

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Special City Commission Meeting
September 4, 2007

The City Commission met in a formal session Tuesday, September 4, 2007 at 5:00 p.m. in the Flagler Auditorium. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Boles, and the following were present:

Roll Call:

Joe Boles, Mayor/City Commissioner
Donald A. Crichlow, Vice Mayor/City Commissioner
Susan Burk, City Commissioner
George Gardner, City Commissioner
Errol D. Jones, City Commissioner

William B. Harriss, City Manager
Ron Brown, City Attorney
Loran Lueders, Police Chief
Paul K. Williamson, Director, Public Affairs
Timothy A. Burchfield, Chief Administrative Officer
Karen Rogers, City Clerk
Susan Goins, Recording Secretary

2. Discussion regarding the Homeless Situation.

Mayor Boles stated that the city was seeking creative solutions to dealing with the homeless issue. He explained that there were approximately 1,200 to 1,600 homeless people in St. Johns County. He invited the groups representing the homeless to introduce themselves as follows:

- Emergency Services and Homeless Coalition of St. Johns County Incorporated
- St. Francis House
- Emergency Services and Homeless Coalition of Jacksonville, Duval and Clay County
- People United to Stop Homelessness (PUSH)
- St. Augustine Catholic Worker Ministries
- Commercial and Residential Property Manager

- Civic Committee Chair for St. Augustine Historical Inns
- Elderly Disabled Housing Committee for Habitat for Humanity
- Christian Service Center

Mayor Boles asked for clarification regarding the legal issues involved.

Ron Brown, City Attorney, explained the legal issues as follows:

- Courts indicated that individuals must commit a crime before being arrested or removed from a public area
- If a jurisdiction wanted to remove individuals from public places they must provide an alternative venue
- The panhandling ordinance was constitutional because it was confined to a small area
- To remove or limit activities in public areas, such as exercising bodily

- functions, an alternative location such as restrooms must be provided
- The city could restrict time, place and manner of activity but could not completely remove an individual
 - Enhanced police enforcement, cooperation of social agencies and various forms of government, as well as individuals were important to solving the problem

Loran Lueders, Police Chief, stated that there had been a decrease of people hanging out on St. George Street since the panhandling ordinance was passed. He added that people understood the prohibited panhandling areas. He said homeless people and people causing problems should be differentiated. He pointed out that if an individual committed a criminal act, the police could enforce the issue. He explained that if a citizen witnessed a violation, the police could take their statement and charge the violator.

Commissioner Burk questioned whether representatives from churches were present, as church representatives should participate in the discussion.

Following a discussion regarding the availability of public restrooms, Mr. Harriss clarified that public restrooms were available 24 hours a day at the city marina, and there were public restrooms available on Hypolita Street and on St. George Street during the day.

Commissioner Burk stated that there were economic and social interests in solving the problem. She suggested addressing the matter in narrow fashion, taking small steps to solve the problems to reach a bigger goal. She added that various homeless groups required different solutions.

Mayor Boles opened the public hearing and the following solutions were provided:

- Treatment centers were needed for people with drug and alcohol addictions

- Transportation was needed to take individuals to treatment centers and medical appointments
- The city needed a detox center
- Assistance from St. Johns County was crucial for helping the homeless
- Grants from the state were available to form re-entry programs for people getting out of jail
- The city needed a facility for the homeless to perform basic hygiene
- Case managers were needed to assist the homeless in finding employment, school programs and health care
- Affordable housing was important
- Tourists should be educated to donate money to organizations and agencies that assist the homeless instead of directly to the homeless
- Churches should assist the homeless
- Separate shelters were needed for men and women

Mayor Boles closed the public hearing.

There was an announcement that Thursday September 20, 2007 the Homeless Coalition would meet to discuss solutions to the homeless problem.

3. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:02 p.m.¹

MAYOR

CITY CLERK, CMC

¹ Transcribed by Susan Goins