

ST JOHNS COUNTY CIVIC ROUNDTABLE

MINUTES OF MEETING

July 13, 2015

Meeting called to order by President Rick Lofgren at 9:00 am

The Minutes of the June 8, 2015 meeting were approved as read.

The Treasurer reported a balance of \$1,585.94.

President Lofgren introduced the guest speaker;

Dr. Joseph Joyner, Superintendent of St. Johns County Schools

Subject- School Board pursuing one half percent increase in sales tax to fund Capital Improvements.

Dr. Joyner began the presentation with some history to clarify how the school district has gotten into a situation requiring it to pursue a one half percent increase in sales tax to help fund some Capital Improvements .

He explained there are two parts to the budget-

1. The Capital portion used to build schools, debt payment, maintenance, technology, buses, equipment, security improvements, relocatable classrooms (portables).
2. The Operating Budget pays for salaries, benefits, utilities, instructional materials, and consumable supplies.

Funds from one portion of the budget cannot be transferred to another portion and the District must operate on a balanced budget.

In the past 10 years the District has seen a growth of 44%, adding approximately 10,000 students. In response the district has built new schools, but they are not sufficient to handle the projected growth. In 2014-2015 an additional 1,558 students came into the system. This is the equivalent of two elementary schools or one high school.

In 2008-2009 the State Legislature reduced the allowable millage levy from 2.0 mills to 1.75 mills.

In 2009-2010 the State Legislature again reduced the allowable millage levy from 1.75 mills to 1.5 mills.

The District has calculated this loss in Capital funding from 2008 to the present to be approximately \$180,000,000. The reduction was not seen by the taxpayers as the funds were diverted to K-12 statewide operating costs .**

The Legislature has again refused to restore the .5 millage reduction to the schools. This forces the District to seek out other local sources of revenue.

In 2007-2008 the property values before the millage decrease were \$24.7 Billion, raising \$47million for the District. In 2014-2015 the assessed property values are \$20.1 Billion and generate just \$29 million for the district. Yet the district has grown 44% during this time.**

Dr Joyner referred to the situation as a perfect storm;

the Legislature reduced the funds available to schools at the same time

as a recession forced property values to decrease , at the same time as

the district experienced a 44% growth.

Impact fees were discussed and their significance is insufficient to affect the deficit necessary to provide funding commensurate with growth.

Housing and population growth will continue in the future, the current predictions are that 20 more new schools will be required in the next 10 years.

Currently the equivalent population of nine elementary schools are housed in portable classrooms thru out the District. These are leased not owned. The portables present their own set of issues. Safety; children must walk in inclement weather from building to school; population is not all under one roof. In the event of a storm the children must all be brought into the main building. Currently St Johns leads the state in the number of portables used. The class size mandate also has an impact on the number of students in a room and increases the need for portables.

Regarding education monies from the Florida State Lottery, those funds are used mostly for mandated programs and very little actually goes toward operating expense.**

It is clear that the one half percent increase in the sales tax is of great importance if the District is expected to continue to be the best School District in the State and to continue to give quality education to our children. To not increase the tax could result in dramatically larger schools, more portable classrooms, more safety and security concerns and the possibility of split sessions.

Dr Joyner's power point presentation is attached.

** (Note: Some statistical information obtained from Record Article July 15, 2015)

Other Business

Linda Oakley provided a presentation regarding impact fees, their history and significance.

Included was a discussion regarding the actual payment of dollars vs. impact fee credits which are paid by the donation of land for public uses such as schools and fire/rescue. Land donations and roadway construction also falls under impact fee credits. The impact fees can only be used for the development they are associated with.

Attached is a copy of Linda Oakley's power point.

Jerry Cameron, reported on the Veteran's Administration Hearing he recently testified at in Washington, DC. The end result is he expects to hear shortly the VA will have found an interim home and has a firm plan in place for the future.

Meeting adjourned at 11:10 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Tony Bosco