

**SALES TAX FOCUS GROUP MEETING MINUTES  
OCTOBER 24, 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, Robin Madden, Gordon "Mac" Martin, Lynne Matthews, Sylvia Orr, James Parish, Brian Presley, Todd Rebol, Bill Schafer, Steve Vieira, John Wright

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** Jason Green, Ed Hill, Danny Nix, Kathi Obendorfer, Tom Rice, Steve Uebelacker

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Dr. Robert Lee, Meeting Facilitator  
Craig Rudy, Utilities Director  
Travis Mortimer, Assistant County Administrator  
Emily Lewis, Assistant County Administrator  
Bruce Bullert, Utilities Operations & Engineering Manager  
John Elias, Public Works Director

**OPENING STATEMENTS**

Dr. Bob Lee, Meeting Facilitator, briefly outlined meeting procedures, including the Public Comments section and the scoring process.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**October 9, 2019 Meeting**

Mr. Wright **MOVED**, Ms. Matthews **SECONDED** approval of the October 9, 2019 minutes.  
**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Dr. Lee confirmed no members of the public had signed up to speak.

**SALES TAX PROJECTS**

**Water Quality Septic-to-Sewer**

Mr. Craig Rudy, Utilities Director, commented on the critical importance of water quality and its significant impact on the community and the beautiful wildlife in Charlotte Harbor, pointing out unsuitable soils, high groundwater tables and aging septic systems eventually resulted in high levels of contaminants being transported to the latter. He spoke at length regarding septic systems with non-ideal treatment and the subsequent negative impact on area waters. He noted the Septic-to-Sewer (STS) program was intended to reduce pollutants, thereby improving and restoring water quality by funding infrastructure which supported same. He explained the program entailed the connection of homes to a centralized sewer system through funding of its backbone infrastructure. He anticipated funding needs of up to \$10 million and annual operating costs of \$44,000.

Mr. Schafer commented on the incorporated and unincorporated areas of the City of Punta Gorda, voicing concern with the latter due to its lower tides. He contended it appeared the area was being ignored.

Mr. Rudy responded the area was not a part of the Charlotte County Utilities Service Area but rather was located in Punta Gorda's Utility Service Area. He noted Punta Gorda recently completed its own Sewer Master Plan.

Mr. Schafer countered residents in those areas were Charlotte County citizens.

Mr. Travis Mortimer, Assistant County Administrator, explained Punta Gorda operated its own utility; however, their service area extended far beyond the incorporated City limits.

Mr. Schafer asked if those residents, if compared to Port Charlotte residents, for example, would incur higher costs to convert from septic to sewer if this project was approved as part of the Sales Tax Program.

Mr. Mortimer confirmed County and City officials had discussed dovetailing their Master Plans, which would address the issue.

Mr. Schafer noted this project would not be accomplished for several years even if approved, adding he simply wished to ensure the Board of Charlotte County Commissioners were made aware of the direct impact of those properties on Charlotte Harbor.

Mr. Rudy responded all properties were based on the same criteria by the same engineers.

Ms. Matthews suggested an overlay of the City's three identified corridors which were also under consideration for this project would have been helpful, requesting same be sent to Group members. She confirmed the City was working closely with the County.

Mr. Mortimer pointed out the presentation made this date by Mr. Rudy was developed a few months earlier while the County and City had only recently begun to meet on this issue. He clarified a fair amount of work had yet to be done toward the abovementioned dovetailing.

Mr. Rebol stated he had initially been concerned with expending sales tax funds on the STS project; however, he commended staff on their presentation which showed County-wide improvements, adding he now fully supported the project.

Ms. Aho commented on the increased capacity resulting from installation of two new lift stations (#805 and #815), asking if that increase was needed currently or in the future.

Mr. Bruce Bullert, Operations & Engineering Manager, replied those lift stations would become more critical to the system as more improvements were completed in the surrounding area.

Mr. John Elias, Public Works Director, added lift stations were designed for an operating range. Discussion ensued regarding overall wastewater needs.

Dr. Lee confirmed Group members had completed their scoring sheets and were ready to hear the next presentation. He explained Phases 3, 4 and 5 of the Edgewater Corridor Widening Project would be reviewed by staff in one presentation.

