

# ST. JOHNS COUNTY CIVIC ASSOCIATION ROUNDTABLE

*Agenda for*  
MONDAY – NOVEMBER 13, 2006  
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* :  
**AN EVOLVING MODEL**  
**For PROVIDING HEALTH CARE SERVICES**

*Presenters:*  
*Dr. Maria Colavito, Director, SJC Department of Health and Human Services*  
*Chief Robert Hall, SJC Fire and Rescue Services*

*a Powerpoint presentation with Q&A*

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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 October 9, 2006**

**Program:** **PROPOSED RECONFIGURATION OF THE  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
Current 5 at Large ~ vs. ~ 5 by District plus 2 at Large  
~ a November 7 Election Choice ~**

**Presenters:** **Penny Halyburton, Supervisor of Elections  
Doug Wiles, Former Florida State Representative  
facilitated by Marcy Silkebaken, Growth Management Committee**

**Plus  
Education Committee Report, David Wiles, Chair  
FCAT Part I  
Drs. Kirk, Solms & Mickler, SJC School District**

[ 4455 Avenue A, St. Augustine, FL 32095, 823-2238, PennyH@sjcvotes.us ]

*There were about 60 present, including Joe Adams, Florida Times Union, Cathy Kramer, Ponte Vedra Recorder, Christina Abel, Times Union Shorelines, Laura Fowler, Beaches Leader, Bonnie Barnes, SJ Vision, Randy Brunson, Airport Authority, Candidates for Office Joe Ciriello, Bill Mignon, Ken Bryan, Tom Manuel and Ron Sanchez, Martha Mickle, Diane Solms and Paul Kirk from the SJC School District office, Rafe Hewett, SJC Dept of Health, Chuck Mulligan, Sheriff's Office, Commissioner Rich, and State Rep Bill Proctor. Treasury \$2,386.43. The BCC issue was presented first, rather than Roundtable business first, at the request of Ms. Halyburton.*

**History & Background.** From 1945 to 1990 there were 5 commissioners. In 1985 an amendment came on the ballot for 7, but it failed. In 1988 a proposal for 7 came onto the ballot again. This time it succeeded. From 1990 to 1994 there were 7 commissioners, however then it came on to the ballot again to change back to 5 commissioners, from 1996 until at least 2008. After a change is voted on, it takes a few years to take effect. Therefore, if changed back to 7 by vote in November 2006, in 2008 alternating Districts 1, 3 and 5 and at large District A and B will be voted on. In order to alternate election of commissioners, District B will initially be for 2 years until 2010, when Districts 2 and 4 come up for reelection. All are normally 4 year terms. With 7 commissioners, the cost to the county will be higher. There will be 2 more salaries and benefits, elections will cost more.

Citizens never went through a petitioning process to get the BCC Composition on the ballot. The change was initiated by the BCC each time. If the composition is changed this November by vote, then in 2008, if you live in District 1, you will vote only for District 1, A & B, those living in District 3 will vote for District 3, A&B, etc. In July 2005 there was a presentation made to put a 7 member commission on the ballot. In March 2006, it was voted to put it on this November's ballot.

When Doug Wiles was asked to assist on this panel, he had forgotten that this issue was going to be voted on in November. The county suffers from being an uninformed voting population. And because the voting is by party, it results in many voters being disenfranchised. Of 140,000 voters in the county, 58,000 of them are registered as Democrats or other parties, so a potential 58,000 cannot vote to decide on Republican candidates. If there had been single-district voting, Tom Manuel would not have won in District 4. Only 2,400 people voted in the Republican primary, a very small participation of potential voters.

**Touch Screen Machines.** The reason we have touch screen machines -- legislators decided that they wanted to know who the early voters were and where they lived before the election. The touch screens have the capabilities to do this. Otherwise we would have to have 63 machines for each voting district, in each office where early voting can take place, or one machine with 296 ballot styles, which a clerk would have to decide who got which. On election day, there has to be a touch screen in each polling place that allows the disabled and those needing audio help to vote. Our touch screens are from Election Systems, not Diebold. We have a blended system, and we do have a paper trail for the touch screens. The Optical Scanning machines are not foolproof and also have the ability to be violated. For security in our county, we test the machines to determine that the number of votes is the same as the number we print out. We got rid of hanging chads in 1992.

