STATE OF FLORIDA

IN RE: MEETING OF THE GOVERNOR AND CABINET

CABINET MEMBERS: GOVERNOR RON DESANTIS
ATTORNEY GENERAL ASHLEY MOODY
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER JIMMY PATRONIS
COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE NIKKI FRIED

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PROCEEDINGS

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Good morning, and welcome to the February 26th meeting of the Governor and Cabinet.

To begin our meeting, I'd like to recognize Darrick McGhee to lead this morning's invocation. Please remain standing after the invocation for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Emma Holt Upton.


* * * * *
GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Okay. Our next item is the Department of Environmental Protection, appointment of the Secretary. Two weeks ago I announced that I was appointing Noah Valenstein to the position of Secretary, and we will ask the Cabinet for their concurrence at today's meeting.

I know that Noah has been available for individual interviews. Today we will conduct a public interview before voting on the appointment.

Noah, if you'd like to approach the podium. You're there. I will just start by asking you to just recap, you know, what you've done since January 8th in terms of tackling issues with our environment.

SECRETARY VALENSTEIN: Thank you, Governor; and thank you, General Moody, CFO Patronis, and Commissioner Fried.

It's obviously been very busy since January 1st, and we appreciate your leadership, Governor, with the rollout of the executive order and a commitment of $2.5 billion to really focus on doing more now for water quality in Florida. And
we've already started working on that executive order and doing some restructuring at the Department of Environmental Protection.

And there are a number of elements of it. I always talk about three pillars: The first of which being -- making sure we've got science-based data that's in a form that any member of the public can identify with, learn from, and hold the Agency accountable. And that was some of the key structural changes at the Agency, was to create an Office of Environmental Accountability and Transparency headed by a Chief Science Officer. We've posted that position and are getting a lot of interest on it.

That position would help advise the Agency on science matters, would report directly to myself, and would also with that office work with a newly created Blue Green Algae Task Force. And, again, I see it as a hub of making sure we never forget as an agency that the environment is the foundation for our economy; it's the way of life here in Florida. And if we can't ensure as an agency that we're providing data and allowing the public to engage and hold us transparent -- hold us accountable in a way that a mother and father can
engage in, a business owner can engage in, I don't think we'll achieve the level of sustainability we want and the environment or the product that our employees at the Agency demand.

And so we've been incredibly busy. We've also been working on revamping our resilience office. We've just restructured to rename it the Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection; and then as a whole, starting the process to look at areas that have received recurring algal blooms, whether it was from releases from Lake Okeechobee or otherwise in Florida.

So many of our water quality plans in statute had 20-year goals, scientifically found, led. But when you're a community and you're seeing that impact on a daily basis, clearly that timeline is not good enough. And so this is starting the public process through that Blue Green Algae Task Force to begin looking at: How can we do more? How can we stand next to our community, let them be part of a vision of a sustainable Florida and achieve that today?

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Any Cabinet members have questions?

Jimmy.
CFO PATRONIS: Actually, thank you, Governor.
I have a softball for Secretary Valenstein.
Where in your tenure of service do you think
you've shown poor judgment?
COMMISSIONER FRIED: Accepting this job.
ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: Is that a softball
because there are so many, or is that a softball
because --
CFO PATRONIS: No, he knows where I'm going
with this.
SECRETARY VALENSTEIN: I believe the answer is
I excelled in judgment when I married a Seminole.
COMMISSIONER FRIED: Oh, you had my vote.
SECRETARY VALENSTEIN: I believe it's the
answer --
ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: And are you
supporting -- are you supporting this nomination?
CFO PATRONIS: I think -- I think his choice
and, you know, where he has decided to build a
family with a Seminole is showing actually
excellent judgment. My line of questioning is
because the attire he has on today is just -- it's
just pretty atrocious. So considering the Governor
did not go to the University of Florida, I think
it's important to point this out publicly also.
COMMISSIONER FRIED: But the other two Cabinet members on the bench are.

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: We very much appreciate your attire. Thank you, sir.

CFO PATRONIS: No, in all sincerity, Governor, I just wanted to thank Noah for service to the state. You have kind of been thrown in the deep end of the pool with a number of extraordinary circumstances over the last year plus of your service as DEP secretary, but you served in so many other capacities, whether it be over at Suwannee or in EOG, have been sensitive to the needs of the state in ensuring that the citizens of the state are served well and in a way that makes us an attractive place to move. And if you don't have a beautiful place to live in, people will not move here.

I think it all -- you know, it's great to have a great economy, but you still have to have a beautiful place; and I think your leadership shows that you're sensitive to that and also making the strides to help at least ensure that future generations have a beautiful place too.

Great pick, Governor.

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: Governor, if I may.
GOVERNOR DESANTIS:  Sure.

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY:  And thank you for making the time to meet with us personally prior to today's meeting so that we could question you about your previous service.  My family has been in Florida for five generations, and your passion for conserving our natural resources is evident when anyone meets you.  So thank you very much for standing ready to answer our questions and for being here today.

SECRETARY VALENSTEIN:  Thank you, General.

COMMISSIONER FRIED:  And, Governor.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS:  Yep.

COMMISSIONER FRIED:  I'm encouraged by the conversations that we too had in my office this week.  I believe that we share the commitment to finding ways for DEP and my department to work together on water quality issues.  You've assured me that the environmental and water issues will be a priority in this administration.  Cooperation is key.  It's the only way that we're actually going to get things accomplished.  And the people of our state are counting on us to get this done for our state.

We've got some major work and major issues to
address, like red tide, toxic blue green algae, Lake Okeechobee releases, and so much more. We've got to take a serious look at all state levels and to make plans for the threat of climate change and human contributions to our climate crisis.

