



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

Ron Mallett, Chair
Elaine Burnett, Vice Chair
Mike Meroney, Secretary

Meeting Minutes

November 1, 2007

4:00 p.m.

Attendance: Ron Mallett (Chair), Elaine Burnett, Marcella Lowe, Pamela Korn, Nicole Lester, John Jolly, Louvenia Tippins

Excused: John Palombi, Mike Meroney, Gary Looney, Lou Myers, Mark Cowart

Absent: Charles Curley, Charles Magee, Randy Deen, Greg Anderson

The meeting convened at 4:20 p.m., lacking a quorum.

Chairman Mallett indicated that he will prepare a letter for staff to circulate to all commissioners reminding them of the importance of regular attendance at commission meetings.

Minutes

In the absence of a quorum, consideration of the minutes of the October 4, 2007 meeting was deferred.

Discussion

The commissioners discussed the commission's current operations, particularly as it relates to audit review. Chairman Mallett did not think it necessary for the commission to review each and every audit in detail to critique or revise its findings. He prefers a method whereby the Council Auditor makes a report of the basic findings of each audit to the full commission and asks the commission to take a more in-depth look at any particular issues that the audit may have identified that may not have fallen within the original scope of the audit, or which the audit team did not have the time or resources to address. Then the commission's limited resources can be brought to bear where they would be most effective. Commissioners Lowe and Burnett suggested that it is important for all commissioners to read the full text of all audits for at least two reasons. First, commissioners are not auditors but do bring a wide range of private-sector experience to the table, so they will look at issues differently than government auditors and bring a new and potentially valuable alternate perspective to the issue at hand. Second, reading the audits in detail conveys a great deal of information about how the various departments and agencies of the government work, and may uncover broad trends (like cash management) that deserve attention independent of any particular audit.

The group discussed the best ways of doing initial screening of audits to determine what needs a more in-depth look and how to proceed. It was suggested that at each audit or report should be read in its entirety by at least 2

commissioners to determine if there are issues needing further exploration, but it probably is not necessary or practical for every commissioner to read every audit in its entirety. Commissioner Burnett noted that this seemed to harken back to the commission's former policy – a committee of 2 or 3 read an audit completely and report back to the full group if they see issues that need further committee work. Commissioner Jolly suggested that the commission might play a valuable role by advising the Council Auditor on what sorts of things need to be audited, perhaps by reviewing the Auditor's Risk Assessment and suggesting high priority items for more immediate attention.

Council Auditor Kirk Sherman stated that his office is trying to shift their audit focus somewhat by devoting fewer people to each audit (so as to spread his personnel to cover more audit areas) and by reducing the scope of each audit from 5 or 6 issues covered at a broader level to 2 or 3 issues covered in more depth. They are looking for big problem areas and pointing out ancillary issues identified along the way for the audited department to begin correcting by itself without a full-blown audit being done in that area. Mr. Sherman expressed his appreciation for the TRUE Commission's role as a knowledgeable audience for the audits and as an additional voice promoting greater attention to the audits' findings and recommendations.

Commissioner Lowe recalled that the former practice was for the whole commission to hear at least an outline of the major findings and recommendations of each audit at a commission meeting, and then for every audit to be assigned to at least 1 commissioner for in-depth review. She sees a real value in having paper copies of audits distributed to everyone; it's too easy to lose track of or forget about e-mailed versions. Chairman Mallett suggested distributing a hard copy of the *findings* of each audit to all commissioners, then giving full copies to the 1 or 2 commissioners who are interested in heading up the review of that issue. He noted the need to be more rigorous in having each audit looked at by at least 1 or 2 members in the absence of any volunteers, by assignment if necessary.

Commissioner Burnett distributed copies of the commission's 2005-06 Annual Report and suggested it as the template for future reports. Commissioner Lowe reviewed the items listed in the annual report and highlighted the concrete changes that have resulted from the commission's recommendations on those issues.

Chairman Mallett announced that Commissioner Looney had submitted his resignation from the commission due to increased business obligations. He will talk to the Council President about potential replacements.

Commissioner Burnett stated that she is still pursuing the issue of the Sheriff's Office's response to crime in Riverside and the department's interaction with concerned citizens. She hopes to have a report for the December meeting. Chairman Mallett reported that he had recently attended a meeting held by Council Member Webb in Mandarin with the Sheriff and his zone commanders. He felt the Sheriff got a strong message from the community about the department's response to crime in the area. Commissioner Burnett stated that she is looking at the possibility of the JSO developing an electronic bulletin board technology to provide a continuous venue for concerned citizens to connect with the JSO. She doesn't feel like the department is adequately reaching out to involve citizens, but recognizes that citizens have a responsibility to meet the department halfway as well.

Auditor's Report

Kirk Sherman reported that his office had issued one audit last month: #638 – Special Events Division. The report found no real improvement in some areas since the last audit several years ago. The division has developed an event close-out report produced after each large event (Florida/Georgia football game, Sea and Sky Spectacular, etc.) to recap the revenues and expenditures for those events. Mr. Sherman also noted that had met with Council President Davis and confirmed that the TRUE Commission's proper reporting venue is to the Finance Committee.

Next meeting

The commission's next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 6th at 4:00 p.m. in the City Council Chamber.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.