

St. Johns County Civic Roundtable

February 8, 2016

Minutes of Meeting

President Lofgren called the meeting to order at 9:08am

Secretary's Report: The minutes of the January 11, 2016 were accepted as read.

Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer reported a balance of \$771.63.

President Lofgren introduced Caren Goldman, co-founder of Compassionate St. Augustine. (along with Jim Vandeberg and Rev. Ted Vorhees.)

St. Augustine was the first "compassionate city " in Florida and the 20th in the world. According to Ms. Goldman, there are now over 300 compassionate cities in the world. Our sister city Aviles, Spain has also become a compassionate city . According to Caren, compassionate cities sign a charter based on the "Golden Rule" and work to make compassion a verb.

One project involved the creation and placement of beautiful obelisks throughout the city themed on

compassion. In addition, twenty six schools were given 4 ft. obelisks to decorate based on compassion. 474 students participated after given a brief presentation on the background and objectives of the Compassionate City.

Wards Creek Middle School students were selected for the most outstanding design and were privileged to meet with the King and Queen of Spain during their recent visit. No government funds were used for the Obelisk Project.

President Lofgren introduced Rev. Warren Clark who discussed “Compassion in Action”, a program to reduce the prison population in the U.S.A. Rev. Clark pointed out that with 5% of the world’s population, the U.S. has 25% of the world’s prison population. The program focuses on facilitating the return of prisoners to the outside world with approaches that reduce recidivism and break down barriers to successful employment. The racial divides in law enforcement and unequal treatment by the courts also must be addressed according to Rev. Clark.

Discussion:

Linda Oakley: Drug addiction at center of prison problem.

Rev. Clark: Mandatory sentences are often way out of proportion to the crime.

Ruth Weber: Brought up “Drug Courts” which apparently are no longer functioning.

Doug Worth: Demand for drugs from wealthy people help stoke the prison treadmill for drug sellers. Also pointed out that in some countries drug dealers are executed rather than jailed. Several others chimed in on this topic.

Civic Roundtable member Bill McCormick has been appointed to the committee that will establish spending priorities for the additional education funds created by the increase in the County Sales Tax approved last year.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dennis Froio

Secretary