

**Tri-County Community Partnership Initiative Advisory Board Meeting  
Northwest Florida State College, Student Services Building**

**June 12, 2024**

Kay Rasmussen, One Okaloosa EDC Associate Director and John Schuliger, TCPI facilitator provided opening comments. Advisory Board members and guests were welcomed.

New Advisory Board member, Jennifer Fleming, Building Industry Association was introduced and meeting agenda overviewed.

## **Program Updates**

### **Partner Accomplishments Overviewed**

- Okaloosa County and 96<sup>th</sup> Test Wing easement agreement on Okaloosa Island and Okaloosa County contractor engagement for the Bridge-to-Bridge multi-use path across Okaloosa Island.
- 96TW and City of Niceville firefighting mutual aid agreement
- Eglin AFB awarded 2024 DoD Environmental Award
- NAS Whiting Field awarded 2024 Navy Installation Excellence Award
- Santa Rosa County partnership with Trust for Public Land and the Department of the Navy to buffer NAS Whiting Field; NWF Sentinel Landscape

### **DSI Advocacy Outreach Update**

- Congressman Gaetz recently announced the successful passage of the 2025 NDAA from the House Armed Services Committee.
- 99% of the top priorities advocated by the Defense Support Initiatives Committee (DSI) are included in the HASC NDAA, they include:
  - EGTRR Infrastructure
  - EGTRR maximization capabilities
  - Threat simulators
  - WTIC Planning & Design
  - 350<sup>th</sup> Spectrum Warfare Wing MILCON
  - AFRL HC-BLCKFYRE complex P&D
  - Create strategy for unaccompanied housing leases
  - Exemption to allow DoD to resume full testing in EGTRR (Rice's Whales)
- Local total for FY25 allocated funding exceeds \$125M

### **MILKEN Institute**

- Each year the MILKEN Institute conducts an economic performance analysis of cities across the county. This year, the Crestview-FWB-Destin MSA ranked #17, up from #22 last year. Additional rankings included:
  - Highest ranked metro in NW Florida
  - Third highest ranked metro in Florida
  - 19<sup>th</sup> in job growth
  - 16<sup>th</sup> in wage growth
  - Broadband increased from #182 to #23 (LiveOak Fiber)
  - Housing affordability remained low at #108

### **OLDCC DCIP Program**

- The DCIP applications are due June 17
- Okaloosa County is submitting an application for their traffic management center project
- ECRC planned to submit for the FL/AL TPO Traffic Management Center enhancements but pulled it and will plan to apply next cycle
- The City of Mary Esther is planning to submit next cycle when they are closer to being shovel ready
- Walton County Fire District is submitting an application for Deer Moss Creek
- The pending final ECRC MIRR will identify additional projects to pursue

### **Women Veterans Recognition Day**

- June 12 is recognized for the 1948 Women's Armed Services Integration Act signing
- A celebration was held this morning at the Women Veterans' Park on Okaloosa Island
- Gordy Fornell, Lt Gen USAF Retired was awarded the Daughters of the American Revolution National Society's highest honor, the Medal of Honor, for his unwavering support and accomplishments

## **Lines of Effort Updates**

### **Quality of Life; Colonel Wood, 1 SOMSG/CC**

#### **Childcare Work Group**

- Angie Strumeyer, Early Learning Coalition of the Emerald Coast briefed on their current business childcare survey for Okaloosa and Walton Counties. The findings of the needs assessment will be shared in the August timeframe. Current initiatives offered by ELCEC include workforce retention stipends and training
- Tamera Gerstbrodie, Co-Chair reported for the work group. Eglin currently has 16 FCC homes established with 13 pending. Hurlburt Field currently has 21 FCC homes.
- Eglin's waitlist is 145 and Hurlburt's waitlist is 185.
- Higher Ground Education is planning to break ground on their new facility in Crestview in August. They will accommodate 164 children; 6 months to 6 years. They are also considering opening a temporary facility in a church Sunday School facility while their complex is being built. Priority will be provided to military families; all services.
- The City of Niceville reports the need for CDC workforce.
- Previous discussions with Dr. Stephenson supported a partnership to create an educational curriculum to develop a workforce pipeline. With Dr. Stephenson leaving, this may not come to fruition.
- Both Eglin and Hurlburt are providing workforce training and incentives.
- Hurlburt Field is expanding their CDC West facility to accommodate 24 additional infants.
- Eglin AFB is renovating CDC #1 with a planned open date in 2025 and will offer 119 spaces.
- GetSidekicks is a new independent contractor based community of childcare providers for military affiliated families; [www.getsidekicks.com](http://www.getsidekicks.com)
- Upcoming events overviewed.

