

ST. JOHNS COUNTY CIVIC ASSOCIATION ROUNDTABLE

Agenda
for
MONDAY – APRIL 10, 2006

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

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

: *Program* :
ALLIANCE ON HEALTH CARE
The Governor's New Medicaid Initiatives
Medicaid Pilot Project

Presenter:
Heidi Fox, Administrator

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Plus Ongoing Current Issues
Committee Reports
Issues of County Interest

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ROUNDTABLE WEBSITE: www.sjcroundtable.org

Email: info@sjcroundtable.org

ST. JOHNS COUNTY: www.co.st-johns.fl.us

ST. JOHNS VISION: www.stjohnsvision.com

ROUNDTABLE INFORMATION:

Sacha Martin, Secretary, 501-5545: 133 Coastal Hollow Circle 32084
secretary@sjcroundtable.org

: 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 March 13, 2006**

There were about 50 present including 4 candidates for County Commissioner – Ron Sanchez, Ken Bryan and Ron Schumaker for District 2 and Tom Manuel for District 4, Chuck Mulligan, SJC Sheriff's Office, Rage Hewett, SJC Health Department., Bonnie Barnes, St. Johns Vision , Reporters Kathy Cramer, PV Recorder, Terry Brown, St. Johns Sun. Treasurer's Report: \$2,486.06.

Program: ST. JOHNS COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
Successes, Issues, Plans
Presented by: **Bill Fehling, Chairman,**
SJC School Board, 40 Orange ST, St. Augustine, FL 32084
819-7510 (c/o Laura Cooper), fehlinb@stjohns.k12.fl.us

“Mission: The St. Johns County School District will inspire in all students a passion for lifelong learning, creating educated and caring contributors to the world.”

The School Board is St. Johns County's largest employer. We recognize that accelerated population growth in the County is putting pressure on the school system to keep up. Mr. Fehling began by noting successes in the past year or so. He updated the Facts & Figures 2005-6 brochure provided by the School District. The list of awards and achievements compared to other school systems in Florida is a long one. Expansion Magazine listed our county as one of the most desirable places to move to. In Florida we are the number one school district for the last two years with the most number of National Board Certified teachers. We have the 12th highest paid teachers in the state. We are compliant with the Class Size Amendment. We had 16 National Merit Scholarships this year, 8 at Nease. For every teacher position open, we have at least 3 applicants. Two of our high schools are in the top 1,000 in the United States out of 19,000 (Nease is #485, Bartram #820). We also excel in athletic sports, particularly football (St. Augustine and Nease High School) and girl's soccer. Only 7 Florida School Districts out of 67 shared with us an overall score of Grade A.

There are now 25,000 children in the school system in 28 schools-- 5 high schools (9-12), 6 middle schools (6-8), 16 elementary schools (K-5) and one Alternative Program School (6-12) (Gaines). Twenty years ago there were 8,000 students. We are projecting growth to 79,000 students in the next 20 years. This means not just facilities and land, but teachers, targeting locations, level of services, relevant academic programs. Next year we are breaking ground on 2 new high schools, one middle and one elementary school, and are looking at a 9th grade academy at Bartram Trail and an expansion at Julington Creek.

Florida S.B. 360 bill passed last year gives the school district concurrency power in the development approval process, not just from DRIs (Developments of Regional Impact), but for every approval. Concurrency can mean developers must give either/or land, money, mitigation, construction, etc. Our county is a member of a pilot concurrency program (with the cities of St. Augustine, St. Augustine Beach and Hastings) for concurrency planning.

There is a national movement for education called the 65% Plan. Mr. Burns, CEO of Overstock.com proposes that school districts should be run like big businesses. 65% of the operating expenses should be for teacher salaries, aides and supplies. We are now at 61-62% here. However, his plan does not include Assistant Principals, speech pathologists, guidance counselors, media specialists, etc. In order to bring us up to the 65% level, it would cost the school district another \$5 million.

The E Comp Plan (Effective Compensation Plan) is proposed by Commissioner Wynn, Florida Department of Education. It is a program to reward high performing teachers. The top 10% of teachers would be given a 5% salary bonus. However the test for top 10% is how their students perform on the FCAT tests. Therefore it depends on the performance of a child on the day he/she takes the test, and they are measured on this for a whole year of schooling. A question is, how do we then measure a Drama or a Physical Education student, or a history teacher?