I'm hopeful that we take this all very seriously as much as we do in the Department of Agriculture, and I look forward to watching you and DEP's actions closely on these issues. Our next generation's fate relies on us doing this together and making strides for our state. So thank you.

SECRETARY VALENSTEIN: I look forward to working together, Commissioner.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Any other questions from the Cabinet?

(NO RESPONSE).

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Is there any other public comment regarding the appointment? We have some.

MS. UPTON: Good morning. I'm Anna Upton on behalf of the Everglades Foundation.

The Everglades Foundation fully supports Noah Valenstein as Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection. He's transformed DEP by bringing in more transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement. He has the experience and
the temperament to tackle the environmental
challenges facing our state. He's approachable,
he's straight with you, and his knowledge of the
Everglades is bar none.

Florida's environment and America's Everglades
has a friend in Noah Valenstein. So on behalf of
the Everglades Foundation, we ask that you approve
the appointment of Noah Valenstein as Secretary of
the Department of Environmental Protection.

And I also submitted to your Cabinet Aides
letters of support from the National Parks
Conservation Association, the Everglades Trust,
and the Captains for Clean Water who also support
Noah Valenstein as DEP Secretary.

Thank you.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Great.

Any more? Yes.

MS. WRAINTHEMELL: Good morning. I'm Julie
Wraithmell, Executive Director of Audubon Florida.

As you know, Audubon is the state's oldest
conservation organization. We've been around since
1900. We've seen a few Secretaries of DEP in that
time, and I will say that we have been incredibly
impressed with what Noah has been able to
accomplish already.
When he took the helm at DEP, we saw a breath of fresh air, this opportunity for accountability, transparency, access, as well as engagement. You know, we've seen remarkable progress in the culture of the Agency. Morale has improved incredibly, and with that has come performance.

I think he's a very talented leader, as well as a devoted conservationist, and we really can't wait to see what he's able to accomplish in an administration that places such a priority on addressing our water and conservation issues and with such an opportunity and a savvy partner in the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

In addition to having deep roots in the Everglades, he's equally sophisticated in the ways of North Florida springs and the Apalachicola River, the St. John's, and the pitcher plant forests of the Panhandle. So given his depth of experience and knowledge of the entire State of Florida, I'm not sure you could find a better candidate, and we urge you to support him today.

Thank you.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Thank you.

Any more public comments? Yes.
MS. FOOTE: Good morning. I'm Deborah Foote. I'm the Government Affairs and Political Director for the Sierra Club of Florida, and I just want to second what our colleagues have said and encourage you to make this appointment.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Thank you.

Any more public comment?

(NO RESPONSE).

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Seeing none, is there a motion to concur with the appointment of Noah Valenstein as the Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection?

COMMISSIONER FRIED: So moved.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Is there a second?

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: Second.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Any comments or objections?

(NO RESPONSE).

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Hearing none, the motion carries.

Congratulations, Noah. I believe that CFO has a request for our newly appointed Secretary?

CFO PATRONIS: Yes, sir, I do. Thank you.

Congratulations, Noah. And also, I just want to make a motion that we just continue the same
salary, sir.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Any second?

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: Second.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Okay. The motion carries.

You want to do a photo with your family here?

SECRETARY VALENSTEIN: Thank you.

(APPLAUSE).

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: We're going to do one more question from the CFO for Noah.

CFO PATRONIS: Thank you, Governor.

At the next Cabinet meeting, I just want to get a status update of what's happened with the recovery from your Department's jurisdiction regarding Hurricane Michael.

SECRETARY VALENSTEIN: Absolutely, it will be my pleasure.

CFO PATRONIS: Thank you, sir.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Great.

* * *
GOVERNOR DESANTIS: All right. Our next item is interviews for the Commissioner of the Office of Financial Regulation. We have two interviews on the agenda today: Linda Charity and Ronald Rubin.

Ms. Charity, would you like to approach the podium for your interview? Why don't you start by introducing yourself and briefly telling us why you would like to serve as Commissioner.

MS. CHARITY: Good morning. I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

My background, briefly, is I spent 33 years in progressively responsible regulation of Florida's financial institutions, and it culminated with two stints as the Interim Commissioner for the Office of Financial Regulation.

I'm a public servant. I love public service, and I find that the Office provides such, you know, important consumer protections that -- you know, regulation is consumer protection. And that's one of my main goals, is to ensure that the industries are safe, sound, and run lawfully.

I'd like to -- why I'd like to be the
Commissioner, it's in my blood, it really is. I have strong relationships with the federal and state regulatory agencies, and with -- certainly with Cabinet Affairs. I'm well versed on budget, legislation, administrative issues, all from a Florida perspective. And I feel like I can serve the public and the Financial Service Commission to a great deal, and I would look forward to working with you in that capacity.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Do you have a question?

COMMISSIONER FRIED: Good morning. Thank you for being here today.

One of the important aspects of being Commissioner and director of OFR is working with a lot of our state charter banks.

MS. CHARITY: Correct.

COMMISSIONER FRIED: And one of the issues here is that in our constitution -- we have medical marijuana in our constitution, and we are obviously a big banking situation here in our state with only two banks currently banking our legal industry. And I wanted to see kind of your opinion and your approach to some of these state charter banks who want opportunities to come into our state and have access to this industry.
MS. CHARITY: That's an excellent question. I truly believe that we have got to find a solution, a banking solution for the medical marijuana industry and related parties that -- it's a difficult, difficult situation because of the stigma that marijuana at the federal level is considered a controlled drug.

I have worked with some of the federal agencies, the State of Georgia, on finding solutions. We've had these discussions about finding out how we can find the solution that is not only a safe and sound solution but one that is -- one that is more user friendly. We have to have an area where the banks do bank medical marijuana and related activities. So I'm all for it, absolutely.

