

NEFRC

Highlights

Monthly Report of the Northeast Florida Regional Council

February 2007

Northeast Florida Regional Council releases its 2007 Legislative Priorities

In February 2007, the Northeast Florida Regional Council's Legislative Committee released its Legislative Priorities publication. The priorities detailed within the publication represent the issues of greatest importance throughout the seven-county region.

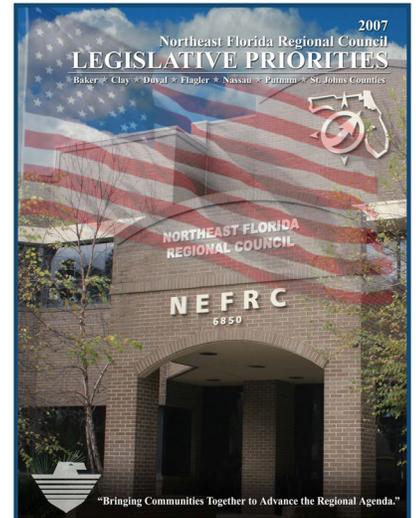
The Committee was created, in 2006, to address the significant concerns within the region. It is composed of one delegate from each county (Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam and St. Johns). Legislative priorities from each county were collected and placed on the separate County pages; while the Legislative Committee determined the top six priorities of critical concern within the region were deemed iregional priorities.

The Committee is chaired by Council President Commissioner Chip Laibl, who also serves as the representative of Putnam County. Karen Stern serves as Vice Chair and represents St. Johns County. Other delegates and their respective counties include: Commissioner Mike Griffis, Baker County; Commissioner Harold Rutledge, Clay County; Councilwoman Elaine Brown, Duval County; Councilman Jon Netts, Flagler County; and Mr. Todd Duncan, Nassau County.

The top six legislative priorities for the Northeast Florida Regional Council as determined by the Committee are: Affordable/Workforce Housing; Protection of Local Revenue; Transportation Funding; Emergency Preparedness and Recovery; Health and Human Services; and Environment and Water Resources.

The Committee members will travel to Tallahassee during upcoming legislative sessions to lobby for the issues which are most vital to the Council and the Northeast Florida region.

For additional information concerning the regional legislative priorities, please contact Mario Taylor at (904) 279-0880.



Members of the African Delegation pose with Council staff during their recent visit to Northeast Florida.

African Delegation brings diversity to Council while exploring regional perspectives

On February 22, 2007, the Northeast Florida Regional Council joined with the International Visitor Corps of Jacksonville to host a delegation from the Africa Regional Project. The International Visitor Corps of Jacksonville is a nonprofit, nonpartisan volunteer organization that promotes multicultural awareness and understanding between people of other nations and the United States. The Africa Regional Project is composed of a group who came to the Jacksonville area to learn more about the history and perspective of our region. This project is built to enhance official skills, improve communication between political officials and constituents, increase positive links between local officials and national government authorities and increase accountability for government decisions and processes.

Participants included visitors from the African countries of Chad, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Niger, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo and Zimbabwe.

The members met with Council CEO Brian Teeple, and Mr. Jim Rinaman, a local attorney; both spoke about historic aspects of the region as well as the recent manifestation of regional development to benefit a broader community.

For more information, please contact Brian Teeple at (904)279-0880.

FEBRUARY 14, 2007, marked the 30th year of the Northeast Florida Regional Council providing visionary leadership and coordination between counties and governmental agencies to preserve and enhance the quality of life in our region.

HAPPY 30TH BIRTHDAY NEFRC!

Bringing Communities Together to Advance the Regional Agenda



Community leaders participated in health care access simulation

Community leaders experienced first-hand how it felt to be uninsured and in need of healthcare on February 9, 2007. *iWalk in My Shoes* is a powerful group activity for community leaders that helps participants understand what it is like to be an outsider in the U.S. health care system.

