

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AND PUNTA GORDA CITY COUNCIL
JOINT MEETING

MARCH 14, 2008

A joint meeting was held at the Murdock Administration Complex in Room 119, Port Charlotte, Florida. The following members were present: Chairman D'Aprile, Commissioner Moore, Commissioner Cummings, Commissioner Loftus, Commissioner Duffy, Mayor Friedman, Vice Mayor Goldberg, Council Member Smith-Mooney, Council Member Albers, and Council Member Wallace. Also in attendance were County Administrator Loucks, County Attorney Knowlton, Minutes Supervisor Nice, City Manager Kunik, and City Attorney Levin. The following members were absent: None. The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman D'Aprile requested a moment of silence in memory of Michael Ripp who recently died from cancer.

Mayor Friedman introduced Councilmembers and Chairman D'Aprile introduced Commissioners and staff in attendance.

I. Docking Opportunities at Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center (County)

Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Projects Management Division Manager David Milligan explained the 2005 Citizens' Master Plan, prepared subsequent to Hurricane Charley by Jaime Correa and Associates for TEAM Punta Gorda, included sketches and reference to a marina for small boats adjacent to the Event and Conference Center. Mr. Milligan reported the current project scope is limited to landside improvements but design and permitting of waterside facilities has merit for future discussion in coordination with existing Laishley Park improvements, other permitted or proposed dock slips, and mooring in the downtown waterfront area.

Commissioner Cummings suggested consideration be given to the location of parking facilities for boating and a breakwall with dockage due to the exposed location and wave action in the area. Councilmember Goldberg and Commissioner Loftus commented in support of investigating exposure issues and pursuing the

proposal for a waterside destination point that will be culturally and economically beneficial to the community. **Councilmember Wallace** advised the City intends to move forward with two mooring fields and opined a full marina would not be necessary. **Chairman D'Aprile** questioned the type of dockage. **Mr. Milligan** advised the conceptual plan is to construct permanent docks for day or short-term use and pointed out there is ample lease dockage at Laishley Park. **Tourism Director Becky Bovell** reported economic impacts of recreational boating is higher than citrus and cruise industries combined, commented on the importance of permanent dockage rather than floating docks, advised Florida is the number one state in the United States for boat registrations, opening soon will be the Charlotte Harbor Queen paddle boat will need a permanent dockage area or at least space to on and off load passengers, and dockage in Florida generates over \$2 billion. **Councilmember Smith-Mooney** commented on suggestions from the Punta Gorda Waterfront Development Advisory Board including waterfront visions for a water taxi, a dingy dock, and an L-shape board walk in conjunction with the fishing pier and an amphitheater located at the end of the pier available for rental. **Councilmember Smith-Mooney** requested Ms. Bovell speak to the Advisory Board. Ms. Bovell commented on the Boaters' Alliance suggestion for various groups to meet with City and County staff and commented on the intent to develop a guide for the entire County on boating facilities. **Councilmember Smith-Mooney** pointed out the Advisory Board was established through the Boaters' Alliance and it is an official board of the City. **Councilmember Wallace** commented on the ground breaking next month on the Harbour Inn property that will enhance the waterfront. **Commissioner Cummings** expressed safety concerns about wave and traffic patterns and various water issues that may cause some unanticipated problems and impacts from small and large boats and commented in support of moving forward with careful consideration. **Councilmember Smith-Mooney** questioned the status of a submerged land lease in the area. **Commissioner Moore** reported he is not getting proper enforcement regarding casually docked and abandoned vessels. **Commissioner Duffy** requested information of dockage availability at the Sheraton. **Councilmember Wallace** recalled the plan calls for approximately 80 slips with at least one-half or a majority of the slips open for public usage. **Councilmember Smith-Mooney** suggested funding this out of Sales Tax revenues. **Councilmember Albers** reported the Best Western will provide public dockage as

part of mitigation and opined the more day dockage made available, the more beneficial it will be. **Chairman D'Aprile** explained public input procedures after discussion of each item. **Councilmember Albers** requested the next procedural step. **Chairman D'Aprile** advised the investigation would move forward and the amount of Sales Tax revenues will be determined if approved by referendum, and if the extension is not approved, the project will stop here. **Councilmember Smith-Mooney and Commissioner Duffy** commented on the availability of grant monies.

II. Infrastructure Sales Surtax Public Information Campaign (County)

Communications and Marketing Manager Joyce Ross provided a slide presentation on actions being taken to update residents including distribution of Charlotte Shines, securing public input in discussions with numerous groups and residents, staff input on Sales Tax collections and project costs, discussions with City of Punta Gorda staff, advised a report would be provided to the Board in April or May on the time line for placing the extension on the August or November 2008 ballots, finalizing the campaign the end of July, reported the Supervisor of Elections must be notified by July 25, 2008 regarding ballot questions, and suggested the Board consider placing the extension on the August ballot because the November ballot will be very crowded due to Constitutional amendments and School Board issues.