#### **PLUSES AND MINUSES of 5 vs. 7 SUGGESTED BY ROUNDTABLE**

#### **DISCUSSION**

**Keeping it as it is.** > If someone lives in District 1 and they don't like what the District 3 commissioner has been doing, they are powerless to vote he/she out of office. > With 2 at large, those running at large will tend to be elected by districts where population is the greatest or where the most campaign funds are, and their campaigning will concentrate on those areas. > Mary Kohnke remembers that the Roundtable recommended returning to 5. Under 7, it had become a "I'll scratch your back if you'll scratch mine" situation. > Dan MacDonald said the Ponte Vedra Beach Coalition took this issue up and came up with a list of pros and cons. The cons are against change. You would only be able to vote for 3 of the 7, and therefore only for 43% of the commissioners. Each district has its own needs unique to that district. 5 commissioners forces a mixing of all district needs. In 1996 the BCC voted 3 to 1, with 3 members absent, to place it on the ballot. This would have forced District 4 to end up paying for Davis Park. > Those who vote are usually well informed. The present system appears to work well. > Many people might be willing to give up their right to vote just to get rid of annoying phone calls.

**Changing to 7 with 2 at large.** > Ron Sanchez commented that composition should not matter if all commissioners serve with honesty and integrity. The problem is this cannot be predicted or guaranteed. Many of those he spoke with wanted to have more control in their district by voting their own district. It is cheaper for a candidate to run by district. Now a candidate has to be retired, self-employed like Mr. Sanchez, or wealthy in order to be able to run county-wide. If voting is for 5 instead of 7, there will be fewer candidates to choose from. With 7, less evidence of influencing the system with campaign contributions. > Your District representative should vote the way you need him/her to, but under 5 that may be less likely to happen. > Many people vote by party vs. for a candidate on the candidate's merit. Unless there is a change to Charter Government and non-partisan elections, a 7 member board could be somewhat less influenced by party vote.

**System Change Needed.** >The biggest problem is the partisan election. > You cannot vote in the primary at all if you register as Independent. > A poll worker commented that many people came away disappointed they could not vote. > Even though people cannot vote for a candidate, they get hundreds of (annoying) phone calls asking to vote for that person anyway. > Roger Van Ghent said he has been a Democrat all his life. When he moved here, he found he only had a 25% voice and could not vote for a good candidate who was Republican. Only 10% of eligible voters voted. > In Georgia, you can declare a party at the time you vote in each election, even if registered in another.

**Under a Charter Government.** Can we under our current form of government have a non-partisan election for the BCC? No, although there is a statewide mandate that the school board be a non-partisan election. If we change to a Charter Government, will the decision making change, without a change in the composition of the BCC? The Florida Association of Counties shows we are 1 of only 7 counties which do NOT have a Charter Government. At least 80% of the state population is under Charter Government. The Charter could state that Commissioners will be elected on a non-partisan basis, like the School Committee. There would be an option of electing a Chairman directly,

to function like a mayor, instead of being elected by the other commissioners. This would allow the BCC to make the election of commissioners non-partisan, change the number of districts if needed, have a chairman elected directly, etc. Nick Meiszer commented there have been 2 efforts to change to Charter Government, but the commission drags its heels, saying they are in favor of putting it on the ballot but never do, spending money “thinking about it”. There has never been any appropriate education for the public on Charter pros and cons coming from the commission.

**Residency Requirements.** Another issue is the current status where a commissioner does not have to live in a district to run for it, but has to move into that district if elected. Some charters allow residency restrictions. To be a resident at the time of qualifying could be proposed. In Volusia County there is a 6 month residence requirement.

