



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

Tony Bates, Chair

Meeting Minutes

February 17, 2004

4:00 p.m.

Attendance: Tony Bates (Chair), Elaine Burnett, Dick Berry, Marcella Lowe, Larry Jaffe, Dan Davis, Randall Deen, Lee Martin, Lou Myers, Bruce Glassman

Excused: Donald Wolfson, John Palombi, and Tom Crabtree

Guests: Richard Wallace - Council Auditor; Charles Curley, Mark Roesser and Amy Holliman - TRUE Commission nominees

The meeting convened at 4:09 p.m.

Minutes

The minutes of the January 20, 2004 as previously distributed were amended to correct a misspelling of Commissioner Burnett's name on page 1.

◆ The minutes were **approved as amended**

Committee Chairs' Reports

Audit #541 – Jacksonville Children's Commission: in the absence of Commissioner Wolfson the item was deferred to the next meeting.

Audit #580 – First Coast Black Business Investment Corporation: Commissioner Berry reported that the Council Audit Committee has discussed the audit in-depth at two meetings and has appointed a subcommittee to study possible revisions to Ordinance Code Chapter 118, the Public Service Grant process. The Audit Committee has also requested a legal opinion from the Office of General Counsel regarding some of the transactions questioned by the Council Auditor.

Audit #585 – Shands Jacksonville Indigent Care: in the absence of Commissioner Wolfson the item was deferred to the next meeting.

CityLink Committee – Commissioner Davis reported that the committee met on Monday, January 26th with CityLink director Monica Ruby and with Roslyn Phillips, Director of the Neighborhoods Department of which CityLink is a function. The committee was impressed with the operation of the system on the input end in the CityLink call center. The deficiencies appear to be on the output end, where successful resolution and closeout of the complaint falls to the operating departments. Those operating departments are responsible for entering the final resolution into the CityLink system, and

failure to do so, even when the work has been performed, prevents the CityLink staff from being able to know the final outcome and to inform return callers of the status of their complaint. The committee heard from Ms. Phillips that her department recognizes this weakness and is formulating a new training program for operating department managers to inform them how the complaint tracking features of CityLink can be used as management tools for ensuring the efficient operation of their departments and divisions. The committee endorsed this effort and hopes that it will be implemented. In response to a question, Ms. Phillips also indicated that her CityLink staff do e-mail and phone surveys of the satisfaction of callers with the City's response to their complaint or issue. Commissioner Davis felt that a TRUE Commission resolution in support of the initiative for additional training in managerial use of the capacities of the CityLink system adopted at the March commission meeting would be a useful and timely action.

Performance Measurement Committee – Commissioner Deen reported that the committee had met last week and discussed the performance measurement efforts being undertaken in other comparable cities. The committee plans to meet with Councilman Kevin Hyde, who is interested in this topic, and with representatives of the City Budget Office before the next full commission meeting.

Policies and Procedures Committee – Commissioner Martin stated that the committee will meet on February 27th at 10 a.m. in City Council Conference Room B. Interested members are invited to attend.

Cash Management Committee – Commissioner Lowe reported met on February 11th and identified several initial themes: 1) the need for a centralized receipt system with City/departmental seal, consecutive numbers, etc.; 2) the need to identify all cash receipt points in the City; 3) the need to look at City fees that haven't changed since a 1991 ordinance; 4) the need to make cash management a substantial job responsibility, not an incidental aspect of performing the agency's mission; and 5) the need for every department to have a designated cash management officer, probably in the person of their budget officer.

The committee heard that action seems to be happening in various departments to bring on internal auditors and other financial experts. The committee will be meeting with Mitchell Perin of the City's General Accounting Division who is in the process of developing a revised City cash handling policy. They will also be meeting with the City Special Events Division to discuss cash handling policies, as that was identified as a weakness in the last Council Auditor's audit of the division. Finally, Ms. Lowe noted that approximately \$60 million in user fees is collected via cash or checks by City agencies each year. The need for solid cash handling policies and enforcement of those policies is great.

