

# ST. JOHNS COUNTY CIVIC ASSOCIATION ROUNDTABLE

Agenda for  
MONDAY – OCTOBER 9 (Columbus Day)  
9 – 11 am

Issues of County Interest – 9:00 am  
Featured Program – 10:00 am

Main County Library  
U.S. 1 and San Carlos Avenue

: *Program* :

## **PROPOSED RECONFIGURATION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

Current 5 at Large vs 5 by District + 2 at Large

\* Constitutional Options \* History in St. Johns County

\* How Would any Change be Implemented ?

*Presenter:*

Penny Halyburton, Supervisor of Elections

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## **EDUCATION REPORT – K-12 TESTING & FCAT RESULTS**

*Presenter:*

David Wiles, Education Committee Chair

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**ROUNDTABLE WEBSITE:** [www.sjcroundtable.org](http://www.sjcroundtable.org)

Email: [info@sjcroundtable.org](mailto:info@sjcroundtable.org)

ST. JOHNS COUNTY: [www.co.st-johns.fl.us](http://www.co.st-johns.fl.us)

ST. JOHNS VISION: [www.stjohnsvision.com](http://www.stjohnsvision.com)

**ROUNDTABLE INFORMATION:**

Sacha Martin, Secretary, 501-5545: 133 Coastal Hollow Circle 32084

[sachamartin@msn.com](mailto:sachamartin@msn.com)

Chairman: Walter Rohrer (543-9809), Vice Chair: Henry Warner (461-3245)

Treasurer: Barrie Higgins (794-1599), Secretary: Sacha Martin (824-1212)

: **Committee Chairs** :

*Membership:* Walter Rohrer (543-9809) & Linda Oakley (471-7555)

*Growth Management:* Marcy Silkebaken (273-8047)

*Government & Budget:* Dan MacDonald (273-5855)

*Education:* David Wiles (471-1896)

**ST. JOHNS COUNTY  
CIVIC ASSOCIATION ROUNDTABLE  
Minutes for September 11, 2006**

**Program:**

**UPDATE ON ST. JOHNS COUNTY UTILITY DEPARTMENT  
Presenter: Bill Young, Director, St. Johns County Utilities  
with assistance from Karri Thomas**

*There were about 50 present, including a new reporter, Joe Adams, from Florida Times Union, replacing Jim Sutton who is retiring from The Record, Cathy Kramer, Ponte Vedra Recorder, Christina Abel, Times Union Shorelines, Laura Fowler, Beaches Leader, Bonnie Barnes, SJ Vision, Randy Brunson, Airport Authority, Joe Ciriello, Candidate for Airport Authority, Bill Mignon, Candidate for School Board, Tom Manuel and Ron Sanchez, Candidates for Commissioner, Rafe Hewett, SJC Dept of Health, Chuck Mulligan, Sheriff's Office, Commissioners Cyndi Stevenson and Ben Rich, and State Rep Bill Proctor. Treasury \$2,498.78.*

The Utility Department's **Mission Statement**: "To serve our customers by meeting their public health and fire protection needs through the provision of safe, reliable drinking water and environmentally responsible wastewater treatment and reclaimed water service. To deliver these services at affordable rates with emphasis on customer service and the protection and preservation of our natural water resources and environment."

In 1995, the Utility Department went through a formal Qualserv Process to do a self assessment with peer reviews and to look at where their strengths were and where there were opportunities for improvement. There was a reorganization of management with an Administrative, an Engineering and an Operations Manager reporting to the Director. There are now 114 employees which include engineers, underground utility contractors, water treatment plant operators, wastewater treatment plant operators, distribution and collection technicians, many of whom are state licensed. The Number of Customers Served is 27,963 for water and 20,497 for wastewater. There are 241 lift stations, 512.5 miles of water lines, 399.2 miles of sewer lines, and 11 miles of reuse lines.

**Interdepartmental Coordination/Cooperation** includes Fire hydrants-Fire Services, reuse water at the County Golf Course, studies which attract Federal and State Funding, an annual indirect allocation of about \$750,000 to the General Fund, sharing of technical expertise, and expedited permitting.