**Q: What happens with the 2010 census and the possibility of redistricting?** A: We will keep the School Board and the BCC districts the same. Otherwise printing of ballot stock would be an almost impossible task. Districts will be divided as evenly as possible by population.

**Q: Is there any chance the State could change to non-partisan state-wide?** A: [Doug Wiles] An opinion was issued by the Secretary of State on this and also the issue of write-in candidates. A write now counts as an opposing candidate, therefore shutting out the opposition party from the election. We tried 3 years in the legislation to change this, but could not even get it through committee; therefore it is not likely to happen, even though both parties wanted the change, and the Secretary of State opinion stands.

**Q: What happens with campaign funds left over?** A: Expense reports are required, and are audited. There can be no new expenses. The funds can be given to a 501(c)(3) charity or paid back to donors pro rata. If elected, they can open an office account.

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**5 DIPLOMA TRACKS**  
**offered by the ST. JOHNS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**Appendix to the Minutes**

- >> **18 Credit College Preparatory** – 3 year Diploma
- >> **18 Credit Career Preparatory** – 3 year Diploma
- >> **24 Credit Standard Diploma** – 4 year Diploma\*\*
- >> **24 Credit College Ready Diploma** – 4 Year Diploma  
(includes at least 2 years of a foreign language – required for SUS/State University System)
- >> **26 Credit Advanced College Prep Diploma** – 4 Year Diploma

**\*\*For the 24 Credit Standard Diploma, a change will take place for 9<sup>th</sup> graders in the 2007-2008 school year.**

***Their diploma will have the following requirements. What is different from the current standard is underlined.***

>>4 credits English, 4 credits Math (used to be 3), 3 credits Science, 3 credits Social Studies, 1 Credit Fine Arts (used to have a choice of fine arts or practical career/technical course or combination), 1 Credit Physical Ed (to include the integration of health), 4 credits in a Major Area of Interest (focused electives), 4 credits in a Second Major, a minor, or electives.

## **EDUCATION – K-12 TESTING OVERVIEW**

### **St. Johns County School District Staff Panel: [ 819-7500 ]**

The SJC School District panel is responsible for curriculum, instruction and assessment, coordinates testing in the County.

**Paul Kirk, Director for Planning and Accountability** [ [kirkp@stjohns.k12.fl.us](mailto:kirkp@stjohns.k12.fl.us), 819-7622 ]

**Diane Solms, Senior Director for Curriculum and Learning** [ [solmsd@stjohns.k12.fl.us](mailto:solmsd@stjohns.k12.fl.us), 819-7532 ]

**Martha Mickler, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Curriculum and Learning** [ 819-7521 ]

**Moderator: David Wiles, Roundtable Education Committee Chair**

*Note: These minutes were first corrected by Mr. Wiles and then reviewed by Ms. Solms. K-12 Testing &*

*FCAT Results will be presented at a future meeting.*

David Wiles outlined 6 points as an overview to testing in the State of Florida. A show of hands confirmed that most of Roundtable members and guests were educated out of state and had different testing exam experiences. In New York State, for example, the Regents Exams for secondary programs are tested by 13 subject areas. This secondary proliferation of assessments comes as the capstone to a generic PEP testing for Grade 3-Grade 8 New York students. The PEP format is similar to Florida FCAT for Grades 3-Grade 8, generic in nature for math, reading, and writing. In Florida, Writing is given in grades 4, 8, 10, Science is given in 5 & 8, and Florida's FCAT for Grades 9 & 10 continues the reference to reading, math, writing and adds science. Because Florida does not document advanced secondary subjects like physics or art and music which encourage well rounded student learning experience, the 'elective' becomes suspect. Advanced Placement exams, dual enrollment exams, IB and AIC end-of-course exams are also given in the District. For example, Physical Education can be taken multiple times and counted as part of satisfying the graduation requirement.

