

**MINUTES OF THE OKALOOSA COUNTY
LEAGUE OF CITIES
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
FRIDAY, APRIL 6, 2001**

CALL TO ORDER

President John Thomas called the meeting to order at 12:06 p.m. at Cinco Bayou Town Hall.

THOSE PRESENT:

Treasurer Councilman Dutch Payne, Cinco Bayou
Councilwoman Brenda Bush, Crestview
Councilwoman Fay Miller, Laurel Hill
President Mayor John Thomas, Mary Esther
Mayor Randall Wise, Niceville
Mayor Gary Combs, Shalimar
Vice President Commissioner Heyward Strong, Valparaiso
Commissioner Shirley Ransom, Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners (BCC)

THOSE ABSENT:

Mayor Ken Beard, Destin
Mayor Glenda Glover, Fort Walton Beach

ALSO PRESENT:

City Clerk Laura Houchens, Mary Esther, Recorder

GUESTS:

Col. Bird, Eglin AFB
Sara Carroll, Councilwoman, Cinco Bayou
Norman Frucci, Councilman, Cinco Bayou
Mike Wright Reynolds, Greater FWB Chamber of Commerce

MINUTES

A motion was made by Councilman Dutch Payne to approve the regular minutes of March 1 and dinner meeting minutes of March 22, 2001. It was seconded by Commissioner Heyward Strong and passed unanimously. Abstain: Cmbr. Payne.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Councilman Dutch Payne reported that the balance is \$2,081.42. He informed those present that his elected status had changed in Cinco Bayou, and as had been customary with the procedures that have been followed in the past, he had had an individual approach him who was interested in the position of treasurer for the OLoC. Cmbr. Payne continued that this individual is highly qualified for the position, and proposed that Sara Carroll would be considered for a motion from one of the Board members if they so desired. Councilwoman Brenda Bush from Crestview made the nomination motion and Mayor Gary Combs seconded it. The vote was called and it passed unanimously (Cmbr. Payne abstained). Cmbr. Payne was thanked by the Board members who were present for his efforts, and Councilwoman Carroll was welcomed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a. One Cent Sales Tax. Comm. Strong said that the letter from the County Attorney had been received, and a response package was being prepared with input from each of the Cities. Approval would be gained from respective city governing boards for a prioritized needs list, and a signature from each Mayor would be obtained on one form. Comm. Strong said that according to the 2000 Federal census, he determined the percentages of the County population each city had, and approximated the amount of funds to be gained by the additional tax over a 5-year period. Table 2 had double the amount of per capita tax for the cities of Cinco Bayou, Shalimar, and Laurel Hill, as their population is so small. Each of the cities present was in agreement with using the distribution formula stated in Table 2. Comm. Ransom clarified that the formulas were based on 60/40 split with the County,

which was affirmed. She also stated that response to the County is needed by May 1. Comm. Strong explained the format Valparaiso used, which was segregated by Public Safety, Environmental, and Infrastructure, and the question from Comm. Ransom about the totals not balancing with the potential funding was answered by stating that we would fund to the level received.

Cmbr. Payne said this is a good format, and that the citizens need to understand that these are needs, not a wish list. Comm. Ransom said that the referendum must state what the money will be used for, and if we used Comm. Strong's format with the three major categories, it would be easier for the County to work with. Comm. Strong also explained a sheet he provided with Sales Tax Facts that the citizen's should be aware of.

(Mayor Thomas paused to welcome Col. Bird, who had just arrived to the meeting.)

Comm. Ransom spoke about her opinion that the ballot should have the Governmental Center removed from the ballot, as she has not heard any positive support for this. She believes this would improve the chance of the tax passing, and added that it would free up about \$27.4 million. It could allow the time span to be reduced to four years rather than five. Comm. Strong said that the original term was four years, and a show of hands by those present concurred that four years was agreeable. Comm. Strong also said that whatever the County supported, we would be behind. Both agreed that the citizens seemed to be concerned with the needs rather than the length of time for the tax. Cmbr. Payne agreed that by reducing the duration to four years and eliminating the governmental/judicial center from the wording on the ballot, the sales tax should stand a good chance of passing. Comm. Ransom added that she has asked Mr. Holley to search for ways to reduce property taxes in the County so that there could be a true rollback next year, which should be a helpful measure in increasing sales tax.

Getting the word out to the citizens via websites, newsletters, or whatever measures are available that these are real needs, not to fill a wish list, was discussed by Cmbr. Payne. There was more discussion, with Mayor Thomas concluding that all cities should use the same format and get their input to the County by 1 May.

A motion from Mayor Combs, seconded by Cmbr. Bush, was made that Comm. Strong is to ensure that each city signs the letter and attachments are ready for the County by 1 May.

NEW BUSINESS

- a. Crestview's Resolution for I-65 Connector. Cmbr. Bush clarified that it was not Highway 123 as stated on the agenda, but the I-65 connector that Crestview is seeking support from the other cities to get the necessary four-laning accomplished. Evacuation from our entire area will benefit from this major project. Our growth makes this necessary, and safety is the main concern. A resolution is in the drafting stage now in Crestview City Hall.

Cmbr. Payne asked if there was an estimate, and Cmbr. Bush said not yet. This has been on and off of the MPO list. Some officials from Alabama have now come forward with a willingness to meet at one place with these roads, and assist with this project. It is on the MPO's cost-feasible project list, Cmbr. Bush added. Comm. Strong said that before, Alabama was not willing to meet the widening of Highway 85. Now, FDOT is purchasing property along this stretch of highway, and it appears to be a certainty.