CFO PATRONIS: Thank you, Governor.

One of the questions that's important to me is you're familiar with the Department.

MS. CHARITY: Yes.

CFO PATRONIS: You're familiar with the number of personnel, the budget. Tell me a little bit about your philosophy of ensuring that the Office realizes its full potential just in your management style.
MS. CHARITY: Thank you. I appreciate that question.

I am an inclusive manager. I think that I have strong leadership skills and include folks in on decisionmaking and, you know, tackling issues. I think that being active with staff is so important and, you know, having frequent meetings and frequent get-togethers, having annual meetings where you have face-to-face time with the staff.

I think that we need to look at more of a risk-focused program at the OFR and spend less time on what I would call parking-ticket-type issues, late call reports, things like that; and spend more substantive time on the bigger issues, the bad guys that are out there. And I think that that's, you know, exactly where we need to go.

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: Thank you for being here.

As you know, the Office of the Attorney General, and specifically my administration, is concerned with Floridians being taken advantage of and being victims of fraud. Would you be committed to, or do you see ways to improve the Office to identify those who are violating our laws, and would you be willing to work with our office to
make sure that they are successfully prosecuted?

MS. CHARITY: Absolutely. The OFR has had a longstanding good working relationship with the Attorney General's Office, actually with all of the offices. And getting the bad guys out is very important, and I think that together we can find solutions.

Having thought about the budget, I think that there is a way to shift some positions -- given the dwindling number of banks, shift some positions with more emphasis on the investigative side and perhaps in the finance area where we have new and emerging issues coming up. So I am absolutely committed to it, yes.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: How do you -- how would you compare Florida's financial regulations to other states, and is there anything we can do to make Florida more attractive to get more financial institutions to locate here?

MS. CHARITY: Well, the -- Florida is a very attractive state, absolutely. We were number two in the de novo activity this last cycle, the de novo or the new bank activity. It's attractive to securities firms and mortgage lending.

The statutes have been revamped, Florida
statutes have been revamped, and they are now more
current and more user friendly, if you will. I
think that working together and working with some
of the trade associations is a good way to help to
spike interest in Florida financial issues.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: What is your view and your
experience dealing with Fintech?

MS. CHARITY: Fintech? I have had some
experience with Fintech. It is, as you know, a new
and emerging issue. The Office of the Comptroller
of the Currency is taking the lead on regulating
Fintech, but it is an emerging industry that's
going to absolutely help support the financial
ability of our state. So Fintech is a new and
important emerging issue.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Any other questions?

COMMISSIONER FRIED: Just one other, Governor.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Okay.

COMMISSIONER FRIED: So you have been Interim
Commissioner twice.

MS. CHARITY: Correct.

COMMISSIONER FRIED: You know, from those two
previous occasions, what are some lessons that
you've learned as being the Interim that you would
take with you for a full-time commitment position?
MS. CHARITY: I think the leadership, being
the face of the Agency, is absolutely critical,
whether it's with our staff, whether it's with the
industry, legislature, Financial Service
Commission. That is one of my areas that I really
truly believe is so important, having a strong face
and voice for the Agency, and I would be committed
to absolutely doing that.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Any other questions?

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: No, sir.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Okay. Thank you,
Ms. Charity.

MS. CHARITY: Thank you very much.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Mr. Rubin, would you like
to approach the podium for your interview? And can
you just start by introducing yourself and briefly
telling us why you'd like to serve as the
Commissioner?

MR. RUBIN: Good morning. Yes. So I'm Ron
Rubin. Currently I live in Washington, D.C., but I
did live in Florida for six years during the '90s,
and my parents have lived in South Florida since
the mid '80s actually. This is a great state, and
some of my best memories are from living here.

I'd like to start by saying that this is
really a great honor, and thank you all. And I'd also like to say I hope it's not too late to congratulate all of you on your election victories and to really say that the people of Florida are so lucky to have such an extraordinary young, talented, smart group of leaders; and I think the future for this state is great. So, also, I'd like to say that I have never felt so old.

I've watched some of the Governor's meetings, and I know they move very quickly, so I'm going to skip the part about telling you how wonderful I am. And I'm going to ask the two questions of myself -- or answer the two questions that I would ask if I were sitting where you're sitting.

First of all is: What do you feel the mission of this office is? And I cannot express it better than to quote my favorite quote from Ronald Reagan. It's almost 50 years ago. He said: Free men engaged in free enterprise build better nations with more and better goods and services, higher wages and higher standards of living for more people, but free enterprise is not a hunting license.

And that statement contains basically the two goals -- the two goals that I feel are not only
important for this office but really for most 
regulators. The first is stopping fraud, stopping 
crime. People work hard for their money, and they 
deserve to know that when they put it in a bank 
that it's going to be there; their funds are not 
going to be depleted by hidden or unnecessary fees; 
when they invest, that they invest with full 
information, truthful information. And obviously 
investing involves risks, but they want to be able 
to calculate the risks and also feel that their 
investment advisors or the people offering the 
investments are honest and not looking to steal 
their money.

That's basically the crime prevention, and 
it's what, by the way, consumers, when they use 
their credit cards, when they use whatever 
financial consumer services know that they're 
dealing with honest people and they're not being 
ripped off, very simple.

Reagan's quote is so profound because the 
latter part of it is saying that free enterprise is 
not a hunting license, is the obvious part of the 
statement and the short part of the statement, 
because the long part of the statement is 
expressing how much benefit people get from free
enterprise and free markets.

I'm a University of Chicago MBA; I'm a -- you know, the epicenter of the free market. I spent two years reading in every class down to advertising, reading studies of how when the government tried to improve the free markets they ended up making it worse.

