



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

Bruce Glassman, Chair
Tom Crabtree, Vice Chair

Meeting Minutes
January 18, 2005
4:00 p.m.

Attendance: Tom Crabtree (Vice Chair), Dick Berry, Tony Bates, John Palombi, Mike Meroney, Randall Deen, Mark Roesser, Louvenia Tippins, Marcella Lowe, Charles Curley

Excused: Bruce Glassman, Lee Martin

Absent: Don Wolfson, Dan Davis, Lou Myers, Elaine Burnett, Charles Magee

The meeting convened at 4:07 p.m. with a quorum present.

Minutes

The minutes of the December 21, 2004 meeting were previously distributed.

- The minutes were **approved as distributed**.

Council Auditor's Report

Audit #601 – Tax Collector Field Inspectors: Renee Beckham of the Council Auditor's Office presented an overview of the audit. She explained that the audit was requested by Tax Collector Mike Hogan as part of his effort to become acquainted with and to improve the operational efficiency of his office. The Tax Collector has 11 field inspectors – 9 assigned to occupational licenses and tangible personal property issues and 2 assigned to mobile home inspections. The audit identified numerous deficiencies related to lack of standard operating procedures (SOPs), lack of access to or use of available databases to target inspection and enforcement activities (i.e. JEA electricity accounts, Florida Dept. of Motor Vehicles mobile home records), and ability of inspectors to alter information in the Tax Collector's database without oversight. Inspector productivity was somewhat difficult to determine because field inspectors are frequently used to fill in at counter jobs to substitute for employees on vacation or sick leave and to handle property tax-related functions during the busy tax billing season.

The audit made several recommendations, including: develop written SOPs; reduce the number of field inspectors and give them the tools to be more productive in the field; control the ability of inspectors to alter information in the central databases; and remove the ability of field inspectors to change amounts of tangible personal property taxes due. The Tax Collector agreed with the findings and agreed to implement all recommendations. Alison Luker of the Tax Collector's Office answered questions from the commission, and noted that most license fees have not been increased since the 1980s. She also reported that the Tax Collector is in the process of actively pursuing linkages with the JEA, Property Appraiser, Building and Zoning Division, and others to utilize their databases to improve his inspectors' operations.

Audit #595 – Public Parking Division: Kim Taylor of the Council Auditor's Office presented an overview of the audit. The Public Parking Division operates city-owned parking lots and garages, including the West Courthouse lot, Jacksonville Landing lot, and the Water Street, Yates Building and JEA/Adair Building garages, in addition to overseeing collection from and enforcement of the city's downtown parking meters. The division is listed in the City's accounting system as an enterprise account (intended to be self-sufficient through own-source

revenues), but has never really operated that way. Parking rates have not been increased in many years, and parking fine revenues are paid to the City General Fund, not credited to the Public Parking Division. The division budget is subsidized by the General Fund (over \$1.8 million this year).

Major audit findings:

- Public Parking does not operate as a true enterprise fund – all parking revenues are not credited to the division, which therefore requires a substantial subsidy from the General Fund;
- while the Code requires that 30% of fine revenues go the Police and Fire Pension fund, Public Parking has also been allocating 30% of late fees on those fines, even though that's not in the ordinance;
- the outside collection agency that pursues overdue accounts receives its fee (25% of collection) even when City booting of a vehicle is the event that finally precipitates payment of the fines;
- free parking for the first half-hour is granted in the West Courthouse lot although it is not authorized in the Ordinance Code;
- there is no policy in place regarding free parking for City vehicles at meters, and no revenue is generated by parking placards provided to City employees and appointed board and commission members using meters for free while on City business;
- there is no centralized oversight of all public downtown parking resources; responsibility is shared among Public Parking, JEA, SMG, and soon to be MPS, as well as all the private operators;
- deposit preparation involves excessive manual work and duplication of effort;
- cash handling duties are not addressed on supervisors' evaluations;
- physical security in the counting area is lax.

