

SALES TAX FOCUS GROUP MEETING MINUTES
February 27, 2014 – 3:00 pm
18500 Murdock Circle, Room B106, Port Charlotte, FL 33948

In Attendance:

Bill Abbatematteo, Donna Barrett, Ruth Bromberg, Rick Brunette, Tom Cavanaugh, Marcia Cullinan, John Dollinger, Judy Malbuisson, Julie Mathis, Gary Quill, Jim Quinn, Tom Rice, Todd Rebol alternate for Kevin Russell, Dr. Doug Whittaker, Brian Gleason – Moderator
Charlotte County Government Staff: Ray Sandrock, Kelly Shoemaker, Hector Flores, Doug Blevins, Caryn Huff, David Milligan, Chief Marianne Taylor, Sheriff Bill Prummell, Jason Stoltzfus.

Opening Remarks:

Kelly Shoemaker, Deputy County Administrator, opened the meeting at 3:00 p.m.
Donna Barrett moved to approve the Minutes from the February 13 meeting; Julie Mathis seconded and motion passed unanimously.
Copies of the Minutes from the February 20 meeting were distributed; the Group agreed to vote on them at the next meeting so as to have time to review and note any corrections.
Ray Sandrock, County Administrator, gave an update on discussions with the City of Punta Gorda officials regarding the Water Interconnect Project. He said that he talked with Howard Kunik and his impression is that the City is planning to move forward with their R.O. plant project regardless of other funding sources, that they want their own independent water source. Ray noted that the Water Interconnect Project that was presented last week still has merit and benefits that it would bring redundancy to the County's over all water supply and Charlotte County is one of the few counties to have it.
Kelly asked for the rating sheets from two members who did not submit one from last week.
Brian asked if there were questions from last week, especially from members who were not in attendance.
Tom Cavanaugh asked if information that is sent from staff in-between meetings and in response to individual questions could be sent to all members. Kelly agreed to make it available to all.

Public Safety Presentations:

David Milligan, Director of Facilities Construction & Maintenance, presented eleven (11) projects for consideration.

Justice Center Generator Upgrade

- Justice Center one of most critical buildings to maintain continuous electricity for basic functions of the Judicial System.
- Existing generator only supplies power for life and safety emergency lights to evacuate the building.
- Proposed new generator would work in tandem with the existing generator, would supply an additional 1,000 kilowatts for extended down-time in power supply, and would power entire building including air conditioning and elevators.
- Total cost is \$350,000 and a minimal operating cost for fuel and maintenance.
- A major benefit is to power continuity of operations and functions of the Justice Center and entire Judicial District.

Members of the Group asked questions about any future plans for expansion, kind of fuel needed, length of past outages, flood levels at suggested site, O & M costs, life expectancy, and square feet of Center.

Fire Station 10

- Project brought to light by recent "Capital Assets Planning & Maintenance Study" by professional company to determine what future operational and maintenance needs might be in relation to County's infrastructure goals.
- Replace existing fire station because it is located on a barrier island (Don Pedro Island) and doesn't meet any of the flood or hurricane regulations.

- Existing fire station is in jeopardy and in a major storm it would be out of service at a time when residents most need the service.
- Built in 1991 – construction issues are wood piling structure, stairways, siding, coiling doors, soffit, suspended ceilings, none of which meet current code.
- Residents number 626.
- Cost estimated at \$2,935,000 with an annual operating cost estimated at \$3,600.

Rick Brunette added the following comments:

- He learned in last six weeks that the volunteer firemen work through Englewood and have reached a local agreement with Charlotte County that will provide 24/7 coverage. Currently, there is no coverage during the day and the existing building has no living quarters.
- Palm Island Resort and Don Pedro State Park are major attractions with employees and are located on the island.

There were no questions from the Group.

Jail Expansion

- There are three phases to this project– proposal is phase #3. Jail is located on Airport Road.
- Last few years saw a significant increase in inmate population, caused alarm bells for capacity to serve into future.
- Size of building means expansion plans need to start well in advance, about five years or so.
- Sheriff’s Office is mandated by Florida Model Jail Standards for specified spaces and beds; these requirements will drive this project as well as the need for better medical facilities, laundry, & food service.
- The three phases of this project were displayed in a diagram: Phase 1 - original jail project, Phase 2 – completed several years ago, and proposed Phase 3.
- Phase 3 would be a two-story structure and would include an energy plant that would service phases 2 and 3, a medical wing which was never completed in Phase 2, and additional housing.
- Would include an infirmary with over 100 beds and a mental health facility and clinic -- an estimated 40% of inmates have mental health issues.
- Six new housing pods would be added.
- Estimates show that current facility will reach capacity in 2018 – emphasized the need of 5 years to plan and begin building now so as to meet that expectation.

