

MINUTES
OKALOOSA COUNTY LEAGUE OF CITIES
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
THURSDAY, JUNE 7, 2001

CALL TO ORDER

President John Thomas called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m. at Cinco Bayou Town Hall.

THOSE PRESENT:

Treasurer Councilwoman Sara Carroll, Cinco Bayou
Councilwoman Brenda Bush, Crestview
Mayor Glenda Glover, Fort Walton Beach
Councilwoman Fay Miller, Laurel Hill
President Mayor John Thomas, Mary Esther
Mayor Gary Combs, Shalimar
Vice President Commissioner Heyward Strong, Valparaiso
Commissioner Shirley Ransom, Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners (BCC)

THOSE ABSENT:

Mayor Ken Beaird, Destin
Councilman Al Swihart, Niceville

ALSO PRESENT:

County Manager Chris Holley, Guest
Col. David Smith, EAFB (For Col. Bird)
City Clerk Laura Houchens, Mary Esther, Recorder

MINUTES

No minutes were available to approve as there was no quorum at the last meeting on May 3, 2001.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Councilwoman Sara Carroll reported that the balance is \$3034.86 as of June 6, following payment for the May lunches. All dues have been paid by the cities.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Chris Holley said he was there to speak about where the County was in regards to the one-cent sales tax, recapping that the County Attorney John Dowd had sent a draft of an interlocal agreement and ordinance to everyone. They're trying to get this approved by July 24th in order to avoid having to spend many thousands of dollars to hold a separate referendum. Mr. Holley spoke at length regarding the current judicial facility's shortcomings, then turned to the recent campaign the conference center supporters had with a PAC (Political Action Committee). He thought using this success to model a one-cent sales tax committee would be prudent, with a citizen's committee acting with guidance from the cities and County. Funds could be raised by this committee, and used for public education of the project. He asked each municipality to have at least two citizens who would be able to represent their community who were willing to spend the next two or three months on this committee. He mentioned some lawyers, Chamber members, and others who have already volunteered, emphasizing that we do need some from the north end of the County, and named some from Destin and other areas who have been recommended. This committee, in order to be effective, he said would have to have public relations guidance, and time will not allow for a drawn-out formal selection process. The estimates for this campaign are in the \$100,000 range so far, and the name that has been recommended for public relations is Dennis Gilson. Expenditure of funds could not occur until after the ordinance was passed, he concluded.

Mayor Thomas said that at the last meeting it was discussed that the Board would like to have elected officials on the committee, and that they would like to have a campaign name (Pennies for Prosperity was suggested by Ms. Houchens at that meeting, and it was well received.) Commissioner Ransom confirmed that the County's big project that is sorely needed is a governmental complex. She also asked Mr. Holley who the PAC would be chaired by, and if Mr. Gilson had

experience, and he said he did. Mr. Holley added that Mr. Chesser was taking care of all of the legal issues. Comm. Ransom also said that she liked the idea of the political action committee, but that it would be called a "citizens advisory committee" who would be performing the action. *(Col. Smith joined the meeting at this point and was introduced to the guests).* Comm. Ransom also spoke about alternative funding sources for projects, and the public's more positive reaction to the one cent sales tax in lieu of increased property taxes. Mayor Glover confirmed Comm. Ransom's statement about the possibility of a true rolling back of property taxes, adding that getting the tourists to assist with the funding is an idea she also is in favor of. Comm. Ransom said that a Judge's Court Order to build a new governmental center (containing courtrooms) would force us to action, whether it's funded by the property tax or sales tax.

Comm. Strong and Ransom spoke about the cost of operations in government, and Mr. Holley added that the County Commission had actually reduced the millage rate for the past five years. Comm. Ransom added that the property is increased in value every year by the Property Appraiser, which confuses the taxpayers when you tell them that their millage rate is lower and they know they have a higher tax bill. Mayor Combs asked if the entire Board of County Commissioners are behind the one cent tax, and Mr. Holley discussed the reservations of one or two particular members. Supporting the public's right to vote is one thing, but one member thinks the City's are not assisting with the funding of the governmental center. Comm. Strong informed the County representatives that 67% of the sales tax dollars are collected in the Cities, and we only get 40% of that. At least 25% of what we get back goes towards County projects, he continued, and illustrated with hypothetical dollar figures.

