



**CHARLOTTE COUNTY – PUNTA GORDA
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

MINUTES OF THE MPO BOARD SPECIAL MEETING
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2025
BURNT STORE ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
STEWART HALL
11330 BURNT STORE ROAD, PUNTA GORDA, FL 33955

MEMBERS PRESENT

Commissioner Christopher G. Constance, MD, Charlotte County Commissioner, MPO Chair
Commissioner Joseph Tiseo, Charlotte County Commissioner, MPO Vice Chair
Commissioner Kenneth Doherty, Charlotte County Commissioner
Commissioner Thomas Thornberry, Charlotte County Airport Authority
Councilmember Jeannine Polk, Punta Gorda City Council

STAFF PRESENT

D’Juan Harris, MPO Director
Bekie Leslie, Administrative Services Coordinator
Lakshmi. N. Gurram, MPO Principal Planner
Wendy Scott, MPO Planner
Sierra Ray Scott, Administrative Support – STARR
L.K Nandam, FDOT District One Secretary
Janette Knowlton, County Attorney (MPO Legal Services)

OTHERS PRESENT IN-PERSON

Pam Barr, FDOT
Betty-Ann Sherer, Charlotte County Transit
Diane Quilty, CAC Chair
Dr. Mary Ellen Kiss, CAC Member
Rick Kirchhoff, CAC Member

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

MPO Chair Constance called the meeting to order at 10:58 a.m. All MPO Board members were present.

2. Public Comments on Agenda Item

There were no public comments.

3. MPO Interim Director – Appointment

Commissioner Chris Constance proceeded to name Principal Planner, Laks Gurram, as interim director. Janette Knowlton stated that there have been no further applicants at this time.

There was brief discussion on the matter of the pay increase. Commissioner Tiseo asked when the pay range study had last been looked at. It was stated that Kathy Quick, HR Director, had conducted a pay range study in the last quarter of 2024. Commissioner Constance asked if there was any other mechanism to increase the pay range for hiring a permanent director, such as the county shouldering any of the funding needed to pay higher. Commissioner Tiseo stated that a 5% increase is not enough for the increase in workload.

Mr. Gurram was given the floor to speak and expressed gratitude to the MPO Board members for the opportunity to appoint him as the Interim Director. He indicated that the promotion is not just about career advancement. He stated that the promotion comes with a lot of responsibility, but also is a great opportunity moving forward. He indicated that coming March will be his 17 years at the MPO. He also reminded the board that it will be a tough time for the rest of the MPO team moving forward and in the middle of LRTP development.

Commissioner Tiseo asked if Mr. Gurram was performing his standard duties at the same time as he would be performing the duties of director. Mr. Gurram answered that he would be. Commissioner Tiseo asked what a 10% increase would be as opposed to a 5%, which Mrs. Knowlton stated could be a discussion point added to the next agenda for the meeting on March 31, 2025.

Commissioner Ken Doherty made a motion to appoint Laks Gurram as interim director with a pay raise of 5%. Commissioner Tiseo seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

4. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

5. Staff Comments

There were no staff comments.

6. Member Comments

There were no public comments.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:05 a.m. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the MPO Board will be held on Monday, March 31, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. at the Charlotte County Administration Center, 18500 Murdock Circle, Room #119, Port Charlotte, FL 33948.