

**SALES TAX FOCUS GROUP MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 22, 2020 - 3:00 P.M.
18500 MURDOCK CIRCLE, ROOM B-106
PORT CHARLOTTE, FL 33948**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Patricia Aho, James Coalwell, Shaune Freeland, Jason Green, Robin Madden, Lynne Matthews, Sylvia Orr, Brian Presley, Todd Rebol, Tom Rice, Bill Schafer, Steve Uebelacker, Steve Vieira, John Wright

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Donna Barrett, Steve Dionisio, Ed Hill, Gordon “Mac” Martin, Danny Nix, Kathi Obendorfer, James Parish

OTHERS PRESENT: Dr. Robert Lee, Meeting Facilitator
Emily Lewis, Assistant County Administrator
John Elias, Public Works Director
Stephen Carter, Team Parkside President
Michael Desjardins, Charlotte County Public Schools Assistant

Superintendent

Jerry Olivo, Charlotte County Public Schools Assistant Superintendent
Robert Kruzal, Tringali Hockey & Sports League President
Cameron Pennant, Legislative Manager

OPENING STATEMENTS

Dr. Robert Lee, Meeting Facilitator, welcomed everyone, asking members to sign in on the attendance sheet currently being circulated. He then outlined meeting procedures, noting representatives of outside agencies would provide presentations regarding the three external projects denoted on the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

January 8, 2020 Meeting

Ms. Freeland **MOVED**, Mr. Rebol **SECONDED** approval of the January 8, 2020 minutes.
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Dr. Lee confirmed there were none.

EXTERNAL SALES TAX PROJECTS

Team Parkside CRA Multi-Use Bridges

Mr. Stephen Carter, Team Parkside President, provided a detailed review of the creation of the Parkside Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) in 2010 and adoption of the Citizens Master Plan in 2011, noting the subject area was comprised of 1,100 acres and had served as the heart of Charlotte County’s commerce throughout its history. He stated

the many facets of the CRA area represented all age groups. He maintained proper reconfiguration would transform the area into an active, pedestrian-oriented community, stating the proposed multi-use bridges would connect sections of the CRA area and enable residents to walk and bike within same. He displayed an aerial view of the CRA and surrounding area, as delineated in the agenda material, pointing out possible bridge locations behind the Bayfront Health Port Charlotte Hospital (Bayfront).

Discussion ensued regarding ownership of surrounding properties and the need for access.

Mr. Schafer asked if the proposed bridges would have a positive effect on access to the Cultural Center of Charlotte County.

Mr. Carter replied affirmatively, commenting access to the two hospitals located within the CRA area would also improve.

Ms. Freeland asked if any portion of the CRA area fell within the Opportunity Zone.

Ms. Emily Lewis, Assistant County Administrator, replied affirmatively. She clarified the entire CRA area was located within an Opportunity Zone.

Mr. Coalwell then displayed his own map upon which Mr. Carter confirmed the proposed bridge location. He commented on the ongoing expansion of Olean Boulevard between Harbor Boulevard and Easy Street, asking if sidewalks were existing.

Mr. Carter replied in the negative.

Mr. Rebol spoke in favor of the proposal and the need to maintain the CRA's forward momentum.

Mr. Wright asked if owners of the surrounding properties had been notified of the proposed bridges.

Mr. Carter replied not as of this date as funding had not been confirmed.

Ms. Lewis interjected the County's Real Estate Services Division would be responsible for property owner notification at the appropriate time.

Mr. Schafer then recalled a loan was provided to the CRA upon its formation, asking if repayment had commenced.

Mr. Carter replied affirmatively, noting current progress indicated complete repayment would likely be accomplished earlier than originally anticipated.

Discussion ensued with regard to the CRA's funding methodology.

Mr. Coalwell then stated the agenda material depicted total costs of \$350,000, requesting confirmation of same.

Mr. Carter opined the amount would be higher as the scenario he described earlier in the meeting called for a much wider bridge.

Mr. Wright questioned the location of the second bridge.

Mr. Carter replied it had been much farther south; however, due to land acquisition costs, Team Parkside was seeking approval for one bridge at this time.

Mr. Rebol asked if any costs above and beyond \$350,000 would be funded by the CRA.

Mr. Carter responded projected costs would be amended, explaining \$350,000 had been a rough, low-ball number, initially based on a much smaller bridge.

Ms. Aho confirmed annual operating costs would also change/increase as a result.

Ms. Lewis asked Mr. John Elias, Public Works Director, to comment on real estate and easement costs.

