

Board of County Commissioners

May 18, 2009

A meeting was held at the Murdock Administration Complex in Room 119, Port Charlotte, Florida.

Members present were: Chairman Duffy, Commissioner Loftus, Commissioner Starr, Commissioner Cummings, Commissioner Skidmore, County Attorney Knowlton, County Administrator Baltz and Deputy Clerk Manley.

The workshop was called to order at **1:30 PM**, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Review Performance Budgets - Kelly Shoemaker and Ray Sandrock

a. Building Construction Services

Mr. Sandrock stated the workshop would include a review of Building Construction Services (BCS), a second phase of follow-up questions, and indicate Constitutional Officer Reductions. Mr. Sandrock announced dates of upcoming workshops, provided a Reduction Update, and read the BCS Mission Statement into the record. (Visual slides were paralleled throughout the meeting) Ms. Shoemaker described each of the four BCS Core Services, provided their Linkage to Strategic Goals, mentioned their Results, noted their FTE information, and indicated the Percent of Time by Results for each.

Mr. Evetts said Charlotte County Community Rating System score is at Level 5, indicated we are one of the top rated counties in the State of Florida, and commented that approximately four municipalities in the United States have a better rating than Charlotte County. Mr. Baltz pointed out this is a significant accomplishment and said this standard has a very tangible benefit to our County. **Commissioner Cummings** asked if we were well into the zone. Mr. Evetts acknowledged we were on the edge but hopes to be at a higher level. **Commissioner Starr** asked what BCS does to achieve a higher level. Mr. Evetts explained the process, mentioned building permitting is considered along with staff education levels, continued education, certified flood plan levels, and pointed out a year-round program review.

Discussion Points:

Mr. Sandrock referenced four Decision Points, explained the organizational chart, pointed out positions that were moved to Growth Management, and indicated positions shown as (1E) represent vacant positions that were eliminated by Board action on April 28, 2009 and items listed as (1C) reflect recommended reductions for the upcoming fiscal year.

Commissioner Starr questioned building permit reserves of \$1.2 Million. Mr. Sandrock explained at one time there were more revenues coming in than expenditures and noted reserves were put in place for specific purposes such as the relocation of BCS to the former library building and software purchases. Mr. Sandrock indicated reserves provide a cushion for a lower revenue stream and commented it will eventually get to a point where revenues must equal expenditures. **Commissioner Starr** requested clarification that the reserves could be utilized for anything. Mr. Sandrock opined the reserves must be used within BCS. Mr. Evetts explained associated State law and announced a Memorandum of Understanding was signed a few years ago that gave guidance on how the money would be handled, and pointed out that a great deal of money is invested in people trained to do plans examining and inspecting, and opined it is very difficult to find trained people when things pick up. **Commissioner Loftus** said the reserve helps to support the industry in down times and noted an oversight committee meets once a month to maintain the budget. **Chairman Duffy** commented that this department is for the most part funded by fees and licenses, questioned how they determine what portion is funded by General Revenue, and asked who the remaining Land Development employees will report to. Mr. Evetts referenced State law and its funding requirements and advised the remaining employees will report to the Building and Inspecting Manager, will work closely with Growth Management, and explained the rules related to zoning interpretations. **Commissioner Skidmore** asked why Building Inspectors are not cross trained as Code Enforcement when Statute allows for it. Mr. Evetts said Building Inspectors are asked to inform Code Enforcement of any problems they see, but explained if fully utilized, a portion of their salaries would be paid out of ad valorem, and noted Code Enforcement Officer Regulations related to reporting issues.

Ms. Shoemaker explained the Recommended Reduction Scenario, noted its results provide approximately \$1.4 Million in reductions, and pointed out the Impacts of Implementing Level of Service Reductions.

Commissioner Loftus expressed concern with the elimination of a Code Enforcement position and mentioned the need to have space available in Punta Gorda when the work picks up. Mr. Evetts explained that position was a retirement and had already been eliminated in the last six months and agreed space will be needed in the future.

Ms. Shoemaker reviewed the Revenue Opportunities, noted the recent approval of an Optional File Maintenance Fee for State Certified Contractors, and reviewed Current Year Savings by category.

Commissioner Skidmore asked if more documents have been made available on-line since the closing of satellite offices and wondered if citizens need to bring permits in to be certified. Mr. Evetts said more on-line documents have been made available, noted a major improvement will occur with the installation of the new computer system, and opined future satellite offices will be needed once the County moves forward with several projects.

