

Brian Mimbs, Chair

Steven Lerner, Vice-Chair

Florida Emergency Management Assistance Foundation, Inc Board of Directors Meeting

**April 11, 2025, at 11:00 AM
Meeting Minutes**

I. Call to Order

Chair Mimbs called the meeting to order at 11:01 AM

II. Roll Call

Chair Mimbs called the roll. Chair Mimbs, Steven Lerner (Vice Chair Lerner), Taryn Fenske (Director Fenske), and Chris Spencer (Treasurer Spencer) were marked present. Javier Marques (Secretary Marques) joined later. A quorum was present.

III. Approval of the January 10, 2025, meeting minutes.

Chair Mimbs called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Treasurer Spencer called for a motion to approve; Vice Chair Lerner seconded the motion. All present board members were in favor of the motion and the minutes were adopted.

IV. Updates

a. Financial Updates (Audit)

William Spicola provided an update on the 2024 audit, noting that it is still in the finalization stage. While Form 990 has not yet been completed, the IRS has granted an extension through the end of May 2025. The team remains on track to meet this deadline, supported by an internal auditor who is ensuring full compliance with all guidelines. Mr. Jeremy Smith has submitted the response to the audit. Additionally, Mr. Spicola is maintaining close communication with the auditing firm, Thomas Howell Ferguson, to ensure the successful completion of Form 990.

V. Discussion on Pending Business Items

- a. Chair Mimbs called on Kelly Ann Kennedy to cover the Chair and Vice Chair ending terms agenda item. Leah Mixon states on Kelly Ann Kennedy's behalf that the annual meeting, scheduled for July 11, 2025, will be used to elect the new officers and conduct other business. Everyone is eligible for

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another one-year term. The annual budget meeting will be July 1, 2025.

- b. Chair Mimbs and Treasurer Spencer, agreed to meet prior to the Annual meeting to approve an operating budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Treasurer Spencer recommends that a draft of the budget be circulated 14 days prior to the budget meeting. Javier Marques (Secretary Marques) joins at 11:05 AM. Chair Mimbs restates the need to call for a special meeting prior to the Annual meeting. Chair Mimbs asks Leah Mixon to schedule a time in June for a special meeting to be held to discuss the draft budget. Additionally, Chair Mimbs is requesting a monthly financial statement for each board member to see where Foundation is with cash balance and expenditure.

VI. Upcoming Activities

a. FTEM 2025

Chair Mimbs called on Marnie Villanueva from FDEM provided an update on FTEM 2025, which is scheduled for June 9-13 at the Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress. Marnie Villanueva states, to date, there are 267 registered attendees, prompting extensions of the hotel room block to accommodate demand. Several sponsorships have been secured, with the top-tier sponsorships already sold out.

A new feature this year is the Inaugural Gala Awards Dinner, designed to celebrate outstanding achievements in emergency management, hosted by the Foundation. Currently, there are 20 nominations across various award categories, with voting scheduled to conclude at the end of April. The golf tournament will continue to be hosted by Fort Services. Additionally, there will be a logistics showcase featuring over 20 vendors and 20 pieces of equipment for counties to view what the division is able to provide during disasters. Chair Mimbs inquires about future leadership training cohorts. Marnie Villanueva states Cohort 4 will be graduating at the start of FTEM, while Cohort 5 will be commencing their program. Pending a successful experience with the venue this year, plans are underway to negotiate a multi-year contract. Efforts are also being made to enhance branding presentations, including the introduction of an official FTEM seal. Continuing with leadership development talks outside of the cohorts, this year the talks will be featured as breakfast and lunch sessions. Progress has been strong, though 3-4 additional speakers are still needed. Overall, the planning process is advancing well, with ongoing initiatives to secure sponsorships and ensure timely communications.

b. Student Investment Program

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Marnie Villanueva from FDEM provided an update on the Student Investment Program that FDEM hopes to launch at FTEM. The program supports college juniors and seniors interested in Emergency Management. It builds soft skills and shares key job-related knowledge. The Florida Chamber Foundation study found soft skills are often missing in college grads entering the workforce. The program will start online; interactive courses focused on soft skill development. Each topic will be assigned to a specific month, like "Preparedness Month" in September, with related workshops and presentations. Future goals include a summer academy, annual student conference, and mentorship program. Courses will cover skills like resume building, interview prep, communication, and basic tech tools, along with Emergency Management topics like recovery and individual assistance. Soft skills are built into this, teaching students how to support disaster survivors with empathy and professionalism. The program will be low-cost, with the main expense being a learning management system; they also plan to develop professional branding and visuals. Marnie Villanueva confirms for Chair Mimbs that estimated costs for the Student Investment program will be reflected in the proposed operating budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Marnie Villanueva confirms for Vice Chair Lerner that the team has begun reaching out to universities about the program. UCF's Dr. Claire Knox was enthusiastic, especially about the virtual format for statewide access. Javier Marques (Secretary Marques) adds he is planning to meet with the FIU Director next Friday and conversations will continue to take place.

c. Disaster Grocery Program

Marnie Villanueva from FDEM provided an update on the proposed Employee Resilience Program (tentatively named) aimed to assist DEM employees with replacing lost groceries after a declared disaster. The support would be up to \$175 per employee, issued once per disaster, and could come in the form of cash, checks, or vendor gift cards (e.g., Publix or Walmart), depending on available resources and sponsorships.

Eligibility includes all DEM employees, including OPS, and requires the disaster to be officially declared. HR would help verify employee status and address information before requests are forwarded for funding approval. The program is currently in the feedback phase, with a goal of finalizing details by the June meeting. HR has also offered logistical support during both blue-sky and gray-sky operations to ensure the program runs smoothly during activations.

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Board members discussed the challenges of providing individual assistance directly to people, noting it is significantly more time- and staff-intensive compared to distributing grants to community partner organizations. Handling individual aid would require the foundation to manage expenditures, track records, and collect detailed reports—tasks they currently lack the staff capacity to support.

While not ruling it out for the future, members agreed that the program isn't feasible at this time without additional personnel. The board plans to share this feedback with leadership to explore potential creative solutions or future staffing options as the foundation grows.

Marnie Villanueva from FDEM provided an update on EM Day at the Capitol. The event was a great success, with over 350 Emergency Management professionals attending—our largest turnout yet for the fifth year. More than 30 sponsors supported the event, many participating in both EM Day and FTEM, which proved to be a successful combination. The event raised significant funds, fostered valuable discussions about the field, and planning for next year is already underway.

Jeremy Smith joins at 11:26 AM. Jeremy Smith reported that the organization currently has a strong cash position, with approximately \$1,500,000.00 available. Opportunities for the Foundation to invest are underway for consideration. Jeremy Smith provides opportunity for Board Members to obtain copies of the draft audit response to Thomas Howell Furgeson.

VII. Public Comment: None heard.

Board Comments: Taryn Fenske (Director Fenske) and Chair Mimbs wants to reiterate the discussion about a monthly breakdown of budgetary items, emphasizing the need to reiterate it.

Outside Counsel, Will Spicola, makes a suggestion for the board to pass a motion authorizing a special meeting in June to formalize setting the budget. Steven Lerner (Vice Chair Lerner) motions for a special meeting in June, scheduled by staff, to consider the budget proposal and financial activities. Taryn Fenske (Director Fenske) seconded to call this special meeting, which was then approved. Staff were tasked with setting the exact date and sending out invites.

VIII. Adjournment

Chair Mimbs adjourned the meeting at 11:29 AM