Councilmember Goldberg commented on the importance of educating everyone on Sales Tax issues e.g. capital or operational expenses, the citizens need to be given as much information as possible, and the City will continue to provide information on their projects. **Mayor Friedman** stated the overall message must be simplified, clear, and concise as follows: does the public want to have the burden of the entire cost of capital projects or have tourists assist in paying for these projects; and opined prior sales tax levies have been shown to be beneficial. **Councilmember Smith-Mooney** pointed out this is a continuance of an existing sales tax that has accomplished many projects. **Councilmember Albers** agreed the extensions is needed and suggested a two-year extension with accountability instead of a five-year extension. **Councilmember Wallace** agreed on the need for the sales tax extension. **Commissioner Moore** expressed

support for proceeding with the extension if that is what the public wants and commented on the need to understand what the people really want because there is currently a lot of distrust. **Commissioner Cummings** stated it is very questionable how the public would vote at this time but they should be given the opportunity to vote on it; based on feedback from County residents, the first priority would probably be road projects; and pointed out additional revenues would minimize operational costs due to the deficit being created by the State. **Councilmember Smith-Mooney** stated two years might be too short of an extension, project completions on the sales tax list have been reliable, and opined this is good for citizens. **Commissioner Loftus** stated the public should be made aware of budget crunch impacts on road projects, the need for additional revenues including bonding in order to expedite road projects and reduce higher future costs, and reiterated the importance of public awareness on what projects have been done and future projects. **Mayor Friedman** stated many people have complained about road conditions and the need to rectify these problems and the need for cost sharing to accomplish these issues. **Commissioner Duffy** commented on the need to focus on what the people really want prior to the election. **Chairman D'Aprile** suggested a survey be sent to ascertain the people's real wants as far as expending sales tax dollars.

Chairman D'Aprile pointed out maintenance programs are paid out of ad valorem revenues. **Mayor Friedman** stated there is a difference between what the people may want versus recommendations from the focus group and suggested caution because it is premature at this date but the July 25, 2008 deadline must be considered. **Frank Weikel** pointed out the November ballot will be difficult and suggested placing the sales tax extension on the August ballot and keep it simple and specific to road projects. **Stan Fox** voiced the opposite opinion even though he is very much in favor of sales tax; he will vote against it because of all of the other taxes levied on residents including higher property taxes than neighboring communities.

III. Expansion of Cooper Street Recreation and Education Center (City)

City Manager Howard Kunik indicated City and County staff have discussed expansion of the New Operation Cooper Street Center,

reported the Center is utilized by both the County (60%) and City (40%); the Board of Directors of the Center will be developing a funding timeline; and suggested discussion on whether the expansion should be a County, City, and private partnership. **Councilmember Wallace** suggested the project be considered for funding as part of the budget process and pointed out there are unresolved safety issues. **Councilmember Smith-Mooney** added the Center is a non-profit entity and suggested funds be utilized as leverage for more grant dollars.

Commissioner Cummings recognized the beneficial impacts of the Center, stated this would be a good investment opportunity but not in the current budget crisis, and based on the status of the General Fund suggested looking for grant monies. **Commissioner Loftus** expressed support for the Center's youth programs, expressed reluctance due to the budget crunch, commented on the need to wait until after the Property Appraiser's valuations come out July 1, 2008, and suggested a public/private partnership to secure grant funds. **Councilmember Wallace** agreed on the importance of the Center's youth programs and requested consensus. **Chairman D'Aprile** pointed out County departmental budgets have been cut by 40% and commented on budget restraints. **Councilmember Smith-Mooney** expressed support for seeking grant funds. **Commissioner Cummings** concurred. **Councilmember Goldberg** concurred on seeking grant monies and reiterated the importance of the Center's youth programs. **Commissioner Moore** acknowledged consensus to have staff move forward in securing grant monies. County Administrator Bruce Loucks recommended Recovery Director Robert Hebert be involved in the process.

Executive Director Graciela Nurse stated most of the students attend schools in the County e.g. she has 147 registered students and 25 on a waiting list versus the 105 students allowed pursuant to CDF standards; the City has funded the Saturday program; and requested monetary backing to secure State and local matching grants. **Chairman D'Aprile** suggested the Center's officials meet with Mr. Hebert with a view towards some County backing. **Commissioner Cummings** commented in support of assisting the Center to secure grant monies and pointed out State legislators need to be made aware of the need for funding for the Center and held accountable for what they are doing to their own communities with cuts and unfunded mandates.