So what that means is not trying to influence prices that are offered, not trying to pick products that you, as a government employee or as a bureaucrat, believe are better products; and most importantly, not having any more regulation and any more costly regulation than is necessary because people forget that any expense that's borne by business, extra expense, unnecessary expense is going to end up costing the consumer and making products more expensive, in other words, hurting the people who you are ostensibly trying to help.

The second question that I would ask is: What are your top goals for the Office? And not surprisingly, the two would fall into those two categories of my answer to the first question.

When I was in the SEC's Miami office, I was surprised at how many of the issues I dealt with looked more like the issues I had dealt with at the
Broward State Attorney's Office previously, in
other words, really just straight-up crime. And
the victims were more often than not senior
citizens. And recently I read that financial crime
against senior citizens has doubled in the last
five years.

CFO PATRONIS: True.

MR. RUBIN: These are the most cruel, most
heartbreaking stories. You know, you have people
who are aging, they're -- you know, as you get
older, life gets tougher; but also, the criminals
prey on these people because they are lonely, they
need a friend, they are willing to believe people
who come to them, and really their goal is just to
take their money.

And so, you know, this -- that would be my
first priority. And lately, for myself, you know,
my parents, who just celebrated their 60th
anniversary, are in their 80s; and so for me it's
very personal. Those kinds of crimes would be my
top priority.

The second goal would be to encourage, as the
Governor mentioned, financial, Fintech, and all the
new developing businesses to be in Florida.
Florida has a great advantage from the recent tax
bill that low-tax states or no-tax states like Florida are now more attractive and they're no longer subsidizing a high tax in spend states. And so this is a great time and a great opportunity to attract those businesses, you know, get them to move down here.

You know, there was originally Silicon Valley, and then in New York they had Silicon Alley; and it would be great to establish something equivalent to that in Florida, to make Florida the place where computer people, tech people want to come.

So having said that, I will, I guess, give it to you for whatever questions you have.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Any questions?

CFO PATRONIS: Sure.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Jimmy.

CFO PATRONIS: Thank you, Governor.

Ron, thank you for being here. I think you've probably picked up both a concern that I share with Commissioner Fried. Last year I started off by sending a letter to the Federal Reserve concerned about a hundred percent cash economy business in medical marijuana in the State of Florida. I recently have, last month, sent a letter to the White House asking the same: We need some clarity.
I've got concerns about -- and I'm probably leading you with this question. That's probably not fair. Tell me your philosophy on medical marijuana banking and then also as it comes to cryptocurrency.

MR. RUBIN: Well, you know, I mean I believe in the will of the people, and it's my understanding that the people of Florida overwhelmingly voted to make medical marijuana legal.

One of the articles that I published in the Wall Street Journal in 2014 dealt with Operation Choke Point, which was at the time the Obama administration's attempt to go after disfavored businesses by choking off their access to banking services and financial services. And I think that that is -- I completely disapprove of that, and that goes for, for example, whether it's medical marijuana, whether it's gun dealers. You know, that's just a backhanded dirty way of going after businesses that you don't like, and I don't approve of it.

And so on the flip side, you know, not having good banking services creates very bad problems. You know, first of all, you're driving it to cash,
which invites crime, basically; but, also, it hurts
revenues of the state. And so, you know, it's
important as much as possible to get the proper
banking services, again, whether it be from medical
marijuana or any other legal business in the state.

Bitcoin is -- I have to admit I have read a
lot about Bitcoin and I kind of understand it. One
of my friends is an SEC commissioner who is very
much against regulating cryptocurrencies, and she
tells me I don't fully understand it; and so I, you
know, want to learn more, whatever I can.

But my feeling is -- my first reaction to it
is that basically money is whatever people believe
money is. So if -- you know, it used to be that
money was backed by gold, so there was something
backing it; and then we're no longer on the gold
standard, but it's backed by the full faith and
credit of the United States. And so people are
fully confident that that money is worth something.

Bitcoin, in my mind, I'm still not certain
that there's -- basically that you can't have a run
on Bitcoin; that there is nothing to support it in
a way that people will not lose confidence in it.
And so, you know, until I could be completely
confident that you're not -- it's not going to
cause the equivalent of a run on the bank, I would be reluctant to go to Bitcoin; but when I feel like I am confident in that, then I will.

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: You have an extensive experience in regulatory agencies and government service. You spent time with the SEC. You also spent time with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. How did that experience do you believe prepared you -- prepare you for this role? In addition to that, how do you believe that has made you aware of the limited power that government is given in executing their duties?

MR. RUBIN: Well, it's hard to, in kind of a quick sum, by basically summarize a lifetime of experiences. I think a lot of times you learn the most by seeing what government agencies do wrong, what kind of mistakes they make. Civil -- certainly civil agencies and civil enforcement is very tough to go after the really bad criminals. You end up catching the -- or run the risk of creating a lot more regulation and expense for the good guys who are trying to be good and then the bad guys just thumb their finger at you -- or thumb their nose at you.

You know, one of the cases that I dealt with
at the SEC was I prosecuted Steve Madden, and my cooperating witness was Jordan Belfort who is known as the Wolf of Wall Street. And he told me the only thing that he really thought about was basically the FBI and the criminal authorities. NASD, which is now FINRA, and the SEC really were not much of a concern for him.

So your Attorney General's office I think would be very, very important to be working with the Office of Financial Regulation and to, you know, at the earliest possible moment when we think that we have someone who is a bad criminal offender to bring in, basically that the heavy guns and all of the powers that you have that this office does not have to put those people in jail; and most importantly, by the way, just to stop the crime, whatever it is. The first goal is to stop it, and then the second goal is to put the people in jail so that it doesn't happen again.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: How would you evaluate some of the recent changes stemming from Dodd-Frank in terms of the effect on community banks?

