

ST. JOHNS COUNTY CIVIC ASSOCIATION ROUNDTABLE

*Agenda
for*

MONDAY – JUNE 12, 2006

Issues of County Interest – 9:00 am

Featured Program – 10:00 am

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

: Program :

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Progress and Preservation

Presenter:

George Gardner, Mayor

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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

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

Treasurer: Barrie Higgins (794-1599), Secretary: Sacha Martin (501-5545)

: 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 May 8, 2006**

There were about 50 present-- including candidates for County Commission, Ken Bryan and Ron Sanchez, Lori from Rep. Bill Proctor's office, Kathy Cramer, Ponte Vedra Recorder, Christina Abel, Times Union Shorelines, Wayne Hickox. Treasurer's Report: \$3,152.93.

Correction to the April Minutes – “The Regional Transportation Authority can levy up to 3 mills of ad valorem tax, but it must be approved by referendum.” – Ellen Whitmer.

PLEASE NOTE ADVISORY MEMORANDUM on Page 3

Program: NEWS COVERAGE IN ST. JOHNS COUNTY
THE ST. AUGUSTINE RECORD
Presented by: Peter Ellis, Editor
[peter.ellis@thestaugustinerecord.com]

A year ago, Mr. Ellis came before our group as a new editor for The Record, coming from Washington State to take over the helm in Florida. The Record is growing at 11.5%, faster than the 5% market growth rate. The set up of the paper is about to change with a new look to page one, which has a column highlight of news inside. Page two is new with “GO AND DO” Information and interesting quality of life occurrences, creative community events. What used to be on page 2 will now be on page 4.

Since readers under 30 are turning more to online reading, there is a big change online with expansion of news, shopping, Go and Do, stories that people care about.

Three of our reporters are over 50 and three are ages 23-25, to help present balanced news. Reporting of “negative news” such as the police log and divorces shows community norms.

There will be a new two month initiative, a series which looks at the St. Johns River--- the environment, recreation, lifestyles, ecology. We will be featuring and profiling Kids Who Excel, especially at graduation time. We have been featuring stories on World War II veterans.

Key topics to look for are growth and the changes and declines that are felt, and the challenges of candidate selection in an election year. There is an important Candidate Forum sponsored by The Record closer to the election, this time a formal debate after the primaries.

Our greatest challenge is competition with our sister newspaper, The Times Union, for markets in the 32259 zip code and other northern part of the county.

There will be at least two more Neighborhood monthly papers coming on stream. (Barrie Higgins edits the Advocate for St. Augustine Shores, and Sacha Martin the North Shores News for the barrier island and Camachee Island to the North.)

Mr. Ellis welcomes your comments at any time to create a paper which will give the best value and interest for its readers

ROUNDTABLE BUSINESS

Mary Jane Little was recognized as Librarian of the Year. Gail Lockwood, of Commodore's Club was introduced. Gail has served on councils similar to the Roundtable in Pennsylvania and had written a Guest Column for the Record on 4/30 on the “Water Follies” future bottling plant.

Growth Management – March Silkebaken, Chair

The first of more-to-come Candidate Forums were held with all 6 candidates for County Commission, at the Palm Valley Community Association. The focus was on growth management and lack of infrastructure to support growth. Ponte Vedra Coalition has one May 22.

Budget & Finance – Dan MacDonald, Chair

The Administrative Budget hearings finished last Thursday. Our Committee has concerns about the capital Improvement program which seems to lack some discipline. Also, almost 90 new people are requested, which is above the county growth rate and the state growth rate. Another bond issue is requested. The Utility Department is asking for money for deferred maintenance. This bond may violate some debt parameters. We will have a report later.

Hiring of an Attorney for St. Johns County

The following seven names were recommended to be transmitted to the County Human Resource Department (delivered to Bob Peters, Employee Resource Manager on May 18) and the BCC (Board of County Commissioners) for consideration to be appointed to a Citizen's Committee to assist in an unbiased selection of a new County Attorney for St. Johns County.-- Don Beattie, Gary Grove, George Jacunski, William Knipper, Judge Robert K. Mathis (retired), Nick Meiszer, Doug Wiles. Judge Mathis and George Jacunski are attorneys and William Knipper is an executive recruiter specializing in attorneys, to be able to evaluate professional legal standards. The Department would collect resumes and do research to establish that they are accurately reported and come up with an initial list of qualified candidates. The Committee would review resumes in an independent evaluation and conduct oral interviews of the top candidates.