### **Predictions of Six Major Changes on the Way** (David Wiles, Roundtable Education Committee)

(1) The Heyday of all standardized testing is over for Florida as they are not giving citizens, parents or taxpayers an adequate picture of education. For example, the "No Child Left Behind Program" [NCLB] urges a 'consistency' in Grade 3-Grade 8 student assessment for each and every State. Certainly, Florida's FCAT meets the 'consistency' criterion of a standardized test for the internal Grades, but cannot justify a claim of 'comprehensive' evaluation of the full Pre-K through Grade 12 Saint Johns program. NCLB urges 'scientifically-based' (or more recently, 'research-based') testing results, but the collection of annual FCAT measures do not form an honest 'longitudinal' profile of similar enough iterations (e.g., changes in minimum benchmarks, adding sub populations, adding standards). The state of Florida, as part of the FCAT in grades 3-10, assesses using the norm-reference test, Stanford Achievement Test (SAT 10) version 10. Locally we also give the SAT 10 in grades 1 and 2 in reading.

(2) Private testing corporations are a major business. They provide the testing process and external analysis of our state-wide results, which are then transmitted to the State of Florida educators. While the whole FCAT experience has only been operating in the past 8 years, the out-sourced, out-state testing companies providing annual FCAT results have changed 3 times in the same period. Further, each of the testing companies—NCS/Pearson of New York, Minnesota & London, Pearson Educational of Britain and CTB/McGraw Hill of New York-- have exhibited major problems (including actual loss of data and major misinterpretations) in the last few years. Florida's

current company, CTB/McGraw Hill, simply failed to deliver annual results to the neighboring State of Georgia K-12 system in 2001-02 although under contract to perform such work. Florida's Department of Education takes responsibility for monitoring all out-sourced contracts and give final review and certifying of all test results.

(3) FCAT, as good or bad as it is, only covers from grade 3 to grade 10. An honest measure should cover from Pre-K to grade 12. Further, prior to grade 3 FCAT evaluation, children in schooling ages 4 to 8 should be evaluated as a cohort. Now there are only generic standards. For example, by the Law of the State of Florida, a 5 -6 year old Kindergarten student should know the Alphabet. Between then and taking the FCAT Grade 3 test in Reading each child should be able to be described in reference to 'commencement' or 'proficient' in learning to read performance. Assessment starts in the state and the district in kindergarten with the administration of FLERS, the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Survey.

(4) FCATS use "Level 3" as a performance threshold that could be translated as 'proficient'. Further, Level 3 is 'bundled' in Level 4 & 5 to give an overall FCAT scoring of "meeting high standards", at an aggregate percentage. This combining of C, B and A Level performing creates a wrong impression as to what "meeting high standards" means. FCAT is a criterion-referenced test rather than a norm-referenced test as is not built upon a bell curve.

(5) Evaluating school buildings, whether by FCAT or NCLB, with grades of A to F should be about over. Both statistical ability and common sense that any A-F judgment should be referenced to particular individuals or small groups (called cohorts) or grade level classes, but not an inanimate building or a District of large size. What would the psychological and political loss be with 3 Building and/or District grades - Distinctive, Passing, or Needs Help? Saint Johns should never ignore the portions of public services which are lagging or 'Need Help', but demonstrating the patterns of deficiencies and exemplary performances should be programmatic and referenced to persons in a supportive manner.

(6) SJC public schools are obligated by the state to do an annual county-wide report. Our county ranks consistently at the top of state-wide performance. In fact, Saint Johns has been one of the top 5 k-12 Districts in the state for the past half decade. Screening, diagnostics, ongoing progress monitoring and outcome assessments are used in all schools. The recent State of the State message by the Superintendent of Schools indicated that the FCAT would be the exclusive discussion of student, class, grade, building and district-wide profiles for Academic year 2006-2007.

***Q: The students are under great stress because of having to perform on these tests. There is pressure to decide on a college to go to, and to do that in addition to doing well on tests, must select the right curriculum and have extra curriculum activities. We are forcing students to choose a major in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. What is your obligation to reduce this tremendous stress?*** A: Choosing a major in High School is part of the A++ plan. Students indicate major areas of interest, and focus through electives. The initial choice is not binding and can be changed and is not a graduation requirement. Hopefully, such flexibility helps chose a career.

