



**Task Force on Consolidated Government**  
**Jacksonville City Council**  
**Council Member Lori Boyer, Chair**

October 17, 2013

**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE OCTOBER 10<sup>TH</sup> MEETING**

**Independent Municipalities Presentations**

Stan Totman – Mayor of Baldwin:

- **Baldwin wasn't much affected by consolidation, still receiving all its county services and paying its county millage, and is satisfied with the arrangement**
  - Baldwin operates under the 1982 Interlocal Agreement; & never signed the 1995 agreement
  - Baldwin is supportive of consolidation and the town has received what was promised by consolidation
  - When Jacksonville Fire and Rescue took over fire service it substantially lowered its ISO rating and thereby lowered property insurance rates for property owners after City worked with Town to insure higher staffing level- before staffing increase, JFRD use resulted in increase in premiums
  - Mayor. Totman believes that Jacksonville could do more with its resources (i.e. Equestrian Center, Cecil gym and aquatic center) than it does now
  - JSO provides police service at no charge to the town and Baldwin pays an additional fee to Jacksonville to have the Fire and Rescue Department staff the town's fire station full-time
    - Most of JSO's calls are in areas of the county around Baldwin not in the town
  - Baldwin levies its own garbage fee and hires a contractor to provide the service

Jim Jarboe – Neptune Beach City Manager:

- **The Interlocal Agreements are settlements of several lawsuits that were political compromises that don't completely address the problems and aren't beneficial for either party**
- **Better communication is needed on both sides, and the continual turnover of political leadership is problematic because institutional knowledge and history is lost**
- **Services are better than in COJ**
  - The Beaches still have problems with Jacksonville not providing fundamental county services
  - The Sheriff's Office is always very helpful, but other departments (i.e. animal control) are sometimes not so, claiming that they are not responsible for the Beaches
  - Council President Gulliford did research that showed that the Beaches cities pay a higher county millage than cities in other counties, and that needs to be investigated
  - Mr. Jarboe believes the Interlocal Agreement needs to be on more permanent footing than a legal settlement.

**Mayor Harriet Pruett – Neptune Beach:**

- **Neptune Beach is glad to be independent so that they can provide the level of public services to their citizens that they deserve and that would not be provided by Jacksonville at the same level**
- **Do beaches get their money's worth from millage paid to County- few county services and for their small increment they provide most services**
- **Some COJ departments do not even know what city services they are required to provide under the Interlocal Agreements; lack of communication and understanding of relationship**
  - Mayor Pruett indicated that the Beaches have always met regularly with Jacksonville mayors and had a good relationship, but not with the current administration
  - The bi-annual air show and 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks place a burden on NB for services such as traffic, crowd control, litter that they are not reimbursed for by COJ even though many of the attendees are Jacksonville residents not just Neptune Beach residents
  - Mr. Jarboe pointed out that NB only has 2 hotels so doesn't receive very much in bed tax revenue, and receives its sales tax revenue as a percentage of the total collected in Duval County on a population basis

**Jim Hanson – City Manager of Atlantic Beach:**

- **Turnover at the top as new mayors are elected and bring in new department heads has been problematic, some of the recent appointees have little or no experience or training in the fields they are put in charge of, and in general Jacksonville is cutting corners and hurting its effectiveness with short-staffing**
  - Mr. Hanson said that AB has a very good relationship with a number of Jacksonville's front line employees
  - There was a tremendous **loss of institutional knowledge** when the Brown administration came to office and let go many of the staff who had long knowledge of issues with the Beaches
  - The new generation of appointees doesn't seem to understand the independence of the Beaches and Baldwin or to have any **knowledge or understanding of the Interlocal Agreements**
- **Beaches service level is already much higher than what Jacksonville provides for basically the same tax rate.**
- The current 3 mill differential was supposed to represent the differential for the city services that AB provides for itself with its own city millage
- **A recent IBM study of per capita spending on public services by America's 100 largest cities that found no correlation between cost of service and population size, geographic size or employee unionization**
  - **The primary factor identified was the presence of a manager** which accounted for a 10% reduction in per capita spending
  - Jim Rinaman stated that the consolidation plan always presumed that the strong mayor would have a strong chief administrative officer who would be a trained, professional city manager

**George Forbes – Jacksonville Beach City Manager:**

- **He recommends a "bill of rights" for the Beaches and Baldwin in the Charter to lay out the parameters of what Jacksonville can and cannot do with regard to those cities; COJ unaware of laws governing relationship**
  - The Charter calls the Beaches and Baldwin "quasi-municipalities", but says they have all the power and rights of any other municipality in Florida

- The City of Jacksonville took away municipal rights of the Beaches' and Baldwin's by ordinance that few people understood and only restored them after being threatened with a lawsuit
- **He agreed that the Beaches have a higher level of service and in some cases lower costs such as for water**
  - Sam Mousa pointed out that the 3 city managers who presented today are exceptions to the general rule of city managers in that they have all been in their jobs for many years, which is very unusual in the profession
  - In response to a question from Opio Sokoni, Mr. Forbes indicated that the Beaches cities occasionally have a small disagreement among them, but always work things out quickly and amicably

