

**SALES TAX FOCUS GROUP MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 19, 2020 - 3:00 P.M.
18500 MURDOCK CIRCLE, ROOM B-106
PORT CHARLOTTE, FL 33948**

MEMBERS PRESENT: 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 Schafer, Steve Uebelacker, Steve Vieira, John Wright

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Patricia Aho

OTHERS PRESENT: Dr. Robert Lee, Meeting Facilitator
Emily Lewis, Assistant County Administrator
Jared Bickham, Capital Projects Manager
Craig Rudy, Utilities Director
John Elias, Public Works Director
Bill Van Helden, Fire Chief
Anthony Maddox, Facilities Construction & Maintenance Director
Brian Orlando-Reno, Fiscal Services Financial Analyst
Francine Lisby, Fiscal Services Financial Manager
Travis Mortimer, Assistant County Administrator
Earl Goodwyne, Charlotte County Sheriff’s Office Major
Robert Kruzel, Tringali Hockey & Sports League President
Frank Desguin, Historical Center Society President

OPENING STATEMENTS

Dr. Robert Lee, Meeting Facilitator, announced this meeting’s agenda represented the culmination of the Focus Group’s work over the past several months, commending members for same. He advised staff would present blind scoring results, identify priorities and address questions. He explained staff also hoped to reach a consensus regarding development of the final ranking process, noting past members were encouraged to provide input.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

January 22, 2020 Meeting

Mr. Wright **MOVED**, Ms. Freeland **SECONDED** approval of the January 22, 2020 minutes.
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Note: Mr. Green arrived at 3:05 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Robert Kruzel, Tringali Hockey & Sports League President, commented on his presentation provided at the previous meeting of January 22, 2020, opining the discussion had become somewhat sidetracked in that it had focused primarily on costs.

Note: Mr. Hill arrived at 3:06 p.m.

Mr. Kruzel described the many community benefits to children, adults and families to be derived through the Tringali Park Multi-purpose Rink Renovation, such as the availability of safe and affordable activities. He thanked members for their time and attention.

Mr. Frank Desguin, Historical Center Society (HCS) President, urged the Focus Group to provide a favorable recommendation on the Punta Gorda Library Renovation project and apologized for missing the meeting at which it had been discussed. He noted the HCS had been speaking with Charlotte County staff as well as the Board of Charlotte County Commissioners (BCCC) for over a year regarding reestablishment of the County's museum, maintaining the former Library building would make an excellent location for same. He pointed out this site would allow the Museum to become a part of what was becoming an arts and cultural corridor, listing other entities located in the surrounding areas. He expressed hope members would keep the 2021 Charlotte County Centennial event in mind during their deliberations.

REVIEW & RECAP OF PROJECTS

Ms. Emily Lewis, Assistant County Administrator, presented staff's ranking of proposed sales tax projects, as requested by the Focus Group at their previous meeting, stating prioritization was based on category, starting with Infrastructure-General Facilities, as follows: 1 - Family Services Center/Phase 2; 2 - South County Annex Replacement; 3 - Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Trails and Sidewalk Improvements; 4 - Supervisor of Elections (SOE) Warehouse.

Note: Mr. Presley arrived at 3:12 p.m.

Mr. Jared Bickham, Capital Projects Manager, then provided a brief recap of each project and their projected costs, as delineated in the agenda material.

Mr. Rebol confirmed the SOE Warehouse project was to be given a low priority as the SOE himself had advised staff of his desire to remain in their current location within the old Courthouse.

Ms. Lewis explained in order to move forward with the District #4 Sheriff's Office & Training Complex project, the SOE's equipment currently located in the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) site must be relocated.

Mr. Green asked if a space study had been done in light of the South County Annex Replacement project.

Ms. Lewis replied a Master Space Plan was in place.

Mr. Schafer confirmed all cost projections for buildings constructed in Punta Gorda took floodplain regulations into account.

Ms. Lewis then reviewed the Infrastructure-Utilities category, which included the Charlotte Harbor Water Quality project, outlining Priorities 1 through 11 Scalable Projects and their projected costs.

Mr. Bickham pointed out projected costs for the entire Charlotte Harbor Water Quality project totaled approximately \$10 million.

Mr. Presley questioned the projected denominator and rate of historic increase over the six-year raise. He further inquired regarding the aggregate amount of funds to be divided among the abovementioned Priorities 1 through 11.

