

Emerald Coast Regional Council

Meeting Minutes

The Chautauqua Building

95 Circle Drive, DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435

September 22, 2025, 11:30am

**Members Present:**

Kurvin Qualls, Governor Appointee, Chair
Councilmember April Sutton, City of Mary Esther, Vice Chair
Councilmember Jim Bagby, City of Destin
Darryl Boudreau, NWFLWMD
Mayor Bob Campbell, City of DeFuniak Springs
Commissioner Doug Crosby, Bay County (Virtual)
Kasey Cuchens, Governor Appointee
Commissioner Danny Glidewell, Walton County
Mayor Pamn Henderson, City of Callaway
Mayor Heather Lindsay, City of Milton
Commissioner Claire Pease, Bay County (Virtual)
Councilmember Bill Schaetzle, City of Niceville
Mayor JB Schluter, City of Gulf Breeze (Virtual)
Councilmember David Schmidt, City of Fort Walton Beach (Virtual)
J.D. Smith, Governor Appointee
Commissioner Kerry Smith, Santa Rosa County (Virtual)
Commissioner Josh Street, City of Panama City
Commissioner Steven Stroberger, Escambia County
Mayor JB Whitten, City of Crestview
Commissioner Colten Wright, Santa Rosa County (Virtual)

Others Present:

Bruce Barnhart, Citizen (Virtual)
Amanda Carpenter, MPOAC Director
Vacari Dickerson, ECRC (Virtual) Sierra
Eades, WGI (Virtual)
Olen Pettis, FDOT (Virtual)
Vandy Vela, Bit-Wizards (Virtual)
Chris Wallace, City of DeFuniak Springs
Cory Wilkinson, HDR (Virtual)
Kandase Lee, ECRC
Dawn Schwartz, ECRC
Renee Quick, ECRC (Virtual)
Ada Clark, ECRC (Virtual)
Eric Christianson, ECRC (Virtual)
Rae Emery, ECRC
Gary Kramer, ECRC (Virtual)
Leandra Meredith, ECRC (Virtual)
Tammy Neal, ECRC
Jill Nobles, ECRC (Virtual)
Jill Strickler, ECRC (Virtual)

Members Not Present:

Mayor Tracy Andrews, City of Chipley
Commissioner Steven Barry, Escambia County
Councilmember Paul Casto, City of Panama City Beach
Commissioner Trey Goodwin, Okaloosa County
Commissioner Jack Griffis, City of Springfield
Councilmember Casey Jones, City of Pensacola
Elizabeth Orr, FL Department of Environmental Protection
Commissioner Andrew Palmer, Okaloosa County
Commissioner Earl Stafford, Holmes County

Call to Order

Chair Qualls called the meeting to order.

Call for Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance

The prayer was led by JD Smith, and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Roll Call and Recognition of Virtual Members and Attendees

Chair Qualls welcomed those in attendance and introductions were made.

Public Forum:

Chair Qualls opened the Public Forum. With no speakers or comments from the public, Chair Qualls closed the public forum.

Information Items

Item 1: FDOT Grant Programs

Chair Qualls introduced Olen Pettis, Planning Supervisor, FDOT and asked for an update.

Olen Pettis presented a brief overview and key updates for FDOT District Three (D-3) to include the FDOT Program Opportunities, the FDOT Tentative Five-Year Work Program Hybrid Public Hearing dates/times/locations, and upcoming FDOT Public Involvement.

Item 2: Watershed Partnership

Chair Qualls introduced Darryl Boudreau, Northwest Florida Water Management District.

Darryl Boudreau gave an update on the Watershed Partnership Program and explained that the District has requested \$22.5 million from the legislature to support the effort. The program builds on the District's Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) plans and will focus on key issues such as water quality, stormwater, wastewater, and habitat restoration in four watersheds: Pensacola, Perdido, Choctawhatchee, and St. Andrew. Darryl Boudreau stated that the goal is to collaborate with community stakeholders to identify one priority subbasin in each watershed where funding can be concentrated.

