

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

**FEBRUARY 4, 2009**

A meeting was held at the Murdock Administration Complex in Room 119, Port Charlotte, Florida. The following members were present: Chairman Duffy, Commissioner Cummings, Commissioner Starr, and Commissioner Skidmore. Also in attendance were County Administrator Baltz, County Attorney Knowlton, Executive Assistant Dillon, and Deputy Clerk Manley. The following members were absent: Commissioner Loftus. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM.

Chairman Duffy opened by thanking the attendees, stated this is the second of three Town Hall Meetings being held throughout the County, introduced the Commissioners, County Attorney, County Administrator, Assistant County Administrator, indicated most department directors were present, and advised Commissioner Loftus was out of town. Chairman Duffy explained she would begin with a brief "State of the County" visual presentation and noted citizens would then have the opportunity to ask questions.

**STATE OF THE COUNTY PRESENTATION: ATTACHED**

**CITIZEN INPUT - ANY SUBJECT**

Joe Dixon, Secretary of Curmudgeon Club, commended the Board for their work, noted several economy related cutbacks, and asked for the number of County employees who were laid off as a result of the reductions. Mr. Baltz said there have been several reductions over the last few years, advised 246 positions were eliminated over the past two year period, noted he was not certain of the actual number of people laid off since many of the positions were vacant prior to elimination. Mr. Dixon mentioned the departments affected by layoffs seem to be functioning well, read predictions into the record related to the economy over the

next few years, opined the market returning to normal by 2011, and questioned whether the County would be required to rehire the employees let go. **Commissioner Starr** explained many of the eliminated positions were vacant or employee buy outs, noted the tremendous increase in the revenue stream after Hurricane Charlie warranted hiring extra people to help the County recover, explained performance budgeting, the importance of reducing government size and spending, and expressed hope that they will one day be able to save money. Mr. Dixon stated his understanding that Fire/EMS is willing to cooperate and discuss salary negotiations. **Chairman Duffy** advised a meeting was scheduled this week for that purpose.

Tess Canja commented on privatizing Fire/EMS, said the Sun Newspaper printed some excellent material related to the importance of research, asked how the County plans to proceed, expressed concern that privatization costs more and reduces the level of service, and opined the need to fully research the issue first. **Commissioner Skidmore** said he believes we privatize functions, not departments; commented that privatization is not a new concept in government and is working in other counties; said the Board is faced with a \$40 Million shortfall and must explore several options; stated they are committed to not raising taxes, but must look at all areas where reductions can be made; explained the importance of increasing productively and eliminating waste; said the Board supports public safety and has a responsibility to look at everything; responded to the Sun Herald comments and stated they got it wrong; explained the RFP process, and clarified the Board's intent to do their homework and make informed decisions on behalf of the Community.

**Commissioner Starr** commented on the Sun Herald articles; agreed they got it wrong; said the Board is thoroughly gathering information; explained once they get all the information, they will meet with the current principals to discuss the proposals; pointed out over \$2 Million in overtime and high salaries within the Fire Department; and explained the goal is to gather competitive pricing, not to reduce services.

**Commissioner Cummings** commented on the need for better efficiencies; discussed privatization and how it applied to Dial A Ride; provided reasons why he believes they need to ask more questions before going to RFP; and said he is skeptical.

Candace Webbe said she was part of a group who visited the jail under the auspicious of the academy, suggested the Board review consultant studies on privatization, explained the overtime mentioned earlier was caused by longer shifts and less men on the ground, and suggested the County consider increasing inmate charges for meals, medical care, and prescriptions.

**Commissioner Skidmore** commented that privatization is just one of the options being considered; said the jail belongs to the County and the Board is looking to find a reduction in its management costs; remarked on the overtime issue and mentioned County and Sheriff Department employees received a 0% increase last year while Fire Union employees received a 10% increase; opined we can no longer afford this; stated he was amazed at how clean and well run the jail is; agreed it is unfair that inmate costs are much lower than the average lawful citizen pays; noted mandated prisoner rights; and said we could use public support and urged citizens to contact our representatives related to unfunded mandates.

