

**MINUTES OF THE JOINT WORKSHOP MEETING OF THE BOARD OF
CITY COMMISSIONERS FOR THE CITY OF PORT ST. JOE AND THE
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS FOR GULF COUNTY, FLORIDA, HELD AT
THE E.O.C. BUILDING, February 24, 2011 AT 10:00 A.M.**

The following City Commissioners were present: Mayor Magidson, Commissioners Buzzett, Gingell, Johnson and Stephens. City Manager Charlie Weston, Attorney Tom Gibson, City Clerk Jim Anderson, Finance Director Mike Lacour, Public Works Director John Grantland, Water and Sewer Plant Manager Glen Davis and P.S.J.R.A. Director Matt Fleck.

The following County Commissioners were present: Chairman Warren Yeager, Commissioners Tan Smiley, Ward McDaniel and Bill Williams. Commissioner Carmen L. McLemore was absent. County Attorney Jeremy Novak, Clerk Rebecca L. Norris, Deputy Clerk Kari Summers, Chief Administrator Don Butler, Assistant Administrator Michael Hammond, Deputy Administrator Lynn Lanier, Planner David Richardson, Sheriff Joe Nugent and Preble-Rish, Inc. Engineer Philip Jones.

Chairman Yeager called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., E.T.

COUNTY/CITY ISSUES

Introduction:

Chairman Yeager thanked everyone for attending the joint meeting.

Mayor Magidson expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to discuss topics that involve the entire County. He believes the time has come, due to the economy, to look at ways to save money. The Mayor hopes that we can come out of the meeting with some good suggestions. Issues need to be identified that we can address in the short term and put a plan together for long term issues.

County Commissioner Yeager would like to continue the Joint Workshops and maybe expand them to include the School Board for unity.

Accomplishments, County:

Mr. Butler opened by commenting how well he and Mr. Weston work together. Attached is Ex. (A) that describes the accomplishments that Mr. Butler noted for the County.

Accomplishments, City:

Mr. Weston noted that the City and County have worked hard to put together a meaningful agenda and would like the opportunity to discuss some good things that are happening at the City and some of our challenges. Attached is Ex. (B) that describes the accomplishments and challenges Mr. Weston noted for the City.

Commissioner Johnson noted that the \$16.4 bonds were refinanced as a five year balloon with a thirty year amortization. It is imperative that we meet our Debt-To-Income ratios and reserve requirements. In three years we need to start looking at options to re-finance. The bond market is very unstable and hopefully, we can re-finance into a thirty year fixed rate loan but we must be prepared.

Philip Jones indicated that the City has made it clear that its number one priority is the water quality. The City is implementing a Flushing Program, addressing the level of disinfectant bi products and identifying parts of the Water Distribution System that needs replacement as outlined in the Department of Environmental Protection Water Consent Order. We are working with the State Revolving Fund to acquire funding for approx. \$2.2M for partial distribution replacement. The plans and specifications are due in April and we hope to hear about the funding in the fall.

County Commissioner Williams asked, "What would the \$2.2M cover?"

Mr. Jones responded, "Partial replacement of the Water Distribution System to include some valves and fire hydrants. Total replacement of the system would be approx. \$9M."

Commissioner Johnson noted that the \$2.2M would enable the City to properly flush the Distribution System.

Consolidation Topics:

Mr. Butler indicated that there are several things that the City and County overlap. There may be some areas that we can save money.

Law Enforcement:

Chairman Yeager noted that there has been ongoing conversation with staff and we need to discuss to see if there is any interest in consolidation.

Sheriff Joe Nugent indicated that he has had no conversations with the City.

Mayor Magidson was under the impression that Sheriff Nugent and Chief Barnes had an informal discussion. The Police Department budget has been reduced from \$1.2M to \$660K and the number of officers is down to eight from four years ago. Both agencies cooperate in coverage and we can't just say, "Sheriff, we no longer have a Police Department." The Sheriff would have to address the issue of coverage and funding. Mayor Magidson feels that the City Manager, County Administrator, Sheriff and the Police Chief need to discuss the topic.

Sheriff Nugent noted that he has not gone after the Police Department and has no plans to. He can't take over the Police Department with nothing. More officers have been killed in the line of duty in the last two months than all of last year in Florida. Someone needs to come to him and let him know what they need.

County Commissioner Smiley indicated that we need to do what is best for the citizens. We have two heads and we have been doing a lot of consolidation. If we can do the same job with one head, why do we need two? Our senior citizens are having a hard time with their utility bills. He doesn't think the level of service will be reduced. Do what is best for the citizens.

Commissioner Gingell noted that the Sheriff is elected and the Police Chief is appointed under the direction of the City Manager. The citizens that she has talked with like having a City Police Department. She has also talked with several City's that have dissolved their Police Department and they usually had a savings in year one, but in years two thru five the cost to the County for Law Enforcement increased.