RECESS: 10:05 AM - 10:15 AM

IV. Updates: Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center (County), Aqui Esta Road Improvements (County), and Overlay District (City)

Growth Management Director Andrew Baker gave a slide presentation on the Event Center construction showing steel and concrete for the numerous entries and the twin towers over the main hall and public concourse, the multi-purpose area, mezzanine, entertainers areas, meeting rooms, trims to be applied to exterior walls, receiving and kitchen areas scheduled for completion in September 2008. **Commissioner Duffy** stated the "cracks" on the exterior are normal as a result of the concrete pouring process. **Councilmember Goldberg** explained the base layer of concrete when poured may result in cracks. **Mayor Friedman** asked for the first booking. Ms. Bovell stated a soft opening will be held in September, event organizers have been made aware of the availability, and the official opening will be in January 2009 with a few events in December 2008. **Councilmember Smith-Mooney** thanked the County for allowing the City to participate in the exterior planning.

Public Works Director Thomas O'Kane stated the February monthly update on the Aqua Esta road improvements was provided to the County Administrator and the City Manger, hopefully, the finished plans will be submitted in April with a notice to proceed in May; the County and State agreement is being drafted; the sidewalk in the County section is to be deleted and the County and City can take action at a future date; he has received notification from SWFWMD to proceed; the latest issue that was resolved was on the payment of inspections; and many problems have come up on grade, elevations, etc. that have been resolved. **Mayor Friedman** requested the timeline for construction. Mr. O'Kane pointed out the possibility of June although a contract exists for May. **Commissioner Loftus** questioned the delay on the issue of the right-of-way acquisition. Mr. O'Kane reported the property owner is negotiating on the configuration of the driveway and FDOT is handling it. **Commissioner Cummings** concluded the bridges will include sidewalks. Mr. O'Kane stated no sidewalks will lead up to bridges because they have been deleted from the County sector. Mr. O'Kane reported the State will treat 33 locations of right-of-acquisitions which would delay the project but the

County and City can address it in the future. **Commissioner Cummings** opined the sidewalks will cost more in the future.

City of Punta Gorda Urban Design Manager David Hilston reported the status on the overlay district including agreement on the basic parameters relevant to non-residential zoned parcels along major traffic corridors in conjunction with the City's sign, landscape, and architectural design standards and County and City staff will continue to resolve technical and logistical components of the project.

V. South County Sidewalk Program (County)

Mr. O'Kane stated the South County sidewalks are funded from 2002 Sales Tax revenues and the contract calls for construction over five to six months. **Mayor Friedman** questioned why sidewalks from US 41 will be commenced prior to sidewalks closest to schools. Mr. O'Kane expressed uncertainty, explained usually construction is started at the most expeditious point, and these sidewalks only go to Taylor Street; and noted the City project at Airport Road and Cooper Street that has an obligation for sidewalks. **Commissioner Duffy** opined the segment closest to schools should be done when school is out. **Commissioner Cummings** commented in support of moving forward expeditiously. Mr. O'Kane pointed out sidewalks on both sides of Florida Street will be going in the next month. **Commissioner Cummings** requested the timeline and noted it goes very quickly. Mr. O'Kane pointed out storm drainage work is included in the project and reported a delay may occur due to the recent death of Michael Ripp, FDOT, who was working on the project.

VI. Councilmember/Commissioner Comments

Chairman D'Aprile requested Economic Development Director Donald Root to report on the Publix warehouse. Mr. Root indicated notification has been received that Publix will not be building the warehouse in this area now but it may transpire in the future but it depends on growth.

Commissioner D'Aprile requested public input. An unidentified woman thanked staff for repairs of peeling paint on the north bound bridge that she mentioned at a Council meeting three of four months ago, remarked favorably on landscaping on the County

side of the US 41 bridge, and expressed appreciation for the Event Center. Jay Buckley, Waterfront Development Advisory Committee, stated that all of the voting groups including Punta Gorda Main Street and Boater's Alliance, support construction of a day dock at the Event Center.

Commissioner Loftus requested the City's position on the sewer extension out US 17. Mr. Kunik indicated City staff has met with Primeamerica and another major property owner who have requested the City install a wastewater transmission line; the City has adopted a line extension policy very similar to that of the County; the City has determined that the transmission line will only benefit those two properties and not the transmission system as a whole; and staff has not recommended to the Council to do that. **Mayor Friedman** explained the property owners would need to develop the line in conformance with the City's policy. **Commissioner Moore** requested the cost. Mr. Hunik offered to provide the information. **Councilmember Goldberg** recognized joint accomplishments and thanked participants. **Mayor Friedman** noted this is about the three-year anniversary of the quarterly meetings which have accomplished many things. **Commissioner Moore** stated we really are moving ahead and expressed appreciation for the City's participation. **Chairman D'Aprile** thanked Councilmembers and Commissioners for their efforts and, hopefully, these meetings have provided more education for the public.

ADJOURNED: 10:55 AM

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

djn