



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

Marcella Lowe, Chair

John Palombi, Vice Chair

Meeting Minutes

June 5, 2006

4:00 p.m.

Attendance: Marcella Lowe (Chair), Mike Meroney, John Palombi, Ron Mallett, Gary Looney, Elaine Burnett, Randy Deen, Mark Cowart, Dick Berry, Mark Roesser, Louvenia Tippins, Lou Myers

Excused: Charles Magee, John Jolly, Lee Martin, Charles Curley

Absent: Arnold Whisenant

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

Minutes

The minutes of the May 1, 2006 meeting were distributed.

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

Committee Reports

Nominating Committee:

Commissioner Myers proposed the Nominating Committee's slate of officers for 2006-07:

Chair – John Palombi; Vice-Chair – Ron Mallett; Secretary - Elaine Burnett

Chairwoman Lowe opened the floor for additional nominations for the offices. Hearing none, the floor was closed and the slate moved as presented by the Nominating Committee.

The motion was **approved**.

The commission extended its thanks to the outgoing chairwoman for her outstanding service and leadership of the commission during a productive year.

Jacksonville Housing Partnership Committee: Commissioner Myers reported that the committee had received copies of 2 new contracts from the Housing Partnership: 1) the contract between the participating homeowner and the Housing Partnership; and 2) the contract between participating builders and the Partnership. The Housing Partnership's revised policy now has the homeowner deal only with the

Partnership, which in turn deals with the builders. The new contracts provide for unit pricing of materials and also provide that all re-inspections are at the cost of the contractor, not chargeable to the homeowner as an administrative fee. Both changes represent substantial improvements over the former practice.

Public Parking Committee: Commissioner Cowart reported that the committee had met with Public Parking Division Chief Bob Carle and with Councilwoman Suzanne Jenkins' downtown vision committee on the subject of parking needs and potential operational improvements. They plan to communicate with Adam Hollingsworth, the Mayor's lead staffer on downtown issues, about the need for a position paper on parking issues.

Performance Committee:

Commissioner Palombi reported that the committee had developed a letter to send to all departments, independent authorities and Constitutional officers requesting information on their procurement and contract management policies and processes – what are they doing, how do they judge their success, and how are best practices disseminated to other departments and agencies? He gave some background on how the committee arrived at these questions, which derive in large part from the committee's initial baseline survey on performance measurement and reporting. One recurring theme in many of the audits the commission has reviewed was problems in procurement, contracting and contract management. The committee decided to focus its attention there to see if good recommendations could be developed.

Auditor's Report

Council Auditor Kirk Sherman reported that 4 audits had been released in the last month:

- 1) BJP Main Library construction: the audit found discrepancies between contract language and attachment documents;
- 2) Cell phone policy: the Sheriff's Office has its own policy separate from the rest of the City, so they were not included in the audit; the City spends approximately \$790,000 on cell phone service annually, mostly with Nextel. In general policies weren't well written or sufficiently updated. The City pays some overage charges and non-use charges. The City does not appear to be in compliance with IRS taxable benefits policies with regard to employee cell phones and computers.
- 3) Court costs schedule: the annual report of what the City spends to house the state court system (buildings, phones, computers, etc.); no findings.
- 4) Quarterly budget summary: we're looking at a \$4.4 million deficit in the General Fund budget (representing approximately 0.5% of an \$800 million budget). The Mayor's Budget Review Committee is meeting today to determine how to rebalance the budget.

Mr. Sherman reported that 5 additional audits are in preparation and should be released by July: 1) overtime usage; 2) Shands Jacksonville hospital charity care write-offs; 3) Jacksonville Public Library operations; 4) Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning study in conjunction with the Planning and Development Department – how well does the City collect on exactions promised by developers as part of PUD approvals; and 5) JSO investigative fund.

Commissioner Mallett stated that he had read the main library construction audit and found it very problematic. He was surprised at the apparent laxity of procedures and oversight. Mr. Sherman felt that part of the problem lies in communication between City departments not being as good as it could or should be. He did note that some management personnel had been discharged because of their performance.

Chairwoman Lowe appointed Commissioner Mallett as chair of the review committee for Audit #612, Better Jacksonville Project library construction. She also noted her concern, on the subject of PUDs, that changes are sometimes made administratively after PUDs are approved by City Council that result in the developments ending up being built substantially differently than Council approved them.

Chair's Report

- Chairwoman Lowe reported that she had attended the GOOHS Committee meeting earlier in the day to report on the TRUE Commission's accomplishments for the year. The commission had the opportunity to undertake several extended projects during the year because the volume of special studies and legislative work undertaken by the Auditor's Office reduced the number of audits usually produced. The GOOHS Committee expressed its gratitude for the work the commission is doing. Ms. Lowe noted that the long-promised revisions to Ordinance Code Chapter 118 – Public Service Grants – are still pending and she asked the GOOHS Committee for help in bringing about a resolution. Chairwoman Suzanne Jenkins asked Adam Hollingsworth of the Mayor's Office to find out where the problem lies.
- Because of the City Council's 2 week summer holiday, the resulting spate of employee vacations, and the Council leadership change-over and committee reformulation, Ms. Lowe suggested that the TRUE Commission dispense with its July meeting and reconvene in August after the new council committee schedule is determined. The commission agreed to reconvene in August at the call of the Chairman.
- Ms. Lowe requested that staff print the recap of the commission's 2005-06 activities on commission letterhead and distribute copies to the Council President, Mayor and 6 CPAC chairs.
- Ms. Lowe also requested that staff notify the chairs of the 6 CPACS of the commission's meeting schedule when a permanent date and time are determined.

Commissioner Comments

- Commissioner Burnett expressed the hope that everyone will remember that the City's ultimate goal is to improve the lives of its citizens, even when budgets are tight. Citizens are giving their time and effort to improving their communities and are relying on the City's promises to be a reliable partner in these efforts. These civic improvement efforts need to be supported and sustained, and not sacrificed when finances are tight.
- Commissioner Palombi reiterated the commission's collective thanks to Marcella Lowe for a great year as chair of the commission.

Next meeting

The commission's next meeting will be in August at the call of the Chairman.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

Items pending further follow-up

- Public Parking Committee report – Commissioner Roesser
- Performance Committee report – Commissioner Meroney
- Audit #612: Main Library Construction - Commissioner Mallett