

CIVIC ROUNDTABLE MEETING MINUTES OCTOBER 13, 2008

Attendance: 29

Distinguished Guests: **Bill Kopf, Marsh Creek Chairman, Safety and Security Representative Bill Proctor
Carla Wright, SJC School Board
Jerry Cameron, Assistant County Administrator**

Press: **Christina Abel, Time Union Shorelines**

Treasurer's Report: **\$1,950.40**

Education Report: **See Attachment**

St. Johns Forever

Sarah Bailey and Roger van Ghant have formed a PAC in support of County Referendum 2 which if approved would provide for a 1cent sales tax increase to support the purchase of conservation and passive recreational lands and to support the County's infrastructure needs. A donation vehicle for promotional funds was distributed.

Roger made a motion that the Roundtable make a donation of \$500 to \$1,000 from its treasury. The motion was seconded by Sarah Bailey. After much discussion, a second motion was made by Tony Bosco that \$200 be donated, which was seconded by Roger and passed.

Speaker 1 - Bill Kopf, Marsh Creek Chairman of Community Safety and Security

Bill described his job as one of access control, not law enforcement.

He described Marsh Creek as a 12 year old community with two access gates, both of which are manned 24/7. There are 640 residents that are roughly 75% retired and 25% working families. There are two school bus stops on the property. There is a country club (independently owned) providing both golf and tennis with an additional 350 non-resident members. This combined population plus the contractor traffic produces 5,000 to 6,000 gate entrances per month.

There are 35 miles of road and areas of marsh, recreational lands and numerous ponds.

Residents may own golf carts but can not use them on the roads.

They employ an outside security firm, Allied Barton, to manage these activities and the property with 11 full-time guards plus a patrol vehicle. They also are under contract with SJC Sheriff to provide internal road discipline (plus or minus 60 hours per month). There

are two speed limits, 15 and 25 mph. The gates have provided a barcode system for residents to speed their access but contractors must go through a check in process.

Common problems are:

- Speeding and stop sign crashing
- Parked car road clearance for potential emergency vehicles
- Unlocked vehicles
- Care for the heavy pedestrian and bike traffic

Unlocked cars have been targeted, but to date no homes have been violated.

The security budget is \$300,000, about \$42 per month per household.

The security system is not absolute given the Marsh and recreational proximity and two gates. The residents are encouraged to be an extension of the guard presence.

In an emergency, the residents are also encouraged to call the County emergency system (911) first, then the Marsh Creek security system. The Marsh Creek guards will facilitate entry and direction to the source of the problem but they are less equipped to deal with either medical or law enforcement issues.

Speaker 2 – State Representative Bill Proctor

Representative Proctor dealt with what he envisions for the next legislative session in what can only be described as a tour de force.

He described Florida as a low tax state (16th from the bottom) and felt that this was probably state policy back in the days pre-air conditioning and mosquito control.

The question today relates to how much more badly needed government revenue sources will be tolerated on the one hand and what level of consequent government services will be found to be acceptable on the other. Some very tough choices await us.

As the budget by statute must be in balance, it is dictated by revenue collections. Recent budgets have been at the \$73.8 billion level, but the Revenue Estimate Conference is now projecting \$62.7 billion. With a budget composite as follows, there is no wiggle room in dealing with these shortfalls:

Human Services (Welfare and Medical)	35%
Education	32%
Safety and Security	<u>8%</u>
Total	75%
Available for the balance	25%

The goal of the new leadership is to balance the budget and stimulate growth. The problem is there is precious little available for stimulus. In fact, activities such as historic preservation, the arts and culture will be subjected to “placeholders” which simply keep the line item alive without funding the underlying activity.

Florida economically is a three-legged stool supported by agriculture, tourism and real estate. The economy must be diversified.

A very promising start on this is the Florida State University system. This represents the start of a resource akin to North Carolina’s Research Triangle made up of FSU’s Magnetism Laboratory, University of Florida’s Brain Institute, UCF’s Simulation Nano Science, Medical and Biomedical pursuits and USF’s Cancer Center.

To further develop these institutions will require among other support, higher tuition rates. The University of Florida rates are currently the lowest of all major university research facilities in the country. As a measure, if the University of Florida’s tuition were to be doubled, it would then only equal that of the University of Idaho at Moscow.

A prerequisite to raising tuition rates is to employ different rates at each institution and thereby uncoupling these rates from Bright Futures funding.

As to a state income tax, Representative Proctor felt that it would be hard pressed to get an amendment passed by the required 60% considering those retired pensioners on the one hand and the gold coast folks who see 5% of the wealthiest paying 40% of the tax burden now on the other.

Much more likely may be service taxes related to the service nature of Florida’s economy. Pointing to the difficulty in considering any new taxes, particularly in this climate, there is a movement in the south to restrict ad valorem taxes to a maximum of 1.35%. Representative Proctor stressed the need for a comprehensive energy policy, stating that the four areas of most concern going forward will be:

- Healthcare
- Energy
- Water
- Crime Control

He received a widespread ovation by stating that we needed discipline in our schools and he reiterated how hard this issue is considering various court actions against it.

Conservation of energy and water was discussed and he felt that preaching will have a small effect but pricing a really meaningful one.

The current property insurance malaise was discussed. He pointed out that had Ike hit us instead of Texas, we would have an insurance bankruptcy on our hands. With our entire coast line vulnerable, with its \$2.5 trillion coastal buildup, and a restricted reinsurance backup, any casualty insurance policy holder in the state (other than malpractice and disability) would be subject to assessment should the reinsurance funds be absorbed.