

## CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

St. Augustine Commission and St. Johns County Commission Joint Workshop  
June 3, 2009

The City Commission met in a formal session Monday, June 3, 2009 at 1:00 P.M. in the Alcazar Room at City Hall. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Joe Boles, and the following were present:

### **1. Roll Call:**

Joe Boles, Mayor/City Commissioner  
Errol Jones, Vice Mayor/City Commissioner  
Donald Crichlow, City Commissioner  
Leanna Freeman, City Commissioner  
Nancy Sikes-Kline, City Commissioner

Cyndi Stevenson, County Commissioner  
Ron Sanchez, County Commissioner  
Mark P. Miner, County Commissioner  
Phillip Mays, County Commissioner  
Joseph "Ken" Bryan, County Commissioner

William B. Harriss, City Manager  
Ron Brown, City Attorney  
Karen Rogers, City Clerk  
John Regan, Chief Operating Officer  
Mark Knight, Director, Planning and Building  
Jim Piggott, General Services Director  
Tim Fleming, Deputy Director, General Services/Purchasing Manager  
Todd Grant, Deputy Director, Public Works  
Darlene Kirkland, Recording Secretary

Michael Wanchick, County Administrator  
Darrell Locklear, Assistant County Administrator  
Doug Timms, Management and Budget  
Patrick McCormack, County Attorney

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Mayor Boles welcomed St Johns County to the first joint City/County meeting, and he read the agenda for the record.

### **2. West Augustine Infrastructure Discussion. General overview of the area's infrastructure history and the associated challenges - City and County staff**

Daryl Locklear, Assistant County Administrator presented an abbreviated

version of an overview previously presented to the Community Rehabilitation Agency (CRA) steering committee.<sup>1</sup> He stated that the purpose of the meeting was to demonstrate to the community the joint interest of the City of St. Augustine and St. Johns County (SJC) in expanding the infrastructure of West Augustine. He explained the interest that SJC had in the West Augustine area citing coordination

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<sup>1</sup> Attached to original minutes.

with other agencies, community involvement and investments made to the area. He described completed and ongoing improvements to the area, which were as follows:

- Paving of dirt roads completed.
- Paving of dirt roads to be completed
- Drainage improvements
- Fox Creek Regional Storm Water Pond currently under construction
- New drainage projects
- Solomon Calhoun Community Center
- Coordinating projects between the City and SJC to upgrade and install new water and sewer lines
- Improvements to Duval and St. Johns Streets entryway including sidewalks and right of ways
- Water and sewer service expansion to King Street
- Adding new lift stations
- Expenditures were estimated to be \$20,625,639

Mayor Boles inquired whether it would be voluntary for residence and business to hook into the sewer lines. He noted that, although West Augustine was outside city limits, the City provided water and sewer service.

Commissioner Donald Crichlow inquired how stimulus funds provided by the Federal Government would be used.

Mr. Locklear responded that of the \$7,000,000 received approximately \$250,000 would be included in the West King Street Project. He stated that the funding was provided by the government specifically for road repavement. He also noted that additional funding would be required to complete the infrastructure project.

County Commissioner Ken Bryan commented that the residents questioned why there was a need to pave the entire

length of King Street.<sup>2</sup> He noted that infrastructure projects would occur as funding was secured.

Mr. Locklear noted that the paving, drainage and water and sewer line installation projects would begin later in 2009 or first of 2010.

Commissioner Crichlow pointed out that the King Street paving project could not wait, because the road was in need of immediate repair.

John Regan, Chief Operations Officer, announced the conclusion of the repair to a main sewer line break in the San Sebastian River.

Mr. Regan presented an overview of an action plan to upgrade the water and sewer lines in the West Augustine area in collaboration with SJC.<sup>3</sup> He stated that the main concern for the area was providing sanitary sewer. He noted that there were 2,465 addresses in the CRA boundaries, 74% of the addresses had existing City accounts and 90% had availability to City water. He noted that in the last ten years the City had been upgrading the water lines with an emphasis on fire suppression. He reported that a City and County staff meeting held April 3, 2009, to discuss key issues for the development of West Augustine. A strategy plan had been developed as follows:

- Develop a master plan
- Make sure the funds were put to the best use possible
- Continue the effort to obtain grants
- Understand what each agency was doing in terms of congressional funding initiatives
- Evaluate other financing mechanisms
- How to handle connection policy issues

<sup>2</sup> Vice Mayor Errol Jones arrived at 1:21 P.M.