Darryl Boudreau outlined upcoming public meetings to review priorities and gather feedback: St. Andrews on October 7, 2025 at FSU Panama City, Choctawhatchee on October 14, 2025 at the District office in DeFuniak Springs, and a joint Perdido-Pensacola meeting on October 15, 2025 at the Santa Rosa Auditorium in Santa Rosa County, noting that the two watersheds were combined

due to overlapping stakeholders. There will be county-level meetings held across the Panhandle as well.

Darryl Boudreau stated if funding is approved, the District will launch a grant program and call for projects within the selected subbasins.

Item 3: RTMC Update

Chair Qualls introduced Sierra Eades, Architect, WGI.

Sierra Eades presented the finalized design for the Regional Transportation Management Center, highlighting both the building's modern technological features and its exterior layout. The construction bidding process has concluded, with Bear General Contractors being awarded the project for \$16,623,672.00, and that a Notice to Proceed will be issued by Escambia County soon.

Kandase Lee added that a formal groundbreaking ceremony would occur in November and that more details would be forthcoming.

Action Items:

Item 4: Approval of the May 21, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Chair Qualls asked for action on the May 21, 2025 meeting minutes.

Mayor Whitten moved to approve the May 21, 2025 meeting minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Stroberger and was unanimously approved.

Item 5: Approval of April – July 2025 Financial Statements

Chair Qualls asked for action on the April – July 2025 financial statements.

JD Smith moved to approve the April – July 2025 financial statements. The motion was seconded by Mayor Henderson and was unanimously approved.

Item 6: Resolution ECRC 2025-07, Approval and Adoption of the FL-AL TPO, O-W TPO, and Bay TPO Intergovernmental Coordination and Review and Public Transportation Coordination Joint Participation Agreements (ICARs)

Jill Nobles presented the FL-AL TPO, O-W TPO, and Bay TPO Intergovernmental Coordination and Review and Public Transportation Coordination Joint Participation Agreements (ICARs). Each agreement, between the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), ECRC, the TPOs, counties, and transportation operators, outlines planning, review, and coordinating responsibilities. Jill Nobles stated the agreements were originally signed in 2010 and reaffirmed in 2015 and 2020, the updated FDOT template includes only minor language revisions and updated party names.

Vice Chair Sutton moved to approve and adopt the FL-AL TPO, O-W TPO, and Bay TPO Intergovernmental Coordination and Review and Public Transportation Coordination Joint Participation Agreements (ICARs). The motion was seconded by Mayor Lindsay and was unanimously approved.

Item 7: Consideration of the Addition of Quest Corporation of America as a Subcontractor to the ECRC General Planning Consultant Contract

Kandase Lee requested approval to add Quest Corporation of America to the Kimley-Horn general planning consultant contract. This originates from a blanket procurement process conducted

jointly with the Florida-Alabama (FL-AL), Okaloosa-Walton (O-W), and Bay County TPOs, as well as ECRC. Kandase Lee explained that the amendment is required since the procurement was bundled across all agencies, and further stated that FL-AL and Bay County TPOs have already approved the addition. The O-W TPO will consider it at its November board meeting.

Councilmember Schaetzle asked whether Quest Corporation of America has previously worked with any of the TPOs as a contractor or if this would be their first involvement.

Kandase Lee explained that Quest was not currently working on any ECRC or TPO projects but has extensive outreach experience with FDOT District 3, including knowledge and familiarity with PD&E studies, public hearings, and related requirements.

Mayor Henderson moved to authorize the addition of Quest Corporation of America, Inc., as a subcontractor to the ECRC/TPOs general planning consultant contract. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Schaetzle and was unanimously approved.

