

Sales Tax Focus Group Meeting Minutes
August 14, 2019, at 3:00 pm
18500 Murdock Circle, Room B106, Port Charlotte, FL 33948

INTRODUCTION:

1. INTRO OF STAFF:

Emily Lewis introduced all present staff with department affiliation.

Mrs. Lewis discussed the history of the Sales Tax process, its original passage in 1994 and its renewal through the years. Also, which projects it covered throughout the years. Mrs. Lewis also discussed the purpose of the committee which is to review 31 projects, the cost of the projects and their benefits to the community, which geographic areas will be benefitting from the projects, and ranking the projects. The purpose of the committee is to have a good list of projects that will represent the needs of the community and will be favorable on passing on the ballot.

Mr. Flores thanked the committee for their time and what they do for the community and reiterated that this is a critical part of the Sales Tax process.

2. INTRO OF FACILITATOR:

Emily Lewis introduced Dr. Bob Lee who will be the facilitator for the 2020 Sales Tax committee.

3. SUNSHINE LAW:

Marylin Miller, Assistant County Attorney, explained in detail what the Sunshine Law is. Mrs. Miller provided history of the Sunshine Law and how it pertains to the group. Mrs. Miller stated that a public meeting is any meeting of two or more members of the same board. Mrs. Miller discussed the requirements of the meetings: they must be open to the public, properly noticed within reason, have an easily accessible location, must have minutes, and public must have an opportunity to be heard on the proposition within a reasonable time. Members of the public are permitted to take a video of the meeting as long as they are not intrusive. Minutes must be taken but not verbatim. Mrs. Miller stated that the responsibility of the Sunshine Law applies to the board as soon as they are appointed. Penalties of breaking the Sunshine Law include civil in fractures and criminal depending on what violation took place.

A discussion took place between some committee members and staff for clarification. Members were advised not to speak about any topics related to the Sales Tax projects with the public or with each other outside of these meetings. This includes in person, by phone, emails, text messages, etc. Also, not to involve another person to communicate with each other through them, that can be considered daisy-chaining. Mrs. Miller stated that staff is available to address any questions members may have in between meetings if needed.

Mrs. Miller discussed use of personal emails. Under the Public Records Law, it is not the source of the emails that matters, it's the nature of the record. Dr. Lee suggested asking questions

verbally. If it's a serious situation and a member had a verbal communication with a staff attorney, it is advised to ask them to memorialize that response to you.

Mrs. Miller discussed the Code of Ethics. Mrs. Miller stated that if a member thinks that there is a matter that will be voted on that might cause a conflict or even an appearance of a conflict, to call staff ahead of time so that it can be vetted. This would apply if it refers to something that would be a private gain. Dr. Lee added that it could be considered a conflict even if it may not be a private gain to you, but what you say could be a private gain to someone else.

4. OVERVIEW SALES TAX FUNDS:

Mr. Burger informed the group of a broad overview on what the \$.01 cent sales tax is.

A. EXPLAIN SALES TAX REVENUE:

Mr. Burger explained that County has a gap in funding the infrastructure, so prioritizing projects is very important to the Commissioners. Sales Tax is by far the largest source of revenue for Capital Projects.

B. REVIEW REVENUE PROJECTIONS:

Mr. Burger reviews with the members that the expected revenue generated from the Sales Tax if approved is approximately \$20 million per year. The budget is intentionally kept conservative to ensure projects are funded.

C. REVIEW WHAT % GOES TO THE CITY OF PUNTA GORDA:

Mr. Burger informs members that distribution of Sales Tax is based roughly on the population. The city gets roughly 10% of the Sales Tax, the County gets 90%.

5. CAPITAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND PROJECT SELECTION:

Mr. Mortimer thanked members for their time and service.

Mr. Mortimer expressed the importance of vetting these projects to ensure that the community's needs are met. Mr. Mortimer made a note that the amounts presented to the committee are rough estimates- a ball park number. The numbers provided are today's numbers and that the amounts will be different by the time project construction begins. Mr. Mortimer pointed out that information gathered from this committee will be a reference point for these projects in the future. It will be used to defend projects if needed.

Mr. Mortimer referenced the Capital Needs Assessment in the binders and explained what it represents.

Mrs. Lewis added that the Board of County Commissioners has been reviewing these projects over the last four years and projects listed on the spreadsheet represent the needs of our community and show what the County needs to be focused on. Projects that are coming before the committee this time are projects that have gone before the Commissioners. It is known that not all 31 projects will be coming before the Commissioners as the final recommendation.

Mr. Mortimer explained that projects on this spreadsheet came from adopted and published Master Plans. Growth projections were applied as well to identify when and where these projects need to occur. These projects are tied in one form or other to growth and capacity requirements that the county is trying to keep up with. A level of service expectations need to be applied as well. Mrs. Lewis explained what each color represents for the projects on the spreadsheet.

Mrs. Lewis addressed a question from members regarding the priority of these projects. Mrs. Lewis added that it's hard to say which project is more important than another. The committee will recommend what is the most important to fund through the Sales Tax program.

A discussion took place with a couple of committee members about the criteria, scoring and priority of projects. Mr. Mortimer addressed those questions by saying that it is up to the committee to validate these projects. Mrs. Lewis stated that when it comes to the ranking process, staff will be in the room during that time to answer any questions. Mrs. Lewis also addressed a question about how additional projects can be added to the list from the community.

Mr. Mortimer discussed the layout of the spreadsheet, what each section, year and amount represents for each project. He explained in detail how to read the spreadsheet.

Mrs. Lewis answered a question on what happens if this does not get passed on the ballot and what percentage is needed to get it passed. All Sales Tax referendum must go on the ballot during a general election and pass with a simple majority vote.

6. FOCUS GROUP INTRODUCTIONS:

Dr. Lee requested each member to introduce themselves. All present members introduced themselves and stated which organizations they are currently with.

7. DISCUSS PROCESS:

A. Binder Organization

Dr. Lee discussed binder organization and the contents of it.

B. Criteria and Weighting

Dr. Lee discussed the criteria and weighting. He explained how to read the criteria and weighting for each project.

C. Ranking Process

Mrs. Lewis discussed the ranking process, referred to the scoring sheets and went over what each scoring includes.

D. Committee Governance

Dr. Lee discussed committee governance. Dr. Lee stated that meetings will start and end promptly at the scheduled time. If additional time will be needed to discuss projects, they can be carried over to the next meeting. The committee decided that if a member is absent

from a meeting, they can gather needed materials and if comfortable scoring that project, they can do that. Committee decided that final scoring will be calculated as an average.

Committee discussed public comment. They agreed to allow public input at the meetings. Those who want to speak, will need to sign in. This input will be at the beginning of the meetings, limited to agenda items only and 3 minutes maximum.

8. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

No public input.

9. **ADJOURNMENT:**

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Natalie Sainchuk