



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

Marcella Lowe, Chair

John Palombi, Vice Chair

Meeting Minutes

September 6, 2005

4:00 p.m.

Attendance: Marcella Lowe (Chair), Tony Bates, Mike Meroney, Lee Martin, Charles Curley, Mark Roesser, Dick Berry, John Palombi, Charles Magee, Lou Myers, Elaine Burnett,

Excused: Bruce Glassman

Absent: Tom Crabtree, Louvenia Tippins, Randy Deen

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

Minutes

The minutes of the August 16, 2005 meeting were previously distributed.

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

Committee Reports

Jacksonville Housing Partnership Committee: Commissioner Myers reported that the committee had met with representatives of the housing rehabilitation program and found that it is really 5 different but inter-related programs.

2005-06 Budget Process: Commissioner Meroney reported that he had attended 8 of the Finance Committee's 9 budget meetings, and felt that there were both positives and negatives to be reported in evaluating the process. On the positive side, the Finance Committee worked hard and seemed to be quite serious about scrutinizing the Mayor's proposed budget closely and trying to trim dollars where possible. On the other hand, not all of the committee members seemed as serious about considering every program and line item from a zero base and justifying everything's existence; much was taken for granted as a given. He saw several items that appeared to be opportunities for considerable savings: 1) the city's recycling program costs much more to operate than it produces in revenue, meaning a large General Fund subsidy for a "feel good" program; and 2) the JTA's Skyway operating and capital expenses are extremely high for the small ridership the system produces.

Council Auditor Richard Wallace explained that the Finance Committee had put considerable sums in the budget "below the line", meaning that the administration must request and the Council must approve their expenditure later in the fiscal year. Commissioner Berry expressed the feeling that Jacksonville's mayors

have had a habit of including major departmental reorganizations in the budget ordinance rather than introducing them as stand-alone legislation, making the proposals difficult to review when the new budget is based on the assumption that the reorganization will have been approved. He recommended that budget proposals be based on comparable year-to-year administrative organizations and that reorganization bills be introduced separately so that Council and evaluate them clearly and easily. Mr. Wallace reported that the Finance committee put much of the Neighborhood Services Division's budget "below the line" while a review is done to see if the division's functions should be split up among other departments and the division eliminated. Chairwoman Lowe felt that the CPACs are well served by the Neighborhood Services Division and urged the CPACs to make their feelings known to the Mayor and Council about their desires for the future of the division.

Children's Commission Committee

Commissioner Martin expressed his dismay that the Children's Commission has cut the New Way grant program to CPACs from next year's proposed budget. The program only totaled \$150,000 out of the department's \$56 million budget and he hoped that the grants could be restored for 2 purposes: 1) to push program decisions to the grass roots level; and 2) to empower citizens to improve their neighborhoods through self-help rather than dependence on a government bureaucracy.

Auditor's Report

Richard Wallace distributed several handouts related to Council priorities and the budget process. City Council's number one budget priority recommendation for this year was to eliminate the use of one-time revenues to fund recurring expenses, and that priority has been addressed in the form of a package of proposed amendments to Ordinance Code Chapter 106, the Budget and Accounting Code. The four proposed changes include: 1) a weaning off of one-time revenues; 2) creation of an emergency reserve policy and fund; 3) a process conditioning the granting of future pension benefits on pension funds being at least 90 percent actuarially funded; and 4) changing the 5-year Capital Improvement Program to include only those projects that will actually projected to be constructed in the next 5 years, rather than the current "wish list" of hundreds of projects that may or may not ever be funded.

The third quarter overview report for the current fiscal year was distributed. Mr. Wallace noted a slight uptick in seasonally variable funds, so it is looking more likely that the budget may achieve its projected year-end fund balance. The City has exited from participation in an interest rate swap program, as was discussed at a previous meeting. Fuel expenses are going to be a significant problem, both in the current and the upcoming budget. The JEA budget currently is projecting a \$9 million shortfall in revenue by year-end. Mr. Wallace explained that the Clerk of the Courts has changed some of his operational practices recently in response to amendments approved by the voters to Article 5 of the Florida Constitution. As a result the clerk is now acting more in the capacity of a state official than as a county official. One change has been that he is now remitting transaction fund collected by his office to the city on an annual, rather than quarterly, basis. He is becoming more like the other 66 clerks of court in the state than an officer of the consolidated government as a result of the Article 5 changes.

Chair's Report

Chairwoman Lowe reported that the commission's recommendations on the subject of public parking were transmitted to the Mayor, Council President and Finance Committee members as requested at the last meeting. She raised the issue of the Super Bowl Host Committee's refusal to provide records or documentation to the City to justify its expenditures of public funds on game-related activities, and wondered if the City has a right to compel the Host Committee to divulge the information because of their quasi-public status? Mr. Wallace indicated that it is a debatable point, with the City requesting documentation to verify expenditures of public funds, and the Host Committee claiming that it is a private corporation and therefore not required to divulge its internal records. The City did not have a formal

contract with the Host Committee spelling out exactly what services were to be provided in return for the investment of public funds in the Super Bowl.

Commissioner Palombi noted that the TRUE Commission had attempted to tackle the issue of accountability in grants to outside agencies before, leading to recommendations regarding Chapter 118 revisions. He wondered if we are now seeing transactions processed in other ways so as to avoid the new Chapter 118 regulations? Mr. Wallace stated that there has not yet been a final conclusion to the Chapter 118 revision process, but he felt that even when that process is complete, a huge event like a Super Bowl will always be outside of the scope of normal procedures and will be subject to negotiations and case-by-case agreements among the parties at the time. The commission discussed sending a letter to General Counsel Rick Mullaney requesting an interpretation of the City's apparent inability to access the Host Committee's records on the use of public funds and asking Mr. Mullaney to attend a future commission meeting to discuss the issue. It was decided to hold the discussion over to a future meeting and not send a letter at this time.

New Business

City Intranet access: staff member Jeff Clements reported that the City's Chief Information Officer has approved access to the City's intranet by TRUE commissioners and requests to know what sites the commissioners are interested in viewing so that access can be arranged. Commissioners will need to sign appropriate paperwork agreeing to use the network only in authorized ways, and will need to be issued log-in codes and passwords. Staff was asked to flesh out a suggested list of potentially relevant sites and distribute it to the members, with the commissioners confirming what sites they thought would be of use in the commission's business.

Parking for commissioners continues to be a problematic issue. Public Parking needs to enforce the purpose of the parking meters -- timely turnover of available on-street parking -- so is reluctant to authorize board and commission members to park for extended periods for free at meters (i.e. to attend City Council committee meetings). To really operate the division as a legitimate business unit, Public Parking would need to charge the cost of commissioner parking to the sponsoring department or agency so that there is not an illusion of "free" parking. Staff was asked to see if other alternatives might be explored with Public Parking.

Commissioner Comments

None

Next meeting

The commission's next meeting will be on Monday, October 3rd at 4:00 p.m. following the GOOHS Committee meeting in the City Council Chamber.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Items pending further follow-up

- Housing Commission response to TRUE inquiries – Chairwoman Lowe
- Housing Partnership home rehab program – Commissioner Myers
- JEDC reorganization – Commissioner Berry
- TRUE commissioner access to the City Intranet – staff
- CityLink audit follow-up – Commissioner Bates
- Public Service Grants Chapter 118 amendments – Chairwoman Lowe