MR. RUBIN: You know, there's kind of an irony of that. Everybody in Washington talks about how much they love community banks, how much they love
smaller banks. And they pass the Dodd-Frank Act, which by putting so much compliance burden on the smaller banks, put more of them out of business than, you know, had ever been before.

And so community banks have the real -- the difference between the community banks and large national banks is that they know their customers. And when they're given by, for example, the Dodd-Frank Act, you know, the ability to pay qualified mortgage regulations, that boxed them in and don't give them the opportunities to say, well, yes, under the standard regulations, this person who wants to buy a home or this business would not qualify, but we know them, and we've worked with them, and we are willing to take that risk with them.

So, you know, I mean I think the President's deregulation initiatives have been -- after the changes in the tax law, quite frankly, have been the most important thing that he's done to help promote business. And so I'm a big supporter of community banks, and anything that we can do to try to help them get back on kind of the stronger foothold that they were before the Dodd-Frank, I would be in favor of.
GOVERNOR DESANTIS: There's, you know, different things going on in the political culture about, you know, finance, whether it's good even, I mean do you think it would be beneficial for Florida to welcome more financial institutions, it would be good for our economy?

MR. RUBIN: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. You know, I know that Florida has a Wild Card Act which says that Florida's state chartered banks should be able to do everything that national banks are able to do.

But in the Wild Card Act, it says that the Office of Financial Regulation has to sign off on it; and that can be a big obstacle or a small obstacle. Bureaucrats are very good at saying no, because when you say no, you can't get in trouble for -- you know, in the one in a thousand chance that something goes wrong, you're on the hook. But saying yes is really what's the better option if you can get to yes and get to enable, for example, in this case, to have more state chartered banks.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Any other questions?

COMMISSIONER FRIED: Governor, just kind of a --

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Nikki.
COMMISSIONER FRIED: Thank you.

Just kind of a follow-up on that. You know, obviously your experience in the financial world is extensive. What about as far as like leadership and accountability and accessibility to our state charter banks? Because that's one of the issues that we have seen in years past, is that the actual client, which are our small banks, have been not able to have as much access or interaction with the OFR. And so I want to kind of get your opinion on your interaction with, you know, the people that you're leading as well as the people that are in theory your clients.

MR. RUBIN: And the simple answer to that question is that there -- any lack of access is inexcusable. I mean banks need to be able to know that this office is there to serve them as well as the people; and when they need help, when they need -- when they have questions, there should be somebody -- I mean my goal would be to have somebody call them back and be able to answer their questions within a day, if possible, maybe two days.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Any more?

(NO RESPONSE).
GOVERNOR DESANTIS: All right. Well, thank you, Mr. Rubin, appreciate it.

MR. RUBIN: Thank you.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: So having conducted these interviews today -- and I know we've been able all to research the different candidates' backgrounds and experience. Is there a motion on either of the candidates?

CFO PATRONIS: Governor, I have a motion.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Okay.

CFO PATRONIS: I move that we appoint Ron Rubin as Commissioner of the Office of Financial Regulation with a salary that matches the Insurance Commissioner.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Is there a second?

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: I'll second it.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: I'll concur as well. Any comments or objections?

COMMISSIONER FRIED: I just have a comment, Governor.

This is obviously such an important position to get right. It's OFR's responsibility to ensure a safe financial marketplace for those living and doing business in Florida and to protect our citizens from scams, fraudulent business practices,
and all the bad actors. The Commissioner is in a
unique position to be the watchdog for Florida's
financial service providers, and I'm sure that this
candidate will be taking that very seriously.

I've been encouraged by what I've heard by
Mr. Rubin, both not today but also in our office
yesterday. His stints at the Federal Securities
Exchange Commission, of the Financial Insurance
Regulatory Authority, and the Consumer Financial
Protection Bureau makes him uniquely qualified for
this position, and so I will concur on his
appointment.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Okay. The motion carries.

So we need to set the salary for the new
position. Is there a motion to set the salary as
the same as the Commissioner of Insurance
regulation? I believe there is.

CFO PATRONIS: Sure.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Is there a second?

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: Second.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: All right. Any
objections?

(NO RESPONSE).

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: All right. Hearing none,
the motion carries.
So congratulations to you, Mr. Rubin.
FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: We now have FDLE. And, Commissioner Swearingen, would you like to present your items?

COMMISSIONER SWEARINGEN: Thank you, and good morning.

I have four agenda items for you today. First are the minutes from the June 13th, 2018 Cabinet meeting which I respectively submit for your approval.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Is there a motion on the item?

COMMISSIONER FRIED: So moved.

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: Second.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Any comments or objections?

(NO RESPONSE).

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Hearing none, the motion carries.

COMMISSIONER SWEARINGEN: Thank you.

The second item are the contracts for the fourth quarter of fiscal year '17/'18 and contracts for the first and second quarter of fiscal year '18/'19.
These reports summarize all the Department's contracts, leases, et cetera, over a hundred thousand dollars. They were not approved by the previous Cabinet because of cancelled meetings towards the end of last year. I respectfully submit them for your approval now.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Is there a motion on the item?

COMMISSIONER FRIED: So moved.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Second?

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: Second.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: All right. Hearing no comments or objections, the motion carries.

Item 3.

COMMISSIONER SWEARINGEN: Thank you.

Item 3 is notice of proposed rules. Revisions to nine sets of rules are being proposed. Public meetings will be offered in April, and they will be back in front of you for final approval in May. A majority of the changes are technical or the result of statutory changes.

11B-20 revises a form.

11B-27 implements special forces equivalency training and makes a couple of technical fixes.

11B-30 updates a form to implement special
forces equivalency training.

