

**MINUTES OF MEETING
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA
DECEMBER 14, 2010
(9:00 A.M.)**

Proceedings of a special meeting of the Board of County Commissioners of St. Johns County, Florida, held in the auditorium at the County Administration Building, 500 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine, Florida.

Proof of publication of the notice of a special meeting for the purpose of conducting the Overview of Current and Future Economic Development Initiatives within St. Johns County was received, having been published in *The St. Augustine Record* on December 7, 2010.

Present were: Ken Bryan, District 5, Chair
 Ray Quinn, District 3, Vice Chair
 Cyndi Stevenson, District 1
 Ron Sanchez, District 2,
 Jay Morris, District 4
 Michael D. Wanchick, County Administrator
 Patrick McCormack, County Attorney
 Terry Bulla, Deputy Clerk

(12/14/10 - 1 - 9:00 a.m.)
CALL TO ORDER

Bryan called the meeting to order.

(12/14/10 - 1 - 9:00 a.m.)
ROLL CALL

The Clerk called the roll and four Commissioners were present, with Stevenson absent.

(12/14/10 - 1 - 9:01 a.m.)
Rev. Johns D. Gillespie, San Sebastian Catholic Church, gave the Invocation and Quinn led the Pledge of Allegiance.

(12/14/10 - 1 - 9:02 a.m.)
PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

(12/14/10 - 1 - 9:02 a.m.)
ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO SPECIAL AGENDA

There were none.

(12/14/10 - 1 - 9:02 a.m.)
APPROVAL OF THE SPECIAL AGENDA

Motion by Quinn, seconded by Morris, carried 5/0, to approve the Special Agenda.

(12/14/10 - 2 - 9:04 a.m.)

1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ST. JOHNS COUNTY. THE PURPOSE OF THE SPECIAL MEETING WILL BE TO PRESENT AND DISCUSS AN OVERVIEW OF CURRENT AND FUTURE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES WITHIN ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA

Michael Wanchick, County Administrator, gave an overhead presentation for the Board Workshop/Special Meeting. He said no final action would be taken, but it would be an open dialogue in the hopes of deciding a direction for the future. He stated that the data being presented was prepared by the University of North Florida (UNF) Center for Economic and Geographical Information Research.

He reviewed the definition of Economic Development, and noted the Board had established Economic Development as the number one goal for the County. He stated that historically, economic development activities were undertaken in partnership with: Conerstone Regional Economic Development Partnership, the Tourist Development Council, the Industrial Development Authority, the St. Augustine and Ponte Vedra Chambers of Commerce, and other organizations and individuals. He said there needed to be an organizational framework and plan to implement countywide economic development.

(9:05 a.m.) Commissioner Stevenson joined the meeting.

Wanchick summarized recent activities towards economic development. He reviewed the Agriculture (Clouser) Study Phase I and Phase II and what they entailed for cultivating agricultural business related opportunities. He stated that they had renewed their contract with Chamber/Cornerstone. He told of the development of the Small Business Development Center on campus. He talked about the Traffic Concurrency Update and its impact on economic development. He said they were about to complete a study on impact fees, and they wanted to schedule a workshop on impact fees on January 25, 2011. He explained they had looked at the Tourist Development Council and taken steps to reorganize its various components. He said they had developed a new Destination Master Plan by PGAV. He said the most recent initiative was a study with the University of North Florida Economic Development Study, which was what they were going to discuss that day.

(9:11 a.m.) He reviewed the UNF Survey, which was a survey of 38 responding counties throughout the United States conducted in April 2010 and completed that fall. He gave the parameters of the counties studied. The surveyed communities were similar to St. Johns County in economic profile, with a working age population between 30,000 and 70,000 people and located within 35 miles of a major city. The counties represented a wide economic perspective from manufacturing and retail sales to agriculture and tourism, with the majority experiencing stable or slow growth over the past few years. He said the goal was to assist in the development of countywide economic development strategy relative to the retention and attraction of business, and the study findings would be utilized to revise the County's business incentives ordinance, amend the County's Comprehensive Plan and regulations, plan and construct future public infrastructure and develop related economic development strategies and studies.

(9:13 a.m.) The organizations involved in the economic development plan were Workforce Boards, Small Business Development Centers, Chambers of Commerce, Private Industry, Municipalities, County Staff and Economic Development Offices. He reviewed who had the primary responsibility for economic development.

