



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
Northwest Florida BRAC Families Transition Council
January 12, 2009 * 9:00 a.m.
JobsPlus, Ft. Walton Beach

On behalf of Ms. Mary Lou Reed, Executive Director of the Workforce Development Board, Mr. Al Ward, Vice Chairman of the Workforce Development Board called the Northwest Florida BRAC Families Transition Council meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and welcomed the attendees to the JobsPlus One-Stop Career Center. Individuals present:

Linda Sumblin	Jeff Fanto	Col Alan Bridges
Carrie Hicks	Jack Daly	Lynn Stephens
Al Ward	Chris Smith	Kay Rasmussen
Dr. Alexis Tibbetts	Jim Breitenfeld	Jerry McDaniel
Dr. Joyce Gillie Gossum	Dolores Johnson	Dr. Diane Kelley
Kaye McKinley	Cindy Frakes	Elaine Tucker
Debby Lundblad	Retta Smith	Don Holloway
Rose Caruth	Melissa King	William Zell
Stephanie Jacobs	Jose Mobley	Mike Lawson
Ronda Davenport	Tamara Kiss	Vince Halverson
Tom Moody	Tricia Brunson	Brian Walsh
Lynn Yort	Carlene Anderson	Ken Wright
Valerie McLaughlin	John Hall	Bill Van Hoesen
ShaQuanna Wilson	Belinda Todd	DeDe Haynes

Jim Breitenfeld presented the Council with an overview of the BRAC project, history and overall mission the Council to include and update on the recent BRAC visit from three of the Army's Family Readiness Support Liaisons from Ft. Bragg, NC. Mr. Breitenfeld reiterated the goal of the newly renamed Northwest Florida BRAC Families Transition Council is to be able to support the transition in a singular and coordinated manner that makes their move as seamless as possible. He stated working under a single banner will help ensure we are covering all the bases, including all of the players and not over burdening the leadership and Families of the U.S. Army Seventh Special Forces Group – Airborne (7SFG-(A) at Ft. Bragg with duplicative requests. After fielding questions, Mr. Breitenfeld introduced Col Alan Bridges, Commander for the 96th Mission Support Group and Chris Smith, BRAC Coordinator for the 96th Air Base Wing.

Col Bridges gave a brief summary of his BRAC experience and capabilities of the support squadrons within the Mission Support Group. He endorsed the Council as the designated community group and on behalf of Col Bruce McClintock, Commander of the 96th Air Base Wing, vowed their support. He reemphasized the need for an absolute agreement to work together for the common good of the transitioning BRAC Families and Northwest Florida

community. Col Bridges announced they are in talks with the Army and upon receiving the “green light”; Eglin AFB would coordinate and sponsor a trip for a small exploratory group’s visit to Ft Bragg. He shared that before arriving on station; he stopped in North Carolina to introduce himself and express his excitement about their upcoming move to Northwest Florida and Eglin AFB. He mentioned he was neither surprised nor offended when the Army’s leadership requested he return in the spring for their current focus was the deployments and reintegration of their troops with their Families.

Col Bridges imparted information on the demographics pertinent to the Council such as total number of incoming battalions (4), and approximate number of active duty service members (2240). He also shared numbers from a recent survey conducted by the Army, which offered insight to the Council as to what the potential housing needs of incoming service members could be. Col Bridges stated 81% of the service members live off post, 62% or 1210 own their own homes of which 730 plan to sell, 295 plan to rent their property and 184 are undecided at this time. Another area he highlighted was the need for good employment information for their spouses. The same survey indicated that 51% or 974 of the spouses worked outside of the home with 273 of them sharing the loss of employment or inability to find work in the area would be catastrophic. This information sparked a robust discussion on the availability of housing, bank lending concerns and how best to address these needs prior to the arrival of the 7SFG (A). The Council suggested representatives from the banking industry be invited to the table for the next meeting.

Mr. Chris Smith, BRAC Coordinator for the 96th Air Base Wing, shared information regarding the flow of construction dollars for the next two fiscal years. He stated that prime contractors have been awarded \$280M to build the facilities necessary for the Army’s beddown. Barring work stoppages caused by acts of nature, the BRAC facilities are scheduled to be completed by the summer of 2011.

Mr. Jeff Fanto, Growth Project Coordinator for Okaloosa County Department of Growth Management, stated the primary focus of his organization is to identify areas of growth to ensure the availability of adequate services and assist with the implementation of the recommendation for transitioning the 7SFG (A) and the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) program to Northwest Florida. He stated the growth management plan looked at nine focus areas that will be impacted by the influx of personnel such as transportation, infrastructure, education, housing and utilities. Mr. Fanto explained he growth management study began last year and the anticipated completion date is September of this year. He reminded the Council that as they begin to socialize the plan with the community, they would enlist the help of the Council to ensure the appropriate measures are taken. A discussion followed about the international component of the JSF program.

Mr. Tom Moody, member of the Crestview Chamber of Commerce, informed the group of his involvement with the 7SFG (A) and offered his assistance should questions arise. He elaborated on the recent spouse visit and explained that the Army spouses selected the stops on their itinerary and over the course of two 8-hour days, covered as much ground as possible. Mr. Moody is working with the 7SFG (A) to provide the Council with a point person.

Ms. Linda Sumblin, Chief Operating Officer for the Workforce Development Board of Okaloosa and Walton Counties, gave an update on the status of the Welcome to Northwest Florida website. She emphasized the purpose of this website was to offer a user-friendly, one-stop site, where spouses could find community information. Ms. Sumblin provided the Council with the link to

the website and solicited feedback and suggestions for improvements from the Council. She also stated the site would be available in Spanish.

Ms. Carlene Anderson, Superintendent of Walton County School District, updated the Council on the recent developments in Walton County. She explained that Walton County revisited their services and facilities and is actively planning for the incoming personnel. Recently, they opened a new Pre-K facility in Mossy Head, which can accommodate up to 600 children. They are also fortunate to have ESL interpreters in all of their elementary schools.

Ms. Kaye McKinley, Assistant Superintendent of Okaloosa County School District (OCSD), described the education concerns of the visiting Army spouses and stated they were pleased with the tour of the facilities, the full-day kindergarten programs and the availability of on-site school nurses. Dr. Diane Kelly, Director of Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction for OCSD acknowledged the spouses were concerned with the FCAT and curriculum differences between the two school districts and they have vowed to offer programs/remedial courses to ensure a smooth educational transition.

Dr. Joyce Gillie Gossum, Associate Dean for the University of West Florida (UWF), Emerald Coast Campus, reported that 30% of their population is military. In accordance with several studies that have been conducted, UWF has realigned their academic programs to reflect the needs of their military and civilian students. One of the outcomes from the studies was the implementation of multiple modalities of instruction to include video teleconferences (VTC) at various sites.

Due to the lateness of the hour, Mr. Breitenfeld acknowledged the areas not covered and promised to allot additional time for the next meeting. Through consensus, the Council will meet quarterly for the next six months and the Workforce Development Board would commit to providing a monthly update on BRAC related events.

The next Northwest Florida BRAC Families Transition Council meeting will be in April 2009 - date/time to be determined.