11B-35 implements special forces equivalency training and updates a defensive tactics instructors course.

11C-6 eliminates conditional non-approvals for firearms purchases and fixes a billing loophole to prevent payment issues. This matches language in SB-7026.

11C-7 eliminates an obsolete form and implements a juvenile expunction change.

11D-9 revises definitions, requirements, procedures and forms for Byrne JAG grants.

And 11D-10 removes the requirement for bringing Hall of Fame nominees in the January Cabinet meeting.

And 11N-1 revises procedures to match current practices for the violent crime and drug control account.

I respectfully submit those for your approval.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Is there a motion?

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: So moved.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Second?

COMMISSIONER FRIED: Second.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: All right. Hearing no comments or objection, the motion carries.
Item 4.

COMMISSIONER SWEARINGEN: Thank you, Governor.

Item 4 is the 2019 Florida Law Enforcement Officers Hall of Fame nominees. The Hall of Fame was created in 2014 through Section 265.0041 Florida Statutes to recognize and honor law enforcement officers who put their lives on the line for the safety and protection of Florida citizens and visitors.

The first five Hall of Fame members were inducted in 2016, and plaques are displayed upstairs on the Plaza Level for the honorees. Each year nominations are accepted from the Florida Sheriffs Association, the Florida Police Association, the Police Benevolent Association, the Fraternal Order of Police, and the State Law Enforcement Chiefs Association.

Ten individuals were submitted for this year's class, and a selection committee identified the following five nominees for your approval:

Charles F. DuPont, as pointed out by the Attorney General earlier, he was the first duly elected African-American sheriff. What was interesting is this was -- his election was in 1889, and he was the son of freed slaves.
Manuel L. Gonzalez, you'll recognize his name. He was recently recognized as the Attorney General's Officer of the Year -- Law Enforcement Officer of the Year.

Paul R. Hoover.

Alfonso Lofton, who was the first African-American FHP trooper in the state. And that was in 1970, believe it or not.

And then James D. Sewell.

A reception and induction ceremony to which you will be invited is scheduled here at the Capitol on Saturday, May 18th. And I respectfully submit these five names for your approval.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Is there a motion on the item?

CFO PATRONIS: So move.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Second?

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: Second.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: All right. Hearing no comments or objection, the motion carries.

Thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER SWEARINGEN: Thank you.
GOVERNOR DESANTIS: All right. Our next agenda items are from BOT.

Noah, welcome back. Would you like to present the items?

SECRETARY VALENSTEIN: Yes, Governor. Thank you.

Good morning, again, Governor and members of the Cabinet. We have six items for you this morning. The last two will be presented by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Item 1 is consideration of minutes from November 30th and the December 4th Board of Trustees meetings, and the Department would ask for approval.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Is there a motion?
COMMISSIONER FRIED: So moved.
GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Second?
ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: Second.
GOVERNOR DESANTIS: All right. Hearing no comments or objections, the motion carries.

Item 2.

SECRETARY VALENSTEIN: Item 2 is consideration of the Stan Mayfield Working Waterfronts 2019
Project Ranking List. The Florida Communities Trust staff reviewed the applications, conducted site visits, evaluated -- submitted reports from the applicants; and then on November 29th, 2018, the FCT governing board reviewed and considered staff recommendations and produced a finalized ranking list containing the two eligible applications.

This ranking list is being presented to the Board of Trustees for consideration today and includes the Homosassa Heritage Park and Working Waterfront in Citrus County and the Blue Crab Cove Phase 2 in Brevard County.

The Department recommends approval.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Is there a motion on the item?

CFO PATRONIS: So move.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Second?

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: Second.

COMMISSIONER FRIED: Second.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: All right. Hearing no comments or objections, the motion carries.

Item 3.

SECRETARY VALENSTEIN: Thank you.

Item 3 -- the next two items, we have some
exciting land acquisitions. Item 3 is the
consideration of an option agreement to acquire
approximately 83 acres within the Wakiva Ocala
Greenway Florida Forever project from
Brian A. Richards for $540,000.

The subject property consists of five
contiguous lake front parcels located on Lake
Norris, and it will connect the Seminole State
Forest to the Bear Track Preserve, which is owned
and managed by the Lake County Water Authority who
is also partnering with us with this acquisition
and who has committed approximately $225,000 to
that purchase price.

With us today we have Julie Wraithmell,
Executive Director of Florida Audubon Society, who
would like to make a comment.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Okay.

MS. WRAINTHEM: Thank you, Mr. Secretary and
Cabinet. Julie Wraithmell, Audubon Florida.

I just wanted to take a minute to say thank
you for taking up these items today. Florida has a
long history of protecting its vulnerable places,
without which our state simply can't function. And
these votes today are this Cabinet's entry into
that legacy.
As you know, our public lands are more than just places for Floridians to recreate. They're places for wildlife to thrive; they recharge our aquifers, and protect our rivers, lakes and coasts; they clean our air; they support rural economies; and they sequester carbon.

But these two projects in particular are more than just those tangible items, you know, they will protect a gem-clear spring that stands out like a glowing sapphire against the dark water of the Withlacoochee River in North Florida and help to preserve the larger Wakiva ecosystem, which is critical to both Orlando area residents as well as black bears.

And we know that by protecting these places it's not just an investment in the resources within the boundaries of the parcel that you're acquiring, but it's important to the health of the larger watershed that they occur within. We know from experience that buying these places helps us to protect the health of our watersheds early, rather than paying more to restore them later.

So thank you so much for bringing these items up. Audubon wholeheartedly supports both of them. They are both strategic and significant, and we
encourage you to approve their acquisition today. Thank you.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Is there a motion on the item?

