

SJC Civic Roundtable - Minutes of February 13, 2012

Meeting called to Order at 9:07 am

Minutes – one addition correction was made and then approved
Treasurers Report - Bank Balance of \$3115.61 and we currently have 52 member organizations

First Guest Speaker – County Chairman Mark Miner

The Chairman emphasized the County's number 1 priority was economic development and job growth. He stated the addition of Elizabeth Glasgow, partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce, Jax – USA, and UNF's small business development center were all important to the effort. The BCC has also reduced non residential impact fees by 50%. These things along with great school system and low tax rates (2nd lowest in NE Florida) have our county positioned well as we try to attract new jobs to area.

During Q & A the subject of last years CEO Conference at the TPC came up. Commissioner Jay Morris who was also present said that the conference is a go again this year. Governor Scott has committed to attend on Thursday and Senator Rubio has been invited on Friday. It was suggested by Hal that Shad Khan of the Jaguars be invited too.

Chairman Miner also suggested that we thank and appreciate our county employees who have all endured staff cutbacks, furlough days and a freeze in pay over the last few years. On a related note Commissioner Stevenson commended new Fire Chief Carl Shank for his efforts to restructure the fire department. Chief Shanks efforts will save to county approximately \$500K

Second Speaker – Mr. Andrew Witt Executive Director SJC Cultural Council

Mr. Witt shared information on State statute covering tourism and funding (see his bio and presentation bullet points attached). Mr. Witt has been on the job for six weeks and stated on a couple of occasions that he was not interested in what has gone on in the past and was moving forward on the restructuring of the Category 2 grant process. Mr. Witt said there would be accountability measures in place to insure that bed tax dollars were spent in an effective manner and according to statute. Only 1/6 of the funds have been advanced from the BCC to this project. All expenses must be approved by Glen Hastings before the county will release funds. He also was excited about the potential we have to develop cultural tourism

by leveraging our connection to our Latin heritage and the Civil Rights movement. The Underground Railroad Conference will be coming here later this spring for the very first time.

Mr. Witt talked about website development, video streaming and the use of data mining in order to promote the art along with cultural tourism. Mr. Witt confirmed that the old ways of marketing events have been replaced with electronic and social media. We need to change with the times or be left behind.

During Q & A Mr. Witt was asked why a larger percentage of funds were not getting into the hands of the local groups that produce these events. Both Mr. Witt and Commissioner Miner said that during this first year there would be some initial expenses to get this project up and running. It is the intent of the BCC to insure that groups that really qualify for funding under this category get funds and those that have just come to expect the grant money each year are weaned off the program. Mr. Witt said he hopes to give more money to groups each year as the program progresses. Mr. Witt was also asked about repairing some of the issues facing the inner workings of the Cultural Council, He said the Cultural Council is like two different entities operating under one umbrella. Mr. Witt said those issues were board issues and he would not be getting involved. President Bosco suggested that Mr. Witt return in six or seven months to let us know how things were going.

Third Guest Speaker – Dr, Pat Gill of The League of Women’s Voters

Dr. Gill presented a short report on the water crisis we may be facing soon here in Florida (see attached). Dr. Gill and her group are thrilled with our new River Keeper but are alarmed at a decision made in Tallahassee last week that may cause further harm to us here. Dr. Gill said tourism grants won’t matter much if we don’t have an adequate supply of drinking water. It appears that the League of Women’s Voters shares some of the same concerns that Jim McLane of our group has shared recently.

It was brought to the attention of the membership that long time Roundtable and Civic Leader Walter Rohr has fully retired to the mountains of North Carolina. It was suggested the group do something to acknowledge Walter’s years of service. President Bosco will send a letter in the form of a proclamation thanking Walter on behalf of the Roundtable.

Meeting adjourned 11:10 am