



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

Wes Benwick, Chair

Robert Jones, Vice Chair

Joe Andrews, Secretary

## Meeting Minutes November 5, 2009

4:00 p.m.

**Attendance:** Wes Benwick (Chair), Greg Anderson, Thomas Martin, Jason Fischer, Joe Andrews, Ruth Arnold, Ryan Jones, Robert Jones, Louvenia Tippins, Marcella Lowe Randy Deen

**Excused:** Mike McCollum

**Absent:** Nicole Lester, Mark Cowart

The meeting convened at 4:03 p.m. with a quorum present.

### Minutes

The minutes of the October 1, 2009 commission meeting were **approved as distributed**.

### Committee Reports

Legislative Tracking Committee – Commissioner Andrews distributed the committee issues matrix of issues considered at the last meeting and reported briefly on items of interest.

Performance Committee – Commissioner Anderson reported that the committee had met just prior to the full commission meeting with Heath Beach of the City's Budget Office to discuss a new initiative in performance measurement/management and improvements to the City's budget web site. The City has purchased a software package called PerformanceSoft the "mines" data from existing City databases and compiles it into easily accessible formats that can be used to track and manage performance. Testing started with data from two departments – Public Works and Recreation and Community Services – because they had the best, most tested and verified data. A simplified version of the system will eventually be available to the general public via the City's web site.

The Nashville TN budget web site was reviewed as a recognized "best practices" example. The committee determined that the Nashville site has much of the same information as Jacksonville's budget web site, but in a much more user-friendly format, particularly through its use of multiple clickable links to each section of the budget instead of a single, very large PDF file that must be downloaded and paged through. The Budget Office welcomes additional input and suggestions about how to make the web site more accessible and informative for average citizens.

### Auditor's Report

Council Auditor Kirk Sherman reported that his office had released 1 report since the last meeting on the Northwest Jacksonville Economic Development Fund. In response to a question, Mr. Sherman described his office's audit scheduling policy which is based on a risk assessment process undertaken every 3 years. The assessment of various departments, divisions, authorities and other entities is based on a number of factors including the level of risk inherent in the entity's operations, the length of time since the entity was last audited, an indications of problems in the entity (allegations of wrongdoing, employees fired or resigning, media reports, tips, etc.) and other factors. The Auditor's Office devotes approximately 25% of its annual workload to the budget process, 30% to ongoing legislative support, 33% to audits and 12% to special projects.

In response to a question about the latest quarterly budget report Mr. Sherman stated that the report highlighted the fact that the parking garage revenue fund is not self-sustaining and is taking continual General Fund subsidies to remain in financial balance. He also noted that the Water and Sewer Expansion Authority's bond rating was downgraded during the last quarter over concerns that the authority's debt coverage ratio is not up to the standards expected by the rating agencies. There is no danger of default on existing obligations, but the amount of revenue is not creating a sufficient coverage ratio.

### Chair's Comments

Chairman Benwick stated that he had been invited to meet with representatives of Jacksonville Community Council Inc. (JCCI) to discuss the TRUE Commission's activities, along with former City Council Member Eric Smith who helped create the TRUE Commission when he was on the City Council. The recent JCCI report on City government finances recommended that the City provide the commission with additional resources to help it better fulfill its potential as an advisor to the City Council and Mayor. Mr. Benwick also stated that he would be scheduling a new commissioner orientation meeting to help bring the newer members up to speed on the commission's structure, policies and work. Commissioners Lowe and Deen volunteered to co-chair the orientation meeting. Monday, November 16<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 was selected as the most convenient date and time.

The guest speaker at the December meeting will be Ron Barton, Executive Director of the Jacksonville Economic Development Commission to discuss the JEDC's incentive processes and results. The January meeting will feature a speaker on the Northwest Jacksonville Economic Development Fund, which is operated by the Housing and Neighborhoods Department.

The Chairman asked if the Commission wanted to take formal action to express a position on the proposed J-bill to move the City elections from the spring to the fall, despite the fact that the City Council had already taken action on the proposal the prior week. Commissioner Robert Jones had produced a draft resolution supporting the change from spring to fall elections, which was presented for consideration.

**MOTION:** redraft the Jones proposed resolution to state the commission's support for a J-bill to move City elections from the spring to a fall cycle coinciding with another statewide general election (remove reference to Council resolution 2009-622) and transmit the resolution to the City Council – **approved by vote of 9-3.**

### Old Business

None

New Business

None

Commissioner Comments

None.

Public Comments

Tony Bates of Concerned Taxpayers of Duval County extended best wishes to Commissioner Lowe during her health challenges. He stated that Chairman Benwick did a good job at the recent JCCI meeting tell the commission's story. He inquired if the commission had considered or taken a formal position on the idea of somehow meshing or merging the TRUE Commission and the Ethics Commission and was told that there had only been informal conversations among Commissioners Benwick and Lowe and City Ethics Officer Carla Miller.

Next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 3rd at 4:00 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Posted 12.3.09

5:00 p.m.

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