Ms. Shoemaker reviewed Current Outsourcing and indicated there will be additional discussion related to Fleet Maintenance at Wednesday's Budget Workshop.

COMMISSIONER LOFTUS MOVED TO APPROVE STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REDUCTION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,350,675 WITH AD VALOREM IN THE AMOUNT OF \$391,023 AND NON-AD VALOREM IN THE AMOUNT OF \$959,652, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER STARR

Commissioner Cummings read the following Impacts of Implementing Level of Service Reduction into the record: "Reductions will bring staffing in line with workloads. Complaint response time for unlicensed contractors will increase. The numbers of properties able to be abated would be significantly reduced both for unsafe properties and lot cleaning. There is a possibility that potential grant funding through the Neighborhood Stabilization Plan would be available to fund demolition of certain unsafe properties." Mr. Evetts said this has been a difficult budget to reduce, agreed levels of service will be

reduced if Englewood and Punta Gorda offices are closed, and indicated the only thing left is to reduce people. **Commissioner Cummings** reminded the Board that in implementing most recommendations it should be expected that complaint response times for unlicensed contractors will increase and the ability to deal with abating unsafe properties and lot clearing will diminish and stated his point is the cuts will reduce the capacity to respond. **Commissioner Skidmore** expressed concern with putting residents at a disadvantage and asked for the true impact related to response. Mr. Evetts said the response time could be delayed by approximately a half day, advised how the County was affected by similar scenarios in the past, and commented that these are the best recommendations at this time. **Commissioner Cummings** asked if we are in an environment where we will have more unsafe properties and lot cleanings to deal with. Mr. Evetts said reports indicate we have reached the bottom of the building crisis. **Commissioner Starr** said the point is we have to reduce the budget; opined we will not be in a situation anytime soon like we were in the building boom; and indicated he would like to use this slack time for training with the new software and learning to be more effective in departments.

Commissioner Starr questioned department travel expenses. Mr. Evetts explained that like contractors, building inspectors, plan examiners and building officials are required to have 14 hours of continuing education every two years in order to maintain their licenses; and that in the past courses were taught all over the State of Florida. Mr. Evetts commented on efforts to lower or eliminate travel expenses by hiring instructors to come to Charlotte County and have the licensed courses done locally and charge for the convenience of others attending the courses here. **Commissioner Starr** asked if everyone in BCS had to be licensed. Mr. Evetts explained 75%-85% of the department must be legally licensed or would be removed from the department. **Commissioner Starr** inquired about the \$100,000 in credit card fees. Mr. Evetts stated most of BCS revenue taken in is through credit cards and BCS is charged a percentage on each receipt. **Commissioner Starr** opined many line items have large dollar amounts and should be reviewed.

MOTION CARRIED 4:1. COMMISSIONER CUMMINGS OPPOSED.

b. Follow up

Question: How much does a Transit Dispatcher make vs. a School Board dispatcher? **Answer:** Transit dispatchers earn between \$13-\$19 per hour and School Board transit dispatchers make \$18-\$28 per hour.

Commissioner Loftus asked if wages include benefits. Mr. Sandrock advised it is salary only.

Question: Look at combining Transit dispatchers with School Board dispatchers. **Answer:** The School Board is unable to combine dispatchers due to student safety.

Question: Can the School Board assume responsibility for maintaining County's Transit vehicles? **Answer:** At this time, the School Board is not interested in taking on the maintenance of the County's Transit vehicles.

Question: What are the monthly/annual operating costs of the Family Services Center? **Answer:** The FY-09 operating budget is \$289,214 for the Family Services Center.

Question: How many buildings does the School Board have? **Answer:** The School Board has 29 separate complexes throughout the County.

Question: How much is the National Association of Counties annual membership and what are the benefits? **Answer:** The cost is \$2,794. Benefits include lobbying, legislative updates, grants clearing house, prescription drug cards, researching county issues, and provide technical assistance and training.

Mr. Sandrock stated BOCC agreed not to fund this membership in the future.

Question: When do each of the CRA's sunset? **Answer:** Punta Gorda 2020; Charlotte Harbor 2036; and Murdock Village 2034.

Mr. Sandrock noted CRA's can be in existence for 20 years with a 10 year extension.

Question: Can we use Reserve Deputies for MSBU Meeting? **Answer:** Yes, however, the cost is the same as using a deputy at \$26 per hour. The Reserve Deputy has to complete a 12-week training program in order to work alone, or, they must work with an officer.