(9:16 a.m.) He reviewed staff and Budget and said that in our county we had no one working directly on economic development. He reviewed the staffing and budget and noted we were putting in only \$100,000 and now were up to \$160,000 for economic development. He said our competition was spending a great deal more and we needed to determine whether we wanted to compete or not. He said the majority of their funding was public funding. He said economic development was an area in which most counties were not reducing funding.

(9:18 a.m.) He reviewed the Program Focus and the areas that we wanted to enhance. He said our competition was looking for many of the same things that we were. He said that tourism was one of the main focuses of our economic development and our competition was also looking in that area, along with other product development.

(9:19 a.m.) He reviewed methods of effectiveness and which methods were the most effective, with the web site being the most highly regarded technique. He said the least helpful methods were media advertising and brochures and printed outreach materials. He said websites were often the first and the last contact for economic development organizations. He said they may have assessed your site, and the County might not even know it. He said the County needed a 24/7 presence. He said that most organizations did cost performance analysis prior to, and after offering business incentives.

(9:23 a.m.) He reviewed business incentives and said a variety of techniques were being offered. He said our competition offered many more incentives than we did, that they might not all be appropriate for our county, but we needed to look at them. He said the three we did participate in were the most effective.

(9:24 a.m.) He reviewed business retention and said it started at home. He asked which business retention activities were considered to be the most effective and reviewed the results. He said calls to local companies clearly needed to be developed.

(9:26 a.m.) He reviewed Development and Training and said the County needed to do more for the small business development in our county and that our competition was doing more. He reviewed the training initiatives our organization offered.

(9:27 a.m.) He reviewed the assessment for St. Johns County. He said the current strengths included: renewed Commission interest, public and private involvement, local and regional cooperation, diverse opportunities to advance, tourism and agriculture industries, business incentives Ordinance, measures of effectiveness, and Small Business Assistance Center. He reviewed areas for improvement: lack of clear program focus, insufficient County staffing, insufficient County funding, limited recruitment techniques, limited business incentives, minimal community self-promotion, under-development internet presence, need for increased training outreach, lack of business/County interaction and perceived image/reputation.

(9:32 a.m.) He reviewed Proposed Initiatives that the County Administrator's Office was making to the Commission.

He said they needed to increase the funding for the economic development activities and programs commensurate with other similar local governments. They needed to create an economic development position within County government dedicated to working in conjunction with local and regional economic development organizations. They needed to adopt a comprehensive countywide economic development plan governing the County's economic development actions, investments, and overall focus. They needed to establish a closer working relationship between business leaders and

the Commission. They needed to create a business roundtable appointed by the Commission to recommend improvements to the business climate of the County. He said they needed to revise the County's business incentives ordinance to provide the Commission with increased flexibility and responsiveness to address the current economic development climate. They needed to expand the number of economic development options and methods available to the Commission to recruit and retain businesses. On recruitment and retention they needed to expand business promotional and outreach efforts relative to the County's business environment and quality of life. They needed to implement an annual survey of area businesses focusing on needs, challenges, future plans, etc. They needed to establish a business achievement recognition program. In Business Development and Workforce Training, they needed to facilitate a closer working relationship between local businesses and the university/school system. They needed to integrate higher education/training programs with the needs of area businesses. Regarding the economic development website/internet presence, they needed, due to its high cost/benefit ratio, to substantially invest in the County's internet presence focusing on business recruitment and retention. They needed to integrate the web operations, programs, and technology of local and regional economic development organizations.

(9:39 a.m.) Wanchick asked the Board for feedback.

(9:39 a.m.) Quinn thanked Wanchick for his presentation. He said the creation of an Economic Development position was critical and would be the person responsible for the web site. He said he would like to discuss impact fees and stressed its importance. He said no one felt that impact fees were good and somehow the County had to wean itself from impact fees. He said he was impressed by the amount of money and jobs created by agriculture in St. Johns County. He said the farmers deserved every amount of support possible.

(9:41 a.m.) Morris said they could not afford not to do it. He said he had no idea that only 11% of the tax base came from business and it should be closer to 30%. He said it was the only untapped source of revenue that the County had. He said it was a pot of dollars that needed to be investigated. He added that we had the best climate conditions and no State income tax and asked why we weren't getting more business. He said they needed fast track permitting, and reduced impact fees, incentives, and to fund what they needed to do. He said he was not for tax increases.

