



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

Wes Benwick, Chair

Robert Jones, Vice Chair

Joe Andrews, Secretary

## Meeting Minutes

April 1, 2010

4:00 p.m.

**Attendance:** Wes Benwick (Chair), Thomas Martin, Marc El Hassan, Joe Andrews, Randy Deen, Greg Anderson, Hiron Peck, Marcella Lowe, Ruth Arnold, Ryan Jones, Jason Fischer (arr: 4:20)

**Excused:** Louvenia Tippins, Mark Cowart, Robert Jones

**Absent:** Mike McCollum

The meeting convened at 4:05 p.m. with a quorum present.

### Minutes

The minutes of the March 4, 2010 commission meeting were approved as distributed.

### Committee Reports

Legislative Tracking Committee – Commissioner Andrews distributed a list of 6 pending bills about which the committee had questions and/or was seeking further information. Of greatest interest was Ordinance 2010-216, a bill to increase numerous City fees and service charges. The bill is estimated to produce approximately \$25 million in new revenue for the City, of which the vast majority (\$20 million) would result from an increase in the household solid waste fee.

Performance Committee – Commissioner Anderson reported that the committee had met that afternoon and heard a very good presentation by representatives of Shands Jacksonville medical center about the hospital's outpatient clinic and community health network and programs. The committee learned that Jacksonville has very sizable disparities in health care among different parts of the community based on factors such as age, race, income, and coverage by health care insurance and that efforts are underway by various parties attack some of the causes of these disparities. Research shows that Jacksonville health care providers get less Medicare reimbursement than providers in other parts of the state, including Miami-Dade, St. Johns and Clay counties, possibly because our doctors are not as skilled at or as careful about filing the proper patient care codes to get the full available reimbursements for the care provided. The Virtual Community Disparity Network (VCDN) helps small physician practices to run the business side of their operations better, report data more efficiently, and maximize their Medicare reimbursement.

Shands operates 10 outpatient clinics in various parts of the city, some of which are targeted at either insured or uninsured patients. All of the clinics and VCDN programs work to track patients electronically, coordinate their care, and ensure that Medicare reimbursements are

maximized. The number of self-pay (or non-pay) patients being treated in the Shands emergency room decreased substantially between 2001 and 2008 largely as a result of the new clinic and VCDN efforts.

Budget Committee – Several meetings of the committee with City Council Vice President Jack Webb were scheduled and then canceled in the last month.

#### Auditor's Report

Thomas Carter of the Council Auditor's Office reported that Audit #678 – Tax Collector's Office - was just released. The Trail Ridge Landfill settlement agreement has taken up the lion's share of the Auditor's Office's staff time in recent weeks. The agreement will be taken up by a City Council Committee of the Whole on April 19<sup>th</sup>, after which the results of that meeting will be voted on at the next regular City Council meeting. Mr. Carter also noted that the mandatory mid-year budget review will be presented by the administration to the City Council in May.

#### Chair's Comments

Chairman Benwick stated that he has been in contact with Chris Sutton of the Mayor's Office to pursue replacement appointments for the Mayor's two vacancies on the TRUE Commission. He also stated that he thought the commission should engage in further discussion about indigent care funding, as this is large continuing obligation of the City, especially in the current difficult budget climate. The Chairman noted that the Northwest Jacksonville Economic Development Fund has been in the newspaper again and perhaps it is time for the TRUE Commission to again take it up as an action item. Finally, he announced that he will be appointing a Nominating Committee in May to prepare a slate of officers for election at the commission's June meeting. Commissioner El Hassan volunteered to chair the committee.

#### Old Business

None

#### New Business

Commissioner Andrews recommended that the commission look very closely at the pending fee revision ordinance. He believes that increases of the magnitude proposed will be a huge drag on the private sector economy and reiterated his comments from the earlier committee report about the possibility of privatizing the economically self-sufficient functions the City performs. Commissioner Lowe agreed that some of the fee increases, particularly some of the building permit and inspection fees, seemed very large and would be harmful to families trying to do small developments.

The Performance Committee was assigned the task of reviewing the pending fee bill, with commissioners Fischer, Deen, Anderson, Lowe, Hassan, Andrews, Ryan Jones and Martin volunteering to take part. One or two meetings will be scheduled in the next week or two to accommodate a review before City Council is ready to take action.

#### Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Anderson stated that he would poll his Performance Committee to see how the committee feels about its review of the indigent care issue – is the committee satisfied with what it's heard, or is there more work to do on this issue?

#### Public Comments

None.

#### Next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 6 at 4:00 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:38 p.m.

Posted 4.30.10  
5:00 p.m.

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