

## SAINT JOHNS COUNTY CIVIC ROUNDTABLE

### March 11, 2019 Meeting Minutes

The meeting was opened at 9:00am by Chairman Rick Lofgren.

Secretary's Report: The minutes of the meeting of February 11, 2019 were accepted as written.

Treasurer's Report: A balance of \$472.47 in our account was reported.

Chairman Lofgren introduced Dr. Jennifer Mitchell, a coordinator with the St Johns River Water Management District. Dr. Mitchell earned her doctorate in Forest Ecology at Auburn University. She completed a post-doc program at the University of Florida in Water and Soil Science.

Her goals in water management are threefold.

- 1) Ensure enough water for current and future use.
- 2) Maintain water quality
- 3) Flood Protection

The Water Management District has 500 employees of which 200 have advanced degrees.

Our drinking water comes from the aquifer that courses deep underground through much of Florida. The aquifer also feeds the springs and wetlands of our state.

The Water District manages 700,000 acres of land. They cooperate with the Suwannee River Water District in planning for future water needs. It is important to balance the water needs of people with that of the natural world and to avoid the intrusion of salt water.

Dr. Mitchell noted that per capita usage of water has decreased since the 1990's aided by water conservation measures such as more efficient fixtures, sensible irrigation plans etc.

Currently 1000 gallons of water from the aquifer costs \$1.50 versus \$6.00 to \$8.50 for desalinated seawater

She also covered a project at Doctor's Lake that reduces the amount of nitrogen and phosphates in the water.

Developer cooperation is sought to make use of "gray water" that requires separate pipe systems economically placed with initial development construction. She also noted the extensive evaluation of river water chemistry to detect problems should they occur.

Our next speaker was Bill Young, Director of St Johns County Utilities. Mr. Young noted that the Utility serves 46,000 water customers and 37,000 ware water customers delivering 4.8

billion gallons of water per year. Sales of water total 51 million dollars per year on a budget of 27.38 million dollars. The 176 full time employees provide the water service with an average of 150 new customers per month.

The St Johns county utility is investing in state of the art water production and reclamation facilities. An example is the new Players Club Reclamation facility scheduled to open November of this year.

Town of Hastings, Florida has turned over its aging water system to the county. The system is being updated and is providing Hastings residents with water at half the previous rate, while retaining the employees inherited.

Both Dr. Mitchell and Mr. Young answered questions from roundtable members.

General Roundtable Business:

Two motions were made, seconded and approved by the Roundtable membership.

They were:

- 1) The Saint Johns County Roundtable Members and Officers recommend that the Commissioners of St. Johns County move forward with the plans to provide dune restoration

and beach re-nourishment needed to improve and protect the erosion damaged shorelines of our county.

- 2) The Saint Johns Civic Roundtable resolves that it opposes bill SB376, sponsored by Senator Monfort, which redirects \$50 million a year through FY 2025-2026 from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund for Hurricane Michael restoration. The Civic Roundtable opposes legislation that diverts constitutionally mandated funding from the Land Acquisition Trust and Florida Forever for unrelated purposes.

Copies of the resolutions were to be sent to the appropriate legislators in county and state government.

A report on the many “Academies” available in the St Johns County School District noted that there are 5,391 students requesting placement in 21 educational and three ROTC programs. Thanks Jim.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00am

Respectfully Submitted,

Dennis Froio. Secretary