Mr. Elias estimated same at approximately \$800,000.

Ms. Lewis confirmed costs would be modified in time for final project rankings.

School Security Infrastructure

Dr. Michael Desjardins, Charlotte County Public Schools (CCPS) Assistant Superintendent, provided a presentation on the importance of school safety/security, announcing CCPS had been proactive since a 1999 Columbine, Colorado, school shooting. He explained the CCPS District strongly desired a continuation of the District's proactive approach, proposing installation of a one-button lockdown system known as Integrated Emergency Response System (IERS). He briefly outlined features of the existing school safety/security system, advising the next step was the IERS, which would ensure an immediate response to an active shooter incident. He asserted the ability to deter and immediately respond to these types of incidents was of critical importance. He explained an IERS was comprised of planned, coordinated and executed actions, including notification, improved timing of assistance and communication with the community in a calm, orderly, efficient manner. He then played a news video depicting the media's saturated coverage of nation-wide school shootings followed by a video demonstrating a one-button lockdown system.

Dr. Jerry Olivo, CCPS Assistant Superintendent, spoke briefly on existing procedures, stating School Resource Officers (SROs) currently played an important role in the safety program. He noted the proposed security system was simple to operate, a benefit in and of itself. He concluded their goal was to take every step possible to keep the community's children safe.

Dr. Desjardins spoke regarding Charlotte County Commissioners' generosity, evidenced by funding of \$3 million the previous year, adding more than half was expended solely on school safety/security. He noted the School District had expended more than \$13 million on safety/security, and forward progress must continue. He expressed hope for the Focus Group's favorable recommendation.

Mr. Presley requested additional input on maintenance budget expenditures, specifically those related to school safety/security. He clarified glass and doors, including hinges, for example, must be constantly upgraded as the finest system available would be for naught if a door could simply be blown off its hinges.

Dr. Olivo responded since 2004, a third of the School District had been raised to current standards, anticipating additional expenses of approximately \$30 million were anticipated over the next 5 years. He confirmed interior security would continue to be strengthened.

Mr. Presley asked if the School District would utilize First Alert.

Dr. Desjardins expressed uncertainty regarding same. He confirmed the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) would have access to all video systems.

Ms. Lewis added schools would be connected to Charlotte County's P25 radio system.

Discussion then ensued with regard to the procedures currently in effect within Charlotte County schools, specifically those related to automatic locking/unlocking of interior and exterior doors and the gates of exterior fences.

Mr. Schafer opined exterior doors should be maintained in the locked position. He acknowledged situations such as during a fire drill, for example, suggesting the system could be tailored to allow those doors to be unlocked with the press of one button, thus ensuring everyone's safe exit.

Dr. Olivo interjected interior doors were already able to be locked and/or unlocked en masse, noting the system enabling such action was in place thanks to 2014 sales tax program funding.

Mr. Uebelacker commented on a Fort Lauderdale shooting incident, stating the National Fire Protection Association required systems to provide for immediate unlocking of all doors, asking how schools avoided same. He recalled fire alarms had been pulled immediately upon the start of shooting situations to ensure all doors were unlocked, thus enabling those inside to gain safe egress.

Dr. Olivo responded he was aware of those incidents, pointing out the difficulty of envisioning every possible scenario. He acknowledged even the costliest systems had eventually been defeated; however, he asserted the proposed system would assuredly save lives.

Dr. Desjardins pointed out active shooter drills were conducted on a weekly basis under constantly changing scenarios.

Ms. Aho asked if total projected costs of \$5 million was sufficient for establishment of the best system described earlier in the presentation.

Dr. Desjardins replied it would allow for purchase of the proposed one-button lockdown system, including the ability to integrate into every school all facets depicted in the video presented earlier.

Ms. Aho confirmed the \$5 million figure was likely a rough estimate submitted by a vendor and included installation.

Dr. Olivo added the District's Maintenance & Operation (M&O) Department had worked closely with the Purchasing Department as well as with Pinellas County. He clarified a complete proposal would be compiled as progress was made toward full installation of IERS, including all of its physical components. He further stated the School District had identified \$2.5 million in capital funds to continue the process over the next 5 years.

Mr. Schafer questioned the percentage of the new school tax which would be dedicated to this project.

Dr. Desjardins responded any funds derived through referendum were prohibited by law from being expended on capital projects, including the maintenance costs associated with same; thus, any security/safety funding must be derived through their operational budget.