**Chairman Duffy** talked about scrub jays and gopher tortoises, provided examples of Fish and Wildlife mandates that affect the County and incur costs, explained requirements to comply with State law; and commented our citizens become victims and opined the County is held hostage by the State.

**Commissioner Starr** said he will look further into the overtime, said we are no longer going to RFP on the jail, noted we will do our due diligence in-house, mentioned we hire the Sheriff to run the jail, said 75% of the inmates are repeat offenders, expressed his opposition in adding one more brick to the jail, and opined offenders may reconsider breaking the law in Charlotte County if the jail is less comfortable.

Nicki Hotchkiss opined the need to find other options to cutting costs, suggested privatization will jeopardize the safety of our citizens, expressed concern that more people will leave our County, said insurance costs may increase, mentioned the possibility of more foreclosures and loss of jobs, urged the Board to hear the concerns of its citizens, and asked for the cost of research. **Commissioner Starr** said parameters will be set for RFPs, explained they are not looking for loss of jobs, remarked that the Fire Union was the only department that did not step up, said they indicated they were entitled to a 10% increase plus additional benefits, noted the Board is now expecting Fire Union cooperation, said the Firefighters were able to eliminate a large portion of overtime once it was pointed out, again mentioned firefighter salaries in Miami/Dade is \$45,000 per year compared to local salaries of over \$100,000 per year, and opined the Fire Union can help avoid a RFP by coming forward with their own proposal. Ms. Hotchkiss responded that new personnel costs and benefits may be much higher than overtime. **Commissioner Starr** agreed but indicated \$2.5 Million in overtime was eliminated but not explained.

Dale Watson mentioned a conversation with Herman Velasco related to septic tanks, said he expected Mr. Velasco to lobby the Commission to remove the aerobic treatment requirement, and opined a managed septic tank will provide many years of proper treatment. **Chairman Duffy** asked about aerobic treatment plants for those who live close to the water. Mr. Watson explained the problem in detail and urged the Board to support Mr. Velasco.

**Commissioner Cummings** remarked on conversations he had with Mr. Velasco related to septic tanks and sewers, provided the history associated with aerobic treatment systems, septic tanks, associated State Law, expressed the importance of Comprehensive Plan compliance, and said the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) should be updated to address the County's infrastructure needs. **Commissioner Starr** agreed we need to eliminate aerobic septic tanks, noted there are no local service centers to support them, expressed the importance of septic maintenance, and said it is necessary in the future to provide residents with a clear sewer bid that depicts the correct cost and detail before approval is considered.

Dave Hackett addressed funded and unfunded state mandates, suggested we need a circumvention manager to find loop holes in the mandates, and said other counties could join in the fight and approach the State for change. **Commissioner Cummings** discussed the unfunded mandate process (official and unofficial), and opined it is less expensive to be proactive. Mr. Hackett questioned the budget and revenues. **Commissioner Cummings** explained the budget and revenue process, talked about the millage rate, and noted what the result would have been had they lowered it last year. **Commissioner Starr** indicated many reductions last year were one time. Ray Sandrock stated \$16 Million of the \$35 Million represented one time cuts. **Commissioner Cummings** indicated citizens are confused with the millage rate and taxes, explained they did not raise taxes last year, said they adjusted the millage rate to collect \$1 Million less, and provided additional detail and facts. Mr. Sandrock clarified the reductions were made, but advised they went to rollback rate which created a stabilization reserve and provided its intent. **Commissioner Cummings** explained the purpose of the stabilization and commented that the State will not stop pushing a lot down to a local level. **Commissioner Skidmore** said he does not want to hide behind the fact that Charlotte County has spent too much money over the years, noted the Board has made staff reductions in the amount of approximately \$350,000, opined we will achieve a better, more efficient, leaner government, and stated we will continue looking for reductions in how we operate government. **Commissioner Skidmore** indicated his opposition in taking more money from the public, explained performance budgeting and noted it will be defined over the next few weeks, indicated they will continue working with State Legislature to bring attention to what is going on here, and commented we need to look at ways to be more cost efficient first.

