



# Taxation, Revenue, and Utilization of Expenditures (TRUE) Commission

Wes Benwick, Chair

Robert Jones, Vice Chair

Joe Andrews, Secretary

Meeting Minutes  
February 4, 2010

4:00 p.m.

**Attendance:** Wes Benwick (Chair), Thomas Martin, Joe Andrews, Mike McCollum, Robert Jones, Jason Fischer, Randy Deen, Ryan Jones, Greg Anderson, Hiron Peck

**Excused:** Mark Cowart, Marcella Lowe, Ruth Arnold

**Absent:** Louvenia Tippins

**Resigned:** Nicole Lester

The meeting convened at 4:05 p.m. with a quorum present.

Chairman Benwick announced the resignation of Commissioner Nicole Lester who is leaving Jacksonville for another career opportunity.

## Minutes

The minutes of the January 7, 2010 commission meetings were approved as distributed.

## Committee Reports

Performance Committee – Commissioner Anderson reported that the committee had met that afternoon with the Mayor’s Chief of Staff Adam Hollingsworth to discuss the upcoming FY10-11 budget process. Mr. Hollingsworth reported that the budget preparation process is beginning earlier this year and will include a very substantial public input process through both a web site and a series of 6 community town hall meetings to be facilitated by JCCI. The overall General Fund budget of \$980 million faces a \$40-60 million funding gap at the outset, due largely to increasing pension funding obligations and another decrease in property tax revenues from last year to this year. The City is currently in negotiations with its unions over pay reductions and substantial revisions to the pension system.

Legislative Tracking Committee – Commissioner Andrews reported that the committee had met after the last City Council meeting to discuss the new legislation of interest. Most of the discussion revolved around the three ordinances (2010-54, 2010-61 and 2010-62) appropriating funding from the Northbank and Southbank Tax Increment Districts to fund substantial renovations and improvements to Metropolitan Park, the Southbank Riverwalk, and Friendship Fountain and park. The committee members were divided on the value of the projects, particularly in a time of economic stress, and had questions about some of the funding sources proposed for the projects. In particular, several members objected strongly

to the use of the Banking Fund and an allocation of the funding set aside to meet the City's obligations to provide parking for the Jacksonville Landing for a portion of the Metropolitan Park project.

Budget Committee – No report.

Auditor's Report

Thomas Carter of the Council Auditor's Office reported that his office had released Audit #657 – Court Costs Attestation, which is an annual review of state-mandated funding of the court system. Mr. Carter also reported that the Auditor's Office has received 6 responses to its Request for Proposals for an accounting firm to perform the City's annual independent audit. The 6 responses are being reviewed and ranked by a committee and the results should be available within the next 2 weeks. In response to questions from commissioners, Mr. Carter will inquire about when the Auditor's Office may have plans to audit the Banking Fund and the Shands Jacksonville indigent care contract and report back to the commission.

Chair's Comments

Chairman Benwick stated that he had spoken recently with newly-appointed City Chief Administrative Officer Kerri Stewart about how the TRUE Commission could be relevant and useful to the City. She recommended 1) involvement in the budget preparation process, 2) further research into health care cost control, including the concept of self-insurance, and 3) an examination of the relationship of the Constitutional officers to the consolidated government, particularly in the area of central services.

Commissioner Deen pointed out that the TRUE Commission discontinued its earlier investigation of self-insurance because the City's health care consultant and volunteer consultant to the TRUE Commission disagreed about the potential savings that might be achieved through self-insurance and there was no clear evidence to support a recommendation for one method versus the other.

Old Business

None

New Business

None

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner McCollum advocated for the commission to express support for the three downtown capital spending ordinances in the belief that the current economic recession makes this the best time to undertake capital building projects. Commissioner Martin expressed disagreement with use of the Banking Fund which seems to be becoming a catch-all for all manner of expenditures and is growing rapidly. Commissioner Ryan Jones agreed with doing the projects now for their economic stimulative effect. Commissioner Fischer prefers to see more emphasis by the City on cutting operational expenses than on new spending. Commissioner Andrews objects to the use of the Banking Fund and the Jacksonville Landing parking obligation funds for these projects and objects strenuously to building unnecessary projects in bad economic times, thereby siphoning money out of the private sector where it is more productive. Commissioner Martin stated that the Southbank Riverwalk project is needed as a safety measure because of the deteriorating condition of the existing wooden structure. Chairman Benwick objected to the use of the Banking Fund and wondered about the time frame for repaying all the borrowing that has taken place to date.

MOTION (Commissioner Robert Jones): adopt resolutions expressing the TRUE Commission's support for the three pending downtown project ordinances – 2010-54, -61 and -62.

Commissioner Anderson recommended voting on three separate resolutions each addressing an individual ordinance and project, to which the group agreed.

MOTION (Commissioner Robert Jones): adopt a resolution of support for pending ordinance 2010-54, the Friendship Fountain project – **approved 7-3** (Commissioners Andrews, Fischer and Deen opposed).

MOTION (Commissioner Robert Jones): adopt a resolution of support for pending ordinance 2010-61, the Metropolitan Park project.

AMENDMENT (Chairman Benwick): have the resolution urge the City Council to remove the Banking Fund allocation from the project budget and either find another funding source or reduce the project cost by the amount of the Banking Fund allocation

Commissioner Robert Jones motion as amended by the Benwick amendment **approved 7-2** (Commissioners Andrews and Deen opposed; Fischer abstaining).

MOTION (Commissioner Robert Jones): adopt a resolution of support for pending ordinance 2010-62, the Southbank Riverwalk project – **approved 8-2** (Commissioners Andrews and Deen opposed).

The commissioners discussed the continuing expansion of Banking Fund uses and requested that staff provide copies of the presentation made by City CFO Mickey Miller on the subject approximately a year ago.

Public Comments

None.

Next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 4th at 4:00 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Posted 3.3.10  
5:00 p.m.

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