

Saint Johns County Civic Roundtable
Minutes of Regular Monthly Meeting
Monday December 13th 2010

Our final meeting of 2010 began with a short social session that included coffee and holiday treats. President Jim McLane called the business meeting to order at 9:40 AM

The incoming slate of officers were introduced and approved by acclamation. The 2011 officers are:

Tony Bosco- Chairman
Rick Lofgren- Vice Chairman
Bill Jones- Secretary
Mary Saunders- Treasurer

President McLane passed the gavel to ne President Tony Bosco for some remarks. President Bosco applauded Jim for his year of dedicated service and pledged to bring revitalize some of the Roundtable's Committees in 2011.

Our Guest speaker was Assistant County Engineer Andy Ames who provided the group with details regarding our county policy on the legal use of golf carts on county roads.

- Golf carts may be operated on designated and approved county roads. Golf carts cannot utilize sidewalks or bicycle paths at any time.
- Proper signage must be displayed that golf carts are allowed
- Gated communities will need to adopt similar rules and will need to sign a Traffic Enforcement Agreement with the County Sheriff
- Operator of any golf cart must have a valid drivers license
- The golf cart must weigh less than 1800 lbs and have at least 3 wheels
- The cart will have a tope speed of not greater than 20 MPH
- Cart must have basic safety equipment including brakes, safe tires, a steering wheel / mechanism, rear view mirror and red safety reflectors
- Golf carts may be operated sunrise to sunset
- If night time operation is desired, the golf cart must have head & tail lights, turn signals, and a windshield

If your community is interested in moving forward on the use of golf carts, please contact Andy Ames at Saint Johns County – 904-209-0655

Community Concerns & Announcements

1. The county will have three days of budget hearings and according to Assistant Administrator Jerry Cameron there will need to be more budget cuts again this year. According to Mr. Cameron, each year this becomes a more difficult process as our government has worked hard in the last three years at eliminating waste. Fire/Rescue is still operating at a deficit. The reserves that allow Fire Rescue to operate will be gone in 2013. It was suggested and agreed that the Round Table be involved and have a presence at these hearings.

2. Retirement Benefit Program – according to Mr. Cameron this portion of an employee’s salary & benefit package is 27%. According to Mr. Cameron, this too will need to be reexamined. Like we are seeing with several states, this level of benefit support is unsustainable and changes will need to be made.
3. Negotiations are beginning with Fire / Rescue on a new contract. The Fire Fighters union would like the current contract to remain in tact. According to Mr. Cameron, the county has hired an attorney who specializes in this arena. As we have all seen in the newspaper, the union is already trying to position themselves in the public arena. In the end the agreement and funding lies in the hands of our Board of Commissioners.
4. The utility purchase in Ponte Vedra is now beginning to cost all utility users on the county. An across the board increase is being absorbed by all water users to cover the expense of improving the system in Ponte Vedra which according to almost everyone is in a very poor state or repair.
5. The cost and need for a desalinization plant was also discussed. According to at least one report, based on growth rates, usage and the reverse osmosis well that has been in use, Saint Johns County is in very good shape with regard to water supply. Currently our county has not immediate concern and looks very good thru the year 2030 and beyond.

Education Committee Report – Jim McLane

- Jim suggested we learn more about and support a new jamming system that restricts the use of cell phones and other electronic devices. Supporters believe this system will eliminate distractions in the classroom as well as cheating on exams.
- Good news, according to experts the Academy system adopted by Dr. Joyner seems to be working. Bad news, St. Johns County Technical High School did not get passing grades. There is still a concern about social promotions and lower standards in all schools to achieve better testing scores. There is a movement to make subjects like chemistry and physics a requirement for graduation.

A spirited discussion on teaching, learning, and education took up the next 15 minutes. This we are sure will not be the last one of these ☺

Our first meeting of 2011 will be Monday January 10 at 9 AM at the Saint Augustine Record. Meeting was adjourned at 10:45 AM

Respectfully submitted by;
William Jones - Secretary