The Group asked questions on cause for increased population, current population and capacity, how many more beds in proposal, approve portion of proposal, operating costs, and previous funding from 2008 tax extension.

Major Goodwyne added that there has been a female population increase nationwide over last few years, not one big event that has caused the increase.

Tom Cavanaugh commented that the average length of stay in the jail is forty (40) days.

David Milligan responded that construction of the pods could be done in phases and there are different ways to split construction costs if necessary.

Justice Center Expansion:

- Showed diagram of proposed expansion to existing Center in Punta Gorda
- Study was recently completed with Professional Judicial System Planners and this proposal is in accordance with those findings.
- Site has potential for a multi-story building over the retention area and move retention area closer to river.
- Renovate Building B for departmental relocation as needed.
- New parking garage with 500 parking spaces.

- Enclose existing portico for better security screening at entrance to building.
- Additional 66,000 square feet.

Questions from the Group were about the projections used, number of courtrooms added, number of parking spaces, other funding sources, and parking garage hours.

Caryn Huff: --- 2 additional courtrooms in proposal

David Milligan: Management study committee of all departments involved over last 6 months. Can provide those findings.

West County Annex Replacement:

- Two Administrative Annexes currently in use – Punta Gorda and West County
- West County Annex built 1989 and is inadequate in size; is on 11 acres
- Facility includes Sheriff’s office in back, small parking area, public works facilities, fire station #13
- To expand would mean tear down and build multi-story building.

Total cost \$4,850,000 and \$50,000 in annual operating costs for 15,000 square feet.

Sheriff District 4 Headquarters (Port Charlotte)

- District 4 consists of 30 square miles, densely populated area of County.
- Currently in leased space in the Promenades Mall with no space to expand.
- Is in Parkside CRA.
- Five acres needed for adequate office and provides for growth, efficiency in current office, and to eliminate a very large expense.
- 14,000 to 18,00 square feet district commander, day-to-day business, finger printing and background checks, claims processing, record retention, storage, work stations for patrol units , will call areas, interview room, property evidence rooms, investigators, staff conference rooms, in-service training areas, public training areas, officer fitness rooms & lockers
- Land cost included estimating \$50,000 for 5 acres total cost of \$6,400,000 in construction costs and operating cost of \$25,627.

Questions from the Group were on a wish list for 5 acres, stay in Parkside area, how long in leased space.

Digital P25 Radio System – presented by Chief Marianne Taylor

Chief Taylor briefly described the Digital P25 Communication System, a public safety land and mobile communication system to meet standards developed by several agencies. They collaborated to form the Association of Public Safety Officials and the National Association of State Technology Directors and then developed standards of public safety interoperability between various agencies and counties.

- Two pieces to the P25 System: the radio system itself and the radios.
- Existing analog radio system will become obsolete and unsupported by manufacturers by 2017.
- Highest cost estimate is \$10 million with a lower estimate of \$7.9 million. The lower estimate (\$7.9 million) includes infrastructure at the tower site, all dispatch consoles at the Charlotte County Jail, City of Punta Gorda, and additional consoles at the Public Safety building and at the Justice Center. The \$7.9 estimate for radio system and software will replace 726 analog radios and provide updated software for 202 additional digital capable radios to upgrade them to digital.

Questions and comments by the Group centered on transmission strength & power, use by Punta Gorda Police and Fire Departments, number of radios in budget, other funding or grants, system-wide cycle, previous tax project, priority, collaboration with adjoining counties vs. stand-alone system, importance of public communication, use in hurricane preparation and recovery.

Sheriff Firing Range/Training Center/District 3 Headquarters

- District 3 is a broad area in the eastern part of the county, 430 square miles (referred to area map).
- This is referred to as Airport Road annex.
- Several different functions – Supervisor of Elections storage, Transit office & bus parking lot -- but majority of space is for Sheriff training programs.
- Sheriff's offices from airport facility would move to new building.
- Begin with Master Plan and program study of what functions are most suited to this site.