Emergency evictions procedures – Commissioner Bates noted that an extremely detailed package of information had been received from the Neighborhoods Department last Friday regarding the events that took place on the day of the Wollitz Gardens Apartments mass eviction several months ago. The package detailed what City and related agencies took what steps at what times during the day of the eviction. What was not included was a sense of what actions might have been taken in the preceding months to avoid the emergency eviction that left numerous families homeless on only a few hours' notice.

Roslyn Phillips, Director of the Neighborhoods Department, explained that the Code Enforcement Division is a complaint-driven organization and does not proactively seek out code violation problems. She noted that various individual units of the Wollitz Gardens complex had previously been condemned by the Housing Authority for various violations of their federal funding assistance contracts, but the whole complex was not condemned until numerous serious health and safety violations were discovered that affected the whole complex. She recommended that the commission talk to Derek Igou, the Chief of Property Safety, to get a better understanding of how the citation and eviction process works. She also noted that the Neighborhoods Department is looking at a more proactive inspection policy, but cautioned that there are complications because of property rights concerns.

Audit #583 – Property Appraiser’s Office – Council Auditor Richard Wallace reported that new Property Appraiser Jim Overton has changed the policy of the former property appraiser and done away with his departmental checking account and investment policy and is now turning all revenues collected over to the Tax Collector for deposit. A new computer system is in the works. He also noted that the audit identified that the office needed to be more vigilant in checking income eligibility for the additional homestead exemption available to low-income seniors.

Audit #586 – First Coast No More Homeless Pets – Spay/Neuter Jax Program – Roslyn Phillips reported that her department, as a result of the discussion of this audit at the Council Audit Committee, is having the Office of General Counsel draft a revised contract with First Coast No More Homeless Pets to 1) limit rebates to 3 pets per owner; 2) to add requirements that any animal brought in for spaying/neutering under the City program must also be properly licensed; and 3) to clarify the proper uses of the agency’s administrative fee.

Auditor’s Report – Richard Wallace stated that he was looking forward to the opportunity to work with the Cash Management Committee to address this very important issue and to help ensure that the City collects and deposits all of the revenues to which it is entitled.

Mr. Wallace distributed the first quarter financial report, which for the first time include the City’s and its related authorities’ bond ratings, as suggested by the TRUE Commission. He briefly discussed the new “swap” policy adopted by the administration to better balance interest rates on City borrowing and investing. The policy has been successful thus far, generating \$3 million in additional revenue in the first quarter.

Chairman’s Report – Chairman Bates reported that the appointment resolutions for Tom Crabtree and John Palombi were approved by the City Council last week.

New Business

Commissioner Davis asked if the commission had any interest in taking a public stand on the proposal for an additional \$15 million in improvements to Alltel Stadium prior to the Super Bowl? The consensus was that the issue would be thoroughly reviewed by the Mayor and City Council with considerable public scrutiny, so there probably was not a need for the TRUE Commission to become involved.

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Burnett suggested, with regard to verification by the Property Appraiser of eligibility of households to receive the homestead exemption, that there may be ways for that office to cross-check with JEA and other available public records to determine actual primary residences and identify persons with multiple addresses whose records might be scrutinized to ensure that they are not claiming the homestead exemption on multiple properties. She volunteered to chair the Property Appraiser Audit committee.

The commission briefly discussed whether there was interest in moving the commission meeting time earlier in the afternoon, but determined to keep the current 4:00 p.m. start time.

Public Comment

Potential commissioner nominee Mark Roesser asked about the commission’s committee structure and audit review process.

Next meeting

The commission's next meeting will be on Tuesday, March 16th at 4:00 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:58 p.m.

Items pending further follow-up

- CityLink Committee – Commissioner Davis
- Children’s Commission audit – Commissioner Wolfson
- Government in the Sunshine Law briefing – Chairman Bates (after more vacancies are filled)
- Prohibition against use of courtesy parking passes in garages – staff
- Fiscal Performance Committee – Commissioner Glassman
- First Coast Black Business Investment Corporation audit – Commissioner Berry
- Policy and Procedure Committee – Commissioner Martin
- Cash Management Committee – Commissioner Lowe
- Shands Jacksonville Indigent Care audit – Commissioner Wolfson
- Property Appraiser’s Office audit – Commissioner Burnett
- First Coast No More Homeless Pets – Spay/Neuter Jax audit
- City Emergency Eviction Procedures – Commissioner Burnett