



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

Marcella Lowe, Chair

John Palombi, Vice Chair

Meeting Minutes

May 1, 2006

4:00 p.m.

Attendance: Marcella Lowe (Chair), Lee Martin, Mike Meroney, John Palombi, Arnold Whisenant, Charles Curley, Ron Mallett, Gary Looney, Elaine Burnett, John Jolly, Randy Deen, Mark Cowart, Dick Berry, Mark Roesser, Louvenia Tippins,

Excused: Bruce Glassman, Lou Myers, Charles Magee

Absent: None

The meeting convened at 4:00 p.m. after the GOOHS Committee meeting with a quorum present.

Minutes

The minutes of the April 3, 2006 meeting were distributed.

◆ The minutes were **approved as distributed**

Committee Reports

Jacksonville Housing Partnership Committee: Due to the absence of Commissioner Myers, the report was deferred to the next meeting.

Public Parking Committee: Commissioner Roesser reported that the committee is awaiting feedback from Steve Diebenow of the Mayor's Office on several points before finalizing its report.

Auditor's Report

Council Auditor Kirk Sherman reported that there had been no new audits released since the last meeting but that several are nearing completion, including audits of the Main Library construction project, cell phone usage and overtime usage. Mr. Sherman introduced Renee Beckham as the new chief of his office's Audit Division, replacing Pam Markham who has taken a position in the city administration. He also noted that the Auditor's Office had recently undergone its periodic peer review visit and received a good report.

Chair's Report

- Chairwoman Lowe appointed a Nominating Committee comprised of Lou Myers (Chair), Lee Martin and Randy Deen. The committee will present a slate of officers for the upcoming year for consideration at the June meeting.
- Ms. Lowe announced that the City Council Finance Committee's mid-year budget review meeting would be held on Thursday, May 18th at 1:00 p.m., and all commissioners are invited to attend.
- Ms. Lowe announced that the City administration's initial budget projection for the 2006-07 fiscal year was released earlier today via e-mail from the City's Chief Administrative Officer Dan Kleman. A difficult budget process is projected, with expenses rising faster than revenues.

Old Business

- The commission discussed the distribution method of audits, commissioner preferences for electronic versus hard copies, and whether the commission's Policies and Procedures Manual current wording adequately reflects the ability to disseminate audits electronically rather than via mailed copies. The commissioners expressed the following preferences for audit distribution: hard copies – Berry, Burnett, Lowe, Mallett, Martin, Meroney, Myers, Roesser, Tippins and Whisenant; electronic copies – Cowart, Curley, Deen, Glassman, Jolly, Looney, Magee and Palombi.

Motion: Commissioner Meroney moved the adoption of language drafted by staff to be added to the Policies and Procedures Manual to specify the option of electronic vs. paper distribution of audit reports. The motion **failed** by a vote of 6-9.

Motion: Commissioner Meroney moved the adoption of language drafted by staff to be added to the Policies and Procedures Manual to incorporate a new section entitled New Commissioner Orientation.

Motion: Commissioner Palombi moved to amend the proposed new language to strike the word "several" in line 1 of the new paragraph and to strike the words "within a short period of time, particularly after the end of commissioners' terms in June" in lines 1 and 2 of the new paragraph (the first sentence to then read "When ~~several~~ new commissioners are appointed ~~within a short period of time, particularly after the end of commissioners' terms in June~~, the Commission Chair may schedule a new commissioner orientation...)

The motion was **approved as amended** by a vote of 15-0.

- Commissioner Mallett reported that the City had not taken advantage of its opportunity in the early 1990s to amend its occupational license fee structure, and cannot do it now without further authorization from the state. He noted that the Office of General Counsel is looking at the possibility of requesting new state authorization for the City to tackle the subject again.
- Commissioner Palombi reported that the Performance Committee has started looking at the City's procurement processes and had a good meeting with Devin Reed, Director of the City's Department of Procurement. He noted that the City has one set of policies while the independent authorities are free to have their own policies. Their initial investigation has uncovered several "holes" in the City's processes that have been mentioned in numerous Auditor's Office reports that need addressing.
- Mr. Palombi also noted that a bill is pending before City Council to give each standing committee more substantive authority to review and oversee both City departments and independent authorities within their area of legislative reference. He believes this will give the council members a much better understanding of the intricacies of City government operations, at least in regard to the particular departments reporting to their committees. He views it as an extension of the work the Performance Committee started last year in trying to link performance with budgeting.

Commissioner Tippins was excused from the meeting to attend another engagement.

- In response to a question from Commissioner Whisenant about whether the new Council Special Committee on Conducting Jacksonville’s Business, chaired by Lad Daniels, would obviate the need for TRUE’s Performance Committee to investigate procurement issues, Mr. Palombi expressed his feeling that it did not. He believes the Conducting Jacksonville’s Business committee is more about broader policy issues than the nuts and bolts of the processes.
- **Motion:** Commissioner Palombi moved that the TRUE Commission pass a resolution supporting passage by the City Council of pending bill 2006-348 that would revise the Council committee naming and appointment process, and would assign a greater amount of oversight authority to the committees over the departments and independent agencies and authorities that fall under their purview.

At the commission’s invitation, City Councilwoman Suzanne Jenkins, the sponsor of 2006-348, and Deputy General Counsel Steve Rohan arrived to discuss the bill’s intent. Mr. Rohan explained that one of the purposes of the bill is to not have to go through the exercise of amending the Council Rules by ordinance every year to change the names of the standing committees, instead allowing the Council President to do it administratively by memo. Councilwoman Jenkins stated that another purpose is to help build the Council’s “institutional memory” and understanding of how the government really works. This will be especially important as term limits remove experienced council members and novices take their places. It will build the Council’s capacity to better serve the public independent of what the administration’s budget and policies provide.

The motion was **approved** by unanimous vote.

Commissioner Comments

- In response to a question from Commissioner Meroney, Chairwoman Lowe reported that the nomination of Hugh Howton to join the TRUE Commissioner had been withdrawn as Mr. Howton had already accepted another commission appointment. A new Council President nominee is needed, and suggestions are welcome.

Next meeting

The commission’s next meeting will be on Monday, June 5th, 2006 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 6:03 p.m.

Items pending further follow-up

- Housing Partnership home rehab program – Commissioner Myers
- Public Parking Committee report – Commissioner Roesser
- Nominating Committee report – Commissioner Myers
- Resolution drafting/distribution - staff