County Commissioner Williams indicated that we need to each staff the power to conduct a study to determine the best use of taxpayer dollars. We need to focus on where we have duplicity and we need to have the answers before the next budget cycle.

Mayor Magidson noted that we have a City Charter that says we must have a police force in some form. We would need to have a referendum to change it. We can't simply abolish the Police Department. It would require additional money for the Sheriff to have the same level of service and it would be difficult at best to consolidate.

Chief Barnes indicated that he and Sheriff Nugent converse on a weekly basis. The Sheriff has deputized all of the City officers.

Sheriff Nugent noted that we have to work together. We are all strapped due to cutbacks and are to the point of having to cut personnel. We are down to the bare bones and we work well together.

County Commissioner McDaniel indicated that the City of Wewahitchka Charter doesn't specify having a Police Department like the City of Port St. Joe. Wewahitchka is directly under the Sheriff and we have better coverage and the drug problems have decreased. Callaway abolished their Police Department and most citizens like the result.

Chairman Yeager noted that we need a formal discussion between the Sheriff, Police Chief, City Manager and County Administrator.

County Commissioner Smiley indicated that desperate times call for desperate measures. We have people hurting and if we want to help the people, we don't need two Law Enforcement Heads and two buildings. Put the people first.

Commissioner Gingell asked, "Are all of the citizens in Wewahitchka county residents? Why do Wewahitchka residents have to pay more for Law Enforcement?"

Sheriff Nugent responded, "I'm also the Chief of Police for Wewahitchka. The City of Wewahitchka pays for one Police Officer. At a cost of \$32,000 a year, Wewahitchka is paying for a Police Chief."

County Commissioner McDaniel noted that Wewahitchka saves money and doesn't require a Police Officer 24 hours a day.

Sheriff Nugent indicated the only requirement from the City of Wewahitchka is to have an officer present at their City Commission Meetings two nights a month.

Mayor noted that we are putting the people first with reductions over the last few years which include a 45% reduction in the Millage Rate and a 40% reduction in the Police Department Budget while maintaining the same level of service. We take this obligation very seriously and are trying to do the best we can with our current resources. We need to look at what it would cost to consolidate. Government can't give to another agency without feeling some pain.

Chairmen Yeager asked, "Do we need to form a committee for each consolidation topic?"

Mayor Magidson responded, "I think we should touch on each topic so we can at least review our options."

Code Enforcement:

Mr. Butler noted that the County currently has a full time Code Enforcement Officer while the City's is only part-time. Our regulations would need to be closer; sometimes enforcing two codes is difficult.

Commissioner Johnson noted that the City Sign Regulations are definitely different.

Mayor Magidson indicated that if we have different codes, Mr. Weston and Mr. Butler would first need to review them.

County Commissioner Williams doesn't think that we need to change the identity of the City and/or County citizens. He suggested staff reviewing our options. He would also like for each staff to take a look at inventory.

Chairman Yeager agrees many times he works with City Staff in reference to projects and equipment. We need to be proactive and work together.

Commissioner Gingell indicated that we could possibly have one Code Enforcement Hearing Officer.

Building Department:

Mayor Magidson noted that we currently contract out our City Building Department and EPCI pays us 18% of the fee charged.

Commissioner Gingell indicated that the Building Department is a revenue stream for the City.

County Commissioner Yeager suggested that the City review the fees being charged by EPCI.

Commissioner Gingell noted that the County refused an offer to handle the City Building Department several years back.

Mayor Magidson suggested that we look at the services and see if the County can handle them.

Commissioner Johnson would like for staff to review the fees.

Mr. Weston indicated that EPCI also handles planning and suggested the County may want to consider outsourcing.

City Attorney Gibson noted that the Building Department and Code Enforcement should probably be working together.

Mr. Butler thinks that Building Department rates in the County are lower than in the City.

Garbage:

Mr. Weston noted that we could possibly save money with one vendor to serve both the City and County.

Commissioner Gingell would like to consider implementing a Recycling Program.

Mayor Magidson noted that Waste Disposal is a big cost to the County and if recycling is not covenanted, it won't be utilized.

Chairman Yeager indicated that the County Landfill doesn't take recyclable items. Recycling has cost the County more than it worth.

Commissioner Johnson is for a Voluntary Recycling Program if we can at least break even on the cost.

Mr. Weston noted that the City has reviewed Recycling and our carrier is willing to do it for free until it starts costing money. The problem is the separation of garbage.

County Commissioner Williams indicated that County mandatory trash pickup could reduce our rates.

Mr. Weston asked, "Is there any appetite for County mandatory trash pickup?"

County Commissioner Williams responded, "We need to review it, the opportunity is there."

Animal Control:

Mr. Butler indicated that he is not sure there is much we can do on Animal Control.

Mayor Magidson believes that the City and County have been cooperating in reference to Animal Control.