SECRETARY VALENSTEIN: Actually, Governor, we have one more comment for public comment.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Oh, one more comment, great.

SECRETARY VALENSTEIN: Lindsay Stevens from the Nature Conservancy would like to make a comment --

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Sure.

SECRETARY VALENSTEIN: -- both on this item and the next.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Okay.

MS. STEVENS: Good morning, Governor and Cabinet. I really appreciate the opportunity to be here morning. I'm Lindsay Stevens. I'm the Land Program Manager with the Nature Conservancy here in Florida. So I have the opportunity to partner with state staff frequently on land acquisition activities in the state. And as stated previously, we're really excited to be able to work with you all moving forward in partnership.

The two pieces of property before you today
may be relatively smaller in scale, but that
doesn't mean they're any less important. The
Wakiva Ocala Greenway, as you all know, is in a
really rapidly urbanizing part of the state; and it
takes a lot of tenacity and patience to put the
pieces of the puzzle together for that Greenway.
This is actually a part of the state that I'm from,
and I've seen it change in the past, you know, 40
something years that I've been around.

So this is just one piece of the puzzle but an
important piece, and it definitely moves the needle
towards having and building this really important
green connection, not only for the critters, but
for the people that live here too, and for our
economy.

The second piece of property, the Florida's
First Magnitude Springs Florida Forever Project,
there's a reason why this is a top-ranked project
in the Florida Forever program. As you know, the
springs in the state are really unique, not only
nationally but internationally. We're known for
the crystal blue waters, and the jewels that they
are. But as the land goes, so goes the water, so
we have to strategically protect important pieces
of land and control the land uses that are
occurring on them to ensure that our springs are something that our children can enjoy, the children of our children and the future generations down the line.

So I certainly encourage you all to vote in support of these two acquisitions today and to also recognize and support, as I think you do, the Florida Forever program and strategic acquisitions moving forward in the state. And, again, the Nature Conservancy looks forward to working with you and appreciate the opportunity to do so.

Thank you.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Thank you.

Is there any other public comment?

(NO RESPONSE).

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Okay. Is there a motion on the item?

COMMISSIONER FRIED: So moved.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Is there a second?

CFO PATRONIS: Second.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Okay. Hearing no comments or objection, the motion carries.

Item 4.

SECRETARY VALENSTEIN: Governor, Item 4 is
consideration of an option agreement to acquire
approximately 316 acres within Florida's First
Magnitude Springs Florida Forever Project from
River Era Farms, Incorporated for $2 million.

This is the project that you just heard about.
The only other thing I would mention is I think
both of these projects are great demonstrations
about how we're adding more value to the footprint
we already have. Both of these projects expand
corridor connections. They show a connection
between a forest, other state management
properties; they show connections between multiple
state agencies and really show us increasing value
of our current green infrastructure, so the
Department would recommend approval.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Any public comment on this
one? I know we did hear one already.

(NO RESPONSE).

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Okay. Is there a motion
on the item?

CFO PATRONIS: So move.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Is there a second?

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: Second.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Okay. Hearing no comments
or objection, the motion carries.
Item 5.

SECRETARY VALENSTEIN: Item 5 and 6 will be presented by Portia Sapp from the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

MS. SAPP: Good morning, trustees.

Since this is the first aquaculture lease that I've brought to you, I'd like to give you a little bit of overview about aquaculture and the leasing program in general if I may before I present the items. So according to the 2013 national census of aquaculture, Florida aquaculture sales totalled $77.9 million with 393 farms reporting. That places Florida sixth in the nation for aquaculture production.

There are approximately a thousand certified aquaculturists right now in the state, and this is probably one of the most diverse agriculture industries in the state. So that production includes tropical fish; corals; alligators; aquatic plants; bait fish; shrimp; turtles; live rock; and, of course, shellfish which we're here to talk about today.

The national census that I just talked about in 2013 placed Florida fourth in the nation in production of shellfish with farming, $19.6
million, which is up 68 percent from the 2005 values. So shellfish aquaculture in Florida is growing, which you guys will see over the next year.

The shellfish aquaculture industry began in the 1980s on the east coast of Florida; and then in the 1990s, the State of Florida began a targeted retraining program for expanded employment opportunities for the fishing industry that was impacted by changing regulations.

So if any of you have been Cedar Key, you know about the just vibrant shellfish industry there. And that helped to provide them with opportunities for jobs after the net ban.

So currently, there are 728 submerged land leases in Florida for aquaculture production, and that includes 2,740 acres of submerged land. About 720 of those are shellfish leases producing either clams or oysters, and the other eight are live-rock leases, so those go into the marine ornamental trade. 161 of those are water column leases which the Board just started approving in about 2013, so it's relatively new.

So the typical submerged land lease only allows the use of six inches off the bottom. The
water column lease allows use all the way to the surface. And this has kind of allowed the new cage culture system with oyster gear.

We also have 25 aquaculture use zones throughout the state, and those are where we have multiple aquaculture leases together in a coordinated zone. So all of those aquacultures can kind of work together and have additional benefits, protection; they can mark their leases together.

And in Florida, there are 6.9 million acres of state-owned submerged land, and a little over a million of those are in shellfish harvesting areas that are either approved or conditionally approved for shellfish harvesting. So as I mentioned before, we have about close to 3,000 acres currently under lease. Well, there are a million acres that are in approved harvest areas that, you know, would provide potential expansion opportunities.

And in 2018 97.6 million aquaculture clams were harvested, and that's compared to 13,000 wild clams. So there's just not a wild industry here for clams, so aquaculture is really the major producer. And aquacultured oysters,
808,000 pounds of aquacultured oysters were harvested.

And as I mentioned, that industry is growing very rapidly, and you'll see that today with the lease applications that I'm going to present to you.