Ms. Lewis estimated \$20 million annually in collections, noting the current trend was approximately \$24 million. She clarified staff anticipated a Tier 1 and Tier 2 project list, adding the Focus Group would be asked to select approximately \$120 million in projects for the first and \$120 million to \$200 million for the latter.

Mr. Rice recalled a figure of \$100 million from the water quality presentation.

Ms. Lewis responded that figure might have been seen in the 20-year Sewer Master Plan.

Mr. Craig Rudy, Utilities Director, explained the utility sales tax projects were considered precursors to larger projects which would benefit the entire County, such as implementation of the Septic-to-Sewer program.

Mr. Schafer recalled a discussion regarding the period of time sales tax money would be in place, i.e., six or eight or ten years, asking if staff would re-present projects to the Focus Group for consideration of changes if that period of time changed.

Ms. Lewis replied she did not believe the schedule included same.

Ms. Barrett then noted staff's presentation did not include the three External Projects presented at the previous meeting.

Ms. Lewis explained staff did not feel comfortable weighing in on those projects. She then presented Infrastructure-Roads projects, Priorities 1 through 4, including projected costs.

Mr. Presley inquired regarding the availability of State Gas Tax funds.

Ms. Lewis replied those revenues were pledged out to 2027 for Burnt Store Road.

Mr. John Elias, Public Works Director, interjected certain funds were available for the Harborview Road Widening project.

Mr. Bickham concluded with a brief review of Priorities 1 through 4 in Roads projects, specifically Harborview Road Widening and Phases 3, 4 and 5 of the Edgewater Road Widening. He noted Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) funding for the former project was available for design and right-of-way acquisition.

Mr. Rebol confirmed staff would be able to provide members with information on other funding sources for various projects.

Ms. Lewis then reviewed Priorities 1 through 6 of the Public Safety-Fire Rescue projects as follows: 1 – New Fire Station 17; 2 – Airport Rescue & Firefighting Training/Phase 2; 3 – Radio Communications; 4 – Fire Station 6 Replacement; 5 – Emergency Vehicle Warehouse; 6 – Fire Station 3 Replacement.

Mr. Bickham provided a brief recap of each project and projected costs, as delineated in the agenda material.

Mr. Presley opined the detailed presentations provided on these projects demonstrated excellent forward planning, adding he believed certain projects would merit FDOT and Federal Aviation Agency support.

Ms. Lewis mentioned relocation of Fire Station #5 and the addition of Fire Station #17 would provide additional coverage.

Mr. Presley asked if all Fire Station projects must be completed in order for same to be effective. Fire Chief Bill Van Helden replied the projects were not linked.

Ms. Lewis reviewed Priorities 1 through 4 of the Public Safety-Sheriff projects as follows: 1 – Hardened 911 Building; 2 – District 4 Sheriff's Office with Training Facility; 3 – Sheriff's Administration Support Office; 4 - District 2 Sheriff's Office. She advised staff had not weighed in on prioritization of CCSO projects but rather left same to the Sheriff.

Members of the CCSO spoke regarding changes in prioritization, particularly the Hardened 911 Building project.

Ms. Lewis interjected staff must follow the BCCC's direction and thus was required to bring all projects forward.

Mr. Anthony Maddox, Facilities Construction & Maintenance Director, noted the CCSO's changes would provide some cost savings.

Ms. Lewis summarized the Focus Group and staff could discuss the issue further during the ranking process.

Mr. Bickham provided a brief recap of each project and projected costs, as delineated in the agenda material, offering to answer any questions.

Mr. Schafer pointed out the District #4 project would likely result in some savings as the existing lease expense would be eliminated.

Ms. Lewis then reviewed Priorities 1 through 15 of Quality of Life projects as follows: 1 – Port Charlotte Beach Recreation Center/Phase 1; 2 – Port Charlotte Beach Recreation Center Pool; 3 – Lake Betty Park; 4 – GC Herring Park; 5 – Maracaibo Park & Concession; 6 – North Charlotte Regional Park/Phase 2; 7 – Charlotte County Cultural History Center; 8 – Charlotte Sports Park Renovations; 9 – Charlotte Sports Park Asphalt Parking; 10 – William R. Gaines Jr. Veterans Memorial Park/Phase 2; 11 – McGuire Park/Phase 2; 12 – Parking Garage/Charlotte Harbor Event Center; 13 – Library Renovations; 14 - Recreation Center Renovations/Phase 2; 15 – Punta Gorda Library Renovation.

