



MEMORANDUM

AGENDA ITEM #16

DATE: APRIL 7, 2008
TO: COUNCIL MEMBERS
FROM: STAFF
SUBJECT: CORRESPONDENCE AND ATTENDANCE FORM

Information only.

	1/8	2/4	3/3									
Ex Officio Members –												
WATERS, Bert SFWMD	P	P	P									
DONN, Gary Florida Dept. of Trans.	A	P	P									
KENNEDY, Chad Dept. of Environmental Protection	D	A	D									

P = Present

A = Absent

D = Designee Present

* = Excused Absence

- = Not Yet Appointed

CC = Via Conference Call

** Please note – August Meeting Executive Committee Only

Urban Forum

Top worry for regional council's new chairwoman is funding

March 21, 2008

By Terry Sheridan

With more than three decades of experience as an educator, new South Florida Regional Planning Council chairwoman Marta Perez knows all too well how big a role schools play in a region's economic development.

In South Florida, where public schools consistently rank at or near the bottom nationwide, Perez knows that the area's reputation for poor-performing schools prevents many companies from relocating here.

She knows, too, that part of the solution lies in more funding. But Florida's current budget crisis isn't likely to help the situation.

In fact, state lawmakers this week were considering a property tax reform measure that would eliminate local school property taxes.

But funding for more than just schools is in peril. Numerous government agencies and programs face the revenue ax, and the regional planning council is no different.

The South Florida council is comprised of elected municipal and county officials, representatives of school boards and water districts and transportation agencies. The council reviews local governments' changes to state-mandated comprehensive plans, makes public policy and planning recommendations on major development projects, and works to promote new planning strategies, including redevelopment of contaminated sites called brownfields and projects linked to mass transit.

The group handles issues in Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe counties while its Treasure Coast counterpart monitors planning in Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie and Indian River counties.

A joint meeting of the two councils April 7 at the International Game Fish Association in Dania Beach will target how to address South Florida's regional issues through 2060.

Perez, who holds a doctorate in educational leadership from the University of Miami and has served on the Miami-Dade School Board since 1998, became chairman of the regional planning council in January after serving as vice chairman.

She spoke earlier this week with the Daily Business Review.

The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

What's the biggest task facing the regional planning council right now?

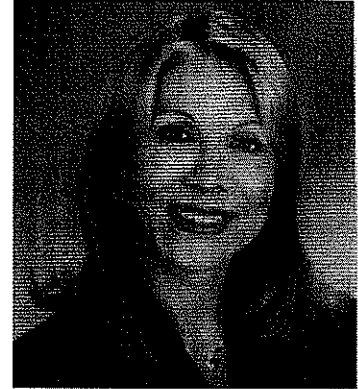
The biggest task for all state agencies right now is finding ways to secure funding for their plans. In the case of regional planning agencies, it's to secure monies to implement plans that include transportation, education, water and so on — all the factors that affect our quality of life.

Do you have a specific example?

The programs I'm referring to are regional transportation. If the state cannot fund the plans for transportation, then how can we be effective? How are we going to continue in our vision and goal for people to better move around South Florida?

What would you like to see emerge from the joint Treasure Coast and South Florida Regional Planning Council meeting next month about the 2060 plan?

The urgency for the councils is to create a unified plan to advocate for the funding, both at the state and federal levels, for our common regional needs.



Marta Perez

In a perfect world, I'd like to see a plan to receive this funding. I think we can strengthen each other because of our common goals.

Of all the planning and development issues facing South Florida and its local governments, what do you think is the most pressing?

The most pressing is the backlog in resolution of core issues that affect the quality of life and sustainability of our region as we receive fewer resources.

How do you think your extensive educational background helps the planning council?

The No. 1 issue of desirability for an area is education — where people want to live and why. If we don't have a good education system, companies won't want to invest here and create jobs.

People won't want to live here. Top notch employees won't want to come here with their families.

So the No. 1 issue to help strengthen our quality of life and economic situation is education.

What goal consistently is the most elusive for the planning council?

For any organization I have ever belonged to, the most elusive goal is how we fund our goals and dreams. For the planning council, it's how to create an affordable, highly desirable region where we do not sacrifice the quality of life. This is an urban area throughout the entire region.

Did I explain that properly?

I'm not sure you did.

We have a dichotomy of trying to live in an urban area and, at the same time, making this urban area a highly desirable place for people to live and children to grow, yet the area needs be affordable.

And I don't just mean affordable housing but affordable in other quality-of-life things, like having sports arenas that people can afford to attend, and theaters that people can afford to attend and top-notch education. That's the elusiveness of it.

