

**MINUTES OF MEETING
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA
AUGUST 16, 2007
(8:15 A.M.)**

Proceedings of a special meeting of the Board of County Commissioners of St. Johns County, Florida, 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: Ben Rich, District 3, Chairman
Thomas G. Manuel, District 4, Vice Chair
Cyndi Stevenson, District 1
Ron Sanchez, District 2
Michael D. Wanchick, County Administrator
Patrick McCormack, County Attorney
Terry Bulla, Deputy Clerk

Absent: James Bryant, District 5

Also present: Charles Baldwin, FDOT Secretary
Michael Blaylock, Executive Director/CEO of the Jacksonville Transportation Authority

(08/16/07 - 1 - 8:20 a.m.)
CALL TO ORDER

Rich called the meeting to order.

(08/16/07 - 1 - 8:20 a.m.)
ROLL CALL

Rich stated that four commissioners were present with Bryant absent.

(08/16/07 - 1 - 8:21 a.m.)

Rich gave the Invocation and Sanchez led the Pledge of Allegiance.

(08/16/07 - 1 - 8:22 a.m.)
ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO SPECIAL AGENDA

There were none.

(08/16/07 - 1 - 8:23 a.m.)
APPROVAL OF SPECIAL AGENDA

Motion by Manuel, seconded by Sanchez, carried 4/0 with Bryant absent, to approve the Special Agenda.

(08/16/07 - 1 - 8:23 a.m.)
PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

(08/16/07 - 2 - 8:23 a.m.)

1. REPORT AND UPDATE OF FEDERAL PROJECTS

Congressman John L. Mica, U.S. House of Representatives, 7th District, Florida, gave the presentation and reviewed the Federal projects affecting St. Johns County. He noted he was the House Transportation Infrastructure Committee ranking member and as such was better positioned to help the District. Transportation issues were reviewed and a priority list was distributed (Exhibit A). He said ear mark funding was not given this year and was made in a lump sum, and decisions on its expenditure were being made at the present time. He reported on the formula for the distribution of Federal funds to the states and noted that 92 cents of each dollar to the Federal government was returned to the state under the new bill. He said they tried to target money to the county's priorities, and that the design and mitigation for 9B had been designated to receive \$500,000 in a current bill he had before Congress. He said he needed to get the priority list from the County for the areas they felt were the most in need.

Mica noted that he had listed the Council on Aging as a priority for the last four years and record amounts were brought back for public transit for those who had no other way around the community, particularly seniors and veterans. He said it was a start to the core of public transportation. He stated they also had to look at their place within the Region, and the Jacksonville Transit Authority had special authority granted by the Legislature. He noted it served many counties and jurisdictions and said their efforts should be towards coordinating the activities that currently existed. He stated that he had encouraged Cathy Brown to work with JTA to maximize the access and connect the existing services to their maximum effect.

(8:36 a.m.) Mica reviewed the new 61 mile commuter system recently approved by four counties in Florida. He noted it was low cost, utilizing existing lines and could be run during commuter times. He said it could be put together for \$8 to \$9 million per mile, well below costs in other areas of \$100 million per mile. He said it would be an alternative form of transportation and compared it to other systems currently in development around the country.

(8:41 a.m.) He said the main purpose of his being present was to hear the county's priorities and asked the Board for their priorities. He said if they had changed any, Secretary Baldwin needed to know.

(8:41 a.m.) Rich said the priority of the Board was still the 9B project, and explained that it became a priority because of the dangerous situation on I-95. He said there were 60,000 homes currently waiting for construction in that corridor and traffic was going to explode. Mica said \$500,000 was earmarked for the design segment.

(8:43 a.m.) FDOT Secretary Baldwin said that was correct and they were moving forward with the design of the 9B segments as well as acquiring mitigation credits that would be available when they were actually in the permit stage of the project. He said it was recognized by the First Coast MOP as a very high priority for the region.

(8:44 a.m.) Mica reviewed the dollar amounts that had been allocated previously for certain projects, including \$5.3 million for SR 312, \$5.28 million towards the 210/US 1 interchange and \$1 million for the parking facility which was recently completed. He said none of the ear marked funds he had included were agreed upon, and all future dollars were rolled into discretionary money distributed by the Secretary. He said the COA transit activity was also a priority. He said he would submit their requests in January of next year. He stated the Secretary would have discretion over any "left

over" money from the current fiscal year. He asked them for a letter specifying their requests. He said that would be the next opportunity to change their priorities.

(8:47 a.m.) Rich confirmed that the transportation issues for the Sunshine Bus Company would continue to be supported by the Board.

(8:48 a.m.) Stevenson said the bridge alignment was a long term issue, and they were concerned about getting some significant access to move people out of the northern development area of the county. She said she was hopeful they would continue to plan to make connections to the JTA express bus services as many of her constituents utilized those commuter lines. Mica said they could possibly help with that and noted a park and ride project had been done in Volusia County for workers in downtown Orlando and was coordinated with a bus distribution center. He said mass transit was looked on favorably by Congress as building new roads was so expensive.

(8:49 a.m.) Cathy Brown said the Board had consistently supported Choice Ride. She said frequency was an issue and they were running 90 trips a day, which would increase with additional funding. She emphasized that facilities were her number one priority. Mica said they could help with buses and bus facilities such as bus shelters.

(8:51 a.m.) Blaylock, JTA Executive Director, said they could go into other counties to pursue transit and highway solutions by terms of an Interlocal Agreement. He said there were double digit needs in terms of transportation problems in the billions of dollars. He said we had to find better and more creative ways to finance their infrastructure needs. He said there would be some opportunities and some economies that could be gained over time with the acquisition and maintaining of equipment.