#### **Housing Work Group**

- Randall Rowland, co-chair reported. Eglin currently has a 400 housing deficient. The Hidden Oaks duplex home renovation program has begun. 100 apartment units will be constructed.
- May Road will demolish 100 Live Oak units on Hurlburt Field and will replace them with 24 apartment buildings; following the Edwards AFB model.

- Freedom Tech Center in Fort Walton Beach will offer 312 luxury apartments; phase 1 will open in August 2024.
- Negotiations continue between Okaloosa County and the 96<sup>th</sup> Test Wing for the potential North 9 207 acres for a mixed use development to include housing. Okaloosa County would like to sell the housing and that is not permitted on an EUL parcel.
- An EUL opportunity is pending for a Poquito Bayou to include retail, office space and temporary lodging.

### **Education/Training; Colonel Davis, 96 MSG/CC**

#### **Career Readiness Work Group**

- Kelly Childs, Co-Chair reported. The previously volunteer TAP survey is now mandatory and is executed at the beginning of the TAP process. This has improved the data collection. 225 surveys were completed from 01Jan24 to 06Jun24. As compared to 158 the twelve months prior. The intent is to measure personnel choosing to remain in the area after separation, and to educate those that are unsure of the opportunities offered locally.
- Job Fairs and hiring events held since the last meeting were highlighted.

### **Infrastructure; Colonel Hammill, 96 CEG/CC**

#### **Traffic Work Group**

- Eric Rushing, co-chair and Scott Davidson reported. A mission impact analysis for Wynnhaven Beach/A-21 is underway.
- Lt Gen Bauernfeind has written a letter to FDOT Secretary Perdue regarding traffic congestion west of Hurlburt Field on Hwy 98.
- Tourism surtax funding is being utilized for Hwy 85 widening to alleviate congestion near Camp Bull Simons and Duke Field.
- Passing lanes may be added to Hwy 285.
- Efforts are underway to stabilize Hwy 98 shoreline on Okaloosa Island. Possible National Coastal Resiliency Funds.

### **Oversight; Nathan Sparks, One Okaloosa EDC**

#### **Grant Funding Work Group**

- Steve Loken, co-chair reported. Funding opportunities highlighted to include, OLDCC Defense Community Infrastructure Program, Florida Defense Infrastructure Grants, Federal Highway Administration Defense Access Road Program, and Florida Department of Transportation's Transportation Regional Incentive Program.
- Funding spreadsheet is available on the TCPI website, [www.floridapartnerships.com](http://www.floridapartnerships.com).

### **Strategic Plan**

- The September 18 TCPI Advisory Board meeting will be a strategic planning process. The current environment will be assessed, goals and objectives will be identified, and a strategic plan will be co-created to move solutions forward throughout the community.
- Additional information will be provided to Advisory Board members as the date nears.

## **Closing Comments**

- Both Col Hammill and Col Davis will be PCS'ing this summer. Much appreciation is extended to them for their partnerships and contributions. Without their support and collaboration, military-community partnerships would not have been possible.
- A farewell is also bid to Steve Horton along with congratulations on his retirement. John Spolski will be joining the Advisory Board representing the Okaloosa County School District.
- The next TCPI Advisory Board meeting will be the strategic planning retreat on September 18.
- The next Eglin-Hurlburt CPP meeting is targeted for November 12; date to be confirmed.

**Meeting adjourned.**