### **Edgewater Corridor Widening: Phase 3; Phase 4; Phase 5**

Mr. Elias reminded members Phase 1 of this project widened Edgewater Drive into 4 lanes from U.S. 41 to Harbor Boulevard, adding in 2017, Phase 2 completed the same type of widening from Harbor Boulevard to Midway Boulevard with 2008 Sales Tax funding. He mentioned Phases 1 and 2 changed the entire dynamic of the surrounding area. He advised Phase 3 would continue the project from Midway Boulevard to Collingswood Boulevard, estimating costs for same to be \$27.2 million and \$134,000 for design/construction and annual maintenance, respectively. He

stated Phase 4 was intended to realign the roadway from Collingswood Boulevard to Samantha Avenue, including a bridge over the Christopher Waterway, as well as completely change the existing 2-lane configuration, estimating costs to be \$25.1 million and \$116,000 for design/construction and annual maintenance, respectively. He concluded Phase 5 encompassed widening of the existing 2-lane divided roadway to 4 lanes from Collingswood Boulevard to S.R. 776, estimating costs to be \$21 million and \$116,000 for design/construction and annual maintenance, respectively. He concluded with displays of aerial views of the abovementioned locations, offering to answer questions.

Dr. Lee inquired if staff would prefer members score Phases 3, 4 and 5 as standalone projects or together as one.

Mr. Elias replied if only one Phase was approved, staff would recommend Phase 4 be prioritized over Phases 3 and/or 5. He then clarified various locations, including Flamingo Boulevard, depicted within each Phase at Ms. Barrett's request.

Ms. Barrett asked if a traffic study had been conducted, stating she believed the project would have a positive impact.

Mr. Elias replied staff anticipated a reduction in traffic congestion as well as an alternative to the current route from I 75 at Harborview Road, then the entire length of Edgewater Drive out to S.R. 776.

Ms. Orr opined any of the Phases would have a positive impact on traffic as many drivers routinely utilized Edgewater Drive when traveling to and from Englewood.

Mr. Rebol commented on the Flamingo Boulevard/S.R. 776 intersection, stating he recalled the County had discussed the possibility of a connection into Murdock Village. He explained doing so would tie into Toledo Blade Boulevard, which in turn would reduce the priority of its connection to S.R. 776. He clarified doing so would streamline travel to I 75, asking if the County would follow through with that plan.

Mr. Elias replied the current goal was to reach S.R. 776; however, he acknowledged ongoing discussion of a connector such as that described by Mr. Rebol.

Mr. Wright asked if Edgewater Drive, once fully completed, was intended to be designated as an evacuation route.

Mr. Elias expressed uncertainty regarding same.

Mr. Wright clarified prioritizing Phase 4 followed by Phases 3 and/or 5 would not be problematic.

Mr. Rebol mentioned S.R. 776 was a designated evacuation route, adding Edgewater Drive would be considered a feeder road to reach same.

Mr. Presley questioned the basis for staff's recommendation to prioritize Phase 4 over Phase 3.

Mr. Elias explained the alignment planned in Phase 4 was much more complex than either of the other two Phases.

Dr. Lee confirmed there were no additional questions or comments, requesting members complete their scoring sheets.

### **Harborview Road Widening**

Mr. Elias announced many had considered the widening of Harborview Road necessary for a number of years. He explained the project would create a four-lane divided highway between Melbourne Street and I-75, resulting in improved road safety by reducing congestion. He noted the project also included the addition of pedestrian and bicycle pathways. He displayed a

photograph of a portion of the existing roadway followed by an engineer's rendering of the project, including measurements. He outlined the Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT's) contributions to the project as follows: completion of a Permitting Development & Environmental study; design funding (effective Fiscal Year 2020); funding for right-of-way acquisition (available in 2023). He estimated up to \$33,386,000 in sales tax funds would be needed for construction.

Mr. Presley requested clarification of FDOT's involvement.

Mr. Mortimer reported FDOT's efforts on design and ROW acquisition had already begun.

Mr. Vieira asked how utilities running along Harborview Road would be identified during the design phase.

Mr. Mortimer confirmed those utilities had been incorporated into the project's design.

Mr. Bullert described FDOT's process in detail.

Mr. Vieira urged the County to coordinate closely with FDOT and the Charlotte Harbor Water Association.

Mr. Rebol opined this project was an absolute priority from a road network standpoint, particularly regarding safety.

Mr. Schafer asked if any consideration had been given to Melbourne Street improvements.

Mr. Elias replied he understood FDOT might be discussing same.

#### **FOCUS GROUP MEMBER SCORING**

Dr. Lee confirmed members had submitted their scoring sheets.

Meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Kelly