

**MINUTES OF MEETING
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA
JULY 24, 2000
(1:30 P.M.)**

Proceedings of a special meeting of the Board of County Commissioners of St. Johns County, Florida, began and held in Conference Room A of the County Administration Building, #4020 Lewis Speedway (County Road 16-A) and U.S. 1 North, St. Augustine, Florida.

Present were: James Bryant, District 5, Chair
 Mary Kohnke, District 4, Vice Chair
 Pal Howell, District 1
 John Reardon, District 2
 Marc Jacalone, District 3
 Ben W. Adams, Jr., County Administrator
 Judy Hamilton, Deputy Clerk

Also present: Staff

(07/24/2000 - 1 - 1.0058)

The retreat was called to order by Chair Bryant. The purpose of the special meeting was to discuss and take action on allocation of potential revenue to be generated by a proposed one percent sales surtax to be voted on by the citizens of St. Johns County on the November 7, 2000 general election. This item was on the agenda for the July 25, 2000 Board meeting.

(1.0102) Jacalone stated he was not comfortable with using half of the revenue that the one cent sales tax would generate to acquire lands, because there was not that much real estate in the County that they could appropriately acquire. Jacalone stated he was in favor of acquiring lands for preservation and that the Board knew how to access and use funds in the *Florida Forever* program. Jacalone stated capital projects were his priority and that they had no other sources of money for capital projects. He said land acquisition was a priority, but there were other sources of money for it. Jacalone said it bothered him that in 1998 the one-half cent for conservation land had failed. Jacalone stated he would not vote to put the 50/50 split on the ballot. He stated he would agree with that proposal, along with most of the revenue going to capital projects, in the form of a non-binding referendum, which would let them know what the people wanted to pursue. Jacalone stated he thought this source of income had to go to the highest priority and thought they should put out both proposals in a non-binding item, let the public vote on it and see what the public wanted, before doing it in a binding fashion. Jacalone said he would consider the 50/50 split, but would not tell the board today that he would support such a referendum.

(1.0140) Kohnke stated she looked at it as acquiring preservation, recreation and mitigation land. She suggested taking mitigation money out of road and bridge, putting it in the land: parks, preservation and recreation. She said in many cases, if they could buy land to preserve it, they could use that same land for mitigation and for recreation. She said it concerned her that projects were held up because they could not find mitigation lands. Kohnke stated she would leverage the three together and roughly take 30% of 50% for preservation and the rest for recreation and make sure that the preservation was used for mitigation also. She stated she did not want to spend any road and bridge money on buying wetlands to mitigate, but recommended all mitigation money go into preservation. Kohnke stated she thought they ought to take half of it for mitigation, recreation, and land; the rest for road and bridge; then, figure out how ad valorem taxes would pay for the

Southeast Library and others. Kohnke reiterated they had serious needs on mitigation, recreation, land acquisition; and road and bridge; she recommended a 50/50 split and leverage.

(1.0216) Reardon stated there were many needs in the County and the only way that they could do a lot of these projects was to come up with the money in some way. He did not want to raise ad valorem and property taxes to get these projects accomplished. Reardon was concerned about reading horror stories of other communities which did not plan ahead for future land use, for conservation, preservation and passive recreation. Reardon thought a very even balance would be a 50/50 split, and clarified it would need to be broken down to a plan which would be presented to the public so they would know exactly what they were voting on. Reardon stated that high-growth communities throughout the United States found out when there was a lot of growth, they had to increase the amount of money that went into infrastructure needs and they had to float bonds; the sales tax would enable the County to do that. Reardon stated he wanted to present a balanced proposal that people would be able to choose from and felt that a 50/50 split was the way to go. Reardon stated he wanted part of the land acquisition for acquisition of historic properties and said he agreed with 50% to land: recreational, mitigation, preservation. He stated it would have to be laid out so voters would know what they were voting for, including the road projects.

(1.0697) Howell stated he believed 10% to 15% should go towards capital improvements. He mentioned libraries and County offices in the Northwest were some of those improvements needing funding. Howell said he would not support 50/50, because he wanted 10% for capital improvements.

(1.0468) Bryant stated each had their priorities, but asked if this would pass with the public. (1.0676) Bryant spoke on land acquisition, stating if they were going to spend millions on a few hundred acres, they needed to purchase thousands of acres, like the Water Management did in 12-Mile Swamp. Bryant stated there are public facilities that the County would have to fund one way or the other and impact fees were not enough to fund it. Bryant stated 52 out of 67 counties in the State have the one-cent optional infrastructure sales tax. Bryant said people were telling him they did not want a new tax. Bryant stated he was not for the 50/50 split. Bryant advised the Commissioners to consider the recommendations and bring their wants to the Board meeting the following day and they would make a final decision at that time.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 2:36 p.m.

Approved _____ September 12 _____, 2000

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: _____
James E. Bryant, Chair

ATTEST: CHERYL STRICKLAND, CLERK

By: _____
Deputy Clerk