(9:44 a.m.) Sanchez thanked Wanchick for his presentation. He said he was very involved and worried about it. He said he would support staffing, reduction in impact fees, an increase in the incentives program, a closer and more focused unity with the Chamber and Cornerstone. He said the web page needed to be established, and after someone was hired, it might be good to think about a Commissioner being appointed as a PR person to work with them. He said they should be able to furnish that, if it became important. He added that the farmers needed help and these freezes were disturbing.

(9:47 a.m.) Stevenson said she appreciated the presentation as well. She said it was good to see the progress they had made. She noted that a business plan was very important and people were being more cautious about making long term investments and commitments. She said by showing where they wanted business to grow and the type of businesses they were pursuing, it would present a positive. She stated that the incentive ordinance needed to be revisited and revised. She said that staffing and budget were important and there had been a person doing some of that in the past. She asked the role of the person to be hired. Wanchick said they needed to bring in someone who would be a bridge between the business community and the County. It would be an executive level person and would be a department or division level head.

She said she could not agree more with the internet presence. Wanchick said they needed additional support for the web development. He said that was the second position he would add; someone dedicated to the web. Stevenson said she agreed that being able to communicate was a big part. Wanchick said that anything they wanted to implement, staff would implement into a formal proposal.

(9:52 a.m.) Bryan said he agreed with his fellow Commissioners.

(9:52 a.m.) Sanchez commented on the web page with a connection with the Chamber and Cornerstone. He said it was vital to show that unity on the web page. Wanchick said some home pages were difficult to navigate and they had to find a better way for a company or site analyst to navigate through the web page to find information they were seeking.

(9:53 a.m.) Morris said he would be happy to work with anyone to get new business in, to really finesse those people, and to make it easy for them to do business here. Wanchick said communication and a personal touch would do a lot to take them a long way. He said our best days were ahead of us. He said we had an excellent quality of life, and in this high tech environment, we needed to put it on the front burner.

(9:55 a.m.) Bryan asked for consensus to make Morris the liaison for Economic Development. **There was Board consensus. He said there was consensus for a position for Economic Development Director, and funding allocations investment support.** He said regarding Impact Fees, that with the School Board, the millage did not increase, and impact fees enabled them to keep the doors of the schools open. He said they had to look at that strategically. He said internet investment was absolutely something they had to review.

(9:57 a.m.) Stevenson said that Morris being liaison was wonderful. She said every Commissioner had a relationship with business, could be useful at different times, should remain available, and be an ambassador for the County in the business community.

(9:58 a.m.) Bryan said he was intrigued with some of the recommendations made. He said some places were offering land as an incentive and they needed to look at what their competitors were doing. Wanchick said economic development did not happen quickly, but it was a process that they could be successful in if they funded it and developed it correctly.

(10:00 a.m.) Wanchick recapped: support for staffing and budgeting, adoption of a comprehensive countywide economic development plan, establish closer relationship with the business community, create a business roundtable appointed by the Commission, revise the County's business incentives ordinance, expand recruitment and retention options, expand business promotional and outreach efforts, implement an annual survey of area businesses, establish a business achievement recognition program, facilitate local businesses/school system relationship, and integrate education/training programs with area businesses.

(10:02 a.m.) Quinn commented on the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) and explained it was a group of volunteers that met monthly to attract business to St. Johns County. He said they had just completed a list of strengths and weaknesses in the County. He noted that those people were present that day and they were working for the County every day.

(10:03 a.m.) McCormack said he was impressed with the analytical quality of the presentation done that day. He asked how many counties in Florida would kill to have the best school district in the State or the second best health programs in the State. He said those were the types of things that could be highlighted in promotional efforts. He said the Players Championship was in St. Johns County, it brought in corporate leadership, and that could be analyzed as an opportunity for presence and corporate contacts. He said there was a big spectrum from industrial development to start up businesses. He said a lot of the businesses were small and he encouraged the Board to keep in mind that broad spectrum.

(10:06 a.m.) Stevenson said they were talking about a roundtable of executives and asked how the plan would be drafted for their input.

