



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

**Ron Mallett, Chair**

**Elaine Burnett, Vice Chair**

**Mike Meroney, Secretary**

## **Meeting Minutes**

**April 3, 2008**

**4:00 p.m.**

**Attendance:** Ron Mallett (Chair), John Palombi, Marcella Lowe, , Pamela Korn, Greg Anderson, Elaine Burnett, Lou Myers and Wes Benwick

**Excused:** John Jolly, Nicole Lester, Mark Cowart

**Absent:** Charles Curley, Charles Magee Randy Deen, Louvenia Tippins

The meeting convened at 4:06 p.m. with a quorum present.

### Personal appearance – Sheriff John Rutherford

Sheriff Rutherford attended the meeting to discuss the Matrix audit of the JSO's operations. Chairman Mallett explained to the Sheriff that Commissioner Palombi has been sitting in as an ex officio member of the City Council's Ad Hoc Committee on Budget Efficiency and was asked by its chairman, Councilman Jack Webb, to have the TRUE Commission review the Matrix report since the Ad Hoc Committee was not reviewing the public safety-related departments. Commissioner John Palombi reviewed the Performance Committee's work on the Matrix audit, which was divided into parts and read by volunteer commissioners.

The Sheriff expressed his appreciation to the commissioners for their willingness to delve into a very lengthy report and understand the many issues it covers. He began by telling the commission that he instructed the Matrix personnel not to do Jacksonville a disservice by recommending only what they thought the city could afford, but to present the whole truth and then let the city and its citizens decide what they feel they want and need and are willing to pay for. He believes that Jacksonville is at a crucial tipping point; the Blueprint for Prosperity data is revealing a large and rapidly rising number of people who work in Jacksonville but choose to live in surrounding counties because of the quality of life (*not* for lower taxes). The Sheriff believes that Jacksonville can no longer grow and thrive by getting by "on the cheap", and will suffer the consequences of its failure to make the necessary investment in public infrastructure and services. The JSO alone needs to invest \$30 million over the next 3 to 4 years for new officers and the cars, guns, computers, etc. needed to fully equip them.

In response to a question, the Sheriff stated that the community services officers are not grant funded, but the 30 COPS officers were funded by federal grants until the funding ran out; now they are fully on the

City's payroll. In response to another question the Sheriff stated that the 53 stop stations around the community are still in place, but are not used as much now as in previous years because officers now have cell phones and laptop computers in their cars, so do not need an office with a phone and computer as they once did. The primary use of the stop stations now is for restroom facilities. In response to a question about how long the Operation Safe Streets funding would last, the Sheriff felt that it could be used for 4 to 5 additional months if used judiciously, and he hoped that the crime situation would not reverse course after the saturation patrols are scaled as happened two years ago. In response to a question the Sheriff indicated that approximately half of the new officers he's recommending be hired will be devoted to community policing.

Commissioner Palombi congratulated the Sheriff on his use of data and performance measurement to determine what is really happening on the streets and to allocate his resources to deal most effectively with the problems. The TRUE Commission's work has found that not many City agencies do that.

#### Minutes

The minutes of the March 6, 2008 meeting were **amended** to reflect that Commissioner Myers was present at the meeting and to correct the misspelling of Mike Meroney's name on page 3, and then **approved as twice amended**.

#### Committee Reports

Performance Committee – Commissioner Palombi noted that the work on the JSO's Matrix report was thoroughly discussed earlier, and thanked all of the commissioners who volunteered to read and digest the report and make recommendations.

#### Ad Hoc Committee on Budget Efficiencies

Commissioner Palombi reported that the committee had met earlier in the week for the third time and reviewed the Auditor's reports on the Jacksonville Public Library and the Recreation and Community Services Department. Generally speaking, the committee has voted to restore almost all of the reserved appropriations. This study process may help inform next year's budget process and assist the Council in understanding the departmental budgets more in depth. His impression is that the committee members are finding that all of the agencies and departments are doing good and valuable work, but there has been no real push to make hard decisions and cut substantial dollars from any departments. The Ad Hoc Committee's work is going more slowly than anticipated, so another meeting has been scheduled in May.

Effectiveness Committee – Commissioner Burnett reported that the group had met just prior to the commission meeting and reviewed several completed project evaluation forms. It appears that with minor tweaking the form will accomplish its purpose and will be a valuable resource to the Chairman in the preparation of the TRUE Commission's annual report. All commissioners were asked to complete evaluation forms for the work of committees they've chaired in the past year or for any audit reviews they completed as individuals and to provide those forms to the commission staff by the end of April.

Nominating Committee – Commissioner Anderson reported that his committee is hard at work and will have a slate of officers to present for consideration at the Commission's May meeting.

#### Auditor's Report

Thomas Carter representing the Council Auditor's Office reported that no audits were released in the month of March. The Auditor will be meeting with TRUE commissioners and city administration officials on April 14<sup>th</sup> to discuss City employee health self-insurance.

#### Chair's Comments

- Chairman Mallett stated his understanding that the Council Auditor will be looking at the proposal submitted several months ago by the Auto Masters vehicle maintenance company to take over maintenance of the Sheriff's Office's fleet of police cars at a lower cost than could be achieved by the City's motor pool. The Public Health and Safety Committee was briefed on the proposal several months ago but never got sets of comparable maintenance costs from Auto Masters and the motor pool, so has thus far been unable to judge the relative merits of outsourcing the work vs. keeping it in-house.
- The Chairman has heard from a City employee that the engineering/planning firm of England, Thims and Miller has had the City's contract to perform planning work for the Parks and Recreation Department on a sole-source basis for a number of years, and he is curious as to why. He requested the Council Auditor to look into the issue and find out if and why that sole-source contract is in place.
- Mr. Mallet announced that a "celebration of life" event will be held in memory of former Commissioner Mike Meroney on May 25<sup>th</sup> at the Meroney home in Queen's Harbor. Commissioners interested in attending need to provide their names to the chair or the commission staff so that access to Queen's Harbor and adequate parking can be arranged.
- The Chairman requested Commissioner Myers to take another look at the operations of the housing rehabilitation program that the commission studied last year to see how the program is progressing and whether any problem areas remain.
- Mr. Mallet extended the commission's welcome to new commissioner Wes Benwick at his first meeting.

#### Old Business

None

#### Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Burnett distributed additional commission business cards to the members in attendance and stated that she would be giving an update on the TRUE Commission's activities at her next CPAC meeting.

#### Public Comments

Former TRUE Commissioner and Chairman Tony Bates thanked the commission for remembering the contributions of the late Mike Meroney and invited all members to attend the celebration of life reception in May.

#### Next meeting

The commission's next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 1st at 4:00 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:57 p.m.