Ms. Lewis advised all estimates provided to the Focus Group to date had been calculated at current values, adding staff had been very conservative when developing those projections. She stated over the life of the sales tax program, as determined by the electorate, staff would research what escalators should be appended, adding the Board of Charlotte County Commissioners (BCCC) would determine the final budget for approved sales tax projects.

Mr. Presley voiced concern regarding the soundness of the cost projections, as depicted in the agenda material, as well as the need for sales tax funds to be expended on retrofits,

citing a comment by the applicant regarding replacement of an analog telephone system to ensure compatibility with IERS.

Dr. Olivo countered the School District must continue to be proactive in the area of school safety/ security, even if same required such replacements.

Mr. Presley contended accurate figures were critical and should be required.

Discussion ensued with regard to the accuracy of projections.

Mr. Schafer asked if thought had been given to recommending the State issue a bid for costs associated with installation of the proposed system throughout Florida's schools.

Dr. Lee countered it would be extremely difficult to reach a consensus among Florida's 67 counties. He then confirmed there were no additional questions or comments, asking members to complete their scoring for this project.

Tringali Park Multi-Purpose Rink Renovation

Mr. Robert Kruzel, Tringali Hockey & Sports League President, stated the Tringali Rink was founded in 2004, adding a renovation project was attempted in 2018, the Rink remaining closed since then. He contended area growth warranted the renovation to be able to provide safe and affordable activities and maintenance of service levels into the future. He explained the Rink's infrastructure was in need of both repair and improvement, to include the following: repair and treat concrete surface and fiberglass boards; install new overhead structure to reduce heat-related injuries and to prolong the integrity and life of the Rink. He detailed construction specifics, stating past estimates from local contractors and vendors totaled under \$300,000; however, after meeting with County staff, current costs were projected to total \$500,000.

Mr. Rebol commented this project was proposed by a 501(c)3 organization; however, if the request was approved, funding would be expended on a Charlotte County facility. He requested clarification of the entity to be responsible for ongoing maintenance.

Mr. Kruzel replied Charlotte County had always maintained the site.

Mr. Rebol noted M&O costs would need to be calculated as same were not provided in the agenda material. He asked who had worked with the applicant in the past.

Mr. Tommy Scott, Community Services Department Director, replied Facilities Construction & Maintenance staff had provided information necessary for development of cost projections.

Mr. Cameron Pennant, Legislative Manager, provided a detailed explanation of the project's operating budget.

Mr. Rebol expressed concern total projected costs of \$500,000 could prove to be insufficient, questioning the next step if that occurred.

Ms. Lewis replied the Focus Group would make a recommendation to the BCCC, adding Commissioners would either increase the project's budget or withdraw the project from the list.

Mr. Kruzel interjected his calculations indicated \$500,000 would fall short of total projections, suggesting an increase to \$750,000 or \$800,000.

Mr. Pennant reminded everyone this was a County-owned facility, adding all projects must adhere to County standards.

Ms. Freeland agreed this project was unique.

Ms. Lewis acknowledged the ability to simply obtain estimates from contractors would eliminate these complications; however, government entities were prohibited by State Law from doing so.

Dr. Lee opined any uncertainty associated with project costs could not be settled this date, suggesting members score the project at this time.

FOCUS GROUP MEMBER SCORING

Dr. Lee confirmed all scoring sheets had been submitted. He then asked Ms. Lewis to comment on the next phase of the review process.

Ms. Lewis first expressed staff's appreciation for the commitment and contribution of time by members of the Focus Group. She proposed discussion and prioritization of the County projects, within established categories, at the next meeting. She suggested cancelling the February 5, 2020 meeting to allow time for staff to gather any missing score sheets as well as develop blind scoring results, explaining the latter would initiate discussion of the remainder of the process. She recommended meeting on February 19, 2020, at which time staff would present the blind scoring results along with the County's perspective in terms of prioritization. She noted staff would then provide those results to the Focus Group, which would then determine how to move forward in the ranking process. She noted the originally proposed schedule also included a March 4, 2020 meeting, if needed; however, the process could possibly be concluded at the next meeting.

Mr. Rebol asked if a map depicting each project's location could be presented.

Ms. Lewis replied affirmatively, adding the blind scoring results would also include project locations.

Discussion ensued with a consensus for approval of Ms. Lewis' recommendation, including a suggestion to meet from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Schafer commented on the CCSO sales tax projects, requesting as much information as possible to include lease expiration dates.

Ms. Lewis concluded she would strive to provide members with all back-up material in advance of the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 4:48 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Kelly