(10:07 a.m.) Wanchick said that if they did a plan, a consulting firm should be brought in, which had expertise in that area. She asked if the executive hire could facilitate that process. Wanchick said, that depending on the person they hired, they might be able to develop that plan. Stevenson said there was a lot of energy around this and they wanted to make the biggest impression from the bottom up.

(10:09 a.m.) Sanchez thanked those individuals who were in attendance that day. He said the IDA was a very important part of the whole process. He said they might want someone to attend as a liaison, as part of the Advisory Board.

(10:10 a.m.) Wanchick said a mistake that often was made, was tailoring a program from their own perspective. He said they needed to market it to others needs. He said the IDA was an important factor and a silent success story and he would like to have their involvement. Wanchick also thanked the UNF for the study which had provided a wealth of information, and which could save the County millions of dollars. He said they were wonderful partners who had done the study for only \$18,000.

(10:12 a.m.) Morris asked about the time frame. Wanchick said that based on the Board's input, they would put together a timeline. Morris said he would like to start to move forward as soon as possible, with local efforts, while the plan was being structured. Wanchick said their ideas were to complement the IDA and the Chamber, with input from anyone in the community who had an interest.

(10:13 a.m.) Bryan said they were talking about all the mentioned entities working together in partnerships; the Chambers, the School Board, municipalities and others.

(10:14 a.m.) Wanchick said there was a window of opportunity with the slow economy and they needed to move as quickly as possible to develop a plan.

(10:15 a.m.) Ellen Whitmer, 1178 Natures Hammock Rd. South, Fruitcove, said it was a good report and she liked many of the concepts and comments brought forward. She said she had advocated for less residential development for a long time because they were out of balance with business. She said they needed to get in some solid business and not just retail. She said some businesses do not like to locate in residential areas. She said the idea to acquire land was a good idea.

(10:18 a.m.) Sarah Owen Gledhill, 201 Owens Avenue, Florida Wildlife Federation, spoke regarding economic challenges. She said economic development incorporated sound land use planning as an economic tool to create new jobs, protect the quality of life, and create a vibrant economy. She said sound planning also protected tax payer's interests. She made recommendations: Place an emphasis on protecting major eco systems, significant natural resource and corridors, water quality and supply, and

reducing the risk associated with hurricanes, floods, wild fires, and sea level rise. She said the environment was the County's most important economic development asset. Second, she recommended that the County ensured that new development covered the costs of associated infrastructure, so that the tax payers did not subsidize it. She said home values were the most valuable asset for most people and they wanted to protect its value. She said there needed to be a demonstrated market based need for new housing before any new housing was permitted. Finally, she suggested they identify appropriate hubs and corridors for industrial development to insure wiser use of infrastructure dollars. She said they should avoid sensitive natural areas.

(10:22 a.m.) Don Heine, 21 Fullerwood Ave., said Wanchick's presentation focused on hiring a new person and an Advisory Board. He said they had many boards that were currently not coordinated, and before setting up a new organism, they needed to get a better coordinating one. He commented about impact fees and the land development process and said they did not work; it was a mess.

(10:25 a.m.) Barbara Jenness, 313 Porpoise Point Dr., St. Augustine Regional Council, said the new organization had been formed to promote the community outside of the County, and to get the word out about the quality of life in St. Johns County. She said they needed to focus on the areas that their competition was not addressing. She added that they needed to put money into training and retraining, possibly in green industry.

(10:28 a.m.) Kirk Wendland, President, St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, said they were excited about the focus on economic development. He said the economy was the number one focus of the world. He said too many communities were facing too few projects. He said while we had a lot of attractive things in the county, we faced steep competition. He said they needed to be at the top of their game. He said comments that day were right on track and they needed to work together. He said they looked forward to working with the County to develop a structure to deliver first class economic development.

(10:29 a.m.) Martin Cohen, 850 A1A, and SCORE member, said the idea of an Economic Development Director was an important element. He said working together with the various entities was important. He said it was also important to support small businesses and to help them to grow.

(12/14/10 - 7 - 10:31 a.m.)

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

(10:31 a.m.) Commissioner Stevenson:

Stevenson said she was interested to hear the idea of corridors for jobs mentioned. She said the State of Florida was spending a lot of money producing technically trained people. She said research was being done at Whitney Labs and in the Jacksonville area. She said she sensed a lot of new energy and hoped it would be young people from the University of Florida with innovative new ideas for them and for this region.