<sup>3</sup> Attached to original minutes.

Mr. Regan summarized a meeting between the CRA and residents to discuss community goals as follows:<sup>4</sup>

- Coordinate governments to ensure projects were completed in an organized manner
- Economic development
- Find funding sources to offset costs water and sewer connection costs for residents
- Data driven decision making
- Ability to get sewer lines to residents considering the public safety factor
- Financing connection fees
- Infrastructure was key to keeping communities together

Mr. Regan stated that the City had \$50,000 allocated to hire outside resources to ensure projects were completed in a timely manner.

Mayor Boles inquired about the percentage of homeowners already connected to sewer lines and what would motivate residents to spend the money to tap into sewer lines.

Mr. Regan answered that, in the past, the Butler construction project provided funding through the SHIP program, in addition to SJC project funding, to assist homeowners with connection fees. He said that most homeowners did not want to spend the money to connect to sewer lines if they had a working drain field, nor did they want to pay a monthly service bill. He stated that the residents felt that sewer was not as important as water because of health and safety concerns, plus there were no government mechanisms requiring connection to sewer lines. He said that, traditionally, homeowners connected to water lines but not as many to sewer. He explained that the issue surrounding the problem was the City would spend thousands of dollars to connect one customer but would not receive revenue to recoup the cost of installing the sewer line.

Mayor Boles pointed out that the City should be responsive to requests for sewer connections, but the lines currently in place were only used by 27% of the residences in the West Augustine area.

County Commissioner Phillip Mays stated that the county was heavily pursuing federal funding to help with connection fees for sewer.

Mayor Boles asked if the funds were available to connect homes with working drain fields and whether they would be willing to pay a monthly bill for services.

County Commissioner Bryan replied that a survey was conducted for community concerns relating to health and safety issues without utilities. He said that a new survey was going to be conducted through the SJC Health Department and Flagler College to collect more data. He also noted that the Department of Environmental Protection was going to conduct soil sample testing for the level of contamination due to poor storm water drainage and poor drain fields.

Mike Wanchick, County Administrator, stated that the county had been involved in a program in the past that provided funding to allow homeowners to connect at no cost for as long as they owned their home. He stated that if West Augustine was found to have health related problems, funding would be easier to secure.

County Commissioner Cyndi Stevenson stated that the survey process would be a small expense compared to the valuable data that would be collected.

Commissioner Leanna Freeman asked if there was any knowledge of how many homeowners had failing drain fields or how many had new drain fields

County Commissioner Bryan said that by looking up existing permits it would be possible to tell how many new drain fields had been installed.

<sup>4</sup> County Commissioner Cindi Stevenson arrived at 1:31P.M.

### **3. 450<sup>th</sup> Anniversary/Tourism Countywide General overview on the status of the 450th Anniversary Celebration and Destination Master Plan - Glenn Hastings and Dana Ste. Claire.**

Glen Hastings, Executive Director of the St. Johns County Tourist Development Council, summarized the opportunities that the 450<sup>th</sup> Celebration would bring to the area as the following:

- National attention
- Broaden economic development
- Tourism development
- Promote local agriculture
- Promote local products
- Bring attention to outlying areas by getting them involved
- Bring in Spanish businesses and organizations

Mr. Hastings stated that St. Johns County had capacity issues to be addressed.

County Commissioner Ron Sanchez commented that Hastings should be included.

Commissioner Nancy Sikes-Kline pointed out that currently many residents and communities feel left out of the celebrations.

Mr. Wanchick stated that the Destination Master plan should be corrected to facilitate organizations working together.

Mr. Hastings noted that there was funding set aside.

