

St. Johns County Civic Roundtable
Minutes of Meeting
Monday May 9, 2011

Attendees: Anthony Bosco, Mary Saunders, Rick Lofgren, Bill Jones, Doug Worth, Hal Young, Linda Oakley, Ed O'Sullivan, Jim Walter, Jay Morris, Pierre Pierce, Jerry Cameron, Walt Rohrer, William P. O'Malley, Ed Olsen, Bill McCormick, Mary Kohnke, Carl Bloesing, Len Kaufman, Linda Stoughton, Ray Ashton, Ridge Bolgiano, Whitney Qualls, Vivian Browning

Meeting called to Order 9:07 AM

Minutes of the April meeting read and approved with one spelling correction.

Treasurers Report – Mary Saunders reported we currently have 50 members with 20 of those paid. Our current bank balance is \$4118.82

President Bosco reported that our April guest speaker from the St. Johns County Education Foundation was asking for a letter of support from the Roundtable. Even though the budget has been finalized, it was agreed that we send a letter to Governor Rick Scott in support of the foundation and its goals. It was agreed that even though the budget was finalized that there would be some changes and adjustments and our letter might provide some support if said adjustments did indeed take place.

Guest speaker Vivian Browning was on hand to present information on the Anastasia Mosquito Control Board. Ms. Browning shared some history, goals and a look at the future of the Mosquito Control Board which included;

- Established in 1948 to serve the Anastasia Island area
- In 1964 the district began to service Ponte Vedra
- Julington Creek and the northwest part of the county came on line in 1992
- In 2003 Hastings was also included
- Current budget for board is \$2.8 million
- Current millage rate is .1325
- Currently employs 26 full time and 8 seasonal – part timers

Purpose of the Mosquito Control Board

1. Kill existing mosquitoes
2. control larvae & population growth before birth
3. Research to prevent the spread of disease

Ms. Browning made clear that the AMCD collects and spends specific funds for the specific purpose of mosquito control. Future plans still include a possible new central location on higher ground next to the new Emergency Operations Center on State Road 16. In 2011 and 2012 the ACMD and its employees will continue to work on the control of the mosquito population and the control of mosquito borne disease. This is especially important as we prepare to host the 450th celebration of the City of Saint Augustine. The mosquito control board meets on the second Thursday of each month at 6:30 PM at the AMCD office on Anastasia Island. To learn more the web address is www.amcdsjc.org

Guest Speakers Ray Ashton and Linda Stoughton from St. Johns County Emergency Management. Mr. Ashton gave a brief reminder about preparedness and shared a little about the new facility on State Road 16. Ms. Stoughton talked at length about the upcoming storm season and some changes made at the national level that will be learned and implemented here locally. Highlight from Ms. Stoughton's presentation included;

- Four pronged approach to disaster by SJC Emergency Management;
 1. Mitigate – a great deal of staff time is spent on mitigation. Trying to predict the needs of EM staff to make dealing with disaster less grave or painful.
 2. Preparation – getting ready for the impending emergency – again a significant amount of staff time is spent in this area. Of the proper supplies, personnel and plans are in place, it makes dealing with the disaster easier on everyone.
 3. Response – when disaster strikes, the efforts put forth in steps one and two allow the county to respond to the needs of citizens.
 4. Recover – what happens after the disaster? This step includes restocking supplies and most importantly filing the correct with the Federal Government to insure the county is reimbursed for expense. This is a long and tedious process that takes years.

Predictions for the 2011 storm season include;

- 11 named storm systems are predicted
- 6 are predicted to have some impact on our state
- 2 are predicted to be major storms

NEW for 2011

There is a new warning system in place that could provide information up to 12 hours earlier than we have been accustomed to. Also new in 2011 are

- Storm Tide – this term replaces the old term storm surge
- New ALPHA – LETTER system regarding Evacuation
- New COLOR scheme for storm categories
- Decisions to evacuate are still made at the local level. These decisions are sometimes made in conjunction with other cities and counties in the region.

The county does not use sirens. Ms. Stoughton suggested that everyone own a NOAA Weather radio to stay informed. She also suggested that everyone own a TV antenna. In the event cable goes out, most TV's will not pick up a signal without an antenna. Most new TV's will need a digital antenna. The old fashioned rabbit ears and bow tie antenna do not pick up digital signals.

Ms. Stoughton advised that most people do not have an adequate supply of water, food and other essential supplies. For a list of supplies, shelters and other important information please visit the Emergency Management website at www.sjcemergencymanagement.org

Education Committee and Board of Commissioners Reports are below.

Submitted for distribution and approval on May 26, 2011

Bill Jones – Secretary

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT- MAY 2011

Several weeks ago, there was a letter to the editor in the Times Union written by a teacher concerning testing in the elementary grades. I knew we tested, but never thought there were this many required tests. The list is as follows: FCAT-3rd thru 5th, FAIR reading assessment- [three times a year], Benchmark testing-reading, math, science [three times a year], Progress Monitor Assessment- reading, math, science [three times a year](notice that it's the same as FAIR) Developmental Reading Assessment -[three times a year]. In addition to the above list of tests, there's a pretest and post test for every subject and every new concept. When are the teachers allowed to actually teach from a text? This is the result of politicians deciding how education should be accomplished. This is what happens when some schools dictating what the failure rate will be instead of failing those who can't do the work. Let's put education back in the hands of the professional educators and out of the hands of professional politicians. We pick on the educational systems for their shortcomings. At least let it be for things they can control and not these mandates, many of which are unfunded.

