



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

John Palombi, Chair

Ron Mallett, Vice Chair

Meeting Minutes

September 7, 2006

4:00 p.m.

Attendance: John Palombi (Chair), Marcella Lowe, Gary Looney, Randy Deen, Mark Cowart, Louvenia Tippins, Bob Lee, John Jolly, Mike Meroney, Elaine Burnett, Arnold Whisenant, Greg Anderson, Charles Magee

Excused: Mark Roesser, Charles Curley Ron Mallett, Lou Myers

Absent: Lee Martin

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

Minutes

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

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

Committee Reports

Public Parking Committee: Commissioner Meroney reported that 4 meetings have been held by Council Members Suzanne Jenkins and Elaine Brown regarding downtown parking issues, which have been well attended by a variety of downtown interests. The City is looking at new parking enforcement equipment that could offer more options in parking pricing and availability. Any method needs to prevent downtown employees from monopolizing meters all day, thereby freeing up spaces for short-term shoppers and other visitors. There are differing philosophies about what is best for downtown parking, but it all boils down to market forces in action. The two extreme views can be characterized as “cheap parking, but there’s never any available” and “plentiful parking, but very expensive”.

Funding Control and Effectiveness Committee: Commissioner Palombi reported in the absence of Chairman Myers that a letter has been sent from the TRUE Commission to the executive director of the Jacksonville Children’s Commission explaining TRUE’s intention to survey Children’s Commission grant recipients regarding their use of City funds. The committee met with Sandra Hull-Richardson of the Community Services Department to talk about the Public Service Grant procedures and safeguards

Performance Committee:

Commissioner Meroney reported that the committee had sent out surveys on June 1st to all City departments, the independent authorities and Constitutional officers requesting information on their procurement practices and contract management procedures. Responses were received from about half of those surveyed, and second request letters were recently sent to those not responding to the original survey. The committee has devised a scoring sheet for members to evaluate the responses received. They hope to be finished with the project by the end of November.

Ordinance Code Chapter 118 Revisions Committee: Commissioner Lowe reported that this committee formed 3 years ago to look at the need to revise the chapter, which deals with the Public Service Grant process, but deferred taking action because the City administration was in the process of doing its own revision of the chapter. After several years of waiting for these revisions to take place, Ms. Lowe met today with Sandra Hull-Richardson of the Community Services Department and learned that the department's long-awaited revisions amount to little more than minor housekeeping changes, not the substantive re-write that was expected. Therefore Ms. Lowe feels that the TRUE Commission needs to start from scratch and review the whole chapter and recommend changes needed to address previously-identified problems with City grants and contracts.

Council Auditor Kirk Sherman reported that the City Council Finance and Audit Committees are preparing to look at Chapter 118 and the Public Service Grant process this fiscal year, hoping to have new procedures in place for the FY07-08 fiscal year, the application process for which begins in the spring of 2007.

Auditor's Report

Council Auditor Kirk Sherman noted that his entire staff has been deeply immersed in the budget process for the past several months and that audit activities come to a virtual halt during that time. The quarterly budget review was released this week, and it shows that the General Fund projects a \$4 million positive variance for the year; small (less than half a percent in a budget of \$900 million) but positive.

In response to a question from Chairman Palombi about the Auditor's annual audit plan, Mr. Sherman stated that the Council President this year has gone back to a purely Audit Committee from the previous GOOHS Committee (which had a broader charge to oversee operational effectiveness, perform special investigations, etc.). He plans to discuss his office's audit plans with the committee in the next month. In response to another question about a note in the Quarterly Report indicating that the Jacksonville Housing Commission did not submit a required quarterly report, Mr. Sherman indicated that the agency was hampered by personnel problems, including the departure of the Commission's financial officer and the extended absence of that employee's replacement due to illness. They anticipate that the commission will produce a year-end report as required.

Chair's Report

Chairman Palombi reported that he will be meeting with the Audit Committee to coordinate plans for audit reviews.

New Business

- Commissioner Whisenant related a recent experience dealing with the City's sign ordinance and expressed his belief that the ordinance practically requires a citizen to hire a sign company to work through the permitting process. He wondered if the process could not be simplified so that a property owner could do the work themselves without having to pay for professional expertise. After some discussion, Mr. Whisenant agreed to make some preliminary inquiries to understand the ordinance and permitting process and to frame some issues for the Commission's

consideration and a possible invitation to the City's manager of sign permitting to come to a future meeting and discuss the process.

Old Business: None

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Burnett wondered how the City disposed of its unused, surplus property. Has an inventory been done to identify all of the miscellaneous lots and parcels around the city and is there a process for determining what is surplus and could be disposed of? Kirk Sherman agreed to look into whether such a policy and process exists.

Commissioner Burnett also expressed an interest in looking at the JEA's Green Building initiative.

Next meeting

The commission's next meeting will be on Thursday, October 5th at 4:00 p.m. in the City Council Chamber.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:53 p.m.

Items pending further follow-up

- Public Parking Committee report – Commissioner Roesser
- Performance Committee report – Commissioner Meroney
- Funding Control and Effectiveness Committee – Commissioner Myers
- Chapter 118 Revisions Committee – Commissioner Lowe
- Sign permitting process – Commissioner Whisenant