

**MINUTES OF MEETING
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA
JULY 25, 2003
(9:00 A.M.)**

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

Present were: Karen Stern, District 2, Vice-Chair
Nicholas Meiszer, District 1
Marc Jacalone, District 3
Ben W. Adams, Jr., County Administrator
Dan Bosanko, County Attorney
Robin Platt, Deputy Clerk

Also present: Joe Vonasek, Director, Office of Management and Budget; Doug Timms and Dawn Cardenas, Office of Management and Budget

(07/25/03 - 1 - 9:07 a.m.)
Vice-Chair Stern called the meeting to order.

(07/25/03 - 1 - 9:07 a.m.)
Jacalone gave the Invocation and Meiszer led the Pledge of Allegiance.

(07/25/03 - 1 - 9:07 a.m.)
ROLL CALL

Stern stated that she, Jacalone, and Meiszer were present and that Maguire would be in attendance soon.

(07/25/03 - 1 - 9:08 a.m.)
ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO THE SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

There were none.

(07/25/03 - 1 - 9:08 a.m.)
APPROVAL OF SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

Motion by Jacalone, seconded by Meiszer, carried 3/0 with Bryant and Maguire absent, to approve the Special Meeting Agenda.

(07/25/03 - 1 - 9:08 a.m.)
1. WORKSHOP - FY 2004 ANNUAL FINANCIAL PLAN - THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S RECOMMENDED BUDGET WAS PRESENTED TO THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ON JULY 8, 2003. AT THAT TIME, THE BOARD SET JULY 25, 2003 AT 9:00 A.M. AS THE DATE AND TIME OF A WORKSHOP TO ADDRESS THE ADEQUACY OF THE RECOMMENDED BUDGET IN MEETING THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY

There was general discussion regarding how the meeting would proceed and Maguire entered the meeting at 9:11 a.m.

(07/25/03 - 2 - 9:11 a.m.)

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Meiszer questioned if there were any new positions being requested and Adams stated that they would like to hire a Citizen Tracker to handle all complaints for the Board and Administration. Vonasek explained that the existing Assistant County Administrator would be retiring soon and that there are funds in the budget to hire a replacement for a three to five month period prior to his retirement. There was discussion regarding funds for subsidizing the maintenance and support of the National Guard Armory and Vonasek commented that that had not been funded in the budget.

(07/25/03 - 2 - 9:22 a.m.)

CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS AND COURT SERVICES

The budgets of the Constitutional Officers were discussed. Meiszer addressed the Law Library being moved to the St. Johns County Public Library.

(07/25/03 - 2 - 9:25 a.m.)

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Meiszer questioned the practice of the County paying dues for employee memberships in professional organizations and stated that he felt the current policy was too liberal. Ted Zebrowsky addressed the memberships of his employees and discussion followed.

There was discussion regarding requests for new employees in Purchasing, Human Resources and Facilities Maintenance. Jacalone questioned what positions are funded through Risk Management and Vonasek explained. Discussion followed regarding maintenance at the Health and Human Services Building.

(07/25/03 - 2 - 9:39 a.m.)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Meiszer stated that funding for the Medical Examiner's Office is based on the population of St. Johns, Flagler and Putnam Counties and he questioned if the population had been reviewed to insure that Flagler and Putnam Counties are paying their proportionate share. Vonasek stated that it was reviewed annually.

Jacalone questioned why the communications for Fire Service is funded out of the General Fund and not the Fire District. Vonasek stated that there is a transfer back from Fire Services for part of that expense, and that EMS is funded from the General Fund. Discussion followed regarding the quality of the 911 call switching with the City of St. Augustine, other communication equipment and FTE position funding.