Mr. Sandrock agreed we can use Reserve Deputies for MSBU meetings and said the cost would be the same since they are considered the same in the manner of training involved at a MSBU hearing. **Commissioner Skidmore** asked who gave him that answer. Mr. Sandrock said the Finance Department. **Commissioner Skidmore** said the Sheriff gave him a different answer and asked Mr. Sandrock to follow up with a direct contact.

Question: What does Sarasota and Lee County pay for lobbyists? **Answer:** Sarasota uses Holland and Knight and pays \$106,000 annually. Lee County does not have a Federal lobbyist; they contract on a case by case basis.

Commissioner Skidmore asked for a comparison to what we spent annually and commented on using Lee County as a model. Ms. Shoemaker noted our contract with the Ferguson Group is \$125,000 and suggested Lee County may have concentrated on less areas. **Commissioner Starr** suggested we hire a lobbyist in the future to lobby for one specific thing for Charlotte County rather than lobbying overall priorities. **Chairman Duffy** indicated the Ferguson Group has concentrated on the needs of Charlotte County and brought back approximately \$4-\$6 Million dollars each year, commented that Lee County and Sarasota County may not have a regular lobbying firm for Federal, but they do for State, and said we do not have a State lobbyist because we chose not to. **Commissioner Cummings** said Holland and Knight lobby but are predominately a law firm, indicated the Ferguson Group is exclusively a lobbying firm and their primary focus is local government, and announced you will not find a better organization than the Ferguson Group. **Commissioner Loftus** mentioned when Board members met with representatives in Washington they indicated their appreciation for the assistance of the Ferguson Group and for us narrowing down our laundry list so the Ferguson Group could lobby for whatever we presented to them. **Commissioner Cummings** said we need to follow through with the projects we have and noted some are on a yearly basis.

Chairman Duffy suggested they work on Federal and State priorities in October 2009.

Question: What is the savings from downgrading the Deputy County Attorney to Assistant County Attorney? **Answer:** The total savings is \$10,261 (Salary Savings: \$5,699 + FRS Savings \$4,562).

Question: Is it more cost effective to use a County vehicle versus a personal vehicle? **Answer:** Yes, it is more cost effective. Cost per mile for County vehicles is \$0.40 and cost per mile for personal vehicles is \$0.55.

Question: Look into Tourist Development having exclusive rights to book events at the Events Center: **Answer:** This policy is that tourism has first rights on dates 12 months or more in advance. Parks Recreation and Cultural Resources (PRCR) book events less than 12 months.

Ms. Shoemaker explained the reason for the policy.

Question: How much does it cost to light a ball field for a night or an hour? **Answer:** Approximately \$43 a game to light a Little League ball field. This cost is using 100% green lighting. We currently have charges within our fee schedule for an hourly fee for the use of lighted fields (Fee is to \$10/hr.)

Question: Look at using solar or LED lighting to be more efficient. **Answer:** There are no solar or LED sport lighting systems on the market and noted they will continue to research as they become available.

Chairman Duffy forwarded a "green lighting" brochure to Mr. Baltz and commented that Musco Sports Lighting donated lighting to Charlotte High School after Hurricane Charley. Ms. Shoemaker confirmed the availability of "green" sports lighting, mentioned solar and LED sports lighting is not yet available, and advised she will keep an eye out.

Question: What is the reduction in gas tax over the last year? **Answer:** Estimated gas tax collections will approximately equal prior year revenues, the amount collected in FY08 was \$10.7 Million, noted 2-3 years ago it was up over \$12 Million, and advised the leveling out could also be reflective of the leveling of the recent gas prices.

Commissioner Cummings commented on the families that have been impacted by the budget reductions.

c. Review of Constitutional Budgets

Mr. Sandrock said the Constitutional Officers collective budget reduction amount for Sheriff, Clerk of Courts and Supervisor of Elections is a little more than \$1.8 Million and advised they will receive the additional reductions after June 1st for the Tax Collector and Property Appraiser.