Steve Tull agreed with **Commissioner Skidmore** related to taxes and commented on ad valorem, commended the present Board for their work, expressed shock that the kids have to pay where ever they go in the County now; and stated retirees can no longer come down and afford to live here comfortably as they did in the past.

Joe Blaiz expressed appreciation to the Board and staff for making themselves available for questions, commented that

Charlotte County is a great place to live, pointed out the importance of communication, discussed economic development, evacuation routes, suggested working with surrounding counties, asked about the stimulus wish list, and expressed concern with local small businesses. **Chairman Duffy** said she has been following it nationally, negatively remarked that they plan to borrow the money from China, indicated we will put any money received to good use on much needed infrastructure, and advised detail related to the wish list. **Commissioner Skidmore** opined they are doing a great job; noted they have a great wish list; expressed the importance of focus; said we changed our Request for Proposal (RFP) process in order to take care of our local businesses; explained local preference and proposed bidding procedure changes; talked about creative government and about streamlining processes. Mr. Blaiz mentioned local students are moving away for work and said we need to plan ahead to help keep our graduates here. **Commissioner Cummings** talked about the stimulus plan; noted the objective is to bring as much money home as we can; said money goes to the states for distribution, mentioned it goes to the larger metropolitan areas; explained how funds are distributed; and recommended citizens take that message to their state legislators.

**Commissioner Starr** commented there are as many citizens as staff here tonight, expressed the importance of working with the public, and asked for suggestions on how to interest more residents. Mr. Tull said he mentioned this meeting to at least twenty people and explained most noted nothing changed when they attended meetings on Murdock Village.

Robert Goon opined the tenure of this Commission is much better than it was during Murdock Village, commented on the rudeness of former Commissioners, commended the Board for listening and for improved communication, and suggested attendance will improve once the word gets out.

Robbie Robbins agreed with **Commissioner Starr** related to jail conditions, agreed our inmates have it too good, commended the Board for their work on performance budgeting, and requested a speedy conclusion related to law enforcement employees. **Commissioner Starr** clarified the RFP is no longer on the table for the Sheriff Department and stated the Board would appreciate any information his group can furnish on achieving better efficiently. **Commissioner Skidmore** said the Board is trying to

be good stewards of taxpayer money and appreciated the information the Sheriff Department has provided. Chairman Duffy commended jail staff. Mr. Robbins thanked the Board and said he would pass the information on.

Chairman Duffy closed the meeting by thanking those who attended and watched, urged more citizens to become involved, and announced the next Town Hall meeting will be held on February 23, 2009 at 6:00 PM at the Charlotte Harbor Conference and Event Center.

ADJOURNED: 8:00 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

*State of the County  
February 2009  
Charlotte County, Florida*

- Population: 152,814
- Area: 694 sq. miles or 444,160 acres
- 142,981 acres of preserved land
- 2,947 acres of park lands
- 12.5 miles of beaches
- 165 miles of canals
  
- ✓ Highlights of 2008
- ✓ Major Issues of 2008
- ✓ Prospects for 2009

*Highlights of 2008*

- Construction Projects
- Local Preference
- Open for Business

*Goals for 2008*

- Develop near and long term strategic financial plan
- Re-write the Comprehensive plan
- Continue and strengthen comprehensive water supply and conservation
- Analyze the County MSBU system
- Resolve the phosphate situation
- Improve internal and external communication
- Aggressively continue the promotion of Economic Development
- Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of government

*2002 Sales Tax Projects*

- Genesis Safe House
- Bayshore Live Oak Park
- Mobile Command Unit

*Charlotte Sports Park*

- **Cost: \$27,300,00**
- **Funded by a state grant, tourist taxes, and the Tampa Bay Rays**

*Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center*

- **Cost: \$19,650,000**
- **Funded by sales tax, ad valorem tax, and a \$1.95 million contribution from Punta Gorda**

*Historic Courthouse Renovation*

*Fire/EMS Facilities*

- **Fire Station 11 in Harbor Heights – Final Hurricane Recovery Project**
- **Cost: \$2,024,000**
- **Funding included insurance and FEMA reimbursements.**
- **Englewood Area Fire Control Station 75**  
**Cost: \$1,800,000**

*County Parks*

- **Bayshore Live Oak Park**
- **Conservation Charlotte**
- **Prairie Creek Preserve**
- **Shell Creek Preserve**

*West Charlotte Mini-Transfer Recycling Facility*

*Local Preference*

- **Desire for local companies to receive preference in government contracts**
- **Updated the scoring process to recognize local bidders**
- **Incentives for maintaining local offices; hiring local subcontractors and hiring Charlotte County residents**

*Major Issues of 2008*

- Budget & Spending
- Economic Development
- Growth Management

*How much and what did we cut? CUT: \$32.5 Million*

• Millage re-direction (part of .6 mill)	\$3,600,000
• Savings from this years budget	\$4,000,000
• Capital project re-direction	\$11,000,000
• Growth Management Fees	\$1,000,000
• Department Reductions	\$10,500,000
• Property Appraiser	\$7,000
• Clerk of the Court	\$427,000
• Sheriff	\$424,000
• Supervisor of Elections	\$1,768,000

*Unfunded State Mandates*

**Unfunded State Mandates \$8,499,322 in FY 2008**

• Div of Juvenile Justice	\$412,625
• Justice Center Facility & Security	\$2,113,328
• Criminal Justice Info System	\$73,795
• Drug Court, Pre-Trial, Law Library	\$410,335
• Public Defender	\$1,177,488
• Healthcare Responsibility Act	\$6,406
• Medicaid – Hosp & Nursing Care	\$974,710
• Medical Services	\$15,000
• Pauper Burials	\$6,080
• Additional Programs:	
• Mental Health	\$1,278,752
• Substance Abuse	\$627,334
• Health Department	\$1,403,469

**Distribution of Ad Valorem Taxes for FY2008/09**

*Ad Valorem Used by Constitutional Officers*

- Supervisor of Elections, 2,062,640, 1%
- Clerk of the Courts, 3,344,577, 2%
- Sheriff, 59,777,827, 41%
- BCC, 69,459,440, 48%
- Property Appraiser, 4,964,461, 3%
- Tax Collector, 6,496,994, 5%

*Ad Valorem used by BCC Departments*

- Mosquito Control & Aquatic, 113,037, 0.16%
- Facilities Management, 441,765, 0.64%
- Grants Organizations, 166,560, 0.24%
- Sheriff Related, 377,206, 0.54%
- Capital Projects Fund, 23,921,056, 34.44%
- Health Department, 1,714,587, 2.47%
- MSTU's, 5,454,720, 7.85%
- Community Development, 3,712,658, 5.35%
- Conservation Charlotte, 3,780,790, 5.44%
- Community Redevelopment Agencies, 2,010,413, 2.89%
- Fiscal Stabilization Reserve, 25,063,148, 36.08%
- Parks, Rec. & Cultural Resources, 1,089,064, 1.57%
- Animal Control, 55,393, 0.08%
- Human Services, 275,567, 0.40%
- Information Tech & GIS, 426,987, 0.61%
- EMS, 721,651, 1.04%
- Court Related, 134,838, 0.19%

*A Typical Tax Bill*

- Average tax bill is \$1,611
- Assuming a \$1,600 bill
- 35.6% goes to Charlotte Co Ad valorem or \$571
- 50% of that goes to Constitutional officers
- What's left is \$285.50 to the county budget
- Rest goes to School Board, SWFWMD, Peace River Basin, etc.