So not only do these shellfish leases provide important economic opportunities, shellfish aquaculture is also really important because it provides environmental benefits. Shellfish are filter feeders, so they're taking phytoplankton out of the water column. They can improve water clarity by doing that. They can also bind nitrogen phosphorous, and carbon, so they are critically important.

So I'll move on unless you have any questions about aquaculture in Florida.

(NO RESPONSE).

MS. SAPP: Okay. So Item 5 is a new aquaculture submerged land lease in Manatee County. Brian Rosager (phonetics) has requested a new two-acre water column lease in lower Tampa Bay in Manatee County in order to start his aquaculture oyster business. There are currently nine aquaculture leases in Manatee County, mainly
raising clams.

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the Department of Environmental Protection's Florida Coastal Office have reviewed the item and had no comments. Additionally, the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Army Corps of Engineers have reviewed the item and determined the activities are not likely to have adverse impacts and are compliant with our department programmatic general permit that we hold with the Army Corps. So with that, staff recommends approval of this item.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Is there a motion on the item?

CFO PATRONIS: So move.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Is there a second?

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: Second.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Okay. Hearing no comments or objection, the motion carries.

Item 6.

MS. SAPP: Item 6, Ryan McAndrew has requested a new 4.8-acre water column lease in East Bay in Santa Rosa County in order to start his oyster aquaculture business. There is currently only one other aquaculture lease in Santa Rosa
County.

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the Department of Environmental Protection Florida Coastal Office have reviewed the items and had no comments. Additionally, the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Army Corps have reviewed the item and determined the activities are not likely to have adverse impacts and are compliant with our general programmatic permit.

Now this site is located in Gulf sturgeon critical habitat, but the applicant is proposing to use floating gear which is authorized within our programmatic general permit with the Corps, so staff recommends approval of this item.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Is there a motion?
CFO PATRONIS: So move.
GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Second?
ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: Second.
GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Okay. Hearing no comments or objection, the motion carries.

Item 6.

MS. SAPP: That was Item 6.
GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Oh, that was six?
MS. SAPP: Yes.
GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Great.
MS. SAPP: That concludes ours. Thank you.

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: There are more fishes than we thought.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Jimmy.

CFO PATRONIS: Thank you, sir.

I just wanted to compliment the Commissioner and what y'all are advocating for. I think for years coming out of the seafood industry, having a sustainable resource that actually can be managed, just like somebody would manage and till a plot of land for a farm, this is a great way that we can at least help advocate and change the whole culture of how this working waterfront that we're advocating for can start to grow and become more of a robust -- to complement the Florida's economy. So I just wanted to thank y'all for being so supportive on this because it's near and dear to my heart because, you know, people love Apalachicola oysters. They love Florida seafood.

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: Now it's going to be Tampa Bay oysters. Did you hear that?

CFO PATRONIS: I saw that. You're right.

But it's just the more we can support this I think it's just ensuring future generations can enjoy it.
MS. SAPP: Thank you.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Great. Thank you.
STATE BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Okay. Our last agency on the agenda is the State Board of Administration, so Ash Williams is here somewhere. There he is. So he's going to present four items.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WILLIAMS: Good morning, Governor --

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Good morning.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WILLIAMS: -- trustees, Cabinet members.

By way of performance update, as of last night's close, 25 February, the Florida Retirement System Trust Fund is up 2.2 percent, fiscal year to date. That's 86 basis points ahead of target. To put some numbers on that, looking back to the beginning of the fiscal year, there's a change in fund value of 760 million dollars down. That is net of benefit payments of 4.56 billion, meaning we had total investment gains of 3.8 billion.

Item 1, request approval of the January 29 meeting minutes.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Is there a motion?

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: So moved.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Second?
CFO PATRONIS: Second.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: All right. The motion carries.

Item 2.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Item 2 is a resolution of the SBA, a fiscal determination in connection with issuing up to $5 million Florida Housing Finance Corporation Multifamily Mortgage Revenue Notes. This is for the acquisition and rehab of a 48-unit affordable housing facility in Okaloosa County, Florida.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Is there a motion on the item?

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: So moved.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Second?

CFO PATRONIS: Second.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Okay. The motion carries.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Item 3 is likewise a fiscal determination in connection with the issuance of not more than $16 million Florida Housing Finance Corporation Multifamily Mortgage Family Bonds. This is for the acquisition, construction, and equipment of a 116-unit affordable housing community in Broward County, Florida, the Suncrest Court.
Request approval.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Is there a motion?

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: So moved.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Second?

CFO PATRONIS: Second.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: All right. The motion carries.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Item 4 is another fiscal determination, this one an amount not exceeding $9 million, Florida Housing Finance Corporation Multifamily Mortgage Revenue Bonds. This is for new construction of an 88-unit affordable workforce housing facility, The Palms at Town Center in Flagler County Florida.

Request approval.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Is there a motion?

ATTORNEY GENERAL MOODY: So moved.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Second?

CFO PATRONIS: Second.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Okay. Hearing no comments or objection, the motion carries.

So thank you, Ash.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WILLIAMS: Thank you.

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: Does anyone have anything else today?
(NO RESPONSE).

GOVERNOR DESANTIS: All right. That concludes today's meeting. Our next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 12th.

(WHEREUPON, THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED).

*   *   *   *

C & N REPORTERS     850-697-8314
CERTIFICATE

STATE OF FLORIDA    
COUNTY OF LEON    

I, NANCY S. METZKE, RPR, PPR, certify that I was authorized to and did stenographically report the foregoing proceedings and that the transcript is a true and complete record of my stenographic notes.

DATED this 11th day of March, 2018.

[Nancy S. Metzke]

NANCY S. METZKE, RPR, PPR
Court Reporter
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