Commissioner Skidmore commended the Supervisor of Elections and questioned whether the 15% included does FRS contributions. Mr. Sandrock indicated it did not. **Commissioner Starr** also commended the Supervisor of Elections and the Clerk of the Courts, suggested Sheriff Cameron find more than a 2% budget reduction, remarked that the Sheriff's budget includes the jail, opined the Board should have direct control of the jail budget, and suggested the creation of a Citizen Task Force to advise costs and recommend additional efficiencies. **Chairman Duffy** explained why she was opposed to a Citizen Task Force. **Commissioner Starr** understood the opposition, stated the Sheriff should reduce at least 15% as all other departments have, and commented the jail is the Board's responsibility. **Commissioner Cummings** stated we need to be careful what we ask for, agreed the Board is responsible for the jail, but remarked the Board contracted the Sheriff to run the jail, and discussed past operational costs and level of service impacts. **Commissioner Loftus** stated he was disappointed with the Sheriff's 2% reduction in budget, expressed hope that the Sheriff will re-examine his budget and find additional cuts while continuing to provide essential services to the community. **Commissioner Starr** commented it is evident that citizens wanted a change because they did not re-elect Board members. **Chairman Duffy** said we are in a position to do what the people asked and said citizens want lower taxes and a smaller, more cost effective government. **Chairman Duffy** said the Clerk of the Courts gave a \$348,000 reduction and additionally was hit by the State Legislature for more cuts on the State side of her budget. **Chairman Duffy** said anyone concerned with the Sheriff's budget should call me, stated she was comfortable with the Constitutionals budget cuts thus far, and opined no need for additional meetings. **Commissioner Skidmore** expressed the need to meet with the Sheriff again, confirmed the elimination of 264 Board side positions over the past two years, explained why he is in favor of a Citizen

Advisory group, and opined there are many additional efficiencies to be found. **Commissioner Loftus** and **Commissioner Starr** agreed they should meet with the Sheriff again. **Commissioner Skidmore** said the Sheriff told him this is the last year to expect a budget decrease and to expect a budget increase in FY 2010/2011 and so on. **Commissioner Cummings** said we are within our legal right to ask questions regarding the Sheriff's budget, mentioned the Sheriff must tell us what he needs in order to effectively fulfill his role, mentioned three (3) categories that the Board can decide to fund or not fund, and indicated the Sheriff's right to appeal Board decisions to the Governor. **Chairman Duffy** received Board consensus to meet with the Constitutional Officers again. Mr. Sandrock announced the Sheriff would be willing to have a discussion, however, he prefers a less formal setting. Mr. Baltz remarked that the Board denied the Constitutional Officers request for an extension, mentioned they submitted their budgets on time, said the Board made their desires clear, and opined the Constitutionals exercised their own judgment when submitting their budgets. **(Board Consensus to meet with Constitutionals in Room B-106)** Attorney Knowlton explained since the meeting dates have already been advertised, they will post the venue change outside Room 119. **Commissioner Cummings** announced the expense line is expected to go up in the near future. **Commissioner Starr** said we cut our budget and are not in the same situation as the Sheriff and suggested a 10%-15% cut in the Sheriff budget would reduce problems.

Mr. Baltz brought up Fire/EMS, mentioned Board feedback, discussed Request for Proposal (RFP) outsourcing, and requested detail related to Board expectations. **Commissioner Cummings** provided a recollection of associated events to date, said concessions were offered in exchange for the Board not going out for RFP, mentioned we excepted the concessions and decided to RFP anyway, said that decision was later withdrawn and the Board made good on the original understanding, opined the Chief will continue to work on efficiencies. **Commissioner Loftus** said his recollection was different and indicated his disappointment that the Union did not step up to the plate when originally asked. **Commissioner Skidmore** noted his opposition to closing fire stations in Charlotte County, recalled Union comments related to reductions, and mentioned his expectations that the Union will offer additional efficiencies. **Commissioner Starr** commented on Fire Department positions and opined the RFP would help us determine our Fire/EMS needs.

**COMMISSIONER STARR MOVED TO REACTIVATE THE RFP PROCESS FOR THE
FIRE DEPARTMENT.**

Chairman Duffy commented on her recollection of events, announced she is still waiting for the reductions promised by the Union, mentioned fire stations were opened based on anticipated growth that did not occur, and commented that a citizen pointed out unnecessary overtime within Fire/EMS. **Commissioner Cummings** commented further. **Chairman Duffy** commented that the Union gave back 7% of their 10% raise and recommended they ask the Chief to come back with alternate ways to trim their budget. **Commissioner Loftus** clarified his interpretation of the events related to Union Representative promises.

**MOTION TO REACTIVATE THE RFP PROCESS FOR THE FIRE DEPARTMENT
FAILED DUE TO LACK OF A SECOND.**

ADJOURNED: 3:45 PM

Signature on file in Commission Minutes
Chairman

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