

ST. JOHNS COUNTY CIVIC ROUNDTABLE  
3/9/20 Meeting Minutes

The meeting was opened at 9:00 am by Chairman Jim McLane. He asked all to stand and join in to say the Pledge of Allegiance. Followed by welcoming our guest speakers SJC Assistant County Administrators Joy Andrews and Brad Bradley.

Joy Andrews began by telling us about herself, she attended the University of International Trade Law and earned a Masters Degree in Public Administration. Joy started in SJC as a budget analyst in the county management & budget office before becoming Assistant County Administrator in 2015. She explained her responsibilities as an Assistant County Administrator, they are in the Community Service areas, such as Parks & Recreation, Library, Fire & Rescue, and Tourist Development.

Next Brad Bradley introduced himself and began by telling us he worked as a Prosecutor in the private sector for 15 years before becoming chief administrative officer/general counsel for Hunter Conrad at the clerk of court office. He has been with the county for 2 months and has much to learn. As an Assistant County Administrator his responsibilities are within Public Works, MIS, Growth Management and other areas.

It was stated that many of Joy and Brad's responsibilities to county business overlap as they work together on many items.

Chairman McLane made notice of others from County staff joining this morning with Joy and Brad. He asked if they would introduce themselves. They were Paolo Soria, County Attorney, Joseph Cearley and Mike Roberson both from Growth Management.

The floor was opened for questions-

Is the Beach Renourishment Project on Schedule?

County Staff: Yes, South beach is on schedule. The Army Corp of Engineers are handling that project and the BOCC has approved the financing for this project. North Beach renourishment project's application was denied by FEMA 4 months ago but will be resubmitted. The BOCC are committed to this project with the proposed cost of 30 million dollars.

What is the Projection for growth in the County concerning utilities?

County Staff: St. Johns County is still interested in acquiring the part of JEA located in northern St. Johns, they are doing this by correspondence.

Chairman McLane said that he had been to the Water Facility Plant and learned that some of the wells have gone dry, so water had to be pumped from other county areas. He asked, should citizens be concerned about inadequate water supply, especially with all the new growth in the southern part of the county?  
Brad Bradley: I am not aware and will check with Bill Young the SJC Utility Director.

What is the County's Plan and Vision for Growth in our County as our's is one of the fastest-growing counties in the country?

County Staff: We are working on revising parts of the Comp Plan, they will start with Land development Workshops. Looking to see what laws will come from new Legislation before working on a formalized revision.

What kind of smart growth plans are set in place to support all the new population coming into SJC?

County Staff: As a group the BOCC are aware of the need for smart growth, when looking at the impacts of growth comes the need for transportation, affordable housing and other infrastructures. Impact fees help to support these kinds of infrastructures.

It was stated that there are 60,000 units permitted but impact fees haven't been paid yet.

County Staff: We are looking to the County Commissioners for support and guidance on this subject.

Vivian Browning brought up the 1985 Growth Management Act, it's a 5 year review of the county's plan for review with the public and state. (The GMA mandates state-supervised, local-level, comprehensive planning based on principles of growth management).

We know there are plans from the Airport to SR 313 down to SR 312, where can these plans be found?

County Staff: The Public can review the plans on file now on the FDOT website for the 2040 Plan.

Do we know what is SJC's plan, where it is and when can it be reviewed by the public? What is the cycle of times used for these plans?

Palo Soria: It's a 15 year planning process, reviewed in 7 years. The last update was 2017 for cost elements. The next is in 2024 and will adopt more flexibility.

Joy Andrews: The county has their own process. It brings more flexibility along with better fiscal responsibility, and able to reinvest into infrastructure.

When will the results from the 2070 Workshop that was sponsored by 1000 Friends of Florida and the Matanzas River Keeper in November 2019 be presented to the BOCC and the County Citizens?

Joy Andrews: There are certain staff members to contact and a process, the correct staff members or correct process needs to be followed to be placed on the Board's agenda.

The Representative, Jen Lomberk, from 2070 Workshop stated that she had followed all of the procedures she was recommended to follow by staff.

