

St. Johns County Civic Roundtable Minutes
May 11, 2020

Submitted by
Maureen Long, Recording Secretary

The meeting was opened at 9:00 am by Chairman Jim McLane. Chairman McLane greeted Representative Cyndi Stevenson and everyone to our meeting. Using the flag in Representative Stevenson's office as our focal point, all joined in to say the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman McLane turned the floor over to Janet Patten, Chair of Government of Affairs who made the introductions of our guest speakers and the order in which they would be speaking, starting with Rep. Stevenson followed by Rep. Paul Renner.

Chairwoman Patten welcomed Rep. Stevenson by thanking her for attending this morning and her many years of service to our county, first as a County Commissioner for over 10 years and for the past 5 years as our State Representative.

Rep. Stevenson began by explaining what steps the Legislators and Governor were doing in preparations to help the citizens during the Pandemic, providing immediate assistance, upgrading computers with new formats, and providing personal protective equipment.

Rep. Stevenson told us what bills she had worked on during this legislative session. She sponsored many bills, like HB 1073, that was passed and established the Statewide Office of Resiliency. While others die out, many became companions to other bills, for example North Beach and Dune Restoration, Ponte Vedra Road Improvements, Money for West Augustine Septic to Sewer, Lincolnville African American Museum and Cultural Center, assistance to EPIC Residential Treatment Center, and provide Fire-fighters equipment to help protect them from cancer, along with other bills that will benefit St. Johns County.

Rep. Stevenson thanked the Roundtable for its civic duty to our county by sharing COVID-19 Information Updates, Stimulus Bill Updates and other valuable information by keeping the citizens informed through the Roundtable's weekly newsletters.

Rep. Paul Renner came onto Zoom and was welcomed by Rep. Stevenson and Janet Patten. It was stated that he is to become the future speaker of the Florida House in 2022, making him the first legislator from Northeast Florida to do so.

He thanked the Roundtable for the invitation and expressed he was happy to speak with us this morning. At this time with the Pandemic the state has brought Health Care to the forefront, opened greater access, repealed and expanded Florida's Hospital Certificate of need. He explained that although many good bills and special projects came out of this legislative session unfortunately with the expenditures for fighting COVID and revenue shortfalls, that might be the cause for special projects to have to go. April reserves are

low and we don't know what May will bring. Do we have enough in Reserves? July first opens the Fiscal Year of 2019-2020 budget, and hopefully we will be able to use the Federal monies for some of our budget, if that will be allowed.

He said that he and Rep. Stevenson had worked together this session on getting the Workforce Development Programs, Technical Training in education funded. He spoke on how many of the bills that came out of this session have to do with expansion of hospitals and to help with the shortfalls of medical health providers. By opening access by a PA or APRN under the supervision of a doctor providing the care to patients.

Rep. Renner spoke about the importance of our water. How the Whitney Lab has a program with real time sensors to test the Matanzas River and the SJR Management tests the water quality in the St. Johns River. Being that we are surrounded by water, we need to protect it and work together to stop Algae blooms, to improve our waters quality.

It was coming up on 9:30, Rep. Renner had to leave as he had another engagement, but thanked the Roundtable for having him and wished everyone well.

Wanda Forest from the North Florida Transportation Planning Agency, presented the 5 year Work Program for St. Johns County. She presented a Power Point with maps and details of each project. (This presentation can be found at www.sjroundtable.org in the minutes page)

There were a number of questions that came up during the presentation. Ms. Forest responded that she would send back the answers.

1. Concerning the work to be done on I-95 (SR 9) are any of these additions or reconstruction going to be toll roads or toll areas?
2. Members stated concerns about SR 313 and lack of space for ROWs, it's a narrow 2 lane highway, how far will they have to cut into the tree lines? How wide will SR 313 become?
3. SR 313 from 207 to S.Holmes Blvd. the new Road Construction, is that being built so cars will be rerouted on that new road while construction is being done to widen Holmes Blvd.? Will this new Road be a connection area just for road traffic or for the use of access for new development properties?
4. On the project of KING STREET (SR 5A) FROM MALAGA ST TO AVENIDA MENENDEZ (SR A1A) concerns were stated about rerouting of traffic during the work and what is going to happen to the ROW areas for bikes and car parking?
5. Why is the proposed A1A multi-use trail extending from Magnolia Street northward along A1A up to Mickler Road in Ponte Vedra not listed in the range of TPO projects that were covered in this presentation? The TPO has supported the St. Augustine to Ponte Vedra trail segment to the point that an FDOT feasibility study has been funded and is nearly complete. Any word on the start of this project?

6. There is a proposal to call the new segment “First Coast Greenway”, is that going to be the official adopted name? When will that project start and what’s the cost?

7. Is the First Coast Expressway going to be a toll road throughout at all points?

* The answers to these questions can be found on page 5, after John Pilecki’s Report on the 5/12/20 School Board meeting.

Representative Stevenson stated that she had another appointment and had to leave, again she was thanked for giving her time this morning.

