MEMORANDUM

To: Council Members

From: Staff

Date: July 18, 2014 Council Meeting

Subject: Legislative Priorities 2015

Introduction

At its June 20, 2014 meeting, Council reviewed a preliminary list of suggested legislative priorities for the 2015 legislative session (Exhibit 1). The Gubernatorial Committee met immediately following the June meeting to review the list and suggested that staff reduce the list and focus on three to five issues of shared interest to the region as a whole. Following is a draft of a pared-down list which is offered for discussion:

Natural Resources and Water Supply

Any legislation, projects, or programs supporting the Region’s efforts to:

- reduce harmful freshwater discharges into the St. Lucie River Estuary, and Indian River and Lake Worth Lagoons
- better manage Lake Okeechobee and improve the Herbert Hoover Dike
- increase water storage, aquifer recharge, and the health and longevity of the Region’s natural systems and public water supply

Transportation

Any legislation, projects, or programs supporting the Region’s efforts to:

- facilitate improvement and public safety of roadway, port and airport, rail, public transit, and greenway and trail systems being advanced by local metropolitan/transportation planning organizations
- improve emergency evacuation times, routes, and planning
**Governance**

Any legislation, projects, or programs supporting the Region’s efforts to:

- improve local governments’ ability to provide government operations and public service delivery with the appropriate funding from state government

**Economic Development**

Any legislation, projects, or programs supporting the Region’s efforts to:

- encourage flood insurance reform
- aid local beach renourishment efforts, and inlet and navigable waterway maintenance and improvement
- improve the Region’s climate for existing and emerging industry clusters, business retention, and job growth
- facilitate infrastructure retrofits due to saltwater intrusion and sea level rise
- fund roadway corridor retrofits and community development/redevelopment programs to improve economic development potential
- expand the Region’s housing and homeownership opportunities for underserved populations
- improve the Region’s public education system

**Energy**

Any legislation, projects, or programs supporting the Region’s efforts to:

- create a comprehensive state energy policy
- fund energy conservation programs for homes and businesses
- revise public service commission regulations to improve the financial feasibility of energy conservation for power companies
- ensure against energy supply interruptions

The preliminary list above is intended to provide good guidance for Council in developing and communicating its legislative priorities; suggesting new legislation, programs, or projects to address regional issues; and providing Council’s position on any legislation, project or program being proposed.

The Gubernatorial Committee also recommended that Council consider pulling together a four-county Legislative Delegation meeting for the Treasure Coast. This would allow its six state senators and twelve state house members to meet as a region and perhaps find some common ground on issues affecting the region as a whole.
Conclusion

It is Council’s mission to provide visionary leadership and advocacy on behalf of local government to preserve the quality of the Region’s economic, natural, built, and social environment. It is Council’s responsibility to: 1) provide an efficient mechanism for addressing problems that can only be addressed by collaborative effort and cooperation between local governments; and 2) help assure that state goals and objectives (the top down part of planning) are achieved in a manner that is appropriate given local and regional needs and conditions (the bottom up part of planning). Council’s mission and its ability to carry out its “bottom-up” planning and advocacy responsibilities are furthered by the development of a legislative priorities issue and project list for the Region. It would also be furthered by having our 18 legislative delegates representing the Treasure Coast meet as a region.

Recommendation

Council should: 1) discuss its legislative priorities for the region and authorize the Gubernatorial Committee to work over the next few months to further refine a priorities document for Council consideration; and 2) authorize staff to communicate with the Legislative Delegates of the Treasure Coast to gauge their interest in meeting as a region.

Attachment
EXHIBIT 1

The following list includes some subject areas Council should consider in establishing its legislative priorities for the Region. The list also includes examples of items that would be covered under these broader subject areas. In other words, legislation, projects, or programs designed to:

- Enhance the ability of emergency management officials and emergency service to improve the public’s safety
  - improve evacuation times and routes
  - update regional and local evacuation plans
  - improve building codes
  - improve public sheltering options

- Enhance the Region’s ability to improve water quality and economic productivity of the Region’s lakes, streams, canals, rivers, estuaries and near shore waters
  - facilitate water quality improvement projects
  - facilitate public access improvement projects
  - facilitate septic tank conversions
  - implement Basin Management Action Plans locally

- Improve the Region’s mobility options for people, goods, and services consistent with improving the Region’s economy, communities, and quality of life
  - facilitate construction of roadway, public transit and greenway and trails improvements being advanced by local MPO/TPOs
  - fund roadway corridor retrofits to improve economic development potential
  - fund sidewalks, bike lanes, and other public safety improvements

- Enhance local governments’ ability to improve property values, public safety and quality of life
  - aid local beach restoration efforts
  - facilitate infrastructure retrofits due to saltwater intrusion and sea level rise
  - facilitate inlet and navigable waterway maintenance and improvement
  - encourage flood insurance reform

- Enhance the Region’s ability to reduce its unemployment rate and to retain, attract, and grow the Region’s job base in existing and emerging industry clusters
  - revamp the enterprise zone program
  - improve the public education system
  - improve the climate for existing and emerging industry clusters, business retention and job growth
• Enhance the Region’s ability to have an adequate and reliable water supply to meet the needs of its growing population, the environment, agriculture, and industry
  - facilitate water conservation measures
  - facilitate water reuse programs
  - increase water storage
  - improve and develop public water and sewer facilities

• Eliminate state cost shifting which negatively impacts local governments’ budgets or restricts local governments’ ability to collect sufficient revenue to provide needed facilities and services
  - restore regional planning council funding
  - eliminate unfunded mandates related to Medicaid assistance, state court costs, juvenile detention and other policy areas

• Improve the state budgeting process by tying budgetary decisions to a state plan that outlines its priorities and policies related to resources and projects of statewide significance
  - preparation of a long-range state plan outlining its priorities and resources and projects of statewide significance

• Improve local access to safe and affordable housing opportunities
  - restore full funding of each county’s State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) allowance
  - increase local downtown redevelopment and infill efforts
  - increase home ownership opportunities

• Improve local governments’ ability to do local planning, zoning, and other operations with less interference from state government
  - further reform state growth management rules and regulations that shift greater decision-making authority to the local level
  - fund local community development and redevelopment programs

• Improve the Region’s energy independence from foreign oil and fossil fuels
  - create a comprehensive state energy policy
  - fund energy conservation programs for homes and businesses
  - revise public service commission regulations to improve the financial feasibility of energy conservation for power companies
  - insure against energy supply interruptions