

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-21

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF PAHOKEE, FLORIDA, PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR THE RE-DESIGNATION OF THE SOUTH-CENTRAL RURAL AREA OF OPPORTUNITY (RAO), AS SET FORTH HERETO IN EXHIBIT "A"; PROVIDING FOR ADOPTION OF REPRESENTATIONS; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the City of Pahokee ("City") is currently designated as part of the South-Central Rural Area of Opportunity, which includes Desoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, and Okeechobee Counties, as well as the municipalities of Pahokee, Belle Glade, and South Bay in Palm Beach County, and the Immokalee area in Collier County; and

WHEREAS, Governor Ron DeSantis, through Executive Order 21-149, re-designated the South-Central Rural Area of Opportunity for a five-year term beginning in June 2021, which is set to expire in June 2026; and

WHEREAS, continued participation in the Rural Area of Opportunity program requires timely submission of a letter of support affirming the City's intent to remain within the designation and to continue participating in regional economic development efforts; and

WHEREAS, following submission of the letter of support, the participating entities will consider and execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to further formalize regional cooperation, responsibilities, and continued participation within the South-Central Rural Area of Opportunity; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Department of Commerce has established a deadline of May 15, 2026, for submission of such letters of support in order to maintain uninterrupted membership in the South-Central Rural Area of Opportunity; and

WHEREAS, failure to submit the required letter of support by the established deadline may result in the City's removal from the designation, thereby limiting access to associated funding opportunities, technical assistance, and economic development resources; and

WHEREAS, the City Commission of the City of Pahokee ("City Commission") finds that it is in the best interests of the City to authorize and submit a letter of support in a timely manner to ensure continued participation in the South-Central Rural Area of Opportunity.

NOW THEREFORE, BE RESOLVED BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF PAHOKEE, FLORIDA, AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Adoption of Representations. The foregoing “Whereas” clauses are hereby ratified and confirmed as being true, and the same are hereby made a specific part of this Resolution.

Section 2. Approval and Authorization. The City Commission of the City of Pahokee hereby approves the submission of a letter of support for the re-designation of the South-Central Rural Area of Opportunity, attached hereto as Exhibit “A.” The City Manager is further authorized to take all necessary and expedient actions to effectuate the intent of this Resolution.

Section 3. Conflict. All resolutions in conflict herewith are hereby and expressly repealed.

Section 4. Effective Date. This Resolution shall be effective immediately upon its passage and adoption.

PASSED and ADOPTED this 12th day of May, 2026.

Keith W. Babb, Jr., Mayor

ATTEST:

Nylene Clarke, CMC, City Clerk

**APPROVED AS TO FORM AND
LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:**

Burnadette Norris-Weeks, P.A.
City Attorney

Moved by: _____

Seconded by: _____

VOTE:

Mayor Babb	_____ (Yes)	_____ (No)
Vice Mayor McDonald	_____ (Yes)	_____ (No)
Commissioner Cowan-Williams	_____ (Yes)	_____ (No)
Commissioner McPherson	_____ (Yes)	_____ (No)
Commissioner Scott	_____ (Yes)	_____ (No)

EXHIBIT "A"

LETTER OF SUPPORT

(ATTACHED)

May 12th,2026

Commissioner Terry Burroughs, Chairman
Florida's Heartland Economic Region of Opportunity, Inc.
304 NW 2nd Street, Room 123
Okeechobee, Florida

Dear Commissioner Burroughs:

As the Mayor for City Commission of the City of Pahokee, I am submitting this letter of support for the Florida Heartland Economic Region of Opportunity, Inc. (FHERO) re-designation of the South Central region composed of Desoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, and Okeechobee Counties, the cities of Pahokee, Belle Glade and South Bay in Palm Beach County and the area around Immokalee included within the Round II Federal Rural Enterprise Community located in northeast Collier County as a rural area of Opportunity (RAO).

Governor DeSantis signed Executive Order 21-149 which re-designated the area for a five-year term in June of 2021. The term expires in June 2026. Florida's legislature recognizes rural communities to face extraordinary challenges in their efforts to significantly improve their economies, and as such, Section 288.0656, Florida Statutes (F.S.) established the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) with DEO and authorizes the participation of State and regional organizations in this initiative.

Section 288.0656 (7)(a), F.S. provides for the designation of up to three RAOs. RAOs are comprised of rural communities that have been adversely affected by extraordinary economic events, severe or chronic distress, a natural disaster, or an event that presents a unique economic development opportunity of regional impact.

FHERO provides economic development support and collaboration throughout the south-central region through marketing, facilitation, and advocacy in rural South-Central Florida. The regional collaboration builds capacity by linking and uniting leadership networks. Over the last few years, the Counties in the FHERO region have seen the benefit of collaboration and leveraging each other's resources to gain strength individually, as well as regionally.

The Counties, as well as other regional partners, value the ability to have discussions and resolve issues with partners that not only understand, but share the same challenges, goals, and aspirations.

We appreciate the FHERO Board of Directors' and staff's proactive approach to regional collaboration.

Sincerely,
Keith W. Babb, Jr.
Mayor
City Commission of the City of Pahokee