Medical Insurance:

Mr. Butler noted that we looked at this issue with the School Board several years ago, but Insurance can be broad.

Commissioner Williams indicated that discussions are ongoing with Sacred Heart in reference to Health Insurance and we need to get Mr. Weston in the discussions.

Commissioner Gingell asked, "Is there any way for small businesses to buy into a government insurance plan?"

Commissioner Johnson responded, "I believe they would need a W-2 or 1099 from the government agency."

Windmark Interlocal:

Fire Tax:

Mr. Weston noted that part of the Interlocal Agreement requires a full time manned fire station at Windmark Beach. Until the station is built we are required

to submit ½ mill on the annexed property at Windmark Beach. The City has paid approx. \$125K in fire tax to date. Windmark has approx. 1,700 lots with approx. thirty structures built out to date. Mr. Weston would like the funds to go into an escrow account until we have 65% build out or 1,100 homes before requiring a full time fire station.

County Commissioner Williams isn't opposed to modifying the Interlocal Agreement. We also have new equipment in Highland View and should consult with the Fire Chief's first.

Chairman Yeager thinks that we should escrow the funds.

County Commissioner Williams would like input from the Fire Chief's first.

Mr. Weston noted that the City paid approx. \$43K in Fire Tax last year.

Mayor Magidson indicated that we have a new Fire Station in Highland View which is only a few miles away from Windmark Beach.

Commissioner Buzzett noted that we are talking about saving the taxpayers money. Do we really need a Fire Department in Windmark Beach?

Commissioner Williams believes there may be a way to avoid building a new Fire Station, but we need to evaluate it.

Mayor Magidson noted that response times are the key.

Mr. Butler noted that the St. Joe Beach Fire Department did not respond to any structural fires last year.

Attorney Gibson indicated that the Joe Company has some obligations regarding land for the proposed Fire Station and equipment. We need to review the Windmark Beach DRI.

Chairman Yeager noted that when we work together and have trust, we won't need to have the Interlocal Agreement. It has been a bone of contention for a long time.

County Commissioner Williams believes that we are at the end of the Interlocal Agreement.

Demolition Joint Venture:

Mr. Weston indicated that he has been working with County Commissioner Smiley on removal of twelve structures that have been identified for demolition. Four of the twelve structures are set for demolition on March 11, 2011. The County is providing the equipment, approx. twenty community volunteers are scheduled to help and the tipping fees have been waived at the landfill.

Port St. Joe Redevelopment Association:

Chairman Yeager noted that the PSJRA has helped with the EDC and Washington Improvement Group. He appreciates anything they can do to help our budgets. It's a success story to help the City and County.

Mayor Magidson indicated that we are trying to find more ways for the PSJRA to help. We are currently trying to put a Community Enrichment Program in place to open the Washington Gym. They have also done an outstanding job on the Hwy 98 Corridor.

Chairman Yeager stated that money was given back to the County last year by the PSJRA and it was noticed.

Commissioner Buzzett was surprised with what the PSJRA was able to do. We can't expect to get money back each year. The legislative intent is to improve blight.

Commissioner Gingell indicated that the comments about downtown Port St. Joe and Highway 98 are exciting. She hopes the same kind of energy can now be put into North Port St. Joe.

EDC-Chamber of Commerce Merger:

Mayor Magidson indicated that the City and County have put a lot of money into the EDC. We need to promote the Chamber, jobs are critical.

Chairman Yeager noted that the new Chamber Model looks good and staff is working on a budget.

Washington Gym:

County Commissioner Smiley noted that he has been working with Matt Fleck to have the Washington Gym back open again.

Mayor Magidson indicated that the City has been working on a solution since last fall when the budget was cut. We have a few options to consider such as a possible long term lease and/or grant. He would like to get the gym open in March with City money until funding is secured. The cost of utilities is the big issue but the summer program is budgeted.

County Commissioner Smiley is willing to ask his board to help with funding for that one month.

Mayor Magidson noted that the goal is to have the gym opened by next Wednesday.

Public:

No one spoke

Commissioner Comments:

County Commissioner Williams noted that we need to have a joint effort to prioritize our lobbying efforts for funding of projects.

Chairman Yeager indicated that on March 1, 2011 our legislative delegation will be in town. They will be meeting with constituents in the County Commission Room.

County Commissioner Williams has asked Governor Scott to extend the \$716K TDC funding between now and Labor Day. We could possibly expand first Fridays. A little creativity could really help our economy.

Chairman Yeager thanked Commissioner Williams for his work on the BP Oil Spill. He also noted that we need to schedule our next City/County Joint Workshop.

Mayor Magidson would like the workshop scheduled no later than June.

Chairman Yeager indicated that Mr. Weston and Mr. Butler will set-up our next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:22 P.M.

Approved this 15th day of March 2011.


Mayor Magidson


Jim Anderson, City Clerk