Mr. Holley asked the status of the agreement and ordinances, and most said it had been approved by their municipality already. Mayor Thomas said that it had been discussed in Mary Esther, but the Council would not sign it unless it were changed to read "one cent on the dollar" consistently throughout. It was discussed that this may enact a new approval cycle, but argued that the change was purely administrative and not of content. Laurel Hill had not approved the agreement as yet, either. There was more discussion about having elected officials on the CAC and getting the word out on the referendum vote. Unity in staging the referendum, the public perception, the elected officials input, having a citizen and an oversight committee (composed of two representatives from each city with not more than one elected official) were also discussed. Commissioner Ransom said that the biggest problem would be to not interfere with the committee once they get started. Cwmn. Miller said that the people and Council in Laurel Hill only feel comfortable with her being their representative on this committee, and as a public official, is being told now that she should not be a party to it. Mr. Holley said that she could be on the oversight committee, but needs to find someone to be on the citizen's committee. Mayor Glover reminded her that Laurel Hill had been voted to receive double the funds if this tax passes.

Mayor Combs announced that he had to leave, but reminded everyone of the League of Cities dinner on the 21st at 6 p.m. (social hour) and 7 p.m. meeting at Eglin Officer's Club. Mike Chesser will be present to discuss some legal issues regarding e-mail. Also, the newly renovated City Hall in Shalimar is having a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 4:30 and open house all day long. He invited all to please come, as the employees have worked very hard for the celebration and response has been low. Chris Holley also departed at this time.

Mayor Glover was asked about the International Roundtable Program, and deferred it to the next meeting.

Mayor Thomas spoke about the one cent sales tax discussions that were televised, and Mayor Combs relayed that in three newsletters their town has published with related articles, no complaints had been received.

NEW BUSINESS

Comm. Strong from Valparaiso suggested that the Okaloosa League of Cities recognize our House and Senate representatives every year at the June dinner meeting with a plaque, and maybe even our County Commissioners as they leave their position. He asked everyone to think about this and maybe initiate this in the July lunch meeting and recognize them at the September dinner. Mayor Thomas reminded them that we had made a plaque and Proclamation for Col. Bird naming him an honorary mayor. It was agreed to present this at a dinner meeting, and the next one he is available for this will be done. *(Col. Smith called, and found that Col. Bird was TDY for the June meeting.)*

Mayor Glover said that she would contact Mr. Turnbull from the Florida League of Cities regarding how his roundtable discussions across the state regarding international aspects of assistance for our cities has gone. Comm. Strong agreed, stating that it would be good to let foreign contacts know what is available in our cities. *(Carried forward to the July meeting.)*

ANNOUNCEMENTS / REPORTS FROM CITIES

Valparaiso. Comm. Strong reported that they had one of the original wells go out in his city, and since a new water tank was planned, they sited the new water tank and bought the property for a well there. This emergency situation forced specs being developed, etc. He also reported that they are beginning the budget cycle. He departed for the 1:30 meeting at the County.

Cinco Bayou. Cwmn. Carroll asked if the Board would approve the December League of Cities dinner being held on December 13th rather than the 22nd, as 1) it is too close to Christmas, and 2) in order to have the large room at Soundside, this is the date it is available. The motion was made by Councilwoman Carroll and seconded by Cwmn. Bush, and approved unanimously by the Board. Also she informed the Board that a man from Miami and a large number of attorneys for a license to open an adult bookstore and video store in a vacant building on Eglin Parkway across the street from the Tag and Property Appraisers office. They are fairly confident that this location will be denied because of being within 1000 yards of the church, which is according to the County ordinance and Cinco Bayou uses the County for Code enforcement. She wanted to alert the other cities to be aware and ready should they attempt to locate in their jurisdiction.

County. Commissioner Ransom commented that she was opposed to the new Bridge Authority bill that the Governor signed because if the bridge is not built, the County inherits the additional debt that is incurred with no way to pay for it. The \$1.3 million debt that was run up before is already looming to be paid back if no bridge is built, and if the bridge is built the Bridge Authority will pay both the old and new debt. She asked for serious consideration of support and guidance to the Bridge Authority.

Many whom had not already departed began to leave at this point.

Shalimar. (See above in Old Business).

Crestview. Cmbr. Bush said that their sister city, Isle of Noir Moutier, France is coming to visit in September. They have visited before, and the City will house and entertain them.

Destin. Not present.

Fort Walton Beach. Nothing to report.

Laurel Hill. Nothing to report.

Mary Esther. Nothing to report.

Niceville. Not present.

Eglin AFB. Nothing to report.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:25 p.m.

John Thomas
John Thomas, President

Approved 9-5-01