And decent mass transit.

Just last Friday, we had a meeting of the Southeast Florida Transportation Council. It's a regional meeting about transportation and how to make it better.

But, once again, what we discussed more than anything is how to fund this.

And, how are we going to have oversight that looks at what's best for the three counties as opposed to each county tugging for its share at a time when there isn't a lot of money. That's the rub.

It seems that at most of these joint meetings it always boils down to the same issue of money.

Any idea what cutbacks the council will have to make yet?

I think being on the School Board and the regional planning council — two entities so dependent on state and federal money — that all of us are anticipating [cutbacks] and waiting to see how we are going to be affected.

Terry Sheridan can be reached at tsheridan@alm.com or at (954) 468-2614.

SPECIAL REPORT [FLORIDA GOES GREEN]

are we there yet?

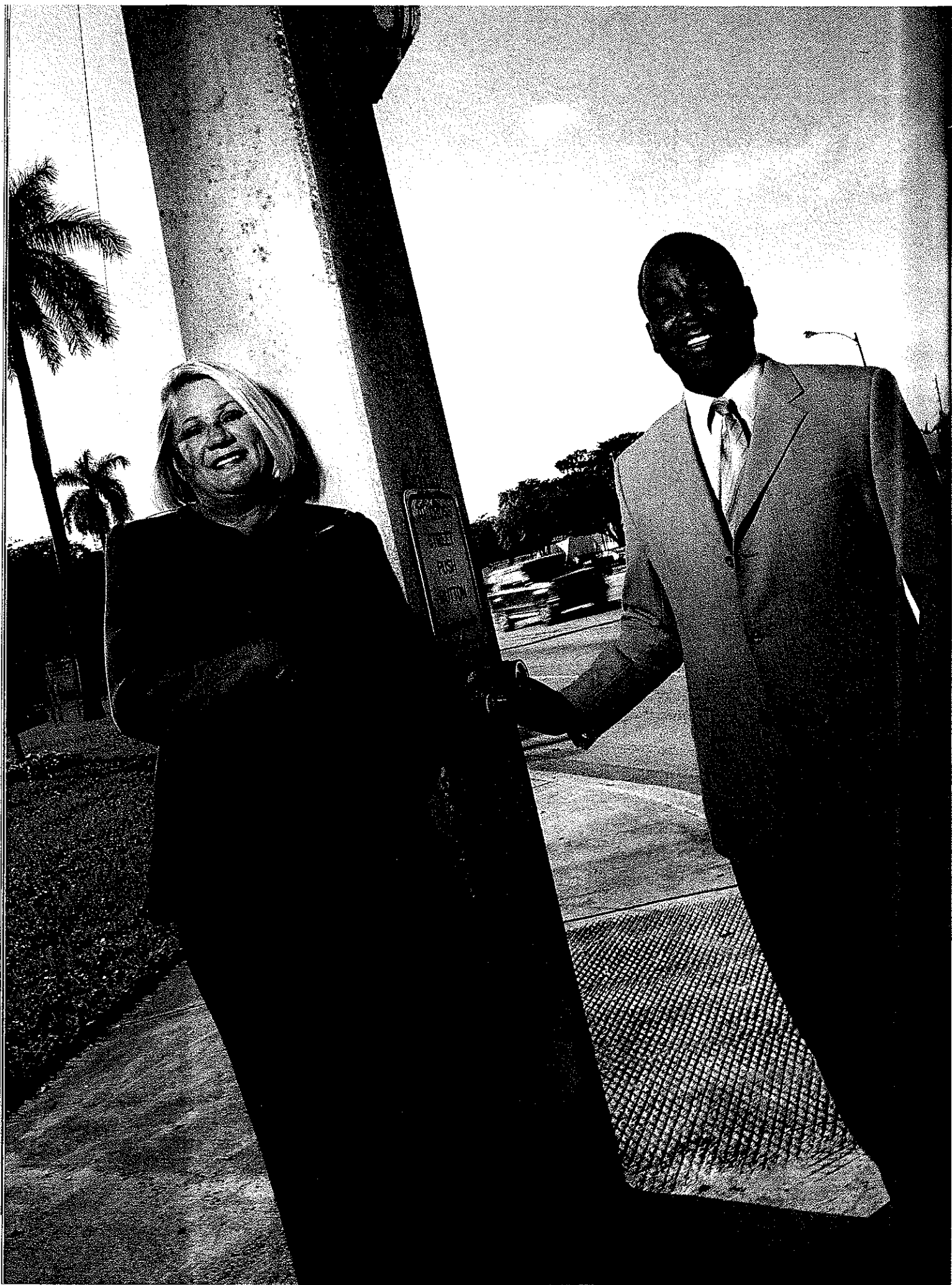
TEXT BY
BRENNAN FISHER,
CHELSEA GREENWOOD,
KEVIN KAMINSKI,
MARIE SPEED
AND TRACY TALLMAN