(9:48 a.m.) Sheriff Neil Perry addressed his proposed budget, including funding for school crossing guards and Bailiff services. He also commented that the most critical issue facing the Sheriff's Office right now is the recruiting of new deputies, as there is a shortage of qualified applicants due to competition with other counties in the state that are paying higher salaries. He stated that in comparable counties, ours has the second highest population, the highest cost of living and per capita income, but we are the lowest in salaries. This county is \$2,000 to \$3,000 behind the comparable counties in starting salaries. He asked for 10 new positions and an increase totaling \$4.2 million, with the County recommending \$2.897 million, leaving a difference of \$1.3 million. He suggested that an additional \$626,000 above the County's recommendation would allow him to hire the 10 new officers and increase salaries. He also suggested that his proposed turn-back of \$300,000 be returned to his budget in the new budget year and this would reduce his request for new monies to \$326,000.

(10:05 a.m.) Jacalone stated that he liked the Sheriff's proposal and questioned how the funding would be handled. Meiszer offered an alternative proposal, including fringe benefits and affordable housing for officers, and discussion followed with Perry addressing the turn-back. Jacalone recommended that the Sheriff's proposed budget be adjusted up by \$626,000, with a commitment from the Sheriff to turn-back \$300,000, and Stern concurred. Meiszer commented on projecting what the turn-back would be and on the over budgeting of salaries and Vonasek explained how salaries are budgeted. Maguire stated his support for the Sheriff's proposal and discussion followed regarding school crossing guards and the size of the traffic enforcement division.

The meeting recessed at 10:31 a.m. until 10:40 a.m.

(07/25/03 - 3 - 10:41 a.m.)

CULTURE AND RECREATION

Recreation Programs and Facilities

Maguire suggested allotting \$30,000 for the Ponte Vedra COA and stated that the PGA is considering a \$150,000 grant as well. Dan Weimer stated that last year the Board approved a contract with the COA for them to operate a senior citizens program at Trout Creek, which has been a great success and discussion followed regarding funding for the program. All of the Commissioners present supported Maguire's suggestion. There was discussion on the CIP request expansion of the pier and the Board requested more information on the topic. Maguire stated that there was a group who wanted the County to provide some seed money (\$70,000 for design and engineering) to design a park behind the Ponte Vedra Library. Jacalone responded that he would not support this suggestion without more input from community, as there is another group who does not want the park there and discussion followed.

Beach Services

Weimer stated that the FY2004 budget is a reduction from the FY2003 budget and discussion followed on State Park revenue and funding.

Library Services

Stern requested that the new position that was requested in the Library Services budget, for the new Southeast Branch, be added back into the budget and be funded at \$27,000. She also requested that the additional hours requested for the courier be funded at \$3,500. Meiszer supported her requests, but stated that the new librarian at the Ponte Vedra Branch would be a higher priority. He also addressed the \$75,000 for the portico at the Ponte Vedra Branch and discussion followed on the portico, the new positions and the related costs.

(07/25/03 - 3 - 11:08 a.m.)

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Vonasek addressed impact fees that were inappropriately credited to the incorrect zone and stated that they are in the process of making adjustments. Doug Timms addressed the Fairgrounds' budget and the impact fees and funding for the expansion projects.

Discussion followed regarding lending from one zone to another and the expansion project. Meiszer commented that it should be a goal of the Fairgrounds to be self-supporting, and he also addressed impact fee lending.

(07/25/03 - 3 - 11:18 a.m.)

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Meiszer addressed funding for the Betty Griffin House and the importance of their services. There was discussion regarding a request by the Betty Griffin House for additional funding. Max Wilson, Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee, stated that they stand by their initial recommendation. Stern commented that she felt very comfortable with the recommendations being made by the committee. Maguire questioned funding for the Youth Crisis Center, and Wilson explained that they are still operating but are doing so as an in-school resource position. Adams explained that he discussed the position with the Sheriff and he is going to aide in finding a place for the resource officer. There was discussion regarding funding for the School Readiness Program, the Sunshine Bus Program, and the HAWKE Program. Adams stated that an additional position was approved for the VA Office.

(07/25/03 - 4 -11:28 a.m.)

