

St. Johns County Civic Roundtable Minutes

October 12, 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 thanked everyone for joining the St. Johns Civic Roundtable today. Then asked all to stand and join him in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Chairman McLane introduced our guest speaker Vicky Oakes, Supervisor of Elections for St. Johns County. Supervisor Oakes has worked in the Elections Office for 32 years, 23 years as Assistant Supervisor and the Supervisor of Elections for the last 9 years. He thanked her for taking the time to speak to us today as this is one of the busiest times of the year for her.

Supervisor Oakes said yes it is a very busy time of year, thanked Chair McLane and all for having her here today. She began listing facts of the upcoming election and ballot descriptions.

10/5/20 would be the last day to register to vote.

In mid-July SJC hit 200,00 voters and to date 210, 000 voters.

The 1st session to open and count ballots begins this week.

70,000 voters requested mail in ballots, 2 times more than ever before.

25,000 voters have already voted and have sent in their ballots.

Ms. Oakes started in the election office in 1988.

The election office used to have to wait to count the ballots until after the polls closed, now we can begin counting early.

Voters have to request a ballot; the Election office does not just mail them out.

Absentee and vote by mail are the same in Florida.

When a vote by mail ballot is received, we must verify that the signature on the ballot is the same as what's on file.

Drop boxes are secure and emptied several times a day.

Many people forget to sign the back of their mail in ballots. The election office is required to reach out to voters that there is a problem with their ballot. They have up to the 2nd day following the election to cure the problem, so their ballot will count.

Early voting begins October 19th thru October 31st
Includes 2 Saturdays (Oct. 24 & 31) and 1 Sunday (Oct. 25)

This year we have 10 early voting locations, normally there are only 7, and you can go anywhere in the County to vote during this time.

We expect 85 to 90% turnout.

It's OK to request an absentee ballot and then go in person to drop it off .

Envelopes that have been damaged by humidity are not a big problem, just call and they will send out another.

The ballot is 2 pages long, many candidates, races for appellate judges, community development districts, with 6 constitutional amendments, and they are bilingual ballots.

Sample ballots can be found at votesjc.com, go to the voter record section to track your ballot and verify that your vote has been recorded.

Ms. Oakes went on to report that here in SJC we have 12 full time staff, 500 volunteers, with our Poll Workers being the Gate keepers of Democracy.

Voter rolls are open to the public, you can buy the County list for \$3.

Ms. Oakes wrapped up her presentation, fielded a few questions and thanked the Roundtable for the civic duties it carries out in our communities and the county.

Chairman McLane thanked Supervisor Oakes for her time this afternoon wishing her well in the upcoming weeks.

Chair asked for approval of July and September's 2020 minutes, motion was made and seconded, minutes were approved.

At this time, we moved onto Roundtable business, Chair McLane asked for the Treasurers Report:

Co-Chair McGlynn reported that we have \$1,054.02 in the bank. Expenses have been to Old City Web and for some logo design work.

Chair asked for Janet Patten's Gov't Affairs Report.

Janet Patten reported:

- Roundtable's Meet the Candidate's site has been a positive public service.
- The County Commission approved the development at I-95 / SR 207 of up to 525,000 square feet of office and commercial space, a Baptist Medical Center / Clinic in 10/2021 and VA Outpatient Clinic by the summer of 2021.
- Commissioners approved an Amazon Distribution center at SR16 and I-95, with 150 employees and 200 drivers.
- COSA held a survey with over 600 citizens participating. The outcome is that Fish Island's official name will be **Fish Island Preserve**. The State has agreed with the COSA lease agreement and a plan to proceed with building a small parking area on the entrance property.
- Gate Express officially sent in their application for the environmental permit to the SJRWMD for their proposed car wash.

- Janet went on record to oppose the granting of permit, proposed that Roundtable write a resolution to SJRWMD to deny Permit Application 10021-12 for undue water pollution.
- A motion was made and seconded, Resolution was approved. Janet will write the resolution and submit.
- Land conservation, here in SJC by way of the LAMP program needs to be started and funded so we can be competitive like other counties here in Florida.
- **Volusia Forever** was created in 2000, the citizens of Volusia County voted to tax themselves .2 mills over 20 years to protect the county's 38,000 acres of natural biodiversity. Alachua and Collier Counties are all active and have similar programs.

Chair McLane called for the Education Report from John Pilecki; John was absent and missed at the meeting.

The Chair called on members to discuss relevant issues / news they would like to share.

Paula Skinner brought up the subject of fireworks being used in neighborhoods and advised members to look into bylaws on the rights they may or may not have in regards to opposing fireworks.

Robert Olson commented on the subject of St. Augustine Airport Authority to drop the stipend for serving Board Members without compensation.

Co-Chair McGlynn spoke on the North Florida Transportation Planning Board, Citizens Advisory Board has 3 SJC citizens, other citizens from NE Sector, Duval, Clay, and Nassau Counties. She met last Friday with Phong Nguyen and will meet once a year with an upcoming meeting on November 20, 2020. SR 312 is now at its capacity of 39,000 travelers. Development has outpaced already the areas of transport; board is looking to the First Coast Expressway to alleviate traffic.

The subject was brought up about the COSA transportation plan for the A1A Trail from Vilano Bridge to Mickler Rd.

Chair McLane expressed concerns for the over burdening of our county's water supply and ground water contamination.

The need for more bike paths and trails for safe travels throughout the City and County for citizens of modest means are needed.

Subject of how Monroe County used a useful Moratorium on all new construction for development.

James Hill reported from France to say the country is safe and has made masks mandatory.

Volunteers are needed to head a Speaker Committee. Also Govt. Affairs Janet Patten would like help with reporting on County Meetings.

We heard from Candidates running for county positions, some spoke on their platforms.

Amy Koch, President of the SJC Audubon Society reported that the Jacksonville Zoo, Duval and St. Johns County Audubon Societies are partnering together for a new program that encourages communities to protect and help native birds along their migration by turning out lights at night during Fall Migration that's occurring now.

Michael Henne stated he was not aware of the Roundtable and enjoyed the meeting today. He was invited to join the group and attend meetings.

Geoffrey Sample gave insight on how to register as an interested party with the SJRWMD and receive updates on permit applications. He also remarked that the Governing Board does not review ERP applications.

Chair McLane reminded all that our next meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 9 at noon and thanked everyone for coming today. Meeting was adjourned at 1:28.