PHOTOS BY
EDUARDO SCHNEIDER
AND TYA TIEMPETCH

The vast tropical wilderness that was once Florida has, in only generations, transformed into an urban megalopolis that stretches from Miami on the south to Jacksonville on the north, across the I-4 corridor and all the way down the Gulf Coast. Development is everywhere, infrastructure is straining, coral reefs are dying and a drought is slowly creeping across the peninsula as water tables drop, Lake Okeechobee shrinks and the population explodes.

These are trying times for the state, which faces climate change as well as increased demands for energy, waste disposal and open spaces. Despite what may look like a perfect storm of environmental crises, a growing army of lawmakers, businesses, private citizens and environmental coalitions are joining forces to tackle these issues head-on—before it's too late.

Some of them are here, on these pages, reporting the latest on the home front as Florida begins its inevitable greening process and its hopeful journey toward a sustainable future.



[transportation]

patricia asseff and larry allen

CHAIRWOMAN AND COORDINATOR, GOLD COAST CLEAN CITIES COALITION

Every South Floridian knows that I-95 rush hours are getting longer—and more congested. What some of you may not know is how our long commutes are increasing the number of cars on the road, polluting the air with greenhouse gases and burning tons of fossil fuels.

Planning cities and urban centers where people can live and work nearby is becoming more important than ever, says Larry Allen, who also is principal planner for the South Florida Regional Planning Council.

“Congestion plays a big part in air quality,” he says. “Congestion and green are opposites.”

In fact, more than 50 percent of the air pollution in our region can be attributed to transportation-related

emissions.

Without a dedicated funding source, it's unlikely that public transportation will provide enough new routes to solve our commuting issues anytime soon, and Florida's sprawling communities preclude people from giving up their cars. So Allen focuses on raising awareness and lobbying government and industry to get cleaner-burning alternative fuels into our market—and to build fuel stations that will sell it.

But there are more than a few roadblocks.

“Biodiesel and ethanol are traditionally only cost-effective when they're made locally because the cost of trucking those fuels would eat up the [money saved],” he says.

Even if we had lots of biofuel manufacturers, we don't have

compatible fueling stations. “There are no current pipelines for the fuels, and ethanol is known to be a corrosive agent,” Allen adds.

Nevertheless, plans for biofuel production are in the works. CitrusEnergy LLC, based in Boca Raton, has a plant in Clewiston that will create blended ethanol fuel from leftover orange peels.

Patricia Asseff, who was recently elected to the Hollywood (District 1) city commission, says that figuring out where to start the transition to alternative fuels has been one of the most difficult challenges. “Unless we get General Motors and all our oil companies on board, I don't see how we're ever going to have progress,” she says. “And the states and federal government need to give them incentives to move forward.”



Fill up with E10, a 10-percent ethanol and 90 percent gasoline mix. The fuel is compatible with most cars built after 1980 and helps reduce air pollution. Already available in Central Florida, the fuel will soon be making its way to South Florida stations. Visit doacs.state.fl.us/standard/petro/altsitemap.html.

HOW TO DRIVE THE GREEN MILE

■ **Ditch your car.** Reduce your pollution by riding the bus, carpooling, walking or biking as often as possible. The newly launched Link bus program in Palm Beach County now offers new routes to areas that previously didn't have service. For schedules and information, visit co.palm-beach.fl.us/palmtran.

■ If you're stopping your car for more than 30 seconds, **turn off the ignition** instead of idling.

■ When the sun's rays meet liquid gasoline, they create ozone, a major component of summertime smog. Prevent this toxic matchup and **fill up after dark**.

■ **Empty the trunk.** For every 50 pounds you transport in your car, you lose 1/4 mile's worth of gas per gallon.

ETHANOL: Made from ethyl alcohol, the same chemical found in alcoholic beverages, ethanol is produced mainly from common starches or sugar, and is widely used in Brazil.

BIODIESEL: An alternative fuel that can be made from any fat or vegetable oil. It can be used in any diesel engine with few or no modifications.

**BIOFUELS
101**

COMPRESSED

NATURAL GAS: Considered a cleaner alternative to gasoline and diesel, CNG is mainly composed of methane. In the United States, some buses and delivery trucks use it.