## **Neighborhoods Panel**

- **Almost all panelists indicated that they did not see any benefits of consolidation for their neighborhood and that they believed their level of services to be sub-par; envied Beaches autonomy and control over their own destinies**
- **Alton Yates said we have to be mindful of where we started and that Jacksonville's core city has vastly improved over pre-consolidation days in terms of public services like water, sewer and drainage; Emily Lisska from Mandarin and Steve Matchett from Arlington both acknowledged success and improvement in early years but question value today**
- **Lack of responsiveness to service requests; inadequate voice in planning and zoning decisions; one size fits all policies; communication failures were all mentioned as major issues**
- **Often in the past what neighborhoods got what infrastructure depended on the relationship between the District Councilperson and the administration**
- **Neighborhood leaders were unaware of the Neighborhood Bill of Rights, but did participate in CPACs**
  - Carmen Godwin said Riverside/Avondale envies the Beaches their ability to control their own destiny with their own planning and zoning powers
  - Christina Parrish from Springfield likewise felt the consolidated government has contributed to rather than prevented Springfield's decline in recent years
  - Alton Yates said that while Jacksonville's core city has vastly improved over pre-consolidation days in terms of public services like water, sewer and drainage, but those improvements shifted problems to other areas outside of the downtown to surrounding neighborhoods
  - Laura Thompson felt that downtown has not particularly benefitted from consolidation because of lack of investment in basic services
  - Steve Matchett said that Arlington benefitted in the early days on issues like removal of tolls, reduction of odors, control of signs, etc., but services have steadily declined in recent years
  - Emily Lisska felt that the delivery of city services has improved overall since consolidation, but it's difficult to say whether that was a result of consolidation or not. Growth management has been much more problematic
  - Ms. Lisska thought that the ability of City Council to overturn Charter amendments approved by referendum by means of an ordinance with a simple majority vote should be changed to require at least some kind of super-majority vote
  - Mr. Matchett said that City response to service requests needs improvement; service levels are going down, responsiveness and advance notice to citizens are lacking

- Ms. Godwin said that RAP with its paid staff still has trouble navigating the City’s bureaucracy and City Council system, and neighborhoods without those resources are helpless to deal with the system
  - She noted that there are many neighborhood plans and overlays that are put on shelves and never implemented
  - An ombudsman or citizen liaison is needed to help neighborhood groups navigate the system, and more appointees representing neighborhood interests rather than development interests are needed on the Planning Commission
  - The City fails to recognize the differences among neighborhoods and historic districts and tries to use a “one size fits all” policy
- Ms. Parrish stated that little to no investment has been made in Springfield in decades and drainage, parks, and other facilities are falling apart because of their age
  - The Springfield Roundtable that used to convene meetings of City officials with neighborhood activists was discontinued under the Mayor Brown administration and needs to be reinstated. City departments don’t seem to communicate among themselves and act at cross-purposes on occasion
- Ms. Lisska stated that Mandarin has many of the same problems as the old core city with regard to old, failing infrastructure
- Ms. Godwin said that neighborhoods need to be involved early in the decision making process because they often don’t know until the development is about to be approved by the City Council even though the City has been working with the developer for months
- Chuck Arnold shared his opinion that the mission of the Task Force is to deal with consolidation issues and not so much with service provision issues
- Ms. Parrish said that at-large council members have been very helpful to her neighborhood so she would not advocate for 19 districts
  - Mr. Yates felt that a reduction of the size of the council would make it easier to achieve consensus, which can be difficult with 19 members
  - Until there are more resources to provide needed services, the size of the council makes little difference
  - Ms. Boyer noted that the original charter proposal called for 21 district council members each serving about 20,000 residents
    - Her district now encompasses 60,000 residents, so a reduction of council size will cause members to represent even larger constituencies, which may be counterproductive to good citizen service
- Kay Ehas stated that the City has allowed its older neighborhoods to deteriorate and has contributed to the destruction of historic structures in historic neighborhoods, and that has got to be stopped
- In response to a question from Betty Holzendorf about how consolidation was sold to city and county residents, Mr. Yates said that every conceivable kind of problem was discussed and promises were made to fix all the problems, although without any specificity about how or when
  - What got done in the early years of consolidation depended in part on the relationship between the mayor and the district council members at the time; some things got done, some things didn’t.
- By a show of hands in response to a question from Ms. Boyer, 1 of the 6 panelists indicated any knowledge of the Neighborhood Bill of Rights.

## **Neighborhood Bill of Rights**

### **Ordinance requiring**

- **Prompt courteous replies within one working day, even if only to say working on issue**
- **Advance notice of any city-related public works or utility project**
- **Notice of the submission of any zoning or land-use application or ordinance**

- **Opportunity for formal budget input, including development of capital improvement program**
- **A timely response from a District Council member or their aide to questions directed to their office**
- **The opportunity to participate in the design of publicly funded projects in or adjacent to the neighborhood**

Was adopted by ordinance not resolution so as to have the power of law and ensure that citizens would get a timely response from their government

Mr. Smith believes that a citizen might have standing to sue the City for lack of enforcement of the ordinance.

### **Community Planning Advisory Committees (CPACs)**

**Citizens Planning Advisory Committees were first established in October 1993 by Mayor Ed Austin as an ongoing, grassroots public participation program. In September 2001, Mayor John Delaney issued a new executive order to continue that involvement as did Mayor John Peyton in 2007.**

- **Effectiveness has waxed and waned over time; membership limited and sometimes not representative**

The primary purpose of the CPAC is to maintain open and effective communication between Jacksonville residents, businesses, neighborhoods, community organizations, educational institutions and city government.

### **Suzanne Jenkins-**

- Former mayors have had a greater commitment to the CPACs and either attended themselves or had staff assigned to attend the CPAC meetings
- As a city council member she used her CPACs as an important conduit of information between the neighborhoods and the council
- She sees a need to keep the CPACs and the Neighborhood Bill of Rights in the forefront as new mayors and city councils are elected so that they are aware of their existence.