

**MINUTES OF MEETING
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA
FEBRUARY 12, 2015
6:30 P.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 a special meeting of the Board of County Commissioners was received, having been published in *The St. Augustine Record* on February 6, 2015.

Present: Rachael Bennett, District 5, Chair
Jeb S. Smith, District 2, Vice Chair
William A. McClure, District 3
John H. Morris, District 4
Michael Wanchick, County Administrator
Patrick McCormack, County Attorney
Robin Platt, Deputy Clerk

Also present: Darrell Locklear and Jerry Cameron, Assistant County Administrators; Regina Ross and Paola Soria, County Attorney's Office

(02/12/15 - 1 - 6:32 p.m.)
CALL TO ORDER

Bennett called the meeting to order.

(02/12/15 - 1 - 6:32 p.m.)
ROLL CALL

The clerk called the roll: All board members were present.

(02/12/15 - 1 - 6:32 p.m.)
INVOCATION

Smith led the invocation.

(02/12/15 - 1 - 6:33 p.m.)
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Bennett led the Pledge of Allegiance.

(02/12/15 - 1 - 6:33 p.m.)
PUBLIC COMMENT

Tom Reynolds, 880 A1A Beach Blvd., spoke on the County's summer recreation program.

Gary Jurenovich, 536 Morningside Dr., Ponte Vedra, Chair Ponte Vedra MSD, showed a video to illustrate flooding on Ponte Vedra Blvd. He stated he was concerned that property values would be affected by the flooding, and asked for the County's assistance in resolving the flooding issues.

Igor Malinsky, 4533 E. Seneca Dr., proposed that a new park be constructed along CR 2209, near the CR 210 corridor, on property already owned by the County. He submitted a packet of ideas for the park, *Exhibit A*.

(02/12/15 - 2 - 6:40 p.m.)

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO THE SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

There were none.

(02/12/15 - 2 - 6:40 p.m.)

APPROVAL OF SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

Motion by Morris, seconded by Smith, carried 4/0, to approve the special meeting agenda, as submitted.

(02/12/15 - 2 - 6:40 p.m.)

1. PRESENTATION - FISCAL YEAR 2016 AND BEYOND: BALANCING REVENUE WITH COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS

Michael Wanchick, County Administrator, gave a presentation entitled "Fiscal Year 2016 and Beyond: Balancing Revenue with Community Expectations." He spoke on maintaining a certain quality of life pursuant to the wishes of the community; revenue versus services; and the budget process. He asked for commission direction on handling the upcoming budget. He addressed the county's budget history through and since the recession and needing 5% annual ad valorem growth to maintain current service levels.

He continued by commenting on:

- Residential growth
- The current and projected demand for services
- The decline in ad valorem revenue since FY 2005 and the impact of property tax reform
- Essential and non-essential underfunded programs
- Unfunded programs and facilities
- Tax dollar allocation and property tax spending
- Governmental fund restrictions
- The programs under the Public Safety umbrella
- General Fund, Fire District and Transportation Trust Fund Reserve utilization
- CIP investments and future CIP needs
- Notable recognitions for the County
- Managing and reducing the cost of government during a recession and a post-recession environment

(7:18 p.m.) He discussed the untapped revenue sources the County had not enacted fees or taxes for and compared the county's sales tax rate with other Florida counties. He spoke on needing realistic solutions for the County's financial options; potential new revenue sources and what they could be used for; and the Commission's budgeting strategies. He said the goal was to find a balance between demand for services and maintaining a high quality of life.

Public Comment

(7:33 p.m.) Gary Easom, 125 Magnolia Hammock Dr., President of the Ponte Vedra Palm Valley Athletic Assoc., complimented the Recreation Department staff on how parks and fields were maintained, and said they wanted to ensure that they continued

to be maintained to current standards. He said that members of his organization overwhelmingly supported a sales tax increase.

(7:36 p.m.) Douglas Worth, 108 Sea Island Lake Ct., Ponte Vedra, spoke on a past millage decrease being the culprit for the current shortfall.

(7:38 p.m.) Tom Turnage, 4114 Herschel St., Jacksonville, representing the South Ponte Vedra Vilano Beach Preservation Assoc., spoke on the effects of beach erosion and said his group supported a 1% sales tax increase and an increase in the Tourist Development Tax, to be allocated to beach restoration.

(7:41 p.m.) Harlan Mason, 3544 Crest St., asked for compassion for taxpayers and that taxes not be increased.

(7:44 p.m.) Bill Korach, 406 Misty Morning Lane, Chairman of the Republican Executive Committee, was opposed to a sales tax increase. He suggested that the projected real estate tax growth rate might be higher than 5%, and offered money saving suggestions.

(7:48 p.m.) Denver Cook, 266 Topsail Dr., President of Success St. Johns, Inc., spoke on revenue and spending, and said he did not support a sales tax increase over concerns of how the funds would be used.

(7:51 p.m.) Bill Dudley, 1072 Alcala Dr., Chairman of the SJC Veterans Council, spoke on the exemplary quality of service provided to the county's veterans. He wanted to ensure that veterans' service organizations were in no way reduced in scope.

(7:54 p.m.) Bob Smith, 309 Summercove Cr., stated that it was his opinion that government was not responsible for its citizens' quality of life; that individual citizens were responsible for their own quality of life. He was opposed to an increased sales tax and suggested that the Board not approve any more rezoning requests for residential development.

(7:57 p.m.) Maria Sullivan, 261 Patrick Mills Cr., was opposed to any sales tax or millage increases. She read a letter from Stephen Joost, regarding management of the golf course, *Exhibit B*.

(8:00 p.m.) Kim Kendall, 5012 Blackhawk Dr., addressed the maximum growth projections and underfunded programs from the presentation, *Exhibit C*, and said she did not support any tax increases.