CHARTER GOVERNMENT FOR ST. JOHNS COUNTY – Tina McGough, Presenter

[For more information, or to schedule a presentation for your group,

Contact Tina at 904-273-4886, tmcgough@aol.com]

The time has come to reassess the need for a Charter Government in our County, to achieve greater accountability and control of our destiny, reduce the influence of special interests. A Charter Government is tailored to meet our local needs and is timeless, can be amended. It is more flexible, but not inconsistent with General Laws. It allows citizen referendum. A major change reflects the way the BCC can respond to citizen input

The Ponte Vedra Beaches Coalition which is driving this effort has researched other Charters in the State in order to learn from those who have already been through the process, pick out the best features of each, and learn how to get the Charter implemented and to keep the process simple. 19 of 67 counties in Florida (75% of the population) have charter governments.

Home Rule under the state Constitution was passed in 1968. Article VIII allows for a Charter Government. No county which became a Charter Government has switched back to the General Law form of government.

A General Law governance has fewer choices. There would be tighter restrictions on Eminent Domain and some constitutional officers could be appointed rather than elected. General Law ordinances are not enacted until filed with the State. Charter ordinances are valid upon approval. Some items that could be addressed are term limits, candidate residency, a limit on campaign contributions, campaign finance reporting. Now campaign reporting may not be available until 30 days later, vs. immediate electronic filing.

There are three ways a Charter can be adopted – (1) BCC Resolution and Citizen Petition, (2) BCC Ordinances (3) Legislative Adoption of the Charter as a Special Act, Article VII, Section 1(c) with voter referendum. We would like to pursue #3, make it an election issue and get the support of the BCC. We should have a draft copy soon.

Q: How would it affect City Governments within our County? A: Municipal ordinances take precedence. Conflicts have gone to court for decision. The Charter only applies to County Government; municipalities can adopt it. St. Augustine Beach has a Charter Government.

ST. JOHNS VISION UPDATE – Bonnie Barnes, Executive Director, Presenter

barnes@stjohnsvision.com, 819-3569, 819-3566 fx, 904-463-0513 cell

Bonnie has been in the Director's chair for three months now, looking at where The Vision is, what it is doing, its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities. 163 Vision Strategies were created by the vehicle sponsored as a joint venture initially by the BCC and the County Chamber of Commerce. These visions remain on a piece of paper without implementation. The BCC must believe in the efforts to implement in the future going forward. The focus is to make the community a better place to live in. This includes addressing such issues as affordable housing and the Neighborhood Bill of Rights. There are so many positive possibilities, which we have seen looking at other vision efforts nationwide. The Jacksonville JCCI has had very real results.

Buying into the Vision, what is needed? County Commission campaigns should address this issue. We need to involve the expertise of County Employees who have some restrictions on participation. We need to change the Board of Directors to ensure good representation county-wide. We need to get to agencies that are already working to implement our strategies and champion and highlight their work, communicate successes. We need to work closely with the School Board. We need to re-invigorate our Foundation Teams. Funding the Vision is always a major concern. The BCC will fund studies, but not the Vision as a non profit organization.

MEMORANDUM

To: **Roundtable Homeowners Associations Members**

From: St. Johns County Civic Association Roundtable
Walter Rohrer, Chairman (543-9809), chapinrohrer@aol.com

Dated: May 17, 2006

Address Neil Shinkre, St. Johns County Utilities Department
Inquiries to: (471-2161)

Subject: **HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION RESPONSIBILITIES
REGARDING UTILITIES
-- AN ADVISORY --**

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It has been brought to our attention that Homeowners Associations may have some financial responsibilities not generally recognized. This is primarily addressed to gated communities that do not have public roads.

Where developers have written agreements with the St. Johns County Utility Department concerning the responsibility of each party in terms of infrastructure (providing water and sewer lines within a development), the responsibility of the development may have been passed on to the Homeowners Association at the time the developer passed control of the development management to the Homeowners Association.

The impact of the transfer of responsibility for undeveloped properties within the development – including some of the infrastructure costs not provided by the developer – in the transition, the agreement becomes a Homeowners Association obligation. This means the Homeowners Association can incur thousands of dollars in costs to establish appropriate connections between the owner’s property line and the main utility line.

For those Homeowners Associations in gated communities where the developer still has management control, we urge you to address this issue as part of the transition process, or prior to that time when the Homeowners Association becomes the responsible party.

For further details we suggest you contact the St. Johns County Utility Department for specific information concerning your development, and that you secure a copy of any existing agreements that could impact financially upon your Homeowners Association and its members.

We would like feedback from Association Members to determine the extent of this issue and what possible course of action might be considered.