Joy Andrews: That the 2070 Workshop is on hold for now because they have a lot of requests, policy requests and the way they help the board when responding to these requests is to look at long term vision requests.

A Representative from the NE Florida Builders Association, Beth Breeding, stated that they are looking for guidance and updates from the County on where growth should be, it would be better if they were told by the County where it would be best to develop, rather than them having to scramble and have to beg for support on development projects.

Several statements were made by two of the Citizens 4 A New Tree Ordinance, who have been working since 2014 concerning clearcutting and objecting to it being used as a normal policy in our county. Citizen's are greatly concerned as more and more trees and soil are being ripped out to level lands for development only to have fill dirt brought in to build up the land for this development. The beauty of our county along with its trees are being destroyed. And when you remove existing trees and replace with other trees they don't survive just as was done with the nine live oaks along A1A, they didn't survive, they are all dead. Where are we with respect for a meaningful ordinance? The Commissioners and citizens have been waiting since 2016 for the new tree ordinances. At the May 2019 BOCC meeting the staff was advised by the Commissioners to go back and work on a better tree ordinance, this was after a large number of citizen's presented evidence and testimony that the policy of clearcutting was unwanted by citizens and also developers who oppose the policy as well. Then in August 2019 the tree ordinance was to be presented at another BOCC meeting, at which time County Staff postponed their presentation. What happened to that ordinance? Will the County's Tree Ordinance be reviewed and presented to the public? How much input will the public have before the ordinance is presented to the County Commissioners? What happened to the newest Tree Ordinance that was presented on the County WebSite, where did it go? It was never rescheduled, why?

County Staff: We are trying to find a middle ground. We received lots of public opposition to the draft. We may hold more workshops with the public, county staff and developers.

Commissioner Waldron: The ordinance wasn't what we asked the staff to do. Staff was directed to look at individual areas. That new ordinance did not have those individual areas, it was a one size fits all. We just recently increased fines for cutting trees without a permit.

Why can't we adopt the same Tree Ordinances the City of St. Augustine has?

County Staff: The city is very different than the county, the county builds the roads, the roads have to be built higher for better drainage.

Commissioner Waldron: The City doesn't collect any impact fees as the County does, that is how the County pays for our roads.

Will we see a new ordinance before there aren't any more trees left?

County Staff: We will be working on it and reporting updates on our website.

A Representative of NE Florida Builders Association, Beth Bedding, stated that the Builder's Ass'n has a new innovative comprehensive plan that they are anxious to share with the county and could be part of the solution.

We will need money to match for the Florida Forever now that the Legislature is funding that program again, how and when can we start the LAMP again?

County Staff: There are lots of competing interests in the county for funding. Many of the subjects today can be followed on the County's website.

The County's web site is hard to maneuver when trying to find information. It's very hard to navigate, especially the front page. Have you all looked at the Website?

Commissioner Waldron: I agree, I have a hard time navigating it myself.

County Staff: We are looking to update it.

Brad Bradley: This is a very hard job, there are many moving parts on a daily basis.

Vice Chair Lisa McGlynn: I understand the difficult job the Administrators and the county representatives present have, however that through transparency and open communication with groups such as ours, the SJC Civic Roundtable and our Citizens, we can work as partners with our County Administrators and Staff to improve the quality of life, the beauty we have here in St. Johns County and the reasons many of us love about living here.

Chairman McLane: What's the plan for the purchase of 31,000 acres of timberland in southern SJC that was bought by a New York real estate investment group? (A map was presented and shared with all by Chair McLane. The map shows its 6% total account of County property its 33,000 acres that's over 50 square miles.)

Commissioner Waldron: Stated that he was aware of the purchase. He also stated that he believed the purchaser has no intention of developing right now and that the Timber Company will be replanting there. The owner of the land made his money building affordable housing behind strip malls.

How is the County going to handle Short Term Rentals?

Joseph Cearley: The County has held a meeting in January of this year to get input from full time residents and the short term vacation rental owners and from that they drafted 2 separate ordinances that are available on the County's web site for review. We are also looking into permits for operating, signage and parking, added administrative costs need to be anticipated. We are waiting to hear how the Legislature is going to handle short term rentals.