The state has a history of taking away money for mandated programs. The state can't be relied on for follow up on its proposed programs. For example, there was a program to pay for security personnel in "high risk" areas. That funding lasted one year.

Controversy is now focused on when students should start school after their summer break. On average we have started the first week of August. This allowed a break to begin before the Christmas holidays. The Tourism Industry, however, needs high school labor for when other kids in the nation are out of school on summer break. A high percentage of our students go to 2 and 4 year colleges, and often take classes at local colleges while in high school. A different starting date for PK-12 might conflict with college dates.

The Class Size Amendment requires class sizes of 18 for K-3, 22 for 4-8 and 25 for 9-12. We have many higher level classes. If we get a 26th child for Advanced Calculus, for example, that child would not be able to enroll, or we would have to provide another class. The state needs to look at promoting electives such as music and art. If they fund it, they can regulate it.

Comments by the Roundtable:

(1) Concurrency will not be retroactive to the 70,000 homes already permitted but not built, so the Board will have to deal with this major gap in school infrastructure. (2) the Roundtable's research found that the School Board's projection for future students it had to provide for was based on only 0.4 children per new residence. You may now be using 0.7, but realistically it is more like 1.2 child per family. Some geographic areas like the Northwest may have higher percentages of children per household. (3) Nationally, Florida schools are ranked at the bottom on spending per student (\$6K in Florida vs. \$48 or \$49K nationally), and that per capita number actually decreased over the previous year. We are now told that Tallahassee has discovered a large surplus of funds they have to decide what to do with. (4) If you do not prioritize how you are going to get land right now, you will not be able to get it in the future, either because of cost or availability.

Q: School Site for the Ponte Vedra High School? A: There are two on the list. The 30 acre site behind Talbot's on A1A and 75 buildable acres next to Davis Park. We hope that by the April or May School Board meeting an option contract for the Talbot site and due diligence for the Davis site will be available. This would mean that ground breaking could be as early as August or September.

Q: Schools for the Northwest? A: We have approved an architect for the school in the Aberdeen/Durbin Crossing area. Right now there is only a logging road for access. (Tom Manuel commented there may be a permitting problem from the Army Corps of Engineers there also.)

Q: Are the Nease and Davis sites too close to one another? A: They appear to be as the crow flies, but we don't see a conflict, and there will be no difficulty in filling up both.

Q: Can you hold the meetings for the new high school at Landrum middle school vs. St. Augustine?

Q: What is the % taking the SAT (required to get into top national colleges)? A: at Nease 92% go on to 2 or 4 year colleges. Countywide is it 70-75%, statewide 50%. The ACT test is a standard for Midwestern schools.

Q: Ratio of computers to students? A: 4 computers in a classroom plus a computer lab in the school.

Q: Starting teacher's salary? A: Approximately \$33,250.

Q: Why have the high schools dropped Science Fairs? A: We now have a county-wide one held at First Coast Technical Institute. Each high school can have applicants.

Q: Isn't lottery money supposed to fund schools? A: It is supposed to supplement, not replace. Every year K-12 gets less money. It is going to university programs and Bright Future Scholarship Programs.

Q: The Concurrency Pilot Program? A: As a pilot county, we can propose how the law should be written as we work out the details at the local level. What works in Miami may not work for us. We cannot stop development, but we can propose how new development can contribute land, etc.

ROUNDTABLE BUSINESS

Welcome to new member Pelican Reef.

Additions to Minutes. On the subject of mental incompetence, the Sheriff is planning a new program to deal with this issue.

Corrections to minutes. School Site in Guana Wildlife Area: In 1997, 200 acres was requested for ball fields. There was a proposal to widen C.R. 210 and Mickler Road along the northern boundary using hurricane evacuation as the reason. In 2003 the Governor told the School Board he would not approve use of conservation land for a high school.

Growth Management (Marcy Silkebaken)

There is a request to re-issue the Roundtable Resolution that was made in 2003, and present it to the School Board and to other appropriate government officials in opposition to the use of conservation lands in the Guana River Wildlife Management Area for a high school site. The ad hoc Ponte Vedra High School Coalition is pressing the School Board to include another site, conservation land in the Guana River Wildlife Management Area.