(8:04 p.m.) Debbie Wiles, 976 Manati Ave., Treasurer of the Friends of the SJC Pet Center, was concerned about funding for Animal Control and the Pet Center. She supported the right of citizens having the opportunity to vote on the sales tax issue.

(8:07 p.m.) Joseph Ryan, 699 Standish Dr., said government's purpose was to protect the rights of citizens, not to take from some people to give to others.

(8:10 p.m.) Liliana Kurpanik, 4245 Nancy St., Hastings, did not support a sales tax increase as it would have a negative impact on low income families.

(8:12 p.m.) Andrea Anthony, 313 N. Shipwreck Ave., said she was responsible for her own quality of life, not the government. She felt that an increase in taxes would negatively affect her quality of life, as she would have less disposable income.

(8:15 p.m.) Tom Dodson, 75 Ponte Vedra Blvd., supported placing the sales tax issue on the ballot to let the voters decide.

(8:16 p.m.) Bill Lazar, 525 W. King St., Executive Director of the St. Johns Housing Partnership, said quality of life was important and supported a sales or gas tax increase so that the County could meet the needs of the citizens.

(8:19 p.m.) Wil Smith, 295 Blvd. Des Pines, introduced a video from Field of Dreams Baseball, a recreational organization for special needs children, to illustrate their need for proper athletic facilities.

(8:25 p.m.) George Vancore, 1920 Perregrine Cr. S., with Creeks Athletic Assoc. and Field of Dreams, commented on the great working relationship they had with the Recreation Department and outlined their needs for facilities and maintenance.

(8:27 p.m.) Dr. Michel Pawlowski, 216 10th St., questioned the creation of a citizens' advisory committee to provide feedback on the budget process; suggested partnering with an educational institution to conduct a study, rather than paying a consultant; and questioned the need for a Sheriff's training facility. He submitted a written copy of his comments, *Exhibit D*.

(8:31 p.m.) Tom Reynolds, 880 A1A South, suggested charging for beach parking, and supported raising the gas and sales tax and putting the issue on the ballot to let voters decide.

(8:34 p.m.) Sheamus McNeeley, 3837 Arrowhead Dr., requested that an economic impact study be conducted to determine how a tax increase would affect the community's quality of life before taking a vote on adding a referendum to the ballot.

(8:36 p.m.) Ron Cavato said he was against new taxes, but that if a new tax was necessary, he would support the gas tax option.

(8:38 p.m.) Mitch Perryman, 1560 CR 13 South, said he was undecided on supporting a tax increase, as the presentation lacked sufficient details to make an informed decision. He wanted to see a comprehensive list, with specific details and associated costs, developed with input from residents.

(8:41 p.m.) Mike Macnamara, 1551 CR 13 South, spoke on the lack of services, particularly emergency services, in the southwest area of the county. He said he would not want to see his 1% sales tax go to subsidize a fire station in Nocatee or golf courses and training facilities, when services were lacking in his area.

(8:43 p.m.) Kelly Lorbeer, 1120 Mill Creek Dr., St. Johns, did not support any tax increases.

(8:44 p.m.) Ed Houston, 244 Odoms Mill Blvd., President of the SJC Professional Firefighters, said that essential and non-essential services should not be pitted against each other and that public safety was essential to maintaining a good quality of life. He requested letting the citizens make the decision.

(8:47 p.m.) Bill McCormick, 9224 July Lane, said the Board's role was to put the tax issue on the ballot and let the voters decide if they wanted to pay an additional tax. He disagreed with the sentiment of other speakers who claimed that the government was not responsible for our quality of life.

(8:51 p.m.) Leslie Cohen, 221 Manuel Ct., representing Villages Athletic Assoc., requested, that in the event a sales tax was imposed, that funds be set aside for the construction of Villages Regional Park, as there was currently insufficient field space in the World Golf Village area.

(8:52 p.m.) Patricia Laurencelle, 23 Versaggi Dr., said that her quality of life was the responsibility of her fellow citizens, that she appreciated the presentation, and felt that the 1% sales tax was the obvious recourse until other resources could be developed.

(8:55 p.m.) Eric West, 2286 W. Clovelly Lane, suggested increasing commercial development and putting the proposed tax increase on the ballot.

(8:57 p.m.) Jon Wicker, 44 Jackson Ave., supported raising the sales and gas tax if the funds were spent properly. He suggested putting the issue to a vote.

(9:00 p.m.) Ron Sanchez, 724 CR 13 South, discussed which services might be eliminated without the tax increases and said that quality of life issues were vital to the community.

(9:04 p.m.) Gary Howell, 170 Harvest Lane, suggested imposing short-term special taxes to pay for certain things, rather than a permanent tax. He challenged the Board to eliminate some of the County's debt.

(9:07 p.m.) Ellen Whitmer, 1178 Natures Hammock Rd. S., commented on living in the JEA service area, despite residing in St. Johns County, and her utility taxes going in to Jacksonville's budget and employee pension plan.

(9:09 p.m.) Jarrett Motes, 4700 N. Francis Rd., did not support a tax increase.

(9:13 p.m.) Wanchick and the commissioners thanked the residents for attending. Bennett asked the residents who did not support a tax increase to send a list of the services they were willing to see cut. Wanchick explained where to get additional information on the budget and how to leave comments.

(02/12/15 - 5 - 9:18 p.m.)
2. OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

(02/12/15 - 5 - 9:18 p.m.)
ADJOURN

With there being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 9:18 p.m.

Approved _____ March 3 _____, 2015

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: _____
Priscilla L. Bennett, Chair

ATTEST: CHERYL STRICKLAND, CLERK

By: Sam Hatterman
Deputy Clerk

