

**The Better Jacksonville Plan
Citizens Oversight Committee
Meeting Minutes
August 31, 2004**

Chairman Ron Salem called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

The previous meeting minutes were approved as written.

Chairman Salem introduced Mayor Peyton who thanked the Citizens Oversight Committee (COC) for their commitment to the success of The Better Jacksonville Plan.

Mayor Peyton applauded Jacksonville for its ambition when it passed The Better Jacksonville Plan in 2000. It is now 2004 and we have a beautiful arena, an exciting ballpark, and will soon be celebrating the opening of a state-of-the-art main library. We are making progress but are also experiencing challenges that we're unforeseen in 2000.

Since taking office last year, our administration has been struggling with the challenges of the county courthouse. With materials price escalations, property costs, new post 9/11 security requirements – budget challenges were oblivious. Unfortunately, the program team also presented information that was not accurate. My administration based our commitment to the \$232 million budget ceiling based on this inaccurate information.

We hired an independent auditor to confirm the information provided to support the \$232 million and their reports confirmed that the building could not be built for \$232 million.

Our investigation led us to fire Jacobs, the program manager for the courthouse, for providing inaccurate information.

We then studied all of our options with the help of our end-users including the judges, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, the Clerk of Court, the Bar Association and others.

We looked at the other designs that were considered during the courthouse design competition, but have determined that we have invested too much in time, money and energy to start over.

We can build a building for \$232 million but it will compromise the durability, the functionality and safety needs of the facility. Also, a \$232 million design would limit the future expansion options for the future. In short, future decision makers would have to pay for our mistakes now.

We are now advocating for a \$267.9 million county courthouse.

In order to meet goal, I have asked Council to do the following:

- Roll back tax revenue funding from its current level of \$232 million to \$211 million originally provided for in BJP. This will free up general fund dollars to meet other important needs in our community
- Impose non-waivable \$15 surcharge on traffic violations such as DUI, leaving the scene of an accident, reckless driving, driving on a suspended license, etc. Legislature authorized this surcharge for the purpose of funding courthouse facilities throughout FL, effective July 1, 2004. This revenue source was not available when City Council voted last fall on issue
- Increase authorized cost of the courthouse project to approx. \$267.9 million. The construction will be based upon a guaranteed maximum price which puts the liability for overruns on the contractor, not on the city.

After much discussion of the courthouse budget challenges, the Citizens Oversight Committee unanimously agreed to support the plan to build a durable, functional and safe building to serve the needs of the judicial system most effectively. They also agreed to work with the administration to educate the community on the importance of building a courthouse that will meet current as well as future needs and to attend any public meetings on this issue to assist the Mayor in getting his message out.

Chairman Salem thanked the committee and adjourned the meeting.