



**Round Table of Volusia County Elected Officials
Transportation Subcommittee Meeting
April 7, 2015
MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER: 1 p.m.

The Training Rooms of the Thomas C. Kelly Administration Center, 123 W. Indiana Avenue, DeLand, Florida.

Subcommittee members attending included Volusia County Council member Doug Daniels, Subcommittee Chair; City of DeLand Mayor Robert Apgar; and Orange City Mayor Tom Laputka.

Others attending were Mary Anne Connors, Volusia County Deputy County Manager; John Angiulli, Volusia County Public Works Director; Joyce Shanahan, City Manager, City of Ormond Beach; Michael Pleus, City Manager, City of DeLand; Jamie Croteau, City Manager, City of Orange City; Pam Brangaccio, City Manager, City of New Smyrna Beach; Jason McQuirk, Commissioner, City of New Smyrna Beach; Chris Nabicht, Commissioner, City of Deltona; Emily Kroeger, Finance Director, Town of Ponce Inlet; Walt Smyser, Deputy Director of Public Works, City of Holly Hill; Barry Cotton, representative for Congressman John Mica; Pat Northey, Project Manager, Ghyabi and Associates; Elizabeth Lendian, member of the River to Sea Transportation Planning Organization(TPO) Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC); and guest speaker Beth Rawlins, a government consultant. Representing the media were Mark Harper, Daytona Beach News-Journal, and Al Everson, DeLand Beacon. Taking minutes was Debbie Kelley with the County Manager's Office of Volusia County Government.

WELCOME

Chair Daniels welcomed those attending. Everyone present introduced themselves.

DISCUSSION

Mr. Daniels introduced Ms. Rawlins, who had helped develop several successful sales tax campaigns. She worked with the League of Cities.

Ms. Rawlins said sales tax campaigns to raise money for transportation projects were difficult to win in Florida. There was no one way to develop a successful campaign. Some steps included building a coalition and being prepared for opposition.

Deputy County Manager Mary Anne Connors asked how Volusia County should start its campaign and what projects, such as roads, trails, public transportation, etc.,

would residents most likely support. Unlike Seminole and Orange counties, Volusia County did not have extensive traffic congestion.

Ms. Rawlins said a vision must be created and sold to the residents. It was not necessarily about trails, roads, and public transportation; it was about investing in the communities. There must be something for everyone, projects that benefitted both the municipalities and the County. Surveys were a good way to test the waters. However, governments could not test wild ideas because public reaction could be very unfavorable.

DeLand Mayor Apgar explained the three general projects that had been discussed at prior meetings: SunRail, Votran, and road construction and improvements. He asked for suggestions for handling divisive issues, information on the process itself, and the details of Pinellas County's successful campaign. Ms. Rawlins said the process was absolutely vital for success. Campaigns were about getting communities to buy into a vision. In Pinellas County, an independent oversight committee had reviewed the School Board's very detailed proposals. She highly recommended creating an oversight committee to include, among others, groups with vested interests and that were well-rounded. The Board of Realtors was one such group that she thought could be very helpful.

Mr. Daniels detailed the possible projects, which included arterial roads, road maintenance, Votran and SunRail. The County and Volusia municipalities were in the process of creating a "wish list" of everyone's wants and needs. The group needed to know how to proceed and how to reach the voters. Ms. Rawlins said the first step was to determine how much money was needed for umbrella projects, such as Votran, SunRail and arterial roads. Some of this money would go to the municipalities for their wish list projects. The next steps were to decide how much gas tax money was needed and to hire a good, analytical firm to guide the group.

Walt Smyser, Holly Hill Deputy Director of Public Works, discussed the building booms that had occurred in some southern Florida counties. In many instances, the governing bodies had not obtained sufficient funding for the projects and the residential areas of some communities had fallen apart. Twenty years later, money that had been earmarked for certain areas was no longer needed, but there was no money available for the areas that needed money. Ms. Rawlins explained in detail the need to identify how much money was needed for roads, rail service and public transportation.

Jamie Croteau, City Manager of Orange City wanted further clarification and details about "selling the vision" to the public and how to get people excited about public transportation. She felt it was going to be a very difficult task to accomplish. Ms. Rawlins gave examples of promoting public transportation, such as its importance to elderly and needy residents, and how its use decreased the need for and cost of road repair and maintenance. She noted that transportation and infrastructure had always been difficult objectives to sell to the public.

In response to questions from Mr. Apgar about the timeframe for getting this on the ballot and whether a half-cent or one-cent gas sales tax was best, Ms. Rawlins said she recommended not rushing this process. Several steps should be taken first, including drafting ballot language, which would have to be provided to the Supervisor of Elections this summer. The process could easily take one year from beginning to end. The difference between a half-cent and a one-cent sales tax would matter more in areas where there was disparity in adjoining counties.

DeLand City Manager Michael Pleus said the municipalities wanted to be involved with the County in making decisions about the process, such as developing the wording on the ballot. He questioned the best way to get civic leaders and businesses involved and supportive of the campaign. Ms. Rawlins discussed expenditures of public funds and Senate Bill 260 in great length. She said it was crucial for community and business leaders to be involved as they would be instrumental in promoting that tax and helping voters understand the benefits.

Discussion ensued among Chris Nabicht, Deltona City Commissioner, Jason McQuirk, New Smyrna Beach Commissioner, Mr. Smyser and Ms. Rawlins about the amount of the sales tax and the formula for distributing the money.

In response to questions from the group, Ms. Rawlins said it was best for the tax to be on a large general election ballot. The poll/survey should contain many questions about the quality of life, take approximately 25 minutes to complete and be completed by at least 400 residents. It should be a real scientific poll that was weighted, random, cross-tabbed and then analyzed. The price for such a poll was approximately \$35,000.00. Further discussion ensued.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the distribution of tax dollars among the County and the municipalities. All present wanted to be sure their respective community received sufficient money to be beneficial.

The group reviewed items discussed earlier in more detail, including dollar amounts, deadlines, how to move forward and upcoming elections.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 3:06 p.m.