

## SAINT JOHNS COUNTY CIVIC ROUNDTABLE

12/9/19

### Meeting Minutes

The meeting was opened at 9:00 am by Chairman Jim McLane.

We began with the Pledge of Allegiance, after all Attendees introduced themselves and their Neighborhoods, Home Owners Associations or Organizations they represent.

Our Chair of Government Affairs, Janet Patten introduced our Monthly Meeting Speaker St. Johns County Commissioner Henry Dean, Representing District 5.

Commissioner Dean opened with how he began his career in Government. That he came from Iowa in 1971 to attend FSU to study Law. He graduated in 1974 with his law Degree then worked for 10 years as Council for Land Acquisitions of conservation lands State wide, and here in St. Johns County. Working with Gov Graham and Herb Payton to acquire Guana in 1984. Conserving and Preserving over 48,000 acres in St.Johns County, in the Julington Creek Area, Deep Creek, Moses Creek, Matanzas State Forest, Princess Place, Favor Dykes, and Conch Island. How he was the Executive Director for the South Florida Water Management District for 4 years and then many years as St. Johns Water Management District Director. Working with several Governors over the years and the Department of Environmental Protection to acquire Florida Lands. Next he spoke about the growth here in our county, just to discuss a few. The plans for growth with Nocatee in 2001 and the planning for Silverleaf in 2003. But unfortunately we are falling behind,

there are 14,000 vacant lots and no taxes being paid on these. We need another way to bring revenue into our county. We have one of the lowest bed taxes in the State, if we could increase our bed tax by one cent it be a way to raise our revenue to pay for the services and other expenses we need here in St. Johns County. He went on to explain why the Board did not pass the referendum to raise the bed tax when it came up, it was due to only 3 of the board members voted for it and a super majority of 4 is needed. Lastly he stated that the surest fairest way to promise to preserve our county's natural resources are through land acquisitions programs like Florida Forever Dollars and LAMP programs.

Mr. Dean answered questions from roundtable members.

Was he going to run for his seat again? Answer: He stated he was.

What could we as citizens do to help move the board members to vote for the increase in the bed tax? Answer: Write to all the County Commissioners and ask them to support the increase.

If the LAMP program was going to be reinstated here in St. Johns County? Answer: At this time there isn't any funding for it, but he thought there were some new ideas in the works for funding.

At this time Commissioner Dean had to leave due to a previous county meeting scheduled, he was thanked by both Chairmen and all the members for the time he gave.

Secretary's Report: The minutes of the meeting of November 11th were accepted as written.

Treasurer's Report: A balance of \$406.00 in our account was reported.

We have applied for a new EIN#, in the process of changing bank account to SunTrust as to streamline the accounting and begin to use mobile banking. Membership, Application Forms are available now to update all dues and membership lists. It was stated that telephone numbers would be on membership list only if members provided them. Budget for next year will be discussed at later time. As redesigning the websites in the process, using word press format will have to be looked at for initial fees. We want to have a bigger presence in the Community, using Facebook and adding other ways for the Roundtable to communicate our message and importance with the community.

Suggestions were made to use the Record, Florida Times Union, and other local Newsletters from all areas of the County.

Our Chair of Government Affairs, Janet Patten listed several items of interest-

St.Johns County- At the 12/3/2019 SJC BOCC meeting Richard Hilsenbeck was nominated by Henry Dean and Megan Perkins nominated by Jerimiah Blocker both were approved and appointed to the SJC PZA Board. Comm. Henry Dean will represent SJC BOCC at the Kings Grant lawsuit mediation on 12/19/19 with an anticipated mediation trial later in January 2020. Along with several important subjects, all can be viewed on the Watch GTV Live at SJC Govt website.

City of St.Augustine- First comprehensive set regarding vacation rentals & Air B&Bs will be considered by Commission on 12/9/9. Mayor of St.Augustine will continue to be elected by the citizens. November 21, 2019 the deal for purchasing Fish Island by the

State was completed. , with 6.5 million of Florida Forever Funds. The City wants Fish Island to be managed as a passive park meeting on 1/9/2020 @ 7 PM will be held at the St. Augustine Beach City Hall. On 1/11/2020 from 8 till 12 the Citizen Cleanup @ Fish Island , sign up at Matanzas River Keeper for set times.

City of St. Augustine Beach- The Beach City is in need of more revenue sources.

Embassy Suites is seeking approval to add 42 rooms to the hotel in a 3 story addition.

Their proposal also includes the controversial water park, which was rejected by the Commission.

State of Florida- On 11/15/19 environmental groups filed a brief asking the Florida Supreme Court to decide the dispute with Legislators over Amendment 1. Their claim is that the Legislators did not carry out the Amendment & diverted millions of dollars to other agency expenses.

1000 Friends of Florida filed suit against HB 713 which it claims is retaliatory in its intent to discourage citizen's from challenging development orders & is probably unconstitutional.

Suggestion was made to have the Roundtable write a resolution to the Florida Legislature to Repeal HB 7103.

Two motions were made, seconded and approved by the Roundtable membership.

Further discussions were had by the members on the 300 miles of turnpike and how it will ruin several counties environments, Kings Grant Lawsuit, Parrish Farms

Development, First Coast Highway & its relationship to Silverleaf, education in SJC, Citizens have concerns of Vacation Rentals in SJC- Dennis Chapman will be meeting with Paul Waldron on this subject 12/9/19, Joy Andrews mentioned that she believed the subject of funding (*funding could be provided by citizen's to round up their utility bills*) for the LAMP program might be brought up at this week's BOCC meeting 12/17/19, concern about clear cutting of trees, County Tree Ordinance, Member stated reason for clearcutting is SJC Roads have to be built up higher, Tourist Development Tax and Bed Tax Discussion, Mickler Beaches and message to remind Commissioners that the Roundtable exists.

Our next SJC Civic Roundtable meeting is Monday January 13th, 2020 at 9:00am.

Meeting adjourned 11:12.

Maureen Long, Secretary