(8:53 a.m.) Rich said mass transit issues fell behind other transportation issues due to the volume of vehicles involved. He said it was a delicate balancing act when they were not providing operational funding. He said they were facing difficult times.

(8:54 a.m.) Mica said they were trying to reach a balance, and they were well positioned in Congress to take care of some of the State's needs.

(8:56 a.m.) Baldwin gave a report on deficient bridges in District 2 and said there were seven bridges on the State highway system. He said the only one in St. Johns County was the old Bridge of Lions, which was in the process of being rehabilitated. He said a detailed report was being prepared for the statewide condition of all bridges throughout Florida.

(8:57 a.m.) Mica said the account was essentially bankrupt with approximately \$198,000,000 left for the entire country. He reported that \$250,000,000 had been authorized, by not yet appropriated, for the replacement of the bridge, on an emergency basis, that had collapsed in Minneapolis. He also commented on enhancement funding and said some money was available. He said he chose to designate funds for the St. Augustine - Palatka rail trail. He said if their priorities changed those funds might be available.

(9:00 a.m.) Sanchez said he agreed that 9B was a priority and that SR 312/313 was right behind it. He said he was going to turn over an engineering report regarding the West Augustine drainage project and said they were unable to acquire the funding already approved for the project in the amount of \$500,000 in 2004, and that \$100,000 had already been expended. He asked Mica for help in getting it resolved. Mica said he was appalled by the conditions he saw in West Augustine and it was an eye opener. He said they would do whatever it took and he was in a better position now to help as one

of his sub-committees was Water Resources. He said they would put someone on the issue to move towards a resolution. He said they could find resources for street scaping and enhancement of that area as well. Sanchez reviewed plans to upgrade King Street. Mica said when they received their plans they would attempt to get appropriations to help fund it. Mica noted that Hastings had specifically been made eligible for assistance.

(9:07 a.m.) Mica said he had some issues he needed answers on and reviewed them. He said \$.5 million had been set aside for the district for beach erosion studies. He said the St. Augustine Beach program had been fairly successful, but the Ponte Vedra issue was a tougher call. He said people had bought houses there and it was their personal responsibility, not a Federal responsibility, to protect their property. He said they had tried to expedite the permitting on the Federal side. He stated he could ask the Corps of Engineers to look at the erosion taking place as part of the study being done at St. Augustine Beach. He said he could have them look at it and come back with recommendations. Rich said Vilano Beach was raising funds for a match with the State for funding for an examination of the dynamics of the problem. Mica asked if they wanted the Corps to look further up the county. Sanchez said he was in favor of studying it as it would provide information for future use.

(9:14 a.m.) Stevenson said they had inherited State roads that they could not defend any longer. She asked if they had done studies on places that were too vulnerable and which would benefit from preventive methods. Mica said they mostly reacted to requests from the local level, and they would have to put a proposal together for preventive actions. He said they would have to set the priorities. He noted that land acquisition was an important element and he had worked on that for years in regard to the St. Johns River. Stevenson said that water quality of the St. Johns River was also an important issue for our county and acquisition of lands was important to us.

(9:17 a.m.) Rich said they had built along the coast and it was important to understand the dynamics of what was happening with the environment, and he would support efforts by the Corps to provide help in understanding what was transpiring now and in the future.

(9:19 a.m.) Mica also spoke on the Veteran's Nursing Facility and said they had heard there was some impasse between the State and Federal governments. He said the issue delaying it was how many veterans were to be in a room. He said a resolution had been passed within the last 24 hours that 40% would be two persons per room and 60% would be one person per room.

(9:21 am.) Mica commented on the airport proposal to extend the runway at the St. Augustine Airport which would necessitate movement of the rail tracks and the highway. He said the airport's long term viability would be determined by the extension. He noted it was an important element for Northrop Grumman for the development of military aircraft. He said he needed to hear from them on that accord, and he had already met with the Airport Authority as well as Northrop Grumman. Rich said the expansion of the airport to the western side of US 1 would involve huge expenses and impacts on the residential areas. He said the citizens he had talked with were not interested in the expansion.

(9:26 a.m.) Manuel said the expansion would be ill advised. He said he would like to see a study done of relocating the airport to the southern part of St. Johns, Putnam or Clay counties. He said it would provide economic revitalization to the area and create job centers to the south of Jacksonville. Mica noted that an expansion was being looked at for the Palatka airport. Manuel spoke on ways to support and revitalize the agrarian

areas of the county and noted it was a billion dollar industry and was one of the largest businesses in the region. Mica said legislation was being developed by Congress on the use of alternative fuel and Florida had the potential to be a leader on that project.

(9:31 a.m.) Mica spoke on crime issues and said they were able to expand the high intensity drug traffic area designation, which would bring more resources to the area. He said the Weed and Seed program had been very successful in St. Johns County. He commented on Sheriff Shoar's program, and said it was a great program of counseling, job training and efforts to cure addiction. He stated that he supported his efforts and said he was using it as a model for inmates with addiction problems in other areas.

(08/16/07 - 5 - 9:35 a.m.)

2. OTHER BUSINESS AS NECESSARY

There was no additional business.

(9:36 a.m.) Motion by Manuel, seconded by Sanchez, carried 4/0 with Bryant absent, to adjourn the meeting.

With there being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 9:36 a.m.

Approved _____ September 4 _____, 2007

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: Ben Rich
Ben Rich, Chairman

ATTEST: CHERYL STRICKLAND, CLERK

By: Juanne King
Deputy Clerk

