

**MINUTES OF THE OKALOOSA COUNTY
LEAGUE OF CITIES
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
THURSDAY, JULY 5, 2001**

CALL TO ORDER

President John Thomas called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. at Cinco Bayou Town Hall.

THOSE PRESENT:

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

ALSO PRESENT:

City Clerk Laura Houchens, Mary Esther, Recorder
Col. Jimmie Smith, Eglin AFB

ABSENT:

Councilwoman Brenda Bush, Crestview
Mayor Ken Beaird, Destin
Councilman Al Swihart, Niceville
Mayor Gary Combs, Shalimar

GUESTS:

City Clerk Helen Spencer, Fort Walton Beach

MINUTES

Motion made by Mayor Glover to approve the regular minutes of Thursday, June 7 and those from the Thursday, June 21 dinner meeting. Motion was seconded by Cwmn. Sara Carroll and passed unanimously.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Cwmn. Sara Carroll reported that the balance previously was \$3,428.51. Two checks were written in June: one for Board lunches (\$72.54), and one for the Trophy Center (Col. Bird plaque, \$32.95). Cash was deposited for lunches (\$19.45). The ending balance is \$3342.47. The treasurer's report was filed for audit.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mayor Thomas led the discussion on the one cent sales tax issue, stating that he had not heard anything from Mr. Dowd regarding this issue. He reminded all of the meeting on July 10th whereby the County Commissioners would be discussing the issue. Comm. Ransom thanked those who were present from the cities, as their presence was critical to show support. She offered to make room on the agenda for the Board to speak as a unified voice, speaking on behalf of the Cities. Comm. Strong said that the Citizens Advisory Committee desired that at least one person from each city be present, and the CAC would make the presentation (one non-elected person from each city) to speak of their needs. Comm. Ransom said she was hoping the discussion could be limited to just one issue, i.e. should this be put on the referendum. Comm. Ransom pointed out that the County could raise the millage rate and increase the property tax for all County residents for 10 or 25 years to raise \$35 million. She also noted that all of the cities need things to keep up with the projected County growth. Comm. Ransom said that by increasing the gasoline tax by 2 cents it would generate \$16.6 million dollars – over a 25-year period! The tourists would also pay about 1/3 of this, same as the sales tax. She also spoke about using the cost of using the transportation trust fund, which is more expensive than the sales tax for generating revenue. The 17% increase in population within the next 10-15 years in the County demands more revenue from some source.

Mayor Glover said she had spoken with a representative at the Florida League of Cities about the Roundtable program, and so far there has only been one meeting, which was held in Orlando. It was very successful, she reported, and more meetings of this type are desired to encourage the international businesses locating in this state. Comm. Strong mentioned that this would be a topic at the annual FLoC meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Confirm Representative of the Year (for September Dinner Meeting Award). Comm. Strong said we had a lot of support from our representatives, such as Senator Clary and Rep. Melvin. At the NWFL League of Cities meeting, it was asked of him if we make an award to a local representative like the NWFL League does, and he suggested that we give one to Jerry Melvin at the June meeting. He is requesting that the OLoC Executive Board initiate this, and select either one person or one from the House and Senate. Comm. Strong said since we're incorporated now is a good time, so this League would move to the next level. Guidelines were discussed, and Mayor Thomas suggested that all cities report back with their nominee. All were in agreement to choose one, and have this done by the September meeting. Comm. Strong said that Sen. Clary helped the Legislative committee in Tallahassee with Growth Management analysis this year, explaining the default formula on sales tax to the Board.

AirTran Serving Pensacola. Comm. Strong discussed the major effort to move AirTran (TransAir) to Pensacola to see if the League could show their support in an effort to halt this action. Comm. Ransom and Cmbr. Carroll spoke about the huge amount of funds Pensacola is offering to relocate. Losing the Panama City tourists is one loss they would face if they were in Pensacola, and Comm. Strong asked if the County could offer them anything to stay. She said that they had offered to reduce their cost of leasing space at the airport. Comm. Strong said his city would show their support, and other cities would probably do so as well. Comm. Ransom suggested that a resolution be passed showing support of AirTran staying in Okaloosa County. Comm. Strong motioned that Mayor Thomas prepare a letter and send it to AirTran on behalf of the League, and do a resolution for the County stating that the League requests the County to do everything they can to keep AirTran here