Mr. Bickham outlined project costs, as delineated in the agenda material, briefly describing the specifics of each.

Mr. Presley commented it seemed only two of the abovementioned fifteen projects were revenue producing.

Mr. Tommy Scott, Community Services Director, clarified all projects produced some revenue.

Mr. Schafer asked if the number order of each priority list was in order of importance.

Ms. Lewis replied each list was a recap of staff's prioritization in each category.

Mr. Schafer noted the Charlotte Harbor Event Center Parking Garage had been constructed in compliance with the City of Punta Gorda's regulations, suggesting the maximum number of parking spaces be installed. He then stated the proposed cost of Library Renovations, \$500,000, was higher than 50% of the total value of the property, which he understood required demolition; thus, he asked why this project remained viable.

Mr. Travis Mortimer, Assistant County Administrator, explained renovations exceeding 50% of a property's value required same to be brought up to Code, adding various groups continued to express interest in the site.

Ms. Lewis further stated staff had not been directed by the BCCC to eliminate any project from consideration. She concluded by displaying a map of proposed project locations, as requested by the Focus Group at their previous meeting.

BLIND SCORING

Ms. Lewis displayed a list of Average Rankings by Project, as delineated in the agenda material, reading the percentage of each project into the record. She introduced Mr. Brian Orlando-Reno, Fiscal Services Financial Analyst, and Ms. Francine Lisby, Fiscal Services Financial Manager.

DEVELOPMENT OF PROJECT RANKING PROCESS

Ms. Barrett stated the percentages presented under the previous agenda item did not represent each member's ranking, adding the questions provided for each project were leading.

Ms. Matthews requested each project be numbered on the Average Rankings by Project list and a copy of same provided to members. She agreed with Ms. Barrett regarding the rankings, opining the information was useless.

Mr. Presley stated he believed several projects had been placed under the incorrect category. He pointed out the BCCC did not have final authority over project selection but rather same fell to the voters.

Mr. Rice noted projected costs totaled \$333 million, adding \$120 million was available for first priority projects. He contended certain projects could be funded through sources other than sales tax revenues.

Mr. Schafer opined the scoring process produced glaring inequities.

Ms. Matthews pointed out some projects were desirable while others were necessary. She reminded members the final list must be palatable to the voters.

Mr. Green stated he hoped to discuss additional and/or alternative funding sources, citing impact fees as an example.

Mr. Rebol noted scoring was only one tool, recommending the Focus Group begin ranking. He stated members must also determine how projects would fit within the budget.

Note: Mr. Hill left the meeting at 4:20 p.m.

Dr. Lee acknowledged members' comments with regard to rankings; however, he felt it was necessary to have some sort of criteria with which to begin.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION & RANKING RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Rebol offered a ranking methodology for members' consideration, stating he was open to other suggestions.

Dr. Lee asked if consideration should be given to geography.

Ms. Barrett replied only in that projects should be spread evenly throughout the entire County. Discussion ensued with regard to various ranking methods.

Mr. Nix **MOVED**, Ms. Matthews **SECONDED** to establish School Security Infrastructure as a Tier 1 project.

VOTING AYE: Barrett, Coalwell, Dionisio, Freeland, Green, Madden, Martin, Matthews, Nix, Obendorfer, Parish, Presley, Rebol, Rice, Uebelacker, Vieira, Wright.

VOTING NAY: Orr, Schafer.

MOTION CARRIED.

Ms. Barrett then stated she felt strongly Infrastructure-Utilities must be prioritized as water quality affected the entire County.

Mr. Rebol acknowledged water quality was critical; however, he expressed uncertainty regarding the projected cost of \$10 million. He suggested prioritizing the previously listed scalable projects and funding same in the amount of \$5 million to \$6 million. He reminded members decisions must still be made relative to Tier 2 projects.

Mr. Rice commented \$10 million was a relatively small amount considering the significant amount of water quality projects; however, he opined voters wished to ensure good water quality.

Mr. Rudy advised staff's prioritization of water quality projects was by timeframe as opposed to cost. He then provided more detail for each of the scalable projects presented earlier in the meeting, concluding Priorities 1 through 5 were of significant importance.

Mr. Mortimer added those projects were most ready to commence and constituted the infrastructure behind the Septic-to-Sewer program.

Discussion ensued with regard to reprioritization of the infrastructure depicted under Scalable Projects.