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Meiszer questioned the County's participation in Cornerstone and Vonasek explained that there was a \$90,000 allotment in the recommended budget. Maguire stated that there is a Chamber in Ponte Vedra and questioned why the monies could not be split between the two Chambers. Meiszer mentioned that there was also a Chamber in Julington Creek and Jacalone questioned if the Ponte Vedra Chamber has even requested funding. Ted Zebrowsky explained that they have in the past, but did not this year, and he also stated that \$45,000 was to support a contract between Cornerstone and the St. Augustine/St. Johns County Chamber, and there is also a \$45,000 appropriation for marketing for the St. Augustine/St. Johns County Chamber and discussion followed regarding who and how the representative to Cornerstone should be chosen and economic development. There was also a brief discussion regarding the Excelsior Building and the plans for that building.

(07/25/03 - 4 - 11:43 a.m.)

NON-OPERATIONAL

Vonasek explained that this category is to allow for interdepartmental transfers and refunds. Meiszer asked that an effort be made to consolidate these independent funds.

(07/25/03 - 4 - 11:46 a.m.)

SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS

Transportation Trust Fund

Jacalone addressed the reduction in the Transportation Trust Fund and asked for a projection in the increase in gas tax revenue and Vonasek explained. Jacalone commented that the transportation millage rate was not changing, but remaining at .9, and questioned if this was not as high a priority as Fire Service, which requested a 45% increase. Meiszer commented that Fire/Rescue Service has a higher priority than highways. Jacalone responded that that was yet to be determined and discussion followed. Maguire agreed that transportation, as well as Fire Service, was under funded, but suggested finding some other revenue source instead of raising ad valorem taxes, as he would rather see an increase in the gas tax or a penny sales tax.

The meeting recessed for one minute at 11:56 a.m. and was then called back to order.

(11:57 a.m.)

Fire District Fund

Jacalone stated that he felt that Fire Service has been adequately funded all along and that in FY2003 their total revenue number was \$9.3 million and this year they are requesting over \$13 million. He feels that that is too much of a tax burden on the taxpayers and too ambitious of a request, but that he would support a level of funding at one mill for Fire Service, but not 1.12. Meiszer stated that the big increase is due to converting from a

volunteer system to a professional system, and discussion followed regarding increases and decreases in the millage. Vonasek explained how statutory requirements have changed for Fire Services and that the County is obligated to meet those requirements. Meiszer stated that peaks and valleys in the millage rates should be avoided and that they need to get away from 12 month budgeting and go to at least three year budgeting to keep up with the trends.

(12:11 p.m.) Chief Bobby Hall explained that over the past five years they have deferred a lot of capital purchases, including fire engines and stations, and put all of their monies into personnel. Included in their five year plan was \$2.2 million for the CIP, including new stations, trucks and equipment. Stern questioned how he would feel if the mill were increased to one mill, as suggested by Jacalone, instead of the 1.12. Hall responded that he has already done a model based on the one mill, and that there would be a reduction in facilities, personnel and equipment. Vonasek explained that would equate to about \$1.371 million. Jacalone stated that if they go to one mill that would still be a 30% increase in revenue over one year. Discussion followed regarding staffing at the Bakersville Fire Station. Jacalone stated his support for professionalizing Fire Services and an increase to one mill.

(12:19 p.m.) Mike McQuiston, 216 Rivers Edge Rd. S., supported Jacalone's suggestion of an increase to one mill and stated that he would support finding other sources of revenue other than an ad valorem tax increase. Vonasek commented on other possible sources of revenue and how the statutes govern how specific kinds of revenue can be used. Discussion followed regarding the Fire Service millage rate.

(12:27 p.m.) Dawn Cardenas, Office of Management and Budget, submitted the Fire District Fund Five Year Projection Administration Debt Finance Report for the Board's review.

(12:28 p.m.) Syd Perry, 10365 County Road 13 N., requested that the Fire Service requested budget be fully funded.

(12:30 p.m.) **Motion by Maguire, seconded by Stern, to adjourn.** Discussion followed regarding the format of the meeting, the Five Year Plan submitted by Cardenas and funding for a transportation improvement project along Fruit Cove Road.

(12:35 p.m.) **The motion to adjourn carried 4/0, with Bryant absent.**

Approved _____ September 4 _____, 2003

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: James E. Bryant
James E. Bryant, Chair

ATTEST: CHERYL STRICKLAND, CLERK

By: Cheryl Strickland
Deputy Clerk