



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

John Palombi, Chair

Ron Mallett, Vice Chair

Meeting Minutes

May 3, 2007

4:00 p.m.

Attendance: John Palombi (Chair), Marcella Lowe, Bob Lee, Elaine Burnett, Lou Myers, Mike Meroney, Charles Curley, Ron Mallett, Pamela Korn, Greg Anderson

Excused: John Jolly, Louvenia Tippins, Gary Looney

Absent: Charles Magee, Randy Deen, Mark Cowart, Lee Martin

The meeting convened at 4:10 p.m. with a quorum present.

Minutes

Motion: The minutes of the April 5, 2007 commission meetings having been previously distributed, a motion was made to approve the minutes.

The motion was **approved**.

Committee Reports

Public Parking Committee: Commissioner Mallett reported that he has talked to Bob Carle, the City's Chief of Public Parking and learned that the City's administrative committee that has been examining parking issues has been disbanded for the time being. There is new technology on the horizon for parking meters in the next 18 to 24 months, so they don't see the need to press the issue now. Mr. Mallett will write to Bob Carle and let him know that the TRUE Commission stands ready to help when the issue resurfaces. He still sees the need to have a discussion about the broader issues of parking policy, some of which may be dealt with by the adoption of new technology, but others of which will not.

Funding Control and Effectiveness/Chapter 118 revisions: Commissioner Myers reported that there still has been no action on the pending ordinance by Kevin Hyde to amend Chapter 118 with regard to Public Service Grants. The committee cannot finish its work and report until that takes place.

Performance Committee: Commissioner Meroney reported that the report approved last month has been distributed, and the committee has requested meetings with the Council President, Mayor and Audit Committee Chair to discuss the findings and recommendations. Meetings are proving somewhat difficult to schedule thus far.

TRUE Commission Effectiveness: In the absence of Commissioner Martin the matter was deferred.

Auditor's Report

- 1) Council Auditor Kirk Sherman reported that the City's independent auditor has, for 6 years, noted the City's apparent failure to have a sufficient computer disaster recovery plan, including a mechanism for off-site backup of the data systems. Lack of funding has always been cited as a primary stumbling block. Mr. Sherman is concerned by this deficiency and has long pushed for some positive action to be taken. The public safety functions (Sheriff and Fire and Rescue Department) are somewhat more robust than the general government functions, but all would be likely to suffer in the event of a hurricane, tornado, or other serious natural or man-made disaster. The Information Technology Department is moving from the City Hall Annex on the riverfront to the Ed Ball Building on Hemming Plaza which will help some, but the equipment is still vulnerable to a major disaster.
- 2) The Auditor's Office has completed its annual attestation to court costs as required by the state. Last year's report had to be restated and this year's report was issued first as an interim report, then as a final report due to the state's change of the attestation timeline. The deadline has been moved up to January 31st, 2 months earlier than previously set. This makes for a difficult deadline, as the previous year's books are not closed out until November, leaving little time to produce the report.
- 3) In response to a question at an earlier meeting by Commissioner Mallett, Mr. Sherman noted that there has been no movement by the City administration on the subject of occupational license reform because of the more pressing needs of budget preparation and the property tax reform battle in Tallahassee. Mr. Mallett pointed out that a revised occupational license tax system could generate much needed dollars to deal with whatever revenue problems arise from the property tax reform issue.
- 4) Mr. Sherman spoke about the Interlocal Agreement between the City of Jacksonville and the 3 Beaches cities and Baldwin. There have been 2 Interlocal Agreements over the years since consolidation along with several other negotiated agreements on particular issues. The Beaches and Baldwin pay a lower county millage rate because they provide some services themselves with their own millage. The Beaches cities pay approximately one-third less than the county in general, while Baldwin pays slightly more than the others because Jacksonville took over law enforcement service in Baldwin last year when the town disbanded its police force. In response to a question about whether the Beaches and Baldwin are bound by the City's oversight system for their share Better Jacksonville Plan funds, Mr. Sherman indicated that they did not. They are required to use the funds for capital improvements, but are not audited to his knowledge.
- 5) Mr. Sherman pointed out the pending ordinance introduced by Council Member Jenkins that would require that office of each of the 5 constitutional officers be audited once every 5 years by the Council Auditor.
- 6) In response to a question, the Council Auditor reported that he has 20 staff members – 2 clerical, 8 dedicated to audits, 5 to City Council legislative support, and 5 to special projects. Commissioner Lowe expressed her belief that the Auditor's Office needs more staff to tackle more of the top priority projects on the Risk Assessment, and Mr. Sherman agreed that there is considerable work to be done and more staff would enable that to happen faster. He hopes to be able to tackle the top 10 issues on the Risk Assessment over the next 3 years. Commissioner Lowe indicated that she and Commissioner Deen would meet with Mr. Sherman to talk about his office's work and to assemble evidence for a possible staff expansion. This issue is timely now with next year's budget in preparation.

Chair's Report

Chairman Palombi reiterated his suggestion for the establishment of a committee to study the issue of the fairness of Jacksonville's taxation system. Commissioner Korn volunteered to chair the committee along with Commissioner's Palombi, Anderson and Lee.

Old Business

Commissioner Burnett made a verbal report on her written report, distributed electronically to the commission, regarding crime and safety issues in Riverside and Avondale and the response of some members of the Sheriff's Office to the community's expressions of concern.

Motion: Commissioner Mallett moved that the TRUE Commission draft a transmittal letter and send the Burnett report to the Sheriff and request a response either in writing or by personal appearance.

The motion was **approved**.

New Business

Chairman Palombi appointed the following Nominating Committee: Lou Myers (Chair), Elaine Burnett, and Marcella Lowe. Volunteers to serve as officers for the upcoming year are welcomed and encouraged. Staff was requested to e-mail a copy of the updated commission roster to the Nominating Committee members.

Chairman Palombi introduced City Council Member-elect Clay Yarborough (District 1) who was in attendance.

Commissioner Comments

None

Next meeting

The commission's next meeting will be on Thursday, June 7th at 4:00 p.m. in the City Council Chamber.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

Items pending further follow-up

- Public Parking Committee report – Commissioner Mallett
- Performance Committee – Commissioner Meroney
- Funding Control and Effectiveness Committee – Commissioner Myers
- Chapter 118 Revisions Committee – Commissioner Lowe
- Fair Taxation Committee – Commissioner Korn
- TRUE Commission performance review – Commissioner Martin