Mr. Rebol **MOVED**, Ms. Matthews **SECONDED** to designate Priorities 1-5, 7-8 and 10-11 (\$7 million) as Tier 1 projects and Priorities 6 and 9 (\$3 million) as Tier 2 projects.

Mr. Uebelacker voiced objection to voting on projects based solely on safety as doing so would deplete available funds very quickly. He recommended prioritizing a percentage to be applied to

each group followed by selection of the most important within same, acknowledging some might receive less.

Mr. Presley stated he did not believe the Focus Group could address a 150-year-old project without a public/private aspect, adding he was in favor of Mr. Rebol's method of ranking. He opined voters would not vote against school safety or water quality.

Mr. Rebol agreed ranking should move forward based on percentages, as recommended by Mr. Uebelacker, from this point forward; however, school safety and water quality were both critical.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

67.4 on tape

Mr. Maddox commented on the issues associated with the CCSO Hardened 911 Building and Administration Support Office projects, stating staff believed between \$17 million and \$18 million for both represented accurate projections.

Mr. Rebol **MOVED** to use the remaining part of the budget as follows: 20%, General Facilities; 6%, Utilities (Water Quality); 29%, Roads; 25%, Public Safety-Fire & Public Safety-Sheriff; 20%, Quality of Life.

Mr. Rebol clarified those percentages were based on \$115 million.

Ms. Barrett inquired regarding the Tringali Park Multi-Purpose Rink Renovation project as same was not included under Quality of Life but rather was an External Project.

Mr. Rebol **AMENDED** his **MOTION** to include the Tringali Park Multi-Purpose Rink Renovation and Team Parkside CRA Multi-Use Bridge projects under Quality of Life.

Ms. Lewis then listed the dollar amounts equal to the percentages stated above: General Facilities, \$23 million; Roads, \$33.35 million; Public Safety, \$28.75 million; Quality of Life, \$23 million.

VOTING AYE: Barrett, Coalwell, Dionisio, Freeland, Madden, Martin, Matthews, Nix, Obendorfer, Orr, Parish, Presley, Rebol, Rice, Schafer, Uebelacker, Vieira, Wright.

VOTING NAY: Green.

MOTION CARRIED.

Mr. Green clarified he had no objection to the process but rather the allocations.

Dr. Lee announced the Focus Group would next provide allocations for each General Facilities project.

Ms. Barrett **MOVED**, Mr. Rebol **SECONDED** to designate Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Trails and Sidewalk Improvements as Tier 1 (\$22.8 million). **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Nix opined the Family Services Center Campus/Phase 2 and South County Annex Replacement projects would more closely address the needs of the community.

Mr. Rebol countered few projects were County-wide, stating trails and sidewalk improvements could be constructed throughout.

Ms. Barrett **AMENDED** her **MOTION** to fund the Family Services Center Campus/Phase 2 in the amount of \$10.9 million and the Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Trails and Sidewalk Improvements in the amount of \$12.1 million.

Mr. Rebol **AMENDED** his **SECOND**.

VOTING AYE: Barrett, Coalwell, Dionisio, Freeland, Green, Madden, Martin, Matthews, Nix, Obendorfer, Orr, Parish, Presley, Rebol, Rice, Schafer, Uebelacker, Vieira.

VOTING NAY: Wright.

MOTION CARRIED.

Dr. Lee stated the Focus Group would next provide allocations for Roads projects.

Mr. Mortimer explained one option as follows: fund one phase of the Edgewater Drive project and allocate the remaining amount of the allowance to Harborview Road Widening as a Tier 2

project. He pointed FDOT might rank the latter project higher if matching County funds were budgeted.

Mr. Rebol **MOVED**, Mr. Wright **SECONDED** to fully fund the Edgewater/Flamingo Corridor Connection/Phase 4 as a Tier 1 project in the amount of \$251 million with the balance of \$8.25 million to be applied to the widening of Harborview Road as a Tier 1 project. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Barrett stated the next area of consideration was Public Safety, questioning the possibility of dividing \$28 million evenly between the CCSO and Fire Department.

Discussion ensued regarding same.

Mr. Green reiterated his desire to discuss other funding sources such as impact fees, for example. Mr. Gordon Burger, Budget & Administrative Services Director, explained other funding sources had been discussed in detail with the BCCC in May 2019, confirming the projects presented to the Focus Group represented those with no alternative funding capability.

