

Citizens Oversight Committee (COC)  
Meeting Minutes  
January 18, 2007

Ron Salem called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m.

Mayor thanked the attendees and reiterated his belief in the value of citizen volunteer oversight of the program.

Remarks continued:

Halfway through program; believe we have navigated the bumps in the road well and pleased with where we are considering the myriad of unexpected circumstances we faced.

Since the last meeting, city selected the design/build team for the courthouse. They will put together the master plan, from which we will build what we can afford. We're not to the point of having a price estimate yet; expect to begin determining scope late this spring or early summer. Again, will build according to budget – hopefully if the market softens we will be able to build more. Certainly remain on track to break ground in 2007.

Construction on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the Bay Street courthouse is finished and the space is ready to accommodate new judges. State Attorney continues to assume the City Hall Annex, which is an awful building but is helping us in the short term. Ultimate goal is get to the city off the river and put that property to higher and better use.

Public Works moved into the Ed Ball building in November and ITD moves next week. Hemming is turning into a government square – Ed Ball building is among the largest in downtown and was a great purchase by the city. Haverty's Building is being renovated by the Fire & Pension Fund, to be rented back to the city and eventually re-purchased – all this will happen less expensively and more quickly than if the city had tried to do it.

JEA's Septic Tank Phase Out program has two areas left, Scott Mill Hill in Mandarin and Oakwood Villas in Arlington. Goal of this administration is river clean-up, and STPO, while it came before the River Accord, is part of that effort. City & JEA is committed to continue the septic phase out; city dedicated \$10 million to River Accord toward that end as well as stormwater improvements. Long-term the partnership will involve city, JEA, River Management District and the federal government.

Ash mitigation effort remains, predominately in the core city in lower income areas. Federal government issued a mandate for the city to clean up these areas; BJP included funds to do that. RFP is on the street for a consultant to lead that initiative. We'd been waiting for the EPA to give direction on how the clean-up should happen, which is why we are now finally able to move forward. It will be

a very intensive project that will generate a lot of attention, both in the community and with the media. Expect to hear more on that in the coming months.

Highlight a few road projects – JTA’s Wonderwood phase 3 is in full swing – recall the project became “BJP” through the rework in late 2005. Ft. Caroline closure almost over. Understand most of the roads in the county seem to be under construction – inconveniences are there, but they are temporary. Important to recognize the long-term impacts; a failure to invest now would cause gridlock in the future. The I-10/I-95 project is supposed to take 7 years – major projects take time, and we need that vision.

April is the Suns’ 5<sup>th</sup> year at our new ballpark. It is a wonderful facility – though we’re almost to the point we can’t call it “new” anymore.

More information on projects is included in report.

The evening’s presentation will be on the city’s road program, following JTA’s presentation last time. Joey Duncan is director of Public Works; hit the ground running when he joined last summer. Pleased with the transition between Joey and Alan Mosley; we have good leadership and a good team in place.

Joey Duncan remarks:

Upon joining Public Works, realized one spot needed to be filled. Dave Schneider took over the Courthouse, so needed someone to run road program full time. Hired Bob Dyr in November – had over 20 years experience at JEA. He earned his bachelor’s from Rutgers and master’s from South Florida. He’s received rave reviews from staff and we’re happy he chose to join our team.

Bob Dyr remarks:

Lived in Jacksonville for 23 years, was with JEA the entire time. Happy to take on this new challenge, particularly with the road program entering its most active period. Realized the significance of this new role when I drove down Kernan recently – previously, I’d casually noticed that they were taking down trees. Now I drive down the road and realize I’m in charge of all that activity.

To summarize the program I inherited – of the \$1.5 billion road program, I am in charge of about \$700 million worth of projects. There is a breakdown of the status of all the projects I manage in your report.

Will touch on a few notable projects – last night we held a pre-construction meeting for the Lenox Avenue (Lane to Normandy). Project was supposed to happen in the late 90s and be five lanes; we’ve been able to reduce the lanes to a combination of three and four lanes. We’re going to keep an eye on Ellis Road going north off of Lenox; can be troublesome to get out if traffic is bad. We hope the Lenox improvements will help that situation.

Still have the two program managers – River City Management Group handles south and east projects; HDR handles north and west.

The \$700 million figure I quoted earlier doesn't include the nearly \$200 million JEA is contributing to the projects. The program managers are working for both the city and JEA, as the projects are supposed to develop concurrently. It requires a lot of coordination, which is why it seems to take so long to go through the design to construction. We want to take the opportunity to do as much as we can in one shot.

South/east area has 10 projects in construction; there are four in the north/west. This equates into about \$80 million worth of work. We've completed about \$165 million worth, with another \$450-465 million left to be done. To break it down further, River City is handling about \$300 million in projects, HDR \$350 million, and early in BJP the city completed about \$50 million worth.

Several projects were broken up into phases in the original work program. We're continuing to split projects, such as Kernan, into smaller pieces to get improvements started faster and to make some of the projects more manageable.

Questions:

*One glaring problem is the Arlington Expressway. What is being done about that project?*

It is on FDOT's radar; however, it is not being pushed politically. It is outside the control of Public Works. The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) coordinates state & local projects; it ranked #2 on their priority list, following the Clay/St. Johns connector. Group concurred that the issue needs to be elevated in the public awareness.

**ACTION ITEM: Marcy Cook to draft letter from the COC to elected officials requesting continued support and funding for the Mathews project.**

*Is JEA putting lines underground? What happened with that initiative?*

Very few of the projects have involved placing lines underground. JEA has stated it cannot fund the effort to put electric lines underground, even though it was widely touted at the beginning of the BJP program. The costs have risen to approximately \$1 million per mile – 10 times more expensive than relocating lines overhead.

The group asked that the overhead lines be put underground whenever possible. Road project representatives reiterated that the decision was entirely JEA's.

**ACTION ITEM: Marcy Cook will ask JEA for comment regarding their position on underground electric on BJP road projects.**

*Noticed JEA lines are being extended into St. Johns County. Are we funding that effort for JEA?*

The city is not funding any effort to take JEA services across county lines. JEA would be doing that on their own.

*Is it true one project will have five roundabouts?*

Yes. The Touchton project is currently being redesigned to replace signalized intersections with roundabouts. The original design was four lanes; the City Council representative for that area was concerned with the traffic, particularly considering the new park in the area. A study was done and it showed roundabouts were supposedly safer, can carry more off-peak traffic and would theoretically provide traffic calming while handling capacity and providing a better aesthetic.

*What's the difference in construction cost between the two designs?*

It's about a wash.

*How long is that section? About a mile?*

Yes. There will be another east-west facility opening very soon – Gate Parkway is being extended and will offer an alternative route.

*Aren't new subdivisions required to have electric lines be underground?*

Yes.

*Are a majority of the traffic signals being replaced? What's going on with the arms that have peeling paint?*

Wire span signals are being replaced with mast arms. The ones that are peeling are primarily on FDOT facilities – we're not using that same kind on our projects. Believe there is a lawsuit pending against the vendor.

Chairman Salem adjourned the meeting at 6:10 p.m.