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**APPROVED BY COUNCIL
MARCH 15, 2017**

**FINAL ACTION AGENDA/MINUTES
Village of Estero and City of Bonita Springs
Joint Workshop**

**Estero Fire Rescue
21500 Three Oaks Parkway
Estero, FL 33928**

February 28, 2017 10:00 a.m.

- 1. CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME:** 10:00 a.m. – Mayors Batos and Simmons
- 2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Led by Mayor Simmons.
- 3. ROLL CALL:**
Present - Village of Estero: Mayor Nick Batos - District 6, Vice Mayor Howard Levitan - District 2, Councilmember Bill Ribble - District 1, Councilmember Donald Brown - District 3, Councilmember Katy Errington - District 4, and Councilmember Jim Wilson - District 7. Absent: Councilmember Jim Boesch - District 5 (excused absence).

Present - City of Bonita Springs: Mayor Peter Simmons, Deputy Mayor Peter O’Flinn - District 4, Council Member Amy Quaremba - District 1, Council Member Greg DeWitt - District 2, Council Member Steven Slachta - District 3, Council Member Michael Gibson - District 5, and Council Member Fred Forbes, AIA - District 6.

Also present - Village of Estero: Village Manager Steve Sarkozy, Assistant Village Attorney Derek Rooney, and Village Clerk Kathy Hall. City of Bonita Springs: City Manager Carl Schwing and City Attorney Audrey Vance.
- 4. INTRODUCTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS**
- 5. PUBLIC COMMENT:** None.

6. BACKGROUND AND HOW WE GOT HERE:

Introductory remarks were made by Mayor Batos and Deputy Mayor O'Flinn. In late November, 2016, a short presentation regarding SUNTrail was given at a joint meeting of the Lee and Charlotte Counties Metropolitan Planning Organizations. Both Mayor Batos and Deputy Mayor O'Flinn believed that the SUNTrail was an important initiative, with the potential to become a first class, multimodal-use path connecting Estero and Bonita Springs; the joint workshop would provide an opportunity for both Councils and the public to have the benefit of information and develop a sense of whether to continue to explore the possibilities. It was explained that SUNTrail is a plan for a statewide system of safe, connected multi-use paths. Funding for the program began in 2015; the City of Cape Coral was awarded funds for the portion of SUNTrail in their area. It was noted that the imprint of the SUNTrail in the Estero-Bonita Springs area is on Seminole Gulf Railway tracks, with focus from Estero Parkway to Bonita Beach Road; however, there were other alternative connections that could be made available. It was also noted that Seminole Gulf Railway representatives were amenable to talking about full acquisition, easement, etc., and that CSX was open to conversation as well.

7. PRESENTATION ON FLORIDA SUNTRAIL SYSTEM - DALE ALLEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FLORIDA GREENWAYS AND TRAILS FOUNDATION:

Mr. Allen provided background information regarding the Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation, including corporate sponsors and foundation funders and sponsors. The foundation is Florida's chief advocacy organization for a statewide system of non-motorized trails and greenways. The foundation wants to turn Florida into the world's #1 greenway and trail destination. The foundation supports trails for paddling, hiking, equestrian, dirt and mountain bike, and Shared Use Non-motorized (SUNTrails) paved regional connectors, as well as expanding public access for all Florida residents and visitors, especially the Gold Medal state parks, public lands, and conservation areas. Mr. Allen explained that "greenways" means the land corridors that allow safe, non-motorized passage of people and wildlife; "trails" means the actual footpath or paved surface through the greenway.

Mr. Allen stated that 200 miles of the proposed 250 miles Coast-to-Coast Connector (C2C) are already in place; work was currently underway to close all of the seven gaps on the C2C; and economic impact of trails on rural and mid-sized communities will be dramatic. He spoke to the tourism, economic, and public health benefits gained through connecting this emerging priority trail system to Florida's Gold Medal Award winning state parks and unique conservation lands. He also spoke to the miles of active railroad lines in the United States at the turn of the 20th century which began to unravel beginning with the Great Depression and accelerating after WWII. He addressed the Florida abandoned railroad rights-of-way, noting that many of the corridors have been converted to rail-trails. He pointed out Florida trails along waterfronts and connected trails across North America and around the world and addressed basic and expanded economics of paved trails, as well as the "Three S's Test": a successful trail is safe, scenic, and Sun-sational. Examples of Sun-sational places, bridges, downtowns, and events were provided.