Ms. Barrett **MOVED**, Mr. Rebol **SECONDED** to designate Priorities 1 through 3 under Fire Rescue and combined Priorities 1 and 3 under Sheriff as Tier 1 projects.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mr. Rice asked if the remaining priorities under Fire Rescue and Sheriff would be designated as Tier 2.

Mr. Rebol replied Tier 2 projects would be discussed separately.

Ms. Barrett **MOVED**, Mr. Vieira **SECONDED** to fully fund the Tringali Park Multi-purpose Rink Renovation project at \$500,000. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Presley stated he wished to see the Port Charlotte Beach Recreation Center/Phase 1, the Port Charlotte Beach Recreation Center/Pool and the Charlotte Harbor Event Center Parking Garage funded.

Mr. Martin recalled the History Center, previously located on the waterfront, had been destroyed, asking if reconstruction was included on the list of proposed projects.

Mr. Presley replied the History Center was Priority 7 under Quality of Life; however, there were a few uncertainties surrounding same.

Note: Mr. Coalwell left the meeting at 5:28 p.m.

Mr. Rebol spoke in favor of GC Herring Park based on its location in West Charlotte County as well as William R. Gaines Jr. Veterans Memorial Park/Phase 2 based on the number of military persons in Charlotte County. He mentioned the Library and Recreation Center Renovations should be considered as they were County-wide projects.

Mr. Nix **MOVED**, Ms. Matthews **SECONDED** to fund the Port Charlotte Beach Recreation Center/Phase 1 (\$7.9 million), GC Herring Park (\$2.5 million), Parking Garage-Charlotte Harbor Event Center (\$9.75 million), Former Punta Gorda Library Renovations (\$500,000) and the William R. Gaines Jr. Veterans Memorial Park/Phase 2 (\$1.75 million). **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Lewis advised \$80 million remained for Tier 2 projects.

Mr. Green **MOVED**, Mr. Rebol **SECONDED** to fund the Tier 2 projects which were partially funded in Tier 1 with the exception of Harborview Road Widening, the remaining funds to be divided by percentages. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Wright **MOVED**, Mr. Rebol **SECONDED** to accept Priorities 4, 5 and 6 under Public Safety-Fire Rescue and the entirety of Sheriff's Projects. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Rebol confirmed Harborview Road Widening was partially funded, and Edgewater/Flamingo Corridor Connection/Phase 4 was fully funded.

Mr. Presley clarified combining two of the CCSO facilities made more tactical sense.

Major Earl Goodwyne outlined the proposed reorganization of uses within CCSO buildings.

Mr. Rebol **MOVED**, Ms. Obendorfer **SECONDED** to move Priorities 2 and 4 (\$11,643,000 or 12% of the overall budget). **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Dr. Lee confirmed \$46.95 million remained unallocated.

Discussion ensued with regard to the categories of Roads, Quality of Life and General Facilities.

Mr. Nix **MOVED**, Mr. Schafer **SECONDED** to move forward with Charlotte Sports Park Renovations (\$6 million), Charlotte Sports Park Asphalt Parking (\$5.5 million) and South County Annex Replacement (\$9.75 million). **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Dr. Lee announced \$25.70 million remained.

Mr. Dionisio **MOVED**, Mr. Nix **SECONDED** to allocate \$10 million to Edgewater Drive Widening, Midway to Collingswood Boulevards/Phase 3 and the balance of \$15.70 million to Quality of Life. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Madden **MOVED**, Ms. Matthews **SECONDED** to fund the Team Parkside CRA project in the amount of \$800,000. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Presley **MOVED**, Mr. Rebol **SECONDED** to fund the Cultural History Center.

VOTING AYE: Barrett, Dionisio, Freeland, Madden, Martin, Matthews, Nix, Obendorfer, Parish, Presley, Rebol, Rice, Schafer, Uebelacker, Wright.

VOTING NAY: Green, Orr, Vieira.

MOTION CARRIED.

Dr. Lee advised \$907,000 remained to be allocated.

Mr. Rebol **MOVED**, Mr. Presley **SECONDED** to allocate \$907,000 toward Library Renovations in West County. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Dr. Lee thanked the Focus Group, commending members for their dedication.

Ms. Lewis announced project rankings would be presented to the BCCC in March 2020 or April 2020. She expressed staff's appreciation to Focus Group members for their commitment.

Meeting adjourned at 5:48 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Kelly