*Property Assessments Dropped in 2008*

- 2000-01 7,662,906,568
- 2001-02 8,471,308,164
- 2002-03 9,483,025,806
- 2003-04 11,025,783,488
- 2004-05 12,993,261,715
- 2005-06 16,124,765,813
- 2006-07 24,280,088,571
- 2007-08 23,370,729,141
- 2008-09 18,850,841,938

*Economic Development*

*Major Changes in 2008*

- **BCC transferred authority to manage business incentive programs to the Industrial Development Authority (IDA)**
- **Prospectus and monthly scorecard created**
- **“Ready Real Estate”**
- **Provided Infrastructure Grant for the development at the Airport Commerce Center Park**
- **Economic and Fiscal Impact Module**
- **Charlotte County Competitive Analysis**
- **SW Florida Regional Technology Partnership, Incubator study and angel funding programs**

*New companies brought over 400 jobs:*

- **ADT**
- **A Plus Laundry**
- **Arcadia Aerospace**
- **Green Scapes**
- **Sherwin Williams**
- **South Eastern Freight**

*Growth Management*

- **Preparing and implementing the County’s comprehensive plan**
- **Smart Charlotte 2050, a community-based planning process to get everyone involved in the Comprehensive Plan revisions**
- **Land development regulations**
- **U.S. 17 Corridor study**

*Planned for 2009*

- Increased Communication
- Budget and Organizational Realignment
- Open for Business
- Economic Development
- Growth Management
- Sales Tax Projects

*Public Interaction*

- Increasing Internal and External Communication
- Reaching out to the Community
- More Town Hall Meetings
- Evening BCC Meeting
- 

*Budgeting 2009*

- Performance-Based Budgeting
- Focuses on results
- Sets objectives and performance targets
- Has a long term perspective – a continuous process
- Driven by Strategic Goals set by BCC
- 

*2009 Sales Tax Projects*

- Burnt Store Road
  - a valuable hurricane evacuation route
- Edgewater Drive
  - a critical corridor to relieve traffic congestion on US 41
- Midway Boulevard
  - needed to accommodate current traffic volume and improve safety
- County Road 775/Placida Road
  - to accommodate traffic growth, and a hurricane evacuation route
- Sidewalks
  - connecting schools to recreation areas and neighborhoods

*Capital Improvement Projects*

- Burnt Store Reverse Osmosis Plant
- Reclaimed Water Expansion

- **Rehabilitating water mains and lift stations that are 30 years old**
- **County Facility Energy Efficiency Upgrades**
- **Coral Creek Bridge Replacement**

*More CIP 2009 Projects*

- **Aqui Esta road-widening project**
- **Toledo Blade road-widening project**
- **Piper Road Widening (South)**
- **Winchester Boulevard South (2002 Sales Tax Project)**
- **Drainage work in preparation of Midway Boulevard Widening**

*Economic Development*

*Enterprise Charlotte Economic Council*

- **Formed this year from the Enterprise Charlotte Foundation.**
- **Funds economic development work and studies through investments made by our business community partners.**
- **Focus:**
  - ✓ **expand economic development**
  - ✓ **bring in site selectors**
  - ✓ **work with local, regional and state counterparts to advance measures that will encourage business growth**

*Enterprise Airport Commerce Park (ECAP)*

- **Charlotte County's Industrial Hub**
- **Special mixed-use designation**
- **4,300 acres**
- **Arcadia Aerospace Industries, Direct Air, and Blue Bell Creameries opened in 2008**

*Open For Business Initial Improvements*

- **Developed a DRC User guide aimed at instructing the new user of the DRC process**
- **Staff completed a revision to the DRC code that:**
  - ✓ **Creates a faster administrative approval process. Projects can now be approved once all departments recommend approval.**
  - ✓ **Extends the maximum timeline for DRC approval to 5 years from 3**

- ✓ **Creates certainty in the preliminary approval process by requiring all applicable comments be made at the preliminary review and prohibiting new comments at final if the proposed development has not changed.**

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