Bob Golitz clarified this by saying landowner Herb Peyton would be willing to give up 50 prime acres called the Outpost in the Guana River area to swap for 50 acres to be used for a high school East of the ICW next to where Publix is at Mickler Road/CR 210 to give the State a better conservation property, and that the Marsh Landing Association is supporting this. Commissioner Rich is on the Board of the GTMNERR. He said the issue here is not the location of a high school, but taking the first bite out of conservation lands which would set a legal precedent. Requests of this nature for use of conservation lands are routinely turned down. Marcy said that a letter written on October 25, 2005 to Ken Wilson, Gate Petroleum, by Bob Ballard, Deputy Secretary of the Florida DEP stated that the DEP cannot authorize a favorable recommendation for this proposed 50 acre swap and recommended that the School Board look for a more suitable site for the high school. No one part of the land can be considered as more important than another. Mary Kohnke pointed out that the land near Publix has a turkey population and that hunting is allowed there. Would the School Board want our children to be within gun sight range? Changes to a wildlife conservation are irreversible, gone forever.

MOTION PASSED (*with one dissention, Marsh Landing*): The Roundtable will present a Resolution opposed to a high school site in the Guana Wildlife Management Area to the County School Board and any other relevant government official per the Resolution submitted in 2003.

Neighborhood Bill of Rights (Jerry Cameron)

Jerry made the powerpoint presentation to 3 additional homeowner associations and another one will be made this evening, and each agreed to support the proposed legislation. Commissioner Rich is sponsoring, Maguire is co-sponsoring, Stevenson agrees in principle but wants to see what the County Attorney's concerns may be. Rumors have been circulating that our version is substantially different or stronger than the Jacksonville/Duval plan. This is not true. Basically, it is the Right to Notice and the Right to Participation. At the BCC meeting on March 21, the BCC is asked to direct the Attorney's office to prepare an Ordinance. The Jacksonville Ordinance does not refer to "legal standing" of the citizens, but "affected parties", which should have legal standing. Scot Clem (Asst. County Administrator, Growth Management) and Joe Stevenson (Public Works) say they had no idea that the problem on Rte 210 was so bad. Clem is resigning.

The Roundtable Chair has drafted a Letter of Support for the Neighborhood Bill of Rights, passed around for review. One change will be made. Instead of at "no cost" it will read "at little cost". Mr. Rohrer has been following the Julington Creek Marina issue being reviewed in Duval using the Bill of Rights. Politicians can be present, however only interested parties, nearby neighbors and the developers can make deliberations before it goes to the Commission. Mary Kohnke reminded us that Duval is a Charter Government County and we are not. **MOTION PASSED:** To send a Letter of Recommendation to our BCC.

Budget (Dan MacDonald)

Budget hearings for administrative departments may start April 26. Our Committee would like to focus on support of funding for a 800mhz countywide communications system, presented by Fire Rescue last month.

Airport Authority (Jerry Cameron)

The Authority under pressure by our group and others has taken a position to modify its use of eminent domain, to use it only as a last resort and where it impacts the functioning of the airport, not just a few hangars. The new FBO (Fixed Base Operator) is raising the bar for corporate and jet business. The airport owns the 5 or 6 hangars it leases. The FBO controls 11 acres. Prior owner, Aero Sport, sold the FBO directly to Galaxy Aviation without going through an Airport Authority contract. Hangars rent for \$2/sf now. To get a 7% ROI, they should charge \$5.75/sf. In the past, the Airport Authority has not maintained control. A contract for a \$600k hangar was changed to a shade hangar which cost \$800k, done without any competitive bids. It appears the Board may some times listen to staff without doing any research on the facts.

Proposed Water Bottling Plant (Henry Warner, Walter Rohrer)

A Letter from the Roundtable was sent to the BCC by the Chair with notes on water issues. It opposes the approval of the plant based on a number of reasons – water shortages are forecast, the WMD limits irrigation to before 10 and after 4, two days a week only. We are paying \$9 mm for a reverse osmosis plant because our water is of inferior quality with salt water intrusion, we have yet to see the impact of 70,000 approved homes, area wells have run dry during droughts, draw down might cause collapse of the water caverns and sink holes, 1.5mm gallons a day = consumption of 4,500 homes. It is 60% of St. Johns Service Company current draw down without reuse, incentives mean we are subsidizing the loss of our water for profitable resale by others. If there must be a plant, it should be on the St. Johns River, using water from there.

Harold Baker Given a Lifetime Achievement Award

Harold was one of the founding members of the Roundtable in the early 1980s, and has served as its President, Secretary-Treasurer, Membership Chair. He was appointed by the BCC to help produce a Special Government Study. He was presented with a plaque in his honor with a standing round of applause Harold would like us to keep up the efforts to insure a strong, effective County government.