Dana Ste. Claire, Executive Director of the St. Augustine 450<sup>th</sup> Commemoration Commission, stated that the 450<sup>th</sup> was a three year celebration beginning with the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landing of Ponce de Leon and ending with celebrating the oldest continually occupied community in the United States. He stated that the Tourism Development Council came up with the idea for the celebration. He noted that there was considerable interest to participate by many

organizations. He stated that on March 30, 2009, public law 111-11 was established by order of President Barak Obama recognizing St Augustine's 450<sup>th</sup> Federal Commission. He stated that the order provided a three and a half million dollar appropriation that would provide the following:

- Hire an Executive director
- 14 member Federal Commission
- Provide services and support

Mr. Ste. Claire stated that at the regional level a steering committee had been created that included county and state wide representation from many organizations. He noted that the Steering Committee chair for the Jamestown 400<sup>th</sup> celebration had been hired as a consultant. He stated that some of the events could include the following:

- Signature events
- Building a replica ship
- Multi cultural involvement

Mr. Ste. Claire noted that the return on investment could include the following:

- Increased revenue
- Creation of jobs
- Bring awareness to St. Augustine as a destination
- Enhance tourism
- Elevate heritage awareness of St Augustine

Mr. Ste. Claire stated that the strategic plan would identify different committees to organize events and handle parking, transportation, and facilities for celebration attendees.

### **4. Discussion pertaining to the need and desirability of undertaking a jointly funded study to develop aesthetic guidelines for U. S. 1 and other related transportation facilities - City and County staff.**

Mr. Wanchick stated that the entry corridors along US1 were in need of updating. He estimated the cost would be approximately 20 to 30 thousand dollars to hire a consultant to develop a design plan. He proposed that the City and the County split the cost. He suggested that new construction projects could use the design plan as a template. He stated that it would be a long term investment if there was mutual interest in working together.

County Commissioner Stevenson discussed the importance of working together on design ideas. She stated that there would be community respect and value.

Mark Knight, Director of Planning and Building, stated that the City hired a consultant seven years ago to prepare entry corridor guide lines. He noted that the guideline design was to include the SR16 and US1 corridors also.

Commissioner Sikes-Kline stated that a joint effort discussion between City and County was the correct way to handle entry corridor guidelines.

Commissioner Crichlow suggested encouraging new business to maintain a common theme for economic advantages.

Mr. Wanchick commented that it was important to be sensitive to cost, but it would be an investment that would enhance property values.

Mayor Boles stated that it was better to develop ordinances while building was slow.

After a brief discussion, there was a consensus to work together to develop a design plan.

### **5. Historic Tax Exemption (5 -10 years). General overview of the exemption and its history - Commissioner Nancy Sikes-Kline and Mark Knight.**

Commissioner Sikes-Kline stated that an ordinance had been passed to extend tax

incentives from five years to ten years for historic properties, and she suggested that SJC do the same.

Mr. Knight stated that properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places that were eligible for rehabilitation and restoration would be tax exempt on the added assessed value. He also noted that the improved value of older houses that were restored would be exempt for up to ten years. He stated that improvements would have to be certified by the Historical Architecture Review Board (HARB) and if approved, the applicant would then apply for tax exemption approval from the City Commission.

Commissioner Bryan asked if HARB would determine if the property improvements complied with the historical guidelines.

Mr. Knight replied that once the improvements were approved, the City Commission granted the tax exemption. He stated that once approved, the applicant would request a tax exemption from the County.

Commissioner Mays asked for a County staff write-up so the matter could be added to the County agenda for review.

County Commissioner Sanchez requested that the City submit an official request for consideration.

Bill Harris, City Manager, replied that the City had already submitted a request.

Mr. Harris commented that, when he was Finance Director, he requested that the Commission consider a five year abatement due to financial impact concerns. He noted that by extending the tax exemption to ten years might encourage more property owners participation.

County Commissioner Stevenson questioned whether there were historic properties outside of city limits that the exemption would apply to.

Commissioner Sikes-Kline replied that there were some eligible properties. She noted that a cultural survey of the West Augustine area had been completed, which identified potential historic districts.

Doug Timms, County Director of Management and Budget, stated that retro activity would be the only concern the County had. He advised that the impact on the county would be under \$5,000. He stated that the tax exemption proposal would fall under an incentive, and it would be favorable overall.

There was a general consensus among the City and County Commissioners that it would be a good idea to schedule semi-annual meetings to be able to work together on common issues. The Commissioners also commended the City and County staff members for their efforts in working together.

Commissioner Stevenson expressed her desire for Nancy Sikes-Kline to serve on the County Historic Resource Board again.

Mr. Harriss stated that the City Attorney would look into whether there would be a conflict serving on two boards.

## **6 Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:57 P.M.<sup>5</sup>

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MAYOR

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CITY CLERK, CMC

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<sup>5</sup> Transcribed by Darlene Kirkland