To assist with excellence in **Customer Service**, there is a new Cogsdale Billing System, and an option to pay by phone with a credit card. They are in process of implementing account payment by internet with access to customer account information and are working towards an Electronic Funds Transfer option. Also they are implementing a Meter Change Out and Fixed Base Meter Reading System which will be able to read meters hourly and transmit readings to a billing system 4 times a day which eliminates costly trips for meter readings and provides leak detection and a theft alarm.

The adopted utility **Financial Plan** includes strategic use of grants, debt, restricted and unrestricted resources to maximize the amount of capital improvements while maintaining prudent levels of security reserves and future debt capacity with minimum increases to user rates and charges. The Proposed Capital Improvement Plan for Fiscal Year 2006 totals \$61.7 mm, with a total spread over the future 5 years to FY2011 of \$164.5 mm. Categories over the next 5 years for water (47.5%) and wastewater (\$52.5%) are Expansion, \$81.9 mm, Upgrades, \$35.4mm, Renewal & Replacement \$30.9 mm, Other \$16.2 mm. A new Utility Administration Building is being constructed.

**Proposed Capital Improvements** include expansion of water and wastewater treatment facilities to provide additional capacity to the system, upgrades to existing projects, rehab of projects to get better serviceability and extend the useful life of facilities. Available funding will cover 31.6% of total 5 year CIP, leaving \$112.6mm to be funded. Based on prudent fiscal policy, utility recommends that a minimum of \$3 mm be maintained for unrestricted operating reserves and \$5 mm reserves for unit connection fee balance.

**Funding sources** are limited by no increase in user rates other than for inflation, there must be net revenue coverage for the parity bond resolution covenant, UCF funds are limited to expansion projects and there are restrictions imposed by Section 5.02 of the Parity Bond Resolution. Projected operating results indicate Utility can meet fiscal requirements, provide unrestricted resource to capital funding and exceed coverage requirements of parity bonds and SRF loans.

The County recently issued \$42.8 mm Water and Sewer Revenue 2006 Bonds to finance a portion of improvements to the system and refund the existing 1996 bonds which resulted in a \$514k debt savings. The new bonds received ratings upgrades from both S&P and Moody's which lowers the borrowing cost for the county. The upgrades were based on a strong and growing service area, solid operations, strong system capacity, sound financial performance with high liquidity, strong system management and more competitive rates due to a reduction in 2005.

In the area of **Environmental Stewardship**, the system can reuse water, apply a conservation rate, meet or exceed all regulatory standards, and participate in water quality studies. In 1995 the system area was designed a water resource caution area. In 1998 there was a wetlands rehydration project initiated, and a need recognized for reduction in surficial pumpage to prevent environmental impact. The conservation rate will better reflect actual water useage and promote less water use. There has been a 4,000 gallon per month. minimum, with the fee for one gallon and 4,000 the same. 50% of Ponte Vedra customers use less than 4,000 gallons.

The County Utility Service Area is now growing at 5-8%, estimated to serve a population of about 125,000 in the existing service area by 2025.

The new CR 214 Water Plant can do 7 million gals/day (MGD) now, but projected for 10 MGD in 2025, and the entire service area of about 14.65 MGD. It combines Floridian (35%) aquifer and 65% surficial wells, using lime softening, filtration and disinfection/chloramines.

Looking at **Alternative Water Supply**, purchase is too costly, additional surficial wells won't work, relying on a combination of lime softening & Reverse Osmosis (RO) from the surficial aquifer is questionable, but a RO/Blend is feasible for long term. RO meets most criteria for long term. In 2002 a 1050 foot exploratory monitoring well was established to provide water sampling. There is semi annual toxicity monitoring for discharge of treated wastewater and concentrate.

Located on 4 Mile Road off S.R. 16, an 8 MGD (4 MGD RO) RO Plant is expandable to 12 MGD. The design was completed in November 2005 and will go on line in mid November 2006. This new plant should prevent adverse impacts in the surficial aquifer and provide long term drinking water from a brackish water source. The Water Management District (SJRWMD) will share the cost with an amount not to exceed \$6,540,000 or up to 40% of the total construction cost for satisfactory performance.

