

St. Johns County Civic Roundtable Minutes
December 14, 2020
Submitted by Maureen Long, Recording Secretary

The meeting was Via Virtual Zoom Teleconference and was opened at 12:00 noon by Chairman Jim McLane, he stated, "How glad he was that everyone was able to attend for our final meeting of the year. It has been a very productive year despite the challenges of COVID. So to get started, Let's take a moment to pause and honor our country and all those who serve so that we can come together to meet in gatherings like this and to say the Pledge. Thanks to Maureen for providing the Flag we will be using during our meetings and if all would please stand and join me in saying the Pledge."

Maureen introduced Commissioner Jeremiah Blocker, the new Chair to the Board of County Commissioners, followed by a brief introduction to his bio.

Commissioner Blocker began by sharing some of his goals and ideas he would like to see addressed from the Commission in the coming year. Along with better communications among our community and our Commissioners, he thinks this can be achieved by outreach programs by our Commissioners visiting neighborhoods, businesses and holding town hall meetings. Of course with the Covid-19 outbreak town hall meetings have been impossible but hopefully when we are back to some normalcy we can meet again in person and can be resumed. This pandemic has hit so many of us hard, with his family as well. Making it difficult for him to visit in person with his own mother. But as a community our citizens have taken care of themselves and worked to help others. He listed some priorities important to him for this upcoming year; While balancing growth in the county we need to protect the natural beauty we have in St. Johns County, the need for workforce housing, relook at the Tree Ordinance, reinstating LAMP , Support for our 1st Responders, Adding more Firefighters, Lookout for those that are less fortunate, Support the SJC Veterans Council with the Homeless and Suicide prevention programs, Working with the School Board, Support for a Resiliency Coordinator, Collaborative efforts for problem solving, and Engaging the community for input.

Commissioner Blocker finished his presentation, Chair McLane opened the floor for questions.

Question: There were several concerns discussed on the subject of Covid-19, what the County should do to control the pandemic in light of the numbers? Numbers are rising and concerns of how tourists are not following the guidelines? When and how the vaccines will be available to citizens/ when communicating this please tell us what you know and what you don't know. Transparency is important, especially with a topic so important to all of us.

Blocker: Right now the Health Department and state are setting the guidelines. Here in our county our citizens have been doing a great job of keeping themselves healthy, as time goes on and word of when the vaccine will be ready to be provided to our citizens the county will be as transparent as possible.

Question: When is the county going to find a replacement for Jack Pope's position?

Blocker: I have heard of Mr. Pope, he is well known in our county for his great customer service working in his role as inspector for the county's building permits. I'll have to ask staff on the progress for his replacement.

Question: The policy of clearcutting of trees is still a concern in the community, when can we see some work addressing that issue?

Blocker: This is something that we will need to work on, I believe the reason used for this policy is for road grading heights. I'd like to see some Vision Workshops, vision planning with builders, realtors, developers, citizens and conservationists working together to make changes to the LDC to preserve more trees.

Chair McLane thanked Commissioner Blocker for his time this afternoon, the work he does for our county, his service to our country and how the Roundtable is looking forward to working closely with him this coming year to preserve and improve the quality of life in St. Johns County.

Chair McLane moved onto Roundtable business, asking for approval of November's minutes, motion was made and seconded, minutes were approved. The next item of business with the the Treasurer's Report, Lisa can you bring us up to date?

Co-Chair McGlynn reported \$1048.58 in our account. Notices for dues will be going out in January, at that time we will have a draft of the budget explaining how we will be spending the money in the next year. Any questions or comments?
No questions or comments.

Chair McLane brings up the next item on the Agenda is the election of Officers for 2021. We are always looking for people to join in helping to lead the Roundtable. Is there anyone who would like to join the Board? Do we have any nominations from the floor for Board positions? There is a slate of candidates for the Board that has been published and that would be the same officers serving another term. So, me, Jim McLane as Chairman, Lisa McGlynn as Vice-Chairman and Treasurer, Maureen Long as Recording Secretary and Robert Olson as Board Member At Large.

Do I have a motion to approve this slate of candidates to serve as officers of the Roundtable for 2021?

Motioned was Second, All in favor, none opposed.
Thank you.

Our Main order of Business today is to settle on our list of state legislative priorities. I am going to turn this over to Co-Chair McGlynn.

Co-Chair McGlynn explains that the annual St. Johns County Legislative Delegation meeting will be held on Friday, December 18 from 9:30 to 11:30 am at the Commission Auditorium. The Roundtable will participate. This is the draft list of State priorities which I will be presenting if you have suggestions or comments I welcome them.

Draft RoundTable State Legislative Priorities

Funding for Florida Forever

Support a minimum of \$300 million in funding for Florida Forever, the state's premier conservation and recreation lands acquisition program. Extend the bonding authority for Florida Forever to maximize the impact of funding. Six years ago, 75% of Floridians voted to Constitutionally mandate one-third of the real estate document stamp revenue to fund land conservation.

Support Repeal of HB 7103 Provisions & Restore Citizen Rights to Participate in Local Planning

Amend legislation passed in 2019 to target frivolous challenges to development orders and restore citizens' right to file legitimate challenges without the fear of financial ruin should they lose in court. HB 7103 passed in the final hours of the session without the benefit of public hearings or normal committee consideration.