Each participant was assigned a character role, either a person trying to obtain health care, or a health care administrator serving as a gatekeeper. They were given real life assignments for obtaining or delivering health care. The event was facilitated by Community Catalyst, a national organization that works with communities to shape the health care system and expand access to quality health services.

The simulation program enables the participants to experience the challenges encountered by the uninsured and under-insured in obtaining healthcare for themselves or their families. The simulation exercise is followed by a facilitated discussion about ways the issue and potential solutions should be addressed.

For additional information, please contact Sarah Holdstein (904)279-0885 X 129.



iWalk in My Shoes participants see firsthand the obstacles and challenges that those in need of healthcare face in our region.

Regional Leadership Academy discusses issues of education and affordable housing

The Northeast Florida Regional Leadership Academy had blended the issues of education and affordable housing within its Nassau County Program Day which was held on February 14, 2007 at the Betty P. Cook Nassau Center on the campus of Florida Community College at Jacksonville.



Class members were able to discuss the need for regional cooperation regarding higher education, understand

the need for regional cooperation and foster awareness within and outside of the region in regard to affordable housing. The academy had a superb panel of speakers, which included Dr. Steve Wallace, President of Florida Community College at Jacksonville; Steve Seibert, executive director for the Century Commission for a Sustainable Florida; Kerri Stewart, Director of Housing and Neighborhoods Department and Karen Stern, Chair of Northeast Florida Affordable Workforce Housing Task Force. The next program day will be held on March 14, 2007 at the Northeast Florida State Hospital in Baker County and will cover the topics of Human Services and Emergency Preparedness.

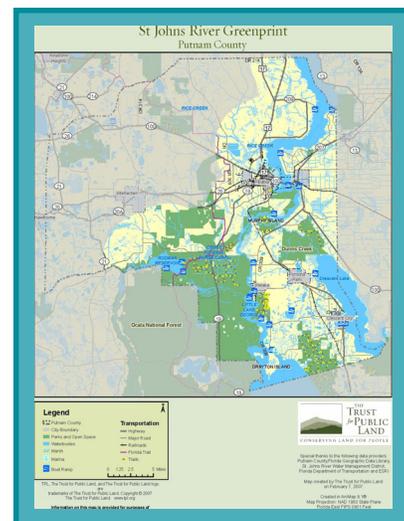
For more information, please contact Mike Hadden at (904)279-0885 X 104.

Greenprinting: Setting land conservation priorities

Protecting cherished landscapes, the drinking water supply and wilderness habitats are very important to local communities in our Region. The Trust for Public Land is working closely with local leaders, residents and technical experts to guarantee that the final products and suggestions have broad community support.

St. Johns River Greenprint for Putnam County was created to facilitate local participation by organizing three committees, which have an extensive array of skills to ensure top results. This Greenprint is focused on recreation, conservation and access along the St. Johns River. Greenprinting is a tool that helps communities make informed decisions about land conservation priorities. It provides a systematic approach for identifying currently unprotected areas that offer the highest conservation benefits.

Please contact Jonathon Goyings at (904)279-0882 X 163, for more information.



Emergency Preparedness staff planned Putnam County Terrorism Exercise

The Emergency Preparedness staff planned and controlled a terrorism/chemical release exercise in Putnam County on Wednesday, February 15, 2007. Putnam County and City of Palatka agencies had to face a hostage-taking situation at the same time as they dealt with a pesticide contamination. The exercise was designed to evaluate the county's communications systems and procedures, as well as evaluate their implementation of the Incident Command System.

The Palatka Police Department and Putnam Sheriff's Office SWAT Teams also executed a tactical assault as part of the exercise. The Putnam Community Medical Center staff practiced their own decontamination procedures as part of the exercise. The American Red Cross and Salvation Army also provided exercise support and victim counseling. Jeff Alexander and the regional planners served as exercise controllers and Charles McCool served as the lead evaluator for the exercise.

Please contact Joe Garcia at (904) 279-0885 X 133, for more information.