

ST JOHNS COUNTY CIVIC ROUNDTABLE

March 12, 2018 Minutes of Meeting

The meeting began at 9:04am.

Secretary's Report: The amended minutes were accepted as read.

Treasurer's Report: \$555.83 currently in our account.

President Lofgren introduced Tim Forson, Superintendent of St Johns County Schools. Mr. Forson has served the St Johns County Schools for 36 years in various capacities. Beginning as a teacher of social studies, Tim moved on to be Principal of Bartram Trail School, and then to Assistant Superintendent for Operations prior to becoming Superintendent of Schools. Married to his wife Janice for over 40 years, the Forson's have four adult children.

The three main areas of emphasis Mr. Forson centered his presentation on were:

- 1) Growth
- 2) Safety
- 3) Future of Schools

The growth of St Johns county student population required 3000 new seats to be added to the schools. The challenge of that growth meant hiring the best teachers available to meet staff requirements. The hiring of science and math teachers (STEM) is particularly difficult and the State is offering a small bonus to assist in securing teachers in high need areas. The need for new schools far outstrips the cash available to build them, the school district has had to borrow the required funds. Based on the economies of scale, the construction of large schools saves money versus building more numerous small schools.

Supt. Forson commented on the Parkland school shootings and the increasing need for safety and security in our schools. Currently, once classes begin the schools have only one entry point, a factor that limits unwanted intrusion into our schools. While many methods are used to keep our students safe, Tim does not support arming of the classroom teachers. Recent state laws allow arming of trained individuals to protect students and staff. Teachers that are exclusively classroom teachers are exempt from the new legislation.

Future of schools is made more problematic because of the low funding from the state. State support of schools in Florida is among the lowest in the country.

General Discussion:

Joy Andrews had several comments:

- a) Sheriff" Dept. seeking a separate purpose directed building.
- b) Tourist Development tax delayed.
- c) Coastal appraisals declined from 40 to 50% ending the MSTU plan for funding coastal beach renourishment.

Linda Oakley expressed disappointment that the impact fee study was not done earlier.

Verna Bacon – Govt. lack of action to deal with beach erosion most troubling.

Several commented on the “Bed Tax” not being paid by many short term rental.

Tony Bosco suggested that an increase in sales tax would be a better solution to fund county operations instead of an ad valorem tax increase.

Motion to adjourn was made and accepted at 11:00am