

**SALES TAX FOCUS GROUP MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 17, 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, Robin Madden, Gordon “Mac” Martin, Lynne Matthews, Danny Nix, Kathi Obendorfer, Sylvia Orr, James Parish, Brian Presley, Todd Rebol, Tom Rice, Bill Schafer, Steve Uebelacker, Steve Vieira

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Ed Hill, John Wright

OTHERS PRESENT: Bob Lee, Meeting Facilitator
Tommy Scott, Community Services Director
John Elias, Public Works Director
Emily Lewis, Assistant County Administrator
Travis Mortimer, Assistant County Administrator
Tom Cavanaugh, Nancy Johnson

OPENING STATEMENTS

Mr. Lee confirmed all Group members in attendance had signed in and then reviewed highlights of their previous meeting. He spoke regarding the project scoring process, suggesting members present any detailed inquiries and/or complex questions to staff prior to meetings in the interest of efficient use of the Group’s time. He commended members on the conciseness of their comments and questions at meetings held thus far.

APPROVAL OF AUGUST 27, 2019 MINUTES

Mr. Martin noted his comment regarding reconsideration of the former Charlotte County Historical Center site had been omitted, requesting the minutes be amended accordingly. Ms. Matthews **MOVED**, Mr. Rice **SECONDED** approval of the August 27, 2019 minutes as amended.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Tom Cavanaugh, former City of Punta Gorda Councilmember, expressed support for the Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center Parking Garage (Event Center Parking Garage) project, recalling this idea had been suggested as far back as 2005 due to inadequate parking in downtown Punta Gorda.

Ms. Nancy Johnson, Team Punta Gorda Chief Executive Officer, commented in favor of the Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Trails and Sidewalk Improvements project. She commended Charlotte County on their Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan.

SALES TAX PROJECTS

Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center Parking Garage

Mr. Scott provided a brief history of the Event Center's construction after the previous facility at this location had been destroyed by Hurricane Charley in August 2004. He confirmed the Event Center's existing parking lot fell short of standards, noting a parking garage was contemplated at the outset. He concluded projected and annual operating costs totaled \$9,750,000 and \$151,211, respectively.

Mr. Schafer asked if parking would remain open to the public.

Mr. Scott replied he was unaware of any discussion to change that practice. He then pointed out the loss of grassy parking areas, due to both the recent construction of an adjacent hotel and an increasing number of events.

Ms. Matthews questioned the proposed location of the structure.

Mr. Scott replied it would likely extend up from the current parking lot; however, no design had been confirmed.

Ms. Matthews expressed concern regarding a significant loss of parking during construction.

Mr. Presley asked if staff's analysis included revenue projections.

Mr. Scott replied it did not, voicing concern regarding loss of revenue.

Port Charlotte Beach Park Recreation Center & Pool Replacement

Mr. Scott stated Port Charlotte Beach Park had existed for approximately 50 years, adding this project included the design and construction of a new recreation center, rentable event space, catering kitchen, offices, classroom, storage and meeting/conference rooms. He announced design/construction of a new 25 yard X 25 yard pool was planned to include space for lap swimming and water fitness programs. He concluded with projected costs for each portion of the overall project as follows: Recreation Center – \$7.9 million; Pool - \$4.5 million.

Ms. Aho observed the number of park-related projects on this agenda, asking if each park would require an additional vehicle.

Mr. Scott replied affirmatively, explaining additional staff was the basis for same.

Ms. Aho asked if vehicles could possibly be shared.

Mr. Scott explained over 80 parks were spread throughout the County, making vehicle sharing virtually impossible.

Mr. Schafer noted the agenda material indicated the Sailing Center was funded from the 2014 Sales Tax Extension at \$918,000, requesting clarification.

Mr. Scott explained Charlotte County worked with a variety of community groups on public sailing programs/classes, adding the expenditure covered items such as a pavilion, storage and office space, for example.

Mr. Schafer confirmed those areas would be open for use by other organizations.

Mr. Rice asked if additional parking would be required.

Mr. Scott replied no impact on parking was anticipated.

Ms. Barrett expressed surprise parking would not be negatively impacted as it was troublesome at times even prior to construction of the proposed, additional amenities.

Mr. Scott confirmed no current parking would be eliminated.

Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Trails and Sidewalk Improvements

Mr. Scott stated this initiative was a continuing sales tax project, with \$11.5 million for sidewalks funded in the 2008 Sales Tax Extension and \$3.8 million in multi-use trails in 2014. He noted the Public Works Department was heavily involved in this project due to much work being conducted in the right-of-way. He concluded projected and annual operating costs totaled \$16 million and \$3 million per mile, respectively.

Mr. Schafer commented bicyclists in Punta Gorda were not forced to ride on the road because of the width of sidewalks and multi-use trails, asking if same could be accomplished in Charlotte County, particularly along U.S. 41.

Mr. Scott replied affirmatively.

Mr. Presley stated he understood the next portion of this project would concentrate on connectivity.

Mr. Scott agreed, adding the Master Plan strongly considered the latter.

Mr. Nix asked if staff consulted with school and transportation agencies.

Mr. Scott replied affirmatively as doing so was required by State Statute.

Mr. John Elias, Public Works Director, described details of their contact with such organizations.

Mr. Rebol agreed this project was important on a County-wide basis. He noted the Public Works Department worked diligently to prioritize areas within a certain proximity to schools. He confirmed any new, major collector roadways were constructed with sidewalks and bicycle lanes in mind.

Mr. Scott confirmed staff would present grant information to the Board of Charlotte County Commissioners (BCCC) in the very near future for sidewalks and multi-use trails.

Mr. Viera noted portions of the Harbour Heights neighborhood were in need of sidewalks due to safety concerns.

Ms. Emily Lewis, Assistant County Administrator, stated any sales tax funds appropriated for sidewalks would first require review and approval by the BCCC, specifically sidewalk locations would be prioritized.

Lengthy discussion then ensued with regard to the Florida Shared-Use Non-Motorized (SUN) Trail Network and the relocation of utilities determined to be necessary during sidewalk construction.

GC Herring Park

Mr. Scott stated this project provided for the re-design and renovation of this West County park and included new playgrounds, sports courts, a multipurpose field, trails, a pavilion and remote-control car amenities. He concluded projected costs totaled \$2.5 million and annual operating costs were anticipated to be \$35,537.

Mr. Rice questioned the difference between a “community” and a “neighborhood” park. Mr. Scott replied size, overall acreage and the distance people would travel to visit the site. He then reviewed staff’s methods of community polling at Mr. Rice’s request.

Lake Betty Park

Mr. Scott stated this project provided for the re-design and renovation of Lake Betty Park, which was located in the Parkside Community Redevelopment Agency area and included a new playground, sports court, fishing pier and kayak launch, trails, pavilions and exercise equipment. He concluded projected costs totaled \$1,725,000 and annual operating costs were anticipated to be \$52,957.

Dr. Lee confirmed there were no questions regarding this project.

FOCUS GROUP MEMBER SCORING

Dr. Lee thanked staff for their hard work, noting Mr. Scott had done a fine job in condensing his presentations

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned at 4:09 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Kelly