

St. Johns County Civic Roundtable Minutes
February 8, 2021

Submitted by Maureen Long, Recording Secretary

The meeting was Via Virtual Zoom Teleconference Meeting was opened at 12:00 noon by Co-Chair Lisa McGlynn. After the Pledge of Allegiance was recited guest speaker Sheriff Hardwick was introduced.

Sheriff Hardwick has been serving in his new position for just a month but in that time, he has begun his initiatives by restructuring SJCSO with five directors, Patrol, Criminal Investigation, Jail, Operations, and General Services that report directly to him.

Believing in community involvement, listening to his constituents, leading by being out there in his uniform, walking through all the agencies and in the schools, he trusts is the best way to let people know he is here and listening. It is extremely important that if citizens see something, they need to say something, it aids the Sheriff's Office to protect and provide assistance to the people they serve. Relationships between the Sheriff's Office, the Board of County Commissioners, the St. Johns County School Board, local businesses, builders, and the faith community he considers important to having partnerships for our community and its people.

The challenges of COVID on our community, especially the effects on the children, as well as the rapid growth of St. Johns County are reasons that efficiency and better processes are part of his vision. Dealing with the mental health crisis is a priority. Among other initiatives, he is working to target human trafficking and drugs that are coming through the county on Interstate 95 and has instituted a pilot program for body cameras in the North West part of the county.

The new training and emergency communications center complex on Agricultural Center Drive, near State Road 16 and Interstate 95 will be used for further training to our law enforcement members and the public.

Implementing resources and programs that address mental health and the unique needs of our officers and staff to help promote resilience so they can deal with stress, to be strong and stay strong so be able to do their job in providing safety, protection and to serve with excellence for the people of St. Johns County.

Sheriff Hardwick answered questions from members and attendees.

General Roundtable Business:

First order of business is the approval of January 2021 Minutes. A motion was made, seconded and minutes approved as written.

Treasurer's Report was given, a balance of \$960.00 in our account was reported. Dues for membership have already begun to be sent out, all should receive theirs this week.

Co-Chair McGlynn introduced our new member Albert Syeles, President at the EpiCentre Alliance. Albert gave us a brief introduction to the EpiCentre Alliance, who they are and what their future vision is.

Janet Patten, Government Affairs Chair reported the State Legislative Session will begin on March 2 for two months.

Governor DeSantis budget is set to be \$96.6 billion, with no new tax increase, continue with tax free days for school and hurricane supplies, he is still committed to to pay increases for teachers, \$500 million to restore the Everglades, Florida Forever will only get \$50 million even though the Doc Stamps bring in \$900 Billion, Resilient Florida will get \$1 billion over the next 4 years, \$50 million for beach restoration, 1.7 billion for Agriculture and \$53.9 million for Mrs. DeSantis statewide mental health initiative to name just a few. A hot button topic in this year's Legislative session will be the regulation of short-term rentals. Air B&B companies are lobbying against local control.

On our local government topics, Jeb Smith will not be seeking re-election for his County Commissioner Seat in 2022. A Lamp Advisory Board will be formed, recommendations for applicants are needed. BOCC will be discussing short-term rental regulations and to examine registration and violation fees. Here at the Roundtable, we are waiting to hear back on the county's response to our recommendation to the Neighborhood Bill of Rights.

Vice-Chair McGlynn reported that the SJC BOCC passed North Florida TPO plans. Explained the process and projects, building and widening roads.

Chair McLane reported on The St. Johns County Utilities Integrated Water Resource Plan (IWRP), it details what the response will be if there is a breakdown in the water system. IWRP can be viewed on the county's website. Chair reported the IWRP is not for well users, and cautioned these citizens should have their well water checked frequently.

John Pilecki, Education Chair reported on the February 3rd 2021 School Board/County Commission combined meeting and the five topics discussed:

- 1: School Safety
- 2: New Development & Growth
- 3: Redistricting (Supervisor of Elections, Vicky Oakes Presented)
- 4: Internet Connectivity in Outlying Areas of SJC.
- 5: Opportunities for Graduation Venues in SJC

To read John Pileki's detailed report click on [February 3, 2021 School Board & BOCC Joint Meeting](#), can be found under February 2021 Minutes.

Lisa proposed creating a Health Care Committee within the Roundtable. Barbra Olsen and Anne Challisas to serve as chair members, with a focus on health care within our community. All were in favor for the committee to be formed. Dr. McCormick and David Klater were interested in joining and volunteering to work the committee.

Chair McLane went around the "room" for discussion/new business.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:10.

The next Meeting will be on March 8th. Becki Yanni from the Council of Aging will be our Speaker and Albert Syeles will give us a presentation on the EpiCentre Alliance and the proposed Performing Arts Center.