Item 8: Resolution ECRC 2025-08, Approval of the RTMC Post Design Architectural Services

Kandase Lee asked for approval of a supplemental addendum to the existing agreement with WGI, Inc., the architect that designed the new Regional Traffic Management Center (RTMC). FDOT has asked ECRC to provide post-design architectural services due to the project's complexity. Kandase Lee stated that at the request of the Florida-Alabama TPO, FDOT transferred \$450,000 from a boxed line item in its budget into the existing LAP agreement with ECRC. Kandase Lee further stated that these funds, designated for professional design/architectural services, will support WGI's additional work.

Chair Qualls opened the floor for discussion.

Commissioner Pease asked whether the \$450,000 was already included in the project budget or whether there was an additional change order on top of the \$16.6 million design and construction cost. Kandase Lee clarified that the amount is an addition to the architectural agreement and is separate from the \$16.6 million construction contract.

Sierra Eades, Architect WGI explained that the \$450,000 covers post-design services such as attending meetings, coordinating with ECRC, the FL-AL TPO, reviewing submittals for accuracy, and ensuring communication and coordination happens with all parties throughout construction. Sierra Eades further explained that these behind-the-scenes tasks are essential but often not seen during the construction process.

Commissioner Crosby stated that he shared Commissioner Pease's concerns with the additional costs and requested information regarding the project costs.

Commissioner Stroberger moved to authorize the ECRC chair to sign Resolution ECRC 2025-08, authorizing the CEO to execute an addendum to the WGI contract and the existing LAP agreement increasing the supplemental funds of \$450,000 for the RTMC Post Design Architectural Services. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Sutton and was unanimously approved.

Item 9: Evaluation of the Chief Executive Officer

Chair Qualls stated the ECRC Executive Committee members had met earlier that morning and completed an annual performance evaluation of CEO, Kandase Lee. Chair Qualls provided the Board with a summary of the meeting for discussion and determination of an increase in salary.

Chair Qualls opened the floor for discussion.

Mayor Lindsay expressed appreciation to Kandase for dedicated service and recognized her outstanding work.

Vice Chair Sutton reported that during a recent Florida Regional Council Association (FRCA) Policy Board meeting, Chris Rietow, Director of the Apalachee Regional Planning Council (ARPC), praised Kandase Lee and the ECRC staff for their outstanding work and support provided to ARPC, rather than highlighting ARPC's recent projects.

Mayor Henderson moved to increase Kandase Lee's current salary by four percent (4%). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Stroberger and was unanimously approved.

Item 10: Approval of the FY 2025-2026 Budget and Work Program

Dawn Schwartz, CFO ECRC presented the ECRC FY October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026 (FY2025-2026) budget and work program, totaling \$11,636,918, and asked for questions or comments.

Chair Qualls opened the floor for discussion.

JD Smith requested a compilation of the past ten-twenty (10-20) years of ECRC budgets to demonstrate the Council's growth and financial strength, with the information to be provided at the November Board meeting. Additionally, Vice Chair Sutton requested an overview of projects included in recent years, noting their significant impact on the annual budget.

Kandase Lee acknowledged that there were nineteen (19) board members in attendance, compared to past difficulties of reaching a quorum, and expressed appreciation for the progress and commitment to the organization.

Commissioner Glidewell moved to approve the FY 2025-2026 Budget and Work Program. The motion was seconded by JD Smith and was unanimously approved.

Item 11: Nomination and Election of Chair & Vice Chair and Executive Committee to Serve October 1 2025 – September 30, 2026

Chair Qualls opened the floor for nominations. Mayor Henderson stated she would like to retain the current officers and Executive Committee members for the next fiscal year.

Mayor Henderson moved to elect Kurvin Qualls as ECRC Chair and Councilmember April Sutton as ECRC Vice Chair, and Executive Committee members Kurvin Qualls, Councilmember April Sutton, JD Smith, Mayor Pamn Henderson, and Commissioner Danny Glidewell to serve October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026. The motion was seconded by Mayor Lindsay and was unanimously approved.

Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:14pm.

Duly passed and approved by the Emerald Coast Regional Council on this 12th day of November, 2025.

By: 
Kurvin Qualls, ECRC Chair

Date: 11/12/2025