What about Short Term Rentals/ B&Bs that are in or attached to a residence home?

Joseph Cearley: Those are exempt from the short term rental ordinances.

Chairman McLane thanked Joy and Brad for speaking and the other County Staff Representatives that attended and invited all back again.

Official Roundtable Business proceeded.

The Treasurer's report was given by Lisa McGlynn. She reported that the BBVA bank account has been closed and the remaining \$200 dollars were deposited in the Suntrust Account. Dues collected amounted to over \$1000.00.

Vice Chair/ Treasurer Lisa McGlynn thanked those who have already paid their membership for 2020.

Janet Patten, Chair of Government Affairs had much to report, as the 60 day legislation session is scheduled to end on Friday, 3/13/20. Thus so far if everything follows through- Florida Forever: Senate approved \$125 million- House agreeing to \$100 million. Encouraged by remarks such as "Let the Emails Stop" observers laughed and applauded. Emails/Grass Roots do work, they have been good for SJC. They agreed to \$650 million for Everglades, 25 million above Governor's request. This is significant because it means no funds are to be taken away from conservation programs.

Teachers pay increases- monies towards increases \$500 -\$600 million.

25 million for Corona Virus.

50 million allocated for Visit Florida which was due to expire in June, it lives another year.

State workers will get an increase 3% across the board- these workers lost 3% of pay this year for new pension contributions.

Governor DeSantis signed into law legislation allowing law enforcement vehicles in residential neighborhoods & prohibits HOAs from creating by-laws which prevent law enforcement from parking in communities.

Reminder : April 1: This is Census Day, a key reference date for the 2020 Census—not a deadline. When you respond, you'll tell the Census Bureau where you live as of April 1, 2020, and include everyone who usually lives and sleeps in your home. You can respond before or after that date. We encourage you to respond as soon as you can.

Vice Chair Lisa McGlynn gave a Power Point Presentation on the results from the SJC Civic Roundtables Survey Results.

A few examples are, Do You Find Value in the Roundtable? 90.9% Yes  
9% No

What Suggestions Do You Have For The Future? Keep getting good speakers, Become more involved in the community, Raise the county gas tax, Continue to monitor County Commissioners and more emphasis on environmental conservation. The full presentation can be found in an attachment at the end of March 9, 2020 Minutes.

At this time the floor is open for discussion or news to be shared, we begin by going around the table.

Citizens Task Force/Doug: We have \$1 million for one project on A1A.

Robert Olson Member at Large reported on the Governor's doubts that 15 new positions at the state level could monitor the 4,413 short term rentals. Great discussion this morning, I hope it will be reported in the minutes.

Ed: Very informative and enlightening, thank you.

Shorty Robbins, State Representative Cyndi Stevenson's Assistant, reported on News from Tallahassee Legislature HB 1011 and SB 1128 concerning short term rentals being regulated by the state of 2020, are dead and gone.

Jen: It's important for Government to have transparency with its citizens.

Russ Scott: The clearcutting is out of hand, there are less and less trees on SR210. I appreciate the transmission of information, but we need to preserve what makes the county unique. Don't make SJC like southern Florida has become.

John Pilecki Chair of our Education Committee reported that at tomorrow School Board Meeting they will be discussing concerns for the Corona Virus.

Sacha: Citizens Involvement is so important.

Vivian: Public and private, need to work together to take on a neighborhood visioning partnership. Remember slab construction is inferior, stem wall is so much better as a foundation for the trees and land around us.

Rick: We have great people, accessible, blessed to have a great staff.

Amy: Impressed by the County staff's accessibility.

Sarah: So glad she could get a ride with Shorty, she feels right at home at the meeting today. She would like people to come out her way and see all the growth that's happening so fast and invite people from her neighborhood to the Roundtable meetings.

Chairman McLane thanked everyone for attending and called the meeting to adjourn at 11:02.

Respectfully,  
Maureen Long. Secretary