, and high standards, noting he sets the bar for others. Councilmember Horland considers him a friend and mentor and noted, that as his constituent, his influence has helped the SFRPC as well as other organizations with which he is involved. Councilmembers Horland and Cates thanked him for his many years of service.

Chair Lincoln recognized Past Chair Geller for his exemplary work over the years with a small token of appreciation. She read the inscription: "With gratitude and sincere appreciation for your dedicated public service on the Council including more than three years as SFRPC Chairman. Thank you for your tireless leadership and contributions to the Council and South Florida Region as SFRPC Chairman and Chairman of the South Florida CEDS Committee. We look forward to your continued service on the Council!"

V. Program Reports and Activities

- A. SFRPC Revolving Loan Funds Status Report
- B. SFRPC CARES Act RLF Status Report

Jeff Tart, Senior Loan Officer, congratulated Senator Geller on his accomplishments during his leadership. He announced that the Economic Development Administration's RLF risk review rating for the SFRPC is B+ for the upcoming year. He provided updates on the CARES RLF Program and thanked Councilmember Goldberg for his referral. Regarding the Brownfields Program, he mentioned that the Hollywood project is underway and stated an article from the Sun-Sentinel in the Council Packet, along with updates on the City of Homestead's Community Redevelopment.

VI. Discussion Items

A. Executive Director's Report

Mrs. Cosio Carballo reminded everyone about the South Florida and Treasure Coast RPC Joint Meeting on February 28, 2025, at the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization. She thanked Greg Stuart and his staff for their hospitality and noted that the Tri-Rail station is located at the venue. She mentioned key discussion topics, including a coral reef update, an update on Tri-Rail by South Florida Regional Transportation Authority's Executive Director David Dech, and SFWMD's resilience efforts regarding the water supply. She introduced Rebecca Landesman, the Council's new Digital Marketing Communications employee. Mrs. Cosio Carballo thanked Alisha, Leo, Kathe, and the staff of the Murray E. Nelson Government Center for their help at the Monroe County Meeting. With the consent of Chair Lincoln, she announced that the February 24th Council meeting will be cancelled because of the a Joint Meeting on February 28th.

Chair Lincoln motioned to approve the cancellation of the February 24, 2025, Council Meeting since there will be a meeting on February 28th. The motion was carried by a unanimous vote.

B. Legal Counsel Report

Mr. Goren commended Past Chair Geller for their long-standing friendship and collaboration, including after-hours. He thanked him for his support in the Dawson case, along with Chris Sterns, the primary lawyer handling the settlement. Mr. Goren expressed his gratitude and wished the new chair the best of luck, and success. Chair Lincoln thanked Mr. Goren.

C. Council Members Report

Councilmember Geller raised the topic of rail connectivity between Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties, discussing conversations with Fort Lauderdale, Brightline, and rail track ownership, including the costs and construction considerations for tunnels or bridges.

D. Ex-Officio Report

Dat Huynh, representing the Florida Department of Transportation, District VI commended Senator Geller for making the Council relevant through the years.

He mentioned the 2055 Florida Transportation Plan; the Resilient Infrastructure Focus Group will have its third meeting on January 30th and can be joined virtually since that meeting will be held in Tallahassee. Chair Lincoln thanked Mr. Huynh for the report and stated she would be at that meeting as she is also on the Steering Committee for the FDOT Strategy 2055

Armando Vilaboy, representing the South Florida Water Management District, had nothing to report and thanked Senator Geller for his leadership.

Chair Lincoln thanked the Ex-Officios and reminded everyone to read the attendance record and that the February 24th meeting is cancelled. She looks forward to seeing everyone at the Joint Meeting on February 28th.

VII. Announcements and Attachments

A. Attendance Form

B. Upcoming Meetings

- 1) Monday, February 24, 2025, 10:30 a.m. (SFRPC)
- 2) Friday, February 28, 2025, 10:00 a.m. (SFRPC/TCRPC Joint Meeting – Broward MPO)
- 3) Monday, March 17, 2025, 10:30 a.m. (SFRPC)

VIII. Adjournment

Chair Geller adjourned the meeting at 12:18 p.m.

This signature is to attest that the undersigned is the Secretary of the SOUTH FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL and that the information provided herein is the true and correct minutes for January 27, 2025, of the SOUTH FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL adopted on the 17th day of March 2025.



Frank Caplan, Secretary
Councilmember, Village of Biscayne Park



Date