

SALES TAX FOCUS GROUP MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 27, 2019, 3:00 P.M.
18500 Murdock Circle, Room B106, Port Charlotte, FL 33948

MEMBERS PRESENT: Patricia Aho, Donna Barrett, James Coalwell, Steve Dionisio, Shaune Freeland, Jason Green, Ed Hill, Robin Madden, Gordon “Mac” Martin, Lynne Matthews, Danny Nix, Kathi Obendorfer, Sylvia Orr, James Parish, Brian Presley, Todd Rebol, Tom Rice, Bill Shafer, Steve Uebelacker, Steve Vieira, John Wright

OTHERS PRESENT: Bob Lee, Meeting Facilitator
Emily Lewis, Assistant County Administrator
Travis Mortimer, Assistant County Administrator
Tommy Scott, Director of Community Services

OPENING STATEMENTS

Mr. Lee confirmed all Group members were present and reviewed the events of the Group’s prior meeting. He announced staff would provide short presentations for each project, adding members had been provided with score sheets to rank each project in 12 areas.

Mr. Shafer requested clarification of the scoring process.

Mr. Lee explained members would provide their scoring sheets to Ms. Lewis who in turn would consolidate project scores into one. He provided various examples of scoring situations. He then reviewed Public Comment procedure, stating citizens who wished to address the group must sign in and identify the project or projects on which they wished to comment, and comments would be limited to three minutes. He strongly urged there be no cross-talk and encouraged Group members to reach out to staff prior to meetings with longer, more complex questions.

APPROVAL OF 08/14/2019 MINUTES

Mr. Presley **MOVED**, Ms. Barrett **SECONDED** approval of the 08/14/2019 minutes.
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Susan English stated she and her mother had resided in Charlotte County since 1970. She commented favorably on the Library Renovations project, stating modernization of the Cultural Center Library might attract younger visitors. She opined the Family Activity Center on Harriet Avenue in Port Charlotte would be a good site for a library. She expressed appreciation to Group members for volunteering their time.

SALES TAX PROJECTS

Library Renovations

Mr. Scott stated Charlotte County's libraries were heavily used, adding patrons' needs had changed as had technology. He explained this project was intended to renovate and reconfigure existing space, update technology, expand maker spaces, replace shelving and provide updated infrastructure. He reviewed the needs of the Englewood Charlotte, Port Charlotte and Mid-County Regional Libraries, projecting construction costs to total \$3,215,000.

Mr. Rice questioned the basis for renovating all three libraries at once, particularly in light of the costs associated with doing so.

Mr. Mortimer explained the intent was to complete the project over the course of six or eight years, thus incorporating a phased approach.

Mr. Presley noted if construction on each facility took place at different times, perhaps the Group could recommend where to begin.

Mr. Schafer questioned the impact on maintenance and operation of each facilities.

Mr. Scott replied no operational increases were projected.

Mr. Schafer pointed out some facilities were older, such as the Cultural Center, which was built in 1960, voicing concern with regard to "throwing good money after bad."

Mr. Lee pointed out staff had provided operating cost detail in members' binders.

Recreation Center Renovations: Phase 2

Mr. Scott stated the Harold Avenue Regional Park needed additional amenities to meet the level of service identified in the Parks & Recreation Master Plan. He noted the South County Regional Park was 15 years old, requiring updating of several amenities. He identified specific, potential upgrades to those locations, projecting total construction costs of \$4,750,000 and maintenance and operating costs of \$184,437.

Mr. Shafer asked if the proposed LED lighting was included in the increase in operating costs, pointing out LED lights typically decreased operating costs.

Mr. Scott replied overall project costs only were provided at this stage; however, he agreed LED lighting costs would be less.

Mr. Rice asked if \$4.1 million had already been expended on this project from prior sales tax funds.

Mr. Scott replied affirmatively.

Mr. Mortimer confirmed the figures provided in Mr. Scott's presentation were correct, adding the amounts provided in members' binders would be corrected. He apologized for any confusion.

Charlotte Sports Park Parking Lot

Mr. Scott stated this site was renovated in 2006, albeit without paved parking of the main lot; thus, visitors were often exposed to water and mud when parked in the grass. He

reviewed the specifics of the upgrades, projecting total construction costs of \$5,500,000 and annual maintenance and operating costs of \$46,000.

Mr. Shafer clarified no additional entrances/exits were proposed.

Discussion ensued with regard to the status of Charlotte County's contract with the Tampa Bay Rays.

Mr. Rice confirmed the proposed renovations would result in the Sports Park being competitive with similar locations. He asked if alternative uses had been considered for the Sports Park on "quiet days" as it seemed the site was being underutilized.

Mr. Scott explained only a small window of time existed between the end of the Stone Crab season and the start of the Tampa Bay Rays season, adding the facility was utilized during that timeframe.

Charlotte Sports Park Renovation

Mr. Scott reiterated the Charlotte Sports Park was last renovated in 2006, stating the tenant baseball organizations' growth warranted expansion to meet level of service needs and improve infrastructure as follows: new maintenance yard and building; LED lighting in the stadium bowl; parking lot; walkways; boardwalk shade structures; accessibility to stadium field and practice fields; press level roof access; restrooms; playground surfacing; batting cage. He projected total construction costs of \$6,000,000 and annual operating costs of \$180,613.

Mr. Rice noted the two Charlotte Sports Park projects entailed significant cost, asking staff's opinion regarding the more important of the two.

Mr. Lee reminded members the projects would re-ranked after all had been reviewed.

Ms. Lewis added the Board of County Commissioners had not yet confirmed the sales tax program's length, i.e., six years, eight years, etc., which could affect the amount of available funding.

Discussion ensued with regard to storm water issues associated with the site along with parking, paving and lighting.

Charlotte County Cultural History Center

Mr. Scott stated the Charlotte County Historical Center closed in 2015 due to severe deterioration and was subsequently demolished. He advised the Library and History Division had since been providing outreach, programming and preservation of the community's rich history at a variety of facilities. He explained a replacement facility had been contemplated in order to bring back a vibrant public center. He stated required costs were projected to be \$9,500,000, adding annual operating costs were estimated to be \$704,734.

Mr. Shafer inquired if the County intended to utilize the land on which the previous Historical Center had been located or acquire new land.

Mr. Scott replied the previous site was located along the water, which was not suitable for any type of museum due to the potential for storm surge; however, its location was uncertain at this time.

Mr. Presley commented the Historical Center should be integrated with the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center. He asked if the collection of Mr. Vernon Peoples, local historian, would be located in the facility.

Mr. Scott replied Mr. Peoples' collection had already been located in the Punta Gorda History Center.

Discussion ensued with regard to possible locations throughout Charlotte County.

Ms. Obendorfer asked if consideration had been given to purchasing an existing building.

Mr. Scott replied doing so was always an option.

Mr. Presley opined sales tax projects were evolving, adding he felt they should be expanded in scope, particularly in the area of grants.

FOCUS GROUP MEMBER SCORING

Mr. Rebol commented on Criteria #2 with regard to fostering economic development and creating long-term jobs, stating he felt cultural resources were lacking in the community. He asked members to take same into consideration when scoring.

Mr. Lee gathered scoring sheets from the Group, commending members on their conduct, civility and level of preparation for this meeting. He thanked staff for their work in preparing the agenda material.

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Kelly