

The Citizens Oversight Committee
Quarterly Report
Minutes

May 8, 2001

The meeting was called to order at 6:15 p.m. by co-chair Ron Salam.

Mr. Salam congratulated the City of Jacksonville for earning the Governor's Sterling Award. Next, he turned the meeting over to Mayor John Delaney.

The Mayor explained the overall advantages of winning the Sterling Award including:

- Wall Street will recognize the award as a symbol of an efficient government and will award us with better bond ratings
- Companies possibly relocating to Jacksonville will be impressed with our stream-lined City government
- The process has created a more effective city government system

Then, the Mayor reminded the Citizens Oversight Committee of their role of providing a check and balance system for The Better Jacksonville Plan.

He solicited the groups input on the format of the quarterly report to ensure that the report is as user-friendly as possible.

Next, the Mayor introduced The Better Jacksonville Plan Implementation team.

The Mayor continued focusing on how Wall Street conservatively approached the funding of the Plan. They predicted that there would be slow times in the economy and averaged the schedule over the allotted amount of time.

Next, the optimum date set for completion of the project was compared to the aggressive date. The optimum date is the engineers' required time to build the building at their preferred pace. The aggressive date was set to stay ahead of inflation. The City will work with the professionals to balance the two dates to create completion dates that fit our projects the best to provide quality public facilities – on time and on budget.

Then, Mayor Delaney explained the Quarterly Report in detail.

QUESTIONS:

1. Will The Better Jacksonville Plan help neighborhoods address specific problems in their area; for example, abandoned strip malls?

The Better Jacksonville Plan will not address this issue directly, but indirectly. The infrastructure will be improved to provide better access that will make the area more attractive to commercial opportunities.

2. Will the construction have a negative impact on surrounding businesses?

Some areas will be a mess. The key is sequencing and working closely with the businesses adjacent to the road improvement projects. We will have to be creative and remain focused on the end results.

3. What will be the impact of the proposed overpass at Atlantic and University?

We will work closely with the community to study the future benefits and the impact during construction.

4. Is there any way to alter the transportation plan?

Under extraordinary circumstances, City Council can alter the transportation plan but they must have a 2/3 vote to do so.

5. Argyle Forest has been overloaded for years with over 21,000 cars per day on the two-lane road. Can we rush construction?

Negotiations are underway and construction will begin soon.

6. Is there a plan to assist minority companies with cash flow issues?

Our goal is to improve our service to assist minority and small companies. We are studying the following options:

- Within 72 hours of the City accounting department receiving the bill – we will pay.
- The contract may be divided into smaller pieces to expand the opportunity
- The City may purchase materials up-front.
- Wrap up insurance – The City buys insurance on the entire project
- Wrap up bond

7. If a home is in close proximity to new sewer lines, is there an opportunity to tap into the new lines?

The JEA Septic Tank Remediation Plan identifies specific streets for the upgrades based on the criteria listed in your quarterly report. Currently, JEA does not have funding in place to expand. However, there is a process set up if homeowners are willing to pay for it. There may also be matching funds if enough homeowners sign up for the improvements.

8. Once land is acquired for The Preservation Project, can it later be sold for development?

Any land owned by the City can be sold, if there is a desire to sell it. The theory is that you will increase the value of your developed area by protecting a portion of your developable land.

9. Will electric go underground on the road projects?

The City is coordinating with JEA to relocate electric underground on the main corridors.

10. If we have national designers, will our new facilities look like something that belongs in another city?

It is important that our new facilities capture the essence of Jacksonville. With the Baseball Park and Arena, we will celebrate the architecture of East Jacksonville. We are working closely with the Historic Society to ensure consistency with the restored St. Andrews Church.

SUGGESTIONS:

Hold COC meetings on a different night than City Council meetings.
On-site visits for Committee meetings.
Notice to all COC members of public meetings.
Newsletter

The meeting was adjourned.

