

**MINUTES OF MEETING
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA
JULY 22, 2004
(9:00 A.M.)**

Proceedings of a special meeting of the Board of County Commissioners of St. Johns County, Florida, began and held in the Auditorium at the County Administration Building, 4020 Lewis Speedway (County Road 16-A) and U.S. 1 North, St. Augustine, Florida.

Present were: Karen Stern, District 2, Chair
Nicholas Meiszer, District 1
James E. Bryant, District 5
Ben W. Adams, Jr., County Administrator
Dan Bosanko, County Attorney
Diane Gorski, Deputy Clerk

Also present: Doug Timms, Dawn Cardenas, Jesse Dunne - Office of Management and Budget, Allen MacDonald, Finance Director

(07/22/04 - 1 - 9:06 a.m.)
Chair Stern called the meeting to order.

(07/22/04 - 1 - 9:06 a.m.)
Stern led the Pledge of Allegiance.

(07/22/04 - 1 - 9:07 a.m.)
ROLL CALL

Stern stated that she, Meiszer, and Bryant were present, Maguire would arrive shortly and Jacalone was absent.

(9:08 a.m.) Stern recessed the meeting briefly due to technical difficulties and reconvened the meeting at 9:09 a.m.

(9:09 a.m.)

1. WORKSHOP - FY 2005 ANNUAL FINANCIAL PLAN -A WORKSHOP TO ADDRESS THE ADEQUACY OF THE RECOMMENDED BUDGET IN MEETING THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY

(9:10 a.m.)
CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT

Cheryl Strickland, Clerk of Court reviewed the Finance Department and Article V County-related budgets. (9:11 a.m.) Meiszer asked Strickland to explain why the adopted budget for 2004 was more than the requested budget for 2005. Strickland explained that the Article V county-related budget was reduced because costs were being picked up by the State through fees assessed and revenues being charged under Article V. She stated that the County would be responsible for communications, equipment and training costs. She mentioned that a new communications system had been installed and that it would be more cost effective and savings would be apparent. She explained that the fee budget had subsidized some of the courts over the years and since Article V had removed that responsibility, it would result in the Clerk of Court's turn back money to the County, being a minimum of over a half million dollars.

(9:14 a.m.)

SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sheriff Neil Perry reviewed the Sheriff's Office budget. He mentioned that a salary study had been completed and it had confirmed that a salary increase was needed. He mentioned that the School Crossing Guards and training required funding through the Sheriff's Office as a result of Article V and that increased funding for fuel, health insurance and worker's compensation costs were also needed. He explained that five new rover positions at the jail were needed for safety reasons. He explained classification of offenders and their placement within the facility. (9:20 a.m.) Bryant questioned the increase in health insurance and worker's compensation funding. Doug Timms, Office of Management and Budget clarified the increase. (9:22 a.m.) Stern mentioned that there appeared to be increases in the Property Appraisers and Tax Collectors Worker's Compensation fund as well. Timms concurred. (9:23 a.m.) Bryant asked how much of the Sheriff's Office budget was attributed to the salary increases and Perry answered that the total personal services increase, including worker's compensation, health insurance and other items accounted for 3.5 million of the requested 4.175 million dollar budget requested. (9:25 a.m.) Meiszer explained that in the year 2003 every call to the Sheriff's Office cost \$147.00 dollars and that had been based on 123,900 calls divided into an 18, 290,000.00 budget. He explained that in 2004, there were 135,000 calls in a twenty million dollar budget making the cost per call \$171.00. He thought the public should know the cost of each citizen call. (9:28 a.m.) *Maguire entered the workshop.* Perry clarified that the cost per calls answered, included every cost that the Sheriff's Office incurred; fuel, capital outlay for the vehicles, equipment, deputy's hourly rate, uniforms, transportation to the corrections facility and more. Meiszer noted that this was an average cost per call. He mentioned that it cost \$75.00 per day to house a prisoner. Perry said that the state average was \$120.00 per day and that St. Johns County was below the average. Perry explained that the Judges worked with the Sheriff's Office to keep the number non-violent offenders housed inmates down. (9:31 a.m.) Stern thanked Perry for providing the Commissioners with the results from the Salary Study. Discussion regarding the proposed salary increases ensued.

(9:55 a.m.) Ron Sanchez, 774 CR 13 requested that the budget be reduced to reduce the burden on the taxpayers. He spoke in favor of increased salaries for the sheriff's department and requested clarification of the cost of renting the hanger for the helicopter at the airport. Perry explained that the cost was shared with two other agencies and that the county's cost was \$8,000. Discussion ensued. (10:01 a.m.) Meiszer recommended that the airport contract be with St. Johns County and not the Sheriff's Department.