Board of County Commissioners Meeting - May 3, 2011 Report submitted by Bill McCormick

1. Dawn Bell presented an informational update on the Early Learning Program. The Program was praised by the commissioners for serving truly as a handup rather than handout approach to helping those in need. Corn. Minor said the program provides an annual saving of \$3,900 to taxpayers for every dollar of cost. Corn. Bryan said need for prison beds are based on high school projected dropout rates, with 60-65% of inmates being high school dropouts.

1. Lindsay Haga, AICP, Development Review Director was presenter for the first Public Hearing on the Ponte Vedra Zoning District Regulations - Amendments. The proposed changes were work shopped by the Ponte Vedra Zoning and Adjustment Board (PVZAB) at three public hearings. A strikethrough/underline version of these amendments was provided to the BCC at the meeting. The provisions generally addressed the placement of Accessory Uses and Structures. Discussion covered boats on trailers, timeframe for continuous use of utility trailers, portable storage structures, fencing, etc. A formal recommendation will be made at the PVZAB meeting on May 9th, at 3:00 pm. The final proposal will than be presented at the BCC meeting at 5:01 pm on June 7th.

1. Lindsay Haga was presenter for the second public hearing to consider modifications to the Land Development Code (Amendments for Articles III, VI, XI). The Planning and Zoning Agency heard this item on April 7th and recommended adoption to the BBC by a 6-0 vote. Robin Moore and Mary Ann Bount provided some historical perspective on the 2001 and 2005 changes to the land use process. The basis for the change in terminology from "Historic" to "Cultural" Resources was discussed. The implications for increased efficiency in the development review process, the effort to reduce duplication of effort with state decision-makers, lowering the hurdles to renovation of historic preservations, the effect of "certified" local government status, and the improvement of access to government grant monies, were all items discussed. The BCC approved the amendments by a 4-0 vote.

1. Jerry Cameron, Assistant County Administrator introduced the subject of Termination of the Contract (NH210) between St. Johns County and the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF). A contract between St. Johns County and DCF has been in existence since the early 1990s. St. Johns County is the only Florida County that has a contract for direct provision

of mental health services. Mr. Cameron reported the our County's cost for the program this year would be between 1.2 and 1.3 million dollars, with a projected cost increase resulting in an annual cost of \$1.5 million next year. DCF told the County Administrators that it would require 3-4 months notice to obtain a provider to service our citizens. Therefore, the County would need to give notice this month to avoid a lapse in service for our beneficiaries.

Discussion regarding the County choosing to no longer provide financial support for Mental Health Services. It was the feeling of the BCC that the county could no longer afford this budget item. Both Mary Kohnke and Bill Jones expressed concern regarding the collateral cost to the community if this financial support was not longer available. Commissioner Bryan reiterated the BCC position citing that citizens want a smaller lest costly government.

2. A concern of the County Administration was that before long, the County's costs would likely grow to over \$2 million and the County residents were paying double through state sales tax and local taxes. Additionally, the program was already suffering from the budgetary crunch, with the staff size having dropped from 70 to 40. With DCF taking over responsibility for the program, a Medical Management firm would be contracted to administer the program. The health services would continue to be provided by local practitioners.

Joe Gordy, CEO of Flagler Hospital, supported the recommendation to terminate the contract. He argued that the County would never perform the job as well as a company that was dedicated to performing that specialty service. He said his hospital would not be interested in taking over that service.

Patty Hart representing the National Alliance on Mental Health Programs expressed reservations about the access to mental health services of St. Johns residents. "Would clients need to travel to Jacksonville or Daytona Beach for services?" She also felt if the current building housing the program was sold to someone else, there would be no going back if the arrangements with DCF did not work out well. A major concern for families with members suffering mental health problems is that they can't obtain health insurance. The County Administrators assured Ms. Hart that county residents would continue to receive their care from local providers. The managing entity would handle only administration of the program, not direct provision of care.

Jim Steinmetz who worked with Dr. William O'Connell in establishing a mental health program and has reviewed community mental health programs in over 20 states expressed two major concerns. First, in his opinion, private entities never operate mental health services as effectively as public entities (citing California and Wisconsin as two outstanding examples). Second, in terminating this contract the County would relinquish any control over the quality of and cost of mental health care for St. Johns residents. Another public comment was offered by Dean Gilman who stated the first objective of a private entity would be to make a profit.

The unanswered question on this issue is how DCF will be able to provide the same level of services with fewer dollars. If DCF gets the same level of funding as last year. that is what DCF will pay the new contractor. If there is no subsidy from the county that will be the upper limit of support of mental health services for St. Johns County residents.

While expressing their regret, the BCC voted 4-0 to terminate the contract.

1. The final items addressed were two appointments to the Northwest Communications Tower Citizens Advisory Board and one appointment to the Library Board.