



GREATER
NAPLES
CHAMBER

Press Release:

Naples chamber names interim CEO, hires search firm for permanent one

The Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce has officially launched a national search for its next leader. In the meantime, it has named Cotrenia Hood as its interim CEO and president. She assumed the role Monday.

Julie Schmelzle, the chamber's voluntary chairwoman, shared the update in a letter to the organization's members, investors and stakeholders. She described Hood as "an incredibly skilled professional," with a strong entrepreneurial spirit, noting that she's led economic development efforts in Louisiana and "our very own Naples." "She is smart and approachable and will bring her skillset to this interim role, as we continue and build on our important work," Schmelzle remarked.

No stranger to the Naples chamber

For four years, Hood worked as a vice president of business development and as the executive to the Naples chamber's economic development arm, The Partnership for Collier's Future Economy, from 2010 to 2014.

From 2014 to 2016, she served as the director of development for Youth Haven, a charity for abused, neglected and homeless children in Naples.

In 2016, Hood founded Steel Bleu, offering up her expertise as a business and executive coach. According to the [company's website](#), she had a successful career with two major Fortune 500 companies before her transition into chamber work to focus on local business and economic development efforts. In a text message, she said it's her "honor" to serve the business community in this temporary role.

"I am committed to ensuring a smooth transition, as I continue to make Collier County the best place to live, work and play," Hood said. The chamber's longtime executive Michael Dalby left in May, to pursue a new opportunity out of state. He's now the assistant vice president of innovation, commercialization and economic development at the University of Texas in El Paso.

Last month, the chamber formed a CEO search committee. After a competitive review of national search firms, the committee chose [Winner Partners](#), a woman-owned business based in St. Petersburg, to help it find the organization's next leader.

National search resumes

The executive search process officially began July 7, with an "engagement team" from the consulting firm embarking on a "mission of getting to know the organization, board, staff, and its key stakeholders," Schmelzle said.



A timeline has been established with milestone objectives and regular reporting with the ultimate goal of identifying and welcoming a new CEO to our 76-year-old organization," she said. One of the next steps? Developing a "recruitment profile," Schmelzle said. "Change or transition affords organizations with the opportunity to think and rethink our history and most importantly ... our future," she commented.

New blueprint will guide future leader

Months before Dalby announced his exit, he launched a five-year strategic planning process. Adoption of the plan is expected this fall, with five priorities, or pillars, identified, based on feedback from chamber members and others, through a survey and various listening groups.

"The working groups have been busy documenting the deliverables and one- to three-year action plans, which will be further distilled and reconciled in the months to come," Schmelzle said. "With a focus on areas to include business-focused public policy, workforce and economic development, optimizing programs for chamber members and our pinnacle leadership programs, as well as overall branding and messaging, all with a sustainable financial mindset."

The longer-term plan is the first of its kind since Schmelzle got involved in the chamber more than a decade ago, and she expects it to serve as a blueprint for the next leader.

Do they expect a lot of interest in the position?

In a recent interview, Schmelzle said she expects strong interest in the high-profile job. "I'm anticipating that we are going to have a lot of applicants for this role, in this place," she said. Last time around, the search committee reviewed more than 195 resumes, and Dalby rose to the top of the heap, with his proven success leading chambers in New Mexico, Texas, Indiana and Ohio. Schmelzle recalled immediately putting Dalby's in the "A pile." She saw him as the right leader, at the right time. "He checked off all the boxes," she said. "I think I still have his resume."

The CEO serves as a voice and advocate for the business community, not just in Naples, but all of Collier County. The chamber has more than 1,200 active members, representing 50,000 employees.

ABOUT WINNER PARTNERS

Winner Partners was established in 2018 by Tina Winner & Steven Oberhoffer, capitalizing on their core desire to build a firm devoted to helping all people. The responsibility associated with a candidate's career decisions, and therefore lives, is one they take very seriously. Winner Partners' professional recruitment solution and process are geared towards identifying and qualifying candidates in an accelerated timeframe to meet clients' growing requirements of top talent needs. Their methodology incorporates a respected, transparent process for clients and candidates throughout the search engagement.

Winner Partners is a privately held national executive recruitment firm headquartered in St. Petersburg, Florida. The firm is a certified, woman-owned business established with a client base consisting of not-for-profits, public-private partnerships, public, and private-sector organizations. To learn more, visit: www.winnerpartners.net