Chairman McLane asked that we move onto Roundtable business.

All were asked if they read the minutes from 4/13/20. Motions were made, minutes were voted on and accepted.

The Treasurer’s report was given and it was reported that there was a positive bank balance with approximately \$1200 in the bank.

Janet Patten, Chair of Government Affairs reported that the request to appeal the Ponte Vedra Zoning and Adjustment Board and Ponte Vedra Architectural Review Committee approvals for the proposed Gate C-Store/Gas Station and Carwash, located at 330 A1A North will be coming before the BCC tomorrow, May 12th, 2020 meeting.

On April 29, 2020 Governor DeSantis, based on data showing a downward turn of hospital visits for COVID-19-like syndromic cases, a decrease in positive test results and a significant increase in hospital capacity, has issued Executive Order 20-211 initiating Phase 1 of the Safe. Smart. Step-by-Step. Plan for Florida’s Recovery.

This past Saturday “Rock the Pantry” was held in response to the increased demand and urgent need experienced by local food assistance programs due to COVID-19. SJC has partnered with United Way of SJC, the St. Augustine Amphitheatre for a “drive-thru” food drive to help restock critically-low local food pantries. Another drive will be held on one on Saturday, May 16 at the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall.

During open discussion, the subject of the upcoming Amendment to Article IV, and Article XII, Definition of Protected Tree of the Land Development Code was brought up. Concerns were stated that the protected trees were limited to southern red cedars and sand live oaks, and did not include live oaks. It was also pointed out that the protection area was only on the east side of the ICW, Matanzas and Tolomato Rivers. Members voted in favor of the Roundtable writing a resolution with recommendations to include the live oak in the definition of protected trees and expand the line of protection westward, this would be in a letter form to be emailed to each Commissioner.

Chairman McLane adjourned the meeting at 11:03

The following is a report prepared by John Pilecki on behalf of The SJC Civic Roundtable:

I attended the virtual (sound only) school board meeting Tuesday morning, May 12th. Here are some highlights:

- The following Board members were in attendance: Beverly Slough (District 1, Board Chair); Tommy Allen (District 2); Bill Mignon (District 3); Kelly Barrera (District 4); Patrick Canan (District 4, Board Vice-Chair). Also, Superintendent Tim Forson
- The meeting began on time at 9:00 am
- The first forty minutes of the meeting were devoted to citations recognizing accomplishments of teachers, students, teacher aides, and substitute teachers. Also, proclamations for "Children's Mental Health Day (May 7); School Nurse Day (May 6); Teacher and Substitute Teacher Appreciation Month (May). Also recognized and honored were four former SJCS D teachers who had recently died.
- Mr. Allen thanked the IT staff for planning and executing the "virtual graduations" for grads from the six district high schools.
- Supt. Forson spoke of the pressure being put on the district to schedule traditional graduations. There is a FB page devoted to criticism of the decision to allow each HS to decide how to honor grads virtually rather than a districtwide traditional ceremony. Supt. Forson has declined to set a date for a "makeup" traditional district-wide graduation, and also has not set a date for the start of the 2020/2021 academic year; these dates might have to be changed due to the coronavirus, causing more confusion and possibly putting students and staff in jeopardy.
- A presentation was made about the coronavirus school closing related Memorandums of Understanding made between the District and the St. Johns Education Association (SJEA). The contract had first been extended to April 15th, then to May 1st, and most recently to June 30th. A staff member who had been in charge of an activity before the closing of schools would be paid for those duties if they were active in some way during the closing, such as holding yearbook meetings virtually. There was also language involving teacher end-of-year responsibilities, The Memorandums of Understanding were approved unanimously by the Board.
- There was an upward adjustment to the fund balance of \$427,034.08 thanks to payments for child care fees, room rentals, etc. since the closing of schools in March. The appropriations balance of \$7,850,501.71 was approved unanimously by the Board.

The following closing comments were made by Board Members:

- Mr. Canan listed as priorities for the district: 1) Keep employees and kids safe. 2) Start school in August. 3) Decreasing the gaps in educational opportunities and achievement among the "haves" and "have nots" - particularly students in technical programs. 4) Early identification of students who have dropped behind in their learning.
- Ms. Barrera agreed with Mr. Canan that the schools must work to "fill all the gaps" that exist among student achievement. She expressed gratitude for how the entire school community has come together to deal with disruptions caused by the coronavirus.
- Mr. Allen spoke on behalf of students who have been "in a deficit" due to lack of technology resources - not so much during the closings because the district has provided laptops and hot spots, but during the rest of their time in school. More attention should be paid to students who do not plan to attend college. Mr. Allen wondered aloud what

effect the disruptions caused by the coronavirus will have on the Culinary and Hospitality programs offered by the district.