Questions were asked about a better location, adequacy of land site, future complaints on noise, and time frame.

David responded that his Department is ready to prepare master plan, proposed site is 11 acres, moving from outdoor firing range to indoor would minimize noise, and would begin the process ASAP as there is pressure to relocate the current firing range.

Sheriff District 1 (West County) Headquarters:

- District I is in Cape Haze Peninsula, an area of 134 square miles.
- Current headquarters is at West County Annex in 2,600 square feet – completely inadequate.
- Proposed site at Sunnybrook and Wilmington was once West County Regional Library.
- Would alleviate crisis situation – in 2600 sq feet now, 12,000 to 18,000 needed.
- Proposed site is more centrally located and offers a more efficient traffic flow, especially in emergency situations.

Questions were asked about the zoning of site and outreach to affected neighborhoods.

David replied that there are residences on two sides of the proposed property and no outreach to residents has been made but no real objections were made when the regional library design was presented.

Sheriff Administration Headquarters/District 2 Headquarters:

Currently in rented land on Airport property, lease expires in 2021.

Need about 5 years for a major design so need to start thinking about where and how to finance now.

Need to locate where it is central to County so District 2 is good option.

Would house Sheriff Headquarters, narcotics division, marine division, command vehicle garage, major evidence department, impound yard and outdoor storage for evidence -- currently has no permanent place, perhaps a helicopter pad and District 2 Headquarters, which is now in leased space at Town Center Mall.

Two questions were asked: Can the Airport space be used for administration headquarters and is there any land already owned by County that can be used?

David replied that the Airport space is rented space and not in a desirable location and that the Murdock acreage owned by the County would be considered as a site.

Fiber to Fire Stations – presented by Chief Marianne Taylor:

- Would like to connect Fiber to five (5) fire stations that have close proximity to it and replace existing DSL and Cable connections.
- Would increase performance and reliability of internet connectivity.
- County would own fiber and would not need to rely on a third party to manage and provide it.
- Increased band width would be included and would meet demands for increases in on line training along with multi-media & video training.
- Productivity with production software currently in use would increase, such as data recording, inventory, tracking, project management.
- Enhance security when there is not a third party involved -- County would own fiber.

- Anticipated Cost is \$143,000

Questions were raised on discrepancies in the scoring sheets completed by staff & confusion in rating them and the lease cost of Promenades Mall facility.

Staff responded that staff scoring was intended to be used as a guide – each member of the Focus Group should use his and her own scoring points

David replied that the Promenades Mall lease cost is \$289,800 per year and it expires in 2015 with two 5-year renewals.

Public Input:

Joan Fischer thanked and commended the group for challenging the scoring last week. Her comments included the following items:

- Many of today's items should be supported by impact fees.
- County employees gave the Focus Group a list of projects, designed the score cards, gave their choice, provided information that supports their choices and gave you their scores.
- Staff tried to limit public input but Group changed it and she expressed appreciation for that.
- Understands government budgeting is not easy -- worked for government in past but expects this small county to rein in its spending and size of government.
- Charlotte County needs to restructure spending and stop building debt.

Closing Remarks:

Julie asked Sheriff Prummell if he would rank the proposals according to his wishes. The Sheriff gave the District 1 project as his first priority, moving the firing range is another priority, District 4 in Promenades Mall needs get out of rented space, and Headquarters location needs to be evaluated – more space is needed. He commented on the value and consequences of planning and coordinating all projects – how one project could affect the urgency of other projects. He said jail space is not critical at this date but a mental health facility is needed now.

The Group discussed ways to choose priorities and ways to choose portions of proposals without eliminating entire projects. Ranking of projects can be done on the last meeting day and time can be added if needed.

Kelly asked the Group to think about how they want the last meeting to go. Conversation followed on moving some projects to make time for all to be considered fairly and for staff to provide adequate information.

The Group asked Kelly to move some projects up to next week's agenda.

Gary Quill asked if he could introduce a new project; Brian agreed to add it to next week's agenda.

Brian moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:08 p.m.; Donna seconded and the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting is scheduled for March 6 at 3:00 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Bonnie Leroy.