(10:34 a.m.) Commissioner Quinn:

Quinn thanked Wanchick and his staff for the excellent report and thanked those who had attended that day. He said he had attended the event at the St. Augustine National Cemetery for the Wreaths Across America for the placement of wreaths at every national cemetery across the nation at 12:00 noon on Saturday. He thanked the veterans who were involved in that.

(10:36 a.m.) Commissioner Morris:

Morris said it was an excellent presentation. He said he would like to see some specific objectives included to allow for measurement. He said one of the biggest objectives should be to get new business into the county and to expand the business based tax that they were not getting currently.

(10:37 a.m.) Commissioner Sanchez:

Sanchez thanked everyone for attending. He said Work Source had a retraining program. He thanked the Sheriff's Department for their prompt response on Monday to pick up the guys who were walking around the County campus with an air rifle.

(10:38 a.m.) Commissioner Bryan:

Bryan thanked Wanchick and staff. He said last Thursday he attended an event in Tallahassee for the expunging, by the Governor, of all the records of the Freedom Marches in St. Augustine from 40 years ago. He said small business was the backbone of our nation. He said it was a great program that day. He asked the County Attorney to remind them of the Sunshine Law and their responsibility in that regard.

(10:40 a.m.) McCormack said there had been follow up questions regarding their recent Sunshine Law training. He said that from time to time they attended community meetings or private gatherings, and the rule on that was that there was no prohibition for Commissioners to attend public or private meetings pertaining to TDC, IDA or cultural or social groups in the County. However, if more than one commissioner did attend, there should be no deliberation among Commissioners that might come before the County. He asked them to avoid those gray areas as much as possible.

(10:43 a.m.) Bryan said there were a lot of committees and boards and this was a reminder to them as well, for their own protection.

(10:44 a.m.) Stevenson asked McCormack about when there was a publicly noted meeting. McCormack said that some events, where more than one Commissioner had expressed that they would attend, and when it was advertised, it would be treated as a public meeting where minutes were taken and kept. Stevenson asked if the IDA and TDC noticed as publicly noticed meetings and that more than Commissioner would be in attendance and where minutes would be taken would apply. McCormack said he might review how each meeting was advertised. Stevenson suggested they might announce at the beginning of each meeting whether it was advertised as a publicly noticed meeting.

(10:47 a.m.) Bryan said appearance could sometimes be confusing as to what was and was not appropriate. He said this was just a precautionary notice. He said if there was a question, to contact the County Attorney.

(12/14/10 - 8 - 10:48 a.m.)

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Wanchick said the Commission had given their top three priorities to the Legislative Council. He asked to place unfunded mandates in the place of Mosquito Control. **There was Board Consensus.** He said they had scheduled a joint meeting with the School Board on impact fees for January 25th at 9:00 a.m. He said that Cameron had left to go to the University of Florida to meet with IFIS to finalize the agricultural study for

the Clouser Study Part II. He said the second study would help them to discover what aspects of the previous study they should build upon.

(12/14/10 - 9 - 10:50 a.m.)

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

McCormack said in June there had been a change in Article 5 of the LDC, regarding Home Owner's Associations and permits. He said it gave a period for HOAs to apply to the County for the new system for the change in the code, with a time frame that ran through December. He said there had been some applications, but it was his recommendation to extend that application period through March 31, 2011, in order to give them more time to apply. (10:52 a.m.) **There was Board consensus to do so.**

(12/14/10 - 9 - 10:52 a.m.)

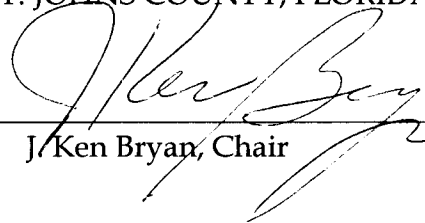
CLERK OF COURT'S REPORT

There was none.

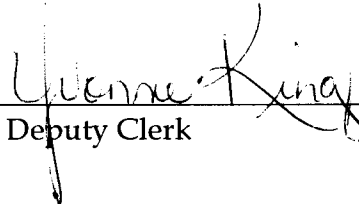
With there being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 10:52 a.m.

Approved _____ January 18 _____, 2011

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: 
J. Ken Bryan, Chair

ATTEST: CHERYL STRICKLAND, CLERK

By: 
Deputy Clerk