The Auditor's recommendations included: develop and implements SOPs; create a managing entity to oversee parking issues throughout downtown; increase revenues to reduce General Fund subsidy to the division; allocate fine revenues appropriately; examine contract with collection agency to reduce amount paid for "non-action" collections; establish better safeguards and accounting for collections; enhance supervision of enforcement officers; work with Information Technology Division to secure public parking data system; revamp manual processes and use available technology.

Commissioner Meroney asked if the City had considered hiring a parking consultant to advise on how to maximize the return on the City's investment in parking resources. The response was no, that such a decision would be made higher up in the City administration.

Committee Reports

Cash Management Committee: deferred

Audit #541 – Jacksonville Children's Commission: deferred

Performance Measurement Committee: Commissioner Palombi reported that the committee had met several times and will be wrapping up a report in the next month or two on a baseline report on what City agencies currently do in the area of performance measurement and utilization.

Audit #589 – JEA Pipe Bursting Contract: deferred

Audit #598 – Oceanfront Parks Revenue: Commissioner Berry reported that the committee met with the Council Auditor's staff and Parks and Recreation Department and are pleased with the department's response. The department seems to be taking action and following up promptly on the recommendations. Adoption of the final report was deferred to the next meeting in order for commissioners to make any final comments.

Audit #531 – Duval County Housing Finance Authority: deferred

Hill-Burton Act Committee: deferred

Chairman's Report: None

Commissioner Comments

◆ Commissioner Palombi suggested that February's agenda include an item for review of his proposed simplified audit review process, which was distributed to the commission at the last meeting. He suggested the need to separate the commission's reactions to the specific findings and recommendations of a particular audit from other associated issues that spin off from the original audit topic. These associated issues sometimes tend to slow down the commission's response to the original purpose and findings of an audit by expanding into broader issues.

◆ Staff was requested to work with Chairman Glassman to deal with the problem of commissioner absences. Several members have missed numerous meetings this year. Should they be requested to give an indication of their intent to continue to serve on the commission, or should the seats be summarily declared vacant and replacements sought?

◆ Commissioner Bates requested that a follow-up to the CityLink audit be placed on the agenda for February. The commission's action regarding that audit called for a follow-up after 6 months to see what progress is being made.

◆ Commissioner Lowe suggested the need for commissioners to volunteer to take ownership of the review of several pending audits and move them to completion. She volunteered to lead the committee on the Tax Collector Field Inspectors audit; Commissioner Roesser volunteered to lead the committee on the Public Parking audit.

◆ Staff was requested to confer with the appropriate City personnel to determine if TRUE Commissioners can be granted access to the City's employee Intranet for purposes of accessing internal performance measurement data and other information relevant to TRUE's investigations.

Next meeting

The commission's next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 15th at 4:00 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:04 p.m.

Items pending further follow-up

Children's Commission audit – Commissioners Wolfson and Bates

Cash Management Committee – Commissioner Lowe

JEA Pipe Bursting audit committee – Commissioner Martin

Performance Measurement Committee – Commissioner Palombi

Powers and Duties – 57.105(b) – Commissioners Curley and Myers

Powers and Duties – 57.105(f) – Commissioners Roesser, Glassman and Palombi

Fleet Management audit – Commissioners Glassman and Lowe (recommendation #2)

Housing Commission response to TRUE inquiries – Chairman Glassman

JEDC reorganization – Commissioners Berry and Bates

Better Jacksonville Plan courthouse and roadway projects update – Chairman Glassman

TRUE Commission Purposes – 57.104 – Commissioner Roesser

Hill-Burton Act application in hospital emergency rooms – Commissioner Burnett

Audit #598, Oceanfront Parks Revenue – Commissioner Berry

Audit #593, Animal Care and Control Revenue – unassigned

TRUE commissioner access to the City Intranet – staff

Audit #595, Public Parking Division – Commissioner Roesser

Audit #601, Tax Collector Field Inspectors – Commissioner Lowe

CityLink audit follow-up - agenda