Regarding **Water Reuse**, although much of the system on Anastasia Island and some parts of the mainland are not conducive to reuse, all of our newer wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) are 100% reuse and located near new developments and golf courses to maximize reuse, currently serve 8 golf courses and up to 10 in near future. There is also a Septic Tank Replacement Program, with 1,000 septic tanks identified in the City of St. Augustine Beach. This \$13.6mm project can be funded by DEP grants and loans.

In future, the Department will maximize residential reuse where possible and will begin to do this within the next 3 years. Most future residential development will be required to install wet lines. We will also explore "Sewer Mining" for localized treatments adjacent to golf courses, including St. Augustine Shores. We will also increase Treatment Levels to reduce nutrients. The Anastasia Island Facility is being upgraded to an **Advanced Wastewater Treatment** (AWT) level using newer technology such as membrane treatments, and we will investigate alternative sludge management.

## **Roundtable Business**

### **BUDGET & FINANCE – St. Augustine Amphitheater Management** (Dan MacDonald)

Bids were requested for the operation of the completed St. Augustine Amphitheatre. A new company, Signature, was awarded the bid, but another bidder, SMG, has appealed for reconsideration. The bidding numbers between the two are significant (\$220k vs \$298k). SMG has 200 national venues managed, with 16 in Florida, including Times Union Center, with 200 employees in Jacksonville over the past 10 years. 5 People were on the bid evaluation committee. One member recused because of interest conflict and one member did not show. The bidding process should not have continued under these circumstances, and the process was flawed, especially for such a large amount under consideration. George Jacunski representing South Anastasia proposed that Bruce Lucker, President of Signature, be allowed to come before the Roundtable to explain their position, but since the issue was coming before next week's BCC, and that SMG would also have to be able to rebut, RT Chair Rohrer asked to present a Resolution, read to those members present, to be read to the BCC which expressed dissatisfaction with the selection of the bidder and with the RFP bidding process.

### **EDUCATION** (David Wiles)

David will present the results of **FCAT tests 2006** next month. The Superintendent of Schools will be giving his yearly state of the schools message. There are several other areas of interest – **Capital Construction** and its relationship to concurrency, **Bus Transportation**, troubleshooting how to get kids from newly constructed residences to school, **Charter School Options**, looking at the ABLE program as a pilot. Cyndi Stevenson pointed out that other important issues were the **Sharing of School Facilities**, especially for recreation purposes, and the policy of **Retrofitting** older buildings.

**PATIENT CENTERED HEALTH NETWORK, delivering basic health care services**

Dr. S.S. Marathe was looking for a recommendation for this proposal presented at our July meeting. H.Warner, M.Catlin, K. Bryan, B. Higgins reviewed it. Three of the review group attended a Health Network Board Meeting on July 26. The contracts for services are with Medical Specialists under Dr. S.S. Marathe. Some of their proposed services are provided by the county, and some of the data was not consistent. Therefore the Review Group suggested that the Roundtable could not offer a recommendation at this time.

**ST. JOHNS VISION – NEW TASK FORCE STUDY** (Bonnie Barnes, Executive Director)

The Vision would like to establish a new Task Force with a study to discover what strategies and services county residents and businesses now would like to see implemented and funded after several years have passed since the first Task Force came together. Many of those strategies have been or are now being implemented . We are looking at it through different eyes now. To better represent the voice of citizens in how they are governed, and to improve their quality of life, the Vision is coming before the BCC to ask for \$25,000 to fund this study and would like the Recommendation of the Roundtable. *Roundtable Comments:* There is a difference between wants and needs. You may want a pool, but you may need a fire engine, and it is not just the cost but the maintenance. This will be a wish list to spend money. It was suggested this subject warrants reanalysis, and a Motion to support at this time failed.

**CHANGING THE STRUCTURE OF THE COUNTY COMMISSION**

Clara Cowan suggested we need to look at the pluses and minuses of re-instituting 7 commissioners, with 5 by district and 2 at large vs. our present 5 at large. And then we need to take a more active look at a Charter Government as a high priority.