Funding for Preservation Of Agricultural Land

Support legislation to assist counties in the purchase of "Development Rights" which will ensure farmland will remain in permanent agricultural use and reduce regulations restricting farmers' ability to market products. Agriculture has been a vital economic contributor to St. Johns County, yet the acreage devoted to agricultural crops is rapidly declining.

Funds for Expansion of St. Johns County Public Transit System

Support legislation that will increase funds to the Transportation Trust and oppose efforts to divert funds from the trust fund. The county's growing population dictates expanding public transportation to employment areas and collaborate on more regional routes.

Protection of Local Government Revenues and Statutes

Oppose any legislation which would further erode local governments from capturing revenue in the form of ad valorem values, impact fees, concurrency compensation and user fees. This revenue is critical to provide necessary programs and services for residents and to meet unfunded mandates.

Local governments should be allowed to regulate Short-term and Vacation Rentals and Plastics

Opposes any legislation which preempt cities and counties from regulating short-term and vacation rentals because local governments know what is best for their communities. Local control is best when it comes to the ability to enact local zoning provisions to ensure quality of life of its citizens, including the use of plastics.

Open Meeting Exemption for Economic Development Purposes

Opposes efforts to amend Florida's Government in the Sunshine statute which would allow local governments to meet and deliberate in private on economic development issues. These amendments could allow almost any non-residential development proposals to be negotiated in private without public disclosure and input.

Program funding for the Vilano/Ponte Vedra Trail

Supports funding for the completion of the pre-construction engineering for the initial phases of the multi-use Vilano/Ponte Vedra Trail along State Road A1A between the City of St. Augustine, Vilano Town Center and Ponte Vedra Beach.

Support Meaningful & Comprehensive Legislation to Further Limit Water Pollution

Enact legislation and increase funding to address the sources of nutrient pollution, especially from septic tanks, biosolids, sewage spills, fertilizer and other runoffs which seep into groundwater and water tables. Nutrients are widely recognized as the major driver of algae proliferation.

Sea Level Rise Infrastructure Funding

Support funding to assist coastal communities in assessing vulnerabilities and risks associated with sea level rise and help develop plans and approaches for mitigation.

A brief discussion was had on a few of the draft list of State priorities, all agreeing to format some suggestions and send to Lisa by email at info@sjcroundatble.

Chair McLane followed by thanking everyone for their input and asked Co-Chair to give her update on the Task Force Discussion on the Neighborhood Bill of Rights zoom meeting held on 11/30/2020.

Co-Chair McGlynn gave the by stating how productive the discussion was on possible changes to the Neighborhood Bill of Rights and would follow up with a written list to be shared at next months meeting, but mentioned a few items for today's meeting.

1. Differentiating Right of Way notices from PUD notices, etc
2. Enlarging the notice area
3. Streamlining the notice publication and description
4. Adding proposed/draft regulations to the NBR distribution

Chair McLane called on Education Chair John Pilecki for an Education Report;

Chair Pilecki reported that the School Board was going to have a meeting and report on the 1/2 cent sales tax funding. HHH Interim High School will be named Toco High School and open next fall with 2100 students, 9th through 12th grades. All statewide tests will be taken in person, if scores are low there will be no repercussions. Beginning Winter 2021 Season there will no longer be split instruction. Either online or in person class, teachers will either teach in person or online. Anthony Coleman, former Sheriffs Research Office is the new School Board member he is replacing Mr. Allen who has been on the board for 30 years.

Chair McLane: Let's do our usual, "Go around the Room" and hear from anyone here who would like to share any concerns or news.

Amy Koch from the SJ Audubon Society are offering Monthly Bird Walks, for more info go to stjohnsaudubon.com

Shorty Robbins: Miss Sarah Bailey wanted me to thank you all for the Roundtable's newsletters, they help her to keep up with what's going on.

Quite a few new members and attendees stated how much they have learned and enjoyed the Roundtable meetings, they had no idea how informative and involved our members were in the county and state's government issues.

Co-Chair McGlynn stated that even with a pandemic the SJCCR has been productive in 2020. She gave us an overview of the last year:

Roundtable wrote several Resolutions; Opposition to Gate Car Wash, Short Term Rentals, Florida Forever Funding, Amendment to Articles IV and XII of the St. Johns County Land Development Code in reference to County Tree Ordinance, Opposition to SJRWMD Permit Application #10002-12, and to reinstate the Lamp Program.

We created easy access information on 2020 local candidates running for office, Provided presentations from NFL TPO and Legal Aspects of Homeowners Associations by Michael J. McCabe and Co-Sponsored the ST. JOHNS COUNTY 2070 Workshop.

Not to mention the dozen or more Monthly Guest Speakers; The N.F. U.S Census Bureau, Utility Director Bill Young, Assistant County Administrators Joy Andrews & Brad Bradley,

Superintendent Tim Forson, Commissioners Dean and Johns, Linda Stroughton, Vicky Oakes, County Administrator Conrad Hunter, County Attorney Patrick McCormack, Mike Roberson from SJC Growth Management, and Representatives Cyndi Stevenson and Paul Renner.

Chair McLane reminded everyone that the next meeting will be Monday, January 11th, 2020 at noon. He wished all a safe and happy holiday and lets all look forward to a Covid Free 2021!! The meeting was adjourned at 1:40.

Absent from meeting was Janet Patten, Chair of Government Affairs.