Mayor Thomas paused at this point and introduced newly elected Cinco Bayou Councilmember Norm Frucci, as well as recognizing Sara Carroll. Also introduced was the Co-Chairman of the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors, Mike Wright Reynolds.

- b. Appoint New Treasurer. This was done at the beginning of the meeting.
- c. Florida League of Cities International Roundtable Program. Recorder Laura Houchens informed all present that this was in reference to a fax that was sent to Mayor Beard, and copied to Mayor Glover last February regarding a program the League of Cities was offering assistance to the cities to implement if there was sufficient interest. She suggested that each member present review the letter and offered to place it on the agenda for Mayor Glover to discuss at the next meeting. All were agreeable.

ANNOUNCEMENTS / REPORTS FROM CITIES

Shalimar. Mayor Combs announced that their Town Hall should be completed with renovations in 15 days. Their new police chief had wrecked a car, and no one was hurt. Insurance covered the cost of the car, and the County was assisting with selling them a used vehicle that was going to be put up for auction. He also said that Shalimar does a quarterly newsletter, and in the past two issues, benefits for the one-cent sales tax have been touted. He asked if each city would mail their newsletters to the other cities so that cross-ideas would transpire, and it also is good for the County to realize that the cities are talking to their citizens.

Crestview. Cmbr. Bush said that the new public safety department had groundbreaking on February 12th, which will allow space for the police and fire departments as well as add more much-needed space to City Hall. She said that safety is her main concern, and the responsibility for government to provide this for citizens. Groundbreaking was last Friday (March 31) for a new Bob Sikes Library, and ribbon cutting for the new CFX Building across from City Hall on April 25. A new Ryan's Restaurant is nearly complete, and Publix is moving into the old Food World. Comm. Ransom noted that Crestview had grown 49% in population since the last census. Cmbr. Payne thanked Cmbr. Bush for hosting the League of Cities meeting and Veteran's Memorial Meetings, that the hospitality is always great in Crestview. She thanked him for his kind words.

Destin. No report.

Fort Walton Beach. Mayor Thomas spoke on behalf of Mayor Glover, who was out of town. The hot issue is the Library, which is on the line for a tight vote on changing the construction contract to search for a different site.

Laurel Hill. Cmbr. Miller said there are problems with rezoning the restaurant with the State, which is telling them that the Comp Plan has not met all of the requirements. There is a possibility that the process will have to begin again, or the owner may give up on the idea altogether. Their lawyer is looking into solutions that do not involve rezoning. A new mayor and three new council members are in place, and had their first meeting last night. It looks like it should be a cohesive group. She also said that an older model fire truck had been donated to Laurel Hill, and volunteers would be trained to use it.

Mary Esther. The creation of a Code Enforcement Board has been heavily discussed in Mary Esther, which would enable the City to enforce ordinances previously barely enforceable. Mayor Thomas said that a group of volunteer residents of the City had worked for a year to revise two old ordinances and create one new one calling for a Board for enforcement.

Niceville. Mayor Wise reported that they should be breaking ground soon for a new skateboard park in the vicinity of City Hall, and the six-lane over Turkey Creek has shifted, so motorists need to be aware. Also, there will be a 10,000-egg hunt the Saturday before Easter at the Mullet Festival site.

Valparaiso. Comm. Strong reported that they have been having hearings on the one-percent sales tax. Also, a sign ordinance for billboards has demanded much attention in Tallahassee, and applies to State or Federal Highways. The move is to apply the law to city or county roads, which would cost Valparaiso \$800,000 - \$900,000 to remove three or four signs. Some of their citizens are sending letters to get the signs down because they are a distraction.

Eglin AFB. Col. Bird thanked the Board for the invitation to join them. Construction projects underway now on the base total about \$150,000,000, so they are definitely growing and are not in danger of closing at this time. He had approved the County's request for water expansion, and signed it over to General Kostelnik to route to the County. German pilots were at the base for training. He stated that the future of Eglin is in the strength of community relations. He asked how or if this group was involved in Senator Cleary's Northwest Florida Day on April 18, and none of the municipalities were involved in it. Mike from the Greater FWB Chamber said that they were late in planning this event this year, but have a huge contingent (21) representing Okaloosa County, which is the largest player of 16 counties. Next year's event planning begins on 1 July.

County. Commissioner Ransom reminded everyone to vote regarding the TDC Referendum on May 15. Comm. Strong said he would have to get a copy of the letter and format to Mayor Glover and Mayor Beard, and he and Comm. Ransom discussed the procedure for obtaining the Council's approval prior to the Mayor's signature for the cities.

Cinco Bayou. They have been working a problem with the City of Fort Walton Beach regarding the \$17,000 repair project on Hughes Street, Cmbr. Payne reported. They have three newly elected Council members, and he welcomed them and offered to support them 100% as long as they are right!

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Thomas announced that the food would be available at 11:30 for the next noon meeting on May 3rd. He also made a motion to recognize Col. Bird as an honorary mayor, and Comm. Strong seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved, and Col. Bird accepted the recognition stating that he was honored. The meeting adjourned at 1:25.

John Thomas, President

(Laura Heuchers for)

