

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS - SPECIAL MEETING

MEET AND GREET

WITH

CONGRESSMAN TOM ROONEY

DECEMBER 8, 2008

A special meeting of the Board of County Commissioners was held at the Port Charlotte Beach Recreation Center, Port Charlotte, Florida. The following members were present: Chairman Duffy, Commissioner Cummings, Commissioner Loftus, Commissioner Starr, and Commissioner Skidmore. Also in attendance were County Administrator Baltz, County Attorney Knowlton, Deputy Clerk Lansing, Congressman Tom Rooney. The following members were absent: None. The meeting was called to order at **11:55 AM**.

Opening Comments:

Chairman Duffy said this meeting would be informal, congratulated Congressman Rooney, and noted the Board is looking forward to working with him. Congressman Rooney expressed thanks for all the support and advised he will do everything he can to help Charlotte County as they move forward.

Discussion:

Chairman Duffy explained how appropriations have been handled in the past, noted several Commissioners travel to Washington DC every March to present their annual list, provided a copy of the 2008 appropriation list of projects and descriptions, indicated the 2009 list will be available sometime in January, and asked the Commissioners to discuss the items.

Commissioner Loftus began with the Regional Reclaimed Water System, advised the importance of water conservation and reducing the amount of potable water used for irrigation. County Administrator, Roger Baltz, advised the County Utility Director and other staff members were present and available to provide additional detail related to reclaimed water, discussed the history and intent of the project, mentioned project expense and the need for funding, and introduced Charlotte County Utilities Director, Jeff Pearson to advise what the new State goal was for reclaimed water per county.

Mr. Pearson believed the goal is to achieve 75% reclaim by 2020, but advised he would confirm the year at a later date, used a visual drawing to describe the current project, storage, and explained what Federal funding would cover.

Commissioner Cummings stated 90% of the County's potable water is supplied by the regional facility, explained 50% is used for irrigation, discussed the positive impacts of storage, and opined this reclaimed water project would reduce regional plant demand, and could be used as a model for other Florida counties in the future.

Mr. Pearson indicated they were requesting \$1 Million in project funding with an estimated cost of \$1 to \$1½ Million for the extension.

Commissioner Duffy asked about an approved allocation that is still not funded. **Commissioner Loftus** explained it was a sponsored Bill to the House, said it was approved a year ago, and confirmed it is still not funded. **Commissioner Cummings** advised it was regional funding with Charlotte County receiving a portion.

Congressman Rooney introduced his new Chief of Staff, Brian Crawford, and District Director, Steven Laughton, indicated they would be hiring a new Deputy District Director in Charlotte County, and said they are looking at local office space.

The Commissioners continued to discuss their project priorities beginning with the U.S. 41 Enhancement and the Burnt Store Road Widening, noted costs, and explained the reasons for the proposed road improvements.

Public Works Director, Dan Quick, mentioned the Florida Department of Transportation is currently conducting a survey to determine realistic costs and a true timeline related to the U.S. 41 Enhancement project and provided additional detail. Mr. Quick explained that the Charlotte County Comprehensive Plan has identified Burnt Store Road as an evacuation route, said the Burnt Store Road Widening is not only needed for additional road capacity and emergency operations, but will be essential to regional economic development within the County. **Commissioner Cummings** asked for the total project cost for Burnt Store Road, mentioned the 10' wide lane is a public safety issue that should be addressed with the extension, talked about funding, and other topics related to the Enhancement. Mr. Quick estimated the total project cost is about \$48 Million. Mr. Baltz mentioned the Sales Tax Extension and joint funding for this project.

Commissioner Duffy provided background related to the Family Services Center property and program, explained funding is needed to support capital improvements and allow the program to continue. Director of Human Services, Vikki Carpenter, advised they received \$196,000 in Federal funding last year, mentioned the area, activities, interested non-profits, the need for building renovations, mentioned volunteers, and indicated there was no local funding. **Commissioner Duffy** offered to give the Congressman a tour of the facility. Congressman Rooney mentioned a similar center on the east coast. **Commissioner Loftus** commended the free clinic and said it has reduced emergency room burden. Congressman Rooney said he looks forward to the tour and mentioned fundraising and donations. **Commissioner Duffy** mentioned many projects related to the revitalization of the neighborhood surrounding the Family Services Center, discussed its status, and mentioned possible Federal revitalization funding. Ms. Carpenter said that funding is part of the neighborhood stabilization fund, opined we may receive \$5 to \$7 Million, indicated the intent to use a portion of the funding for that neighborhood in conjunction with the Community, neighbors, and business donations, and noted State recognition as a pilot program.

Public Resource Manager, Angie Patterson, explained her responsibilities, talked about the long range master plan related to libraries, advised plans to bring sub-standard areas of the County up to standard, indicated they were currently working on a three (3) year funded project to preserve the County's historical resources. **Commissioner Cummings** commented on the importance of preserving our environmental and historical assets which will serve as part of our economic development and allow quality of life.

Mike Koenig, Parks, Recreation, and Culture Resources Department, gave the history of the Old Railroad Bunkhouse, discussed grant funding, and said their goal is to complete the restoration within three (3) years.

Commissioner Cummings provided background related to Murdock Village, stated the vision and intent, described land use and zoning issues, explained the changes that need to be made now for the long term, and opined this is a huge potential economic asset.

Commissioner Loftus pointed out the only large business in Charlotte County is the building industry, opined the need for diversity, mentioned committee process delay, and asked for help at the Federal level to set better response times. **Commissioner Cummings** commented that it takes thirteen years from the decision to development to the date of completion. Congressman Rooney stated he personally experienced the delays and commented on low income housing becoming high end housing after increased regulatory industry costs and permitting. **Commissioner Loftus** brought up energy conservation, green building development, and commended the County for saving \$635,000 in electric within six months.

Commissioner Duffy opined based on the economic climate, Murdock Village may help Economic Development by working with the business community instead of continuing with the original residential intent. **Commissioner Skidmore** brought up the Charlotte Enterprise Airport. Congressman Rooney mentioned touring the airport and expressed the importance of direct access to the County. **Commissioner Duffy** pointed out the benefit of being centrally located with three modes of transportation which

include I-75, the railroad, and the airport. Commissioner Cummings indicated since the airport can handle large aircraft, renovating the airport to look more like a major facility will improve its chance to be declared part of the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) which could help us tap into state gas tax revenues.

Citizen Input:

Susie Hackett congratulated and welcomed the Congressman, briefly discussed her involvement with St. Vincent de Paul Community Medical Center and the Center for Abuse and Rape Emergencies (C.A.R.E), noted their importance and concern that their funding has been cut, said each organization will receive a \$500 donation from the Mid-Charlotte County Republican Club, expressed hope that other County Clubs continue to support these organizations, and indicated the need for Federal Funding. Ms. Hackett mentioned she is on the Babcock Ranch Preserve Advisory Board and offered to take the Congressman on a tour of the ranch. Ms. Hackett brought up mobile homes versus Department of Motor Vehicles (D.M.V.), discussed the issue in great detail, mentioned a timeline of events to date, and asked for support of a Resolution.

ADJOURNED: 12:55 PM

Signature on file in Commission Minutes
Chairman

ATTEST:

BARBARA T. SCOTT, CLERK
OF THE CIRCUIT COURT AND
EX-OFFICIO TO THE BOARD
OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

By: Signature on file in Commission Minutes
Deputy Clerk

JL