(10:03 a.m.) Ronald E. Gates, 55 Mobile Street, questioned the need for helicopters and asked that the Sheriff's budget be held at last year's numbers and recommended that the newly elected sheriff rework the budget. Perry explained the need for helicopters.

(10:08 a.m.) Mary Kohnke, 29 S. Roscoe Blvd., asked Perry to clarify the wage increase and recommended a step increase plus raise in salary be given to deputies.

(10:14 a.m.)

PROPERTY APPRAISER

Timms stated that the Property Appraiser's Office was fee based and the level of property taxes dictated their budget. (10:14 a.m.) Adams announced that there would

be two more public hearings, if the Commission needed to speak with Sharon Outland about the budget.

(10:14 a.m.)

SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS

Penny Halyburton offered to answer questions relating to her department's budget. She asked the Board about the County budgeting a 5% increase in salaries and Timms answered that a 1% increase was due to a wage study for county employees and that a 4% increase had been the general budget. Halyburton asked if she could do the same and Stern asked if the wage study had included her office. Halyburton answered that it had not.

(10:16 a.m.)

TAX COLLECTOR

Tommy Edwards, Director of Accounting, stated that the fees and not the Board of County Commissioners funded the Tax Collector's Office. He requested that the Tax Collector's budget be removed from the County budget workshop. (10:18 p.m.) Meiszer asked if the budget could be included in the book for informational purposes only and Edwards answered that a copy of the budget was submitted to the board as a courtesy and mentioned that it was approved by the Department of Revenue. (10:20 a.m.) Adams stated that he work with Dennis Hollingsworth so that his budget would be included in the documentation for the public but not be included in the workshops. Meiszer stated that as long as he had been connected with St. Johns County, the Tax Collector had never used the entire 2% that he has been entitled to and that was why there were excess fees handed over to the Board at the end of the year.

Stern recessed the meeting at 10:21 p.m. and reconvened it at 10:32 a.m.

(10:33 a.m.)

LEGAL AID FUND

Dan Bosanko, County Attorney, summarized the Legal Aid program. He explained that there had been a change in state law that required Counties to fund the program at approximately the same level it was funded at last year and mentioned that a new fee had been authorized to assist with the funds needed for this program. He explained that the requested amount was so that a new Legal Aid office could be opened to include two attorneys and two assistants. He explained that St. Johns County had not had a Legal Aid office in the past. He stated that the JALA (Jacksonville Legal Aide) had been providing services to St. Johns County through appointments and telephone contacts in conjunction with other agencies. (10:37 a.m.) Bryant asked how the County could be protected from a county funded agency suing the County. (10:38 a.m.) Adams stated that the agency had agreed to not use any monies received from the County for that purpose and Bosanko concurred and explained that he would include that stipulation in the Request for Proposal and contract. He clarified that indigent persons were entitle to have their day in court but that other funding would be used for that type of litigation. (10:39 a.m.) Meiszer asked Bosanko to explain the differences between the Public Defender's Office and a Legal Aide office. Bosanko answered that the Public Defender defended indigents accused of crimes that could result in incarceration and that the Legal Aide Office would handle non-criminal, civil matters for needy citizens requiring legal services. He explained that civil cases included land use disputes, child custody disputes, adoptions, battered spouses and many other vital services.

(10:43 a.m.) Stern announced that she would read through the list of Departments and directed the Board to speak up when something needed to be discussed.

(10:43 a.m.) Meiszer asked for clarification of the State's Attorney's Office Budget. Timms mentioned that changes in State Law, which resulted in Article V made the County responsible for certain, specified costs. He stated that the State's Attorney's Office budget had previously been a Special Revenue Fund in the past and that the fund had gone away and they are not part of the General Fund.

(07/22/04 -4 -10:45 a.m.)

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Economic Development and Intergovernmental and Public Relations

Ted Zebrowski, Director of Intergovernmental and Public Relations, explained that the budget request had not included funding for the Chamber of Commerce. (10:49 a.m.) Kari Hall-Keating, Chamber of Commerce, explained that an additional \$25,000 was needed to update software for marketing and inventory purposes. (10:51 a.m.) Zebrowski clarified the request to resubmit the budget. (10:48 a.m.) Stern asked if this was a one-time expense or would be on-going. Adams clarified that the Chamber requested this funding as a line item, so that they could purchase the needed items to support economic development. Hall-Keating mentioned that the Chamber had private investors. (10:50 a.m.) Maguire asked if the system would be available to everyone and Hall-Keating answered that it would. (10:51 a.m.) Zebrowski explained that the Chamber had come in with a request for \$45,000 for the Cornerstone Membership, \$45,000 for operations and then the Visioning Group had asked for \$50,000 in this account. (10:52 a.m.) He explained that this request had already gone through the Office of Management and Budget and asked if the Board was directing them to resubmit. Discussion ensued. Adams stated that there would be two more public hearings in September.