***Q: If they can change their major, then why bother at all?*** A: This flexibility is being tried within career and academic learning academies, for example, Aerospace. In any particular academy the learning atmosphere is a group of students working toward a common goal. The panel brought with them samples of the new 11<sup>th</sup> grade FCAT in Science. The test for juniors is not just a multiple choice answer but requires real analysis and synthesis of information. In this newest extension, FCAT requires you to have knowledge and apply it in real world contexts.

***Q: What are the core requirements that graduates must fulfill?*** A: The A++ Program requires a core of 16 credits -- 4 English including technical reading and writing, 4 of Math, 3 of Social Science (1 World History, 1 American History, 1/2 government, 1/2 economics), 3 Science, 1 Fine Arts, 1 Physical Ed or Health. There is also a 24 credit diploma, which includes 2 years of a

foreign language and a 26 credit diploma track (see Appendix to minutes). Your Math courses depend on the path you already took. One must be Algebra One.

***Q: It appears that all other learning is curtailed a month before FCATS in order to prepare for them, at the expense of other learning opportunities. A field trip is cancelled, even if it is a one time opportunity.***

**A:** Our philosophy is to offer instruction based on the Sunshine State Standards. FCAT is not something you can drill or test for. But you can teach Format and Procedure. There is enhanced multiple choice. You read 700-1000 words and then respond to this in writing. There are two parts to test (a) Sunshine State Standards Assessment, a criterion-based reference assessment ready with generic benchmarks, such as beginning reading to graduate or commencement level reading, and (b) National measured and referenced norm— akin to the SATs – indicating how any Saint Johns student performed In relation to a national student population. The FCAT test is the sole driving force for evaluation of both schools and their teachers. At least a month before it is administered, students get a remedial reading course.

**RT Comment:** (1) Knowledge of arts, music, current events is essential for good logical thinking, not just Math or English. Current testing does not focus on a well rounded education. (2) The stress level being imposed on children projects the idea you have to focus on a major so therefore to pass a general test, you have to curtail studying your major a month before the test. Learning just facts is not good in life, worthless in the real world. You need to reevaluate your focus.

**RT Comment:** Phyllis Abbatiello is Chairman of the Northwest Coalition. She said she has heard comments from parents that basic education stops to focus on taking the FCATs. The emphasis should be on learning and teaching, and not how to take a test.

**RT Comment:** Some students can never test well, and the pressure causes them to drop out of school entirely.

**RT Comment:** Getting in to a good college is very difficult now and requires a good resume that shows leadership and extra curricular activities as well as outstanding grades.

**RT Comment:** How did we all survive and successfully go to graduate school without all the stress today's students have? We were not afraid to fail.

**David Wiles Comment:** NCS has driven the testing process, and there are other required drivers at the national level. Between the two, they have not arrived at a standard process. If you are teaching state standards, you now much teach and use FCAT testing.

## **OTHER ROUNDTABLE BUSINESS**

### **Building Height Issue**

Recently the Vilano Beach Group created zoning that pierced the standard 35 foot height limit in their 20 acre commercial town center area to 50 feet, and their first project was looking for an additional 7 foot variance. The Roundtable Growth Management Committee will look into the rationale for this project and make recommendations on how and why to keep county building heights under control in the future.

### **Livable Communities Workshop**

Executive Director Bonnie Barnes announced that the St. Johns Vision has taken over the coordination of sponsorship for this important all day seminar on Friday, October 20 at the Hilton Bayfront at no cost. She is getting representatives from groups like the Roundtable to attend. Dan Burden, a nationally known consultant will be showing how to create walkable and pedestrian friendly communities, and bring traffic calming devices to major thoroughfares and reinventing intersections. [www.walkablecommunities.org](http://www.walkablecommunities.org). Reservations or comments to [barnes@stjohnsvision.com](mailto:barnes@stjohnsvision.com).