Regarding existing trail funding opportunities, Mr. Allen spoke to the strong support that exists in Florida Legislature for regionally connected trails, pursuant to Section 335.065(4)F; SB 2514-A; and Florida Department of Transportation approval of 45 projects on the SUNTrails priority system and allocation of \$44.5 million to begin work on trail elements. He also spoke regarding the Coast to Coast Regional Connector; provided maps of the statewide system that is already in place; indicated that there are 25 major gaps; and spoke to lessons from C2C Trail and observations regarding SWC2.

In conclusion, the following points were made: regional paved trails are happening in Florida; SUNTrails Program is transformative legislation and must be protected; local governments must organize regionally; additional public funding is needed, especially for side and connector trails at the community level; funding is also needed for trail necessities; funding for management of trails is also problematic. He also addressed funding: Constitutional Amendment One passed overwhelmingly on November 4, 2014 by Florida voters; Ten Percent for Trails – ask legislators to allocate funding from 2014 Constitutional Amendment One; recommendations from the Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation on how the 10% should be committed were provided, as well as economic, tourism, and safety goals of paved trails for Florida.

8. COUNCIL QUESTIONS:

Discussion followed regarding safety record to date; experience with local cities; average cost for one mile of trail; how to make intersections safe; minimum building standards and safety features; steps to get going; maintenance and replacement costs; availability of grant funds; asphalt vs. concrete; purchasing railroad right-of-way; references for all of the great ideas in archives, rails with trails, and engineering resources; and shading of trails.

9. PRESENTATION ON SUNTRAIL FROM LEE COUNTY MPO PERSPECTIVE - DON SCOTT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LEE COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION:

Mr. Scott addressed and provided information regarding the following maps: Lee County Corridors from 2015 Office of Greenways Land Trail Opportunity; Southwest Coastal Regional Trail; Land Trail Opportunity; Priority Trail; Area Attractions map; The Coastal Loop - addition to the Southwest Coastal Regional Trail; Trail along Seminole Gulf Railroad Right-of-Way - in Estero and Bonita Springs, the SW Coastal Regional Trail is proposed along the Seminole Gulf Railroad right-of-way from Alico Road to Riverside Park; and Lee County MPO Rail Feasibility Study map. Mr. Scott spoke to the development of the SUNTrail Network/Southwest Coast Connector Priorities; SUNTrail Network Timeline; SUNTrail Project Applications; the Kismet Parkway Multi-Use Trail Project; and the John Yarbrough Trail Extension.

10. COUNCIL QUESTIONS:

Discussion followed regarding timeline and the possibility of updating the maps in the near future; materials preference; resurfacing maintenance; there were no matching

funds; MPO railroad right-of-way study; and the interest shown by the Seminole Gulf Railway representatives.

11. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Richard Shine, Hapgehatchee Center, questions regarding future integration and methodology for funds; safety and mobility.

Doug Saxton, The Reserve, spoke to the importance of the rail to trail environment for safety and inquired how he could others to get this moved forward.

Tom Barber, Estero resident, conveyed appreciation of this process.

Dallas Revord, FineMark National Bank and Trust, inquired regarding railway crossings and what the railway's incentive would be.

Jim Royer spoke to his reasons for residing in a small town.

Dena Wilcoxon, Realtor, stated that an overwhelming question has been the location of the bike path and walk path. She also believed that the paths increased property value.

12. COUNCIL COMMENTS AND TAKE-AWAYS:

Mayor Batos expressed pleasure in participating in the first joint meeting between the two Councils and hoped that this was something that would continue as the years go by. He believed that Estero and Bonita Springs were beautiful and strong communities; together they can be even stronger. Mayor Simmons echoed Mayor Batos' sentiments, indicated that one of the highest priorities of the new Bonita Springs Council was meeting with the Village of Estero, and hoped that it was the first of many joint meetings. He agreed that Bonita Springs and Estero were fantastic communities, together were stronger and could offer more for the public and the citizens.

A motion to adjourn was duly made and passed.

13. ADJOURNMENT: 11:44 a.m.

ATTEST:

VILLAGE OF ESTERO, FLORIDA

By: Kathy Hall
Kathy Hall, MMC, Village Clerk

By: Nicholas Batos
Nicholas Batos, Mayor