- Mr. Mignon spoke of the importance of state and federal sources of revenue. He announced that the district's "Virtual High School" will recognize their graduates this evening (virtually, of course!). All other high schools will honor graduates virtually, using the schedule that had been planned for the traditional graduations, May 13th through May 23rd.
- Ms. Slough announced that Cathy Mittelstadt, St. Johns County School District's Deputy Superintendent of Operations, has accepted the position of Superintendent of the Flagler County School District. Ms. Slough thanked Ms. Mittelstadt for her service to the St. Johns County School District.
- Supt. Forson closed the meeting with an announcement that a task force has been formed to plan for the opening of the 2020-2021 school year. He stressed the importance of using caution when adjusting to changing conditions.
- The meeting adjourned at 10:30 am

May 11
TIP Presentation
Wanda Forest
North Florida Transportation Planning Organization
Answers to Questions Asked at the May 11, 2020 Meeting

1. Concerning the work to be done on I-95 (SR 9) are any of these additions or reconstruction going to be toll roads or toll areas? **No new toll roads are planned at this time beyond the two segments of I-295.**

2. Members stated concerns about SR 313 and lack of space for ROWs, it's a narrow 2 lane highway, how far will they have to cut into the tree lines? How wide will SR 313 become? **The North Florida TPO L RTP Cost Feasible plan calls for SR 313 to be a 6-lane roadway between SR 207 and SR 16 and a 4-lane roadway between SR 16 and US 1. However, due to cost limitations the current plans only call for a 2-lane roadway between SR 207 and S Holmes Blvd. All right-of-way being acquired is being purchased consistent with the ultimate typical section.**

3. SR 313 From 207 to S. Holmes Blvd Questions were asked about 313 and the changes proposed on Holmes Blvd. What is the plan for the rest of 313 going to the south? **See response to Question 2. What is the plan for 312? Currently there are no plans for upgrades to SR-312. Any requested upgrades would originate in St. Johns County's List of Priority Projects (LOPP) submitted to the TPO. How is the traffic from 313 going to impact 312? See attached PPT from a 2016 public presentation about the project.**

4. On the project of KING STREET (SR 5A) FROM MALAGA ST TO AVENIDA MENENDEZ (SR A1A) concerns were stated about rerouting of traffic during the work and what is going to happen to the ROW areas for

bikes and car parking? Due to COVID-19, the public hearing for this project has not yet been scheduled. This project will require a public meeting at some point and we plan to discuss the maintenance of traffic. We are tentatively scheduled to receive bids Fall 2022. Traffic will be maintained throughout the length of construction. There are no existing bicycles lanes on King St within the project limits. Bicycles will continue to use the travel lanes during MOT like they do today. Due to the tight ROW along the corridor parking areas will be used for construction phasing. Where possible parking will be maintained.

5. Why was the proposed A1A multi-use trail extending from Magnolia Street northward along A1A up to Mickler Road in Ponte Vedra not listed in the range of TPO projects that were covered in the presentation at the Roundtable Meeting? The TPO has supported the St. Augustine to Ponte Vedra trail segment to the point that an FDOT feasibility study has been funded and is nearly complete. Any word on the start of this project? The project was not highly ranked on St Johns County's List of Priority Projects (LOPP). Currently there is no funding for this project.

6. There is a proposal to call the new segment "First Coast Greenway", is that going to be the official adopted name? When is that projected to start and what's the cost? There is no official branding name for the concept of the Greenway through Northeast Florida. Due to cost of a continuous trail throughout the Northeast Florida area, future plans will be handled in segments. Currently, two segments are planned/underway, the Amelia Island Trail in Nassau County and the Timucuan Trail in Duval County.

7. Is the First Coast Expressway going to be a toll road throughout at all points? All the road will be tolled except for trips that only use the expressway to cross the St. Johns River.

8. First Coast expressway:

1. Will the project be delayed due to COVID 19 funding issues? No announced delays in any FDOT projects at this time

2. It appears the project will be constructed in Saint Johns County in segments, unless I am reading the graphics wrong. It appears the new bridge is to be built first, extending RT 23 from Clay into Saint Johns, but ending at CR 16A for a few years before being extended east to I-95. If this is so, how will major toll road traffic navigate further north, south, and east on our County Roads? The current plan is to let the bridge segment in FY 21/22 and the remainder connection to I-95 in FY 22/23; this plan will result in both segments opening to traffic at about the same time (the major bridge segment will take longer to construct).

3. Or perhaps the entire stretch from the bridge to I-95 is to be completed at the same time so that traffic moves directly from Clay County, across the bridge, and east to I-95? See previous response.

4. I have received traffic count estimates from FDOT, including vehicle exit / entry estimates at each new interchange. I have asked the County Transportation Department where these cars will go once they have exited off the Expressway, and I have been told that existing County Roads can handle this new traffic. While that seems unimaginable to me, I'd like to know if the County / FDOT / and TPO have coordinated and planned for any new County road constructions due to traffic introduced here by the Expressway? SR 16A? SR 13? Other? Any currently planned new roadways would be shown in the

Work Program/TIP. Generally the expressway diverts traffic from the local road system to the expressway resulting in lower volumes on the local roadways