(10:54 a.m.) Meiszer questioned the increase in the Risk Management budget. Timms explained that the major increase was to reinstate a cash incentive, Safety Incentive Program for employees that met certain goals. Zebrowski explained that a cash incentive would be given to employees to work safely, which would benefit the County by lowering insurance rates. Discussion ensued.

(10:58 a.m.)

Animal Control and Humane Society

Doug Timms explained that the Humane Society was part of Independent Agencies on the department list and that there was a contractual issue that was still under review. Meiszer stated that the Animal Control Program was in serious trouble; he felt that with the growth of the County there was a staffing issue that resulted in a safety issue. He suggested considering licensing dogs to assist in funding for the program. He stated that the level of services needed to be increased. (11:00 a.m.) Paul Studivent, Manager, Animal Control reviewed the program. He explained that they were working with the Humane Society to reach an agreement on a new contract. Timms stated that the Humane Society had requested an increase of 53% over the current year and the Budget Office had recommended an increase of 38%. He recommended a workshop item for the Humane Society be scheduled and Adams stated that he would put it on the agenda as a workshop item as soon as possible. Discussion ensued.

(11:07 a.m.)

Planning and Development Services

(11:07 a.m.) Mary Kohnke, 29 South Roscoe Blvd. on behalf of the Roundtable Finance Committee, asked to discuss Planning, Development Services, Development Review and Zoning. She explained that the workload had increased 40% within the last year in planning and questioned the projected increase of nearly 50%, but no request for additional staff except a Historical Review person. She stated that fees for construction in Development Review was up 39.9% and wondered how the workload increases would be handled without additional staff. She wondered what level of service would be provided to the public. (11:13 a.m.) Meiszer stated that the County Commission needed to set a level of service standard and that Staff needed to tell the Commission how to meet the standard so that the Commission could either adjust the standard or the Staff. (11:14 a.m.) Kohnke asked why there were no requests for additional staff in the budget. (11:15 a.m.) Scott Clem, Director of Growth Management, concurred that an increase in workload was expected and stated that there was a plan in place to address this issue. He mentioned that changes in the process that had been made that would reduce Staff's time spent on applications. He stated that a neighborhood site plan had been introduced that allowed Staff to process clearance sheets quickly and that online permitting was being utilized to speed up the process. He announced that he was confident that enough staff was in place to handle the workload. (11:17 a.m.) Stern confirmed that Clem felt that there was adequate staffing and Clem asserted that he did. He explained that he preferred to get into the budget year to see if their projections were accurate. Meiszer reviewed the budgeting process and stated that if an increase of staff was being considered anywhere within the fiscal year that now was the time to ask for it. He stated that coming back and amending the budget later indicated a lack of foresight and emphasis on what the service is in terms of what it will cost. Clem stated that the biggest factor, in terms of turn around and level of service, was with the Billing Department because they felt the largest impact on a large increase in volume. He mentioned that they were an Enterprise Fund and totally generated by fees. He stated that staff increases had been requested in that department, both inspectors and plan reviewer increases. He stated that permitting would have the greatest amount of increase and requests for increases had been made accordingly. (11:19 a.m.) Stern mentioned the requested Historic Resource position and stated that this new position would free up staff. Clem concurred. (11:20 a.m.) Kohnke stated that it was nice to hear that you could do twice as much with half as much, but said that she did not believe this. She asserted that the workload had more than doubled in the past year with the same amount of staff and predicted that there would be the same work in Planning and double that in Development Review with the same amount of staff. Clem assured the Commissioners and the public that the amount of oversight given to the permitting process, planning or development review would not be reduced. Stern stated that Clem would monitor and review the situation and that if additional staff was needed he would meet with Mr. Adams and return to the Board for approval. (11:22 a.m.) Adams stated that the County experts had told the Board that they are comfortable with current staffing. He stated that the people in Planning were becoming more efficient and that DRI's were being handled in a better way. He stated that additional staff was not required. (11:23 a.m.) Meiszer expressed his concern with middle of the year requests for additional staffing. (11:24 a.m.) Stern mentioned that at the previous workshop the Board had asked everyone to do what they could to hold the line unless additional staffing was truly necessary, but clarified that the Board had not meant to direct Staff to cut across the board. Adams replied that new positions were being added to the budget and that all new positions were not eliminated. Clem asserted that they had submitted the budget that they could work with.

(11:25 a.m.)

Independent Agencies

Maguire asked for clarification on the dozen or so requests for funding from these independent agencies. Discussion ensued. (11:46 a.m.) Stern directed Adams to set up a workshop within the next month to review the independent agencies needs and purposes.

(11:47 a.m.)

Housing and Community Services

Bryant mentioned that he had toured the West Augustine CRA with the CMD Engineering Firm and suggested that all of the Commissioners take the tour. He stated that affordable housing was finally coming to fruition. (11:48 a.m.) Stern concurred and commended the Housing and Community Services for the hard work and dedication.

(11:48 a.m.)

Historic CRA

Maguire questioned funding requests. Timms explained that the County was part of the CRA and was obligated to pay the estimated ad valorem taxes. (11:49 a.m.) Meiszer clarified that there were several CRAs in St. Johns County.

(11:50 a.m.)

Library Services

Meiszer requested clarification of the funding request from the library. Timms answered that the funding request did not include the two million dollars for capital improvements.

(11:52 a.m.)

Fire Services

Chief Bobby Hall asked Timms to explain the millage increase. Timms stated that the proposed millage increase was from 1.125 mils to 1.2 mils or 6.7% that had been recommended to address the salary structure situation. Halls explained that the department had experience a large turnover due to economic reasons. He mentioned that a salary and benefit survey was in the works to provide for the County to better address the inequities in salaries. He explained that it cost approximately \$4,000.00 per firefighter to provide the bunker gear and train them to the rookie level. He explained that this year approximately fifty-seven firefighters would have gone through orientation at an approximate cost of over \$200,000. Hall stated that the survey should be completed within three weeks. (11:54 a.m.) Bryant clarified that the Staff and the Union were working together on the issue and Hall concurred. (11:55 a.m.) Meiszer suggested looking at the total compensation package. He explained that in a small department there were few opportunities for promotions and that people leave in search of these opportunities. He suggested becoming competitive in the labor market. He suggested adopting the Jacksonville pay plan. He mentioned that certification was the same statewide and that once our employees were trained, they were able to go anywhere statewide, if they were willing to relocate to further their career.

(11:57 a.m.) Richard Thomas, 4322 Palmetto Street, representing the Civic Round Table distributed a handout (Exhibit A) reviewing the results of its study of the St. Johns County Fire Rescue Department to the Commissioners and the continued loss of experienced personnel. He explained that the salary differential between Duval and St. Johns County needed to be adjusted. He asked the Board to eliminate the CIP program and instate a PIB program (People Instead of Bricks). He explained that the Round Table suggesting this policy whereby the North Beach Fire Station scheduled for

construction in 2005 at a cost of \$955,000, be delayed one year to 2006 and use those funds for people instead of bricks. The Roundtable recommended providing trained, professional personnel to the community.

(12:02 p.m.) Adams explained that the merger with the City St. Augustine Fire Services Department was still being discussed and that the salary adjustments would be addressed next year. (12:04 p.m.) Meiszer discussed the need for a distinction between operating expenses and capital improvements funding. He stated that more fire stations were not needed to increase response time, but better locations for fire stations and personnel were needed. (12:06 p.m.) Jacalone left the meeting. He asked that a budget for capital outlays be established to build the needed facilities and equipment separately from personnel that should be dealt with on a more competitive basis. Discussion ensued.

(12:10 p.m.) Adams explained that a consultant was going to review the Golf Course as required by the Bond Council and that some repairs had already been completed. Timms stated that if 80,000 rounds were played, the course would almost break even.

(12:11 p.m.) Stern finalized the list and asked if there were any questions and there were none.

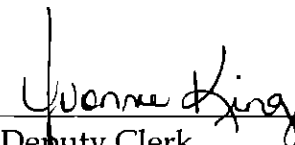
(12:12 p.m.) **Motion by Bryant, seconded by Stern to adjourn the meeting, carried 4/0, with Jacalone absent.** With there being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 12:12 p.m.

Approved _____ August 11 _____, 2004

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA

By:  _____
Karen R. Stern, Chair

ATTEST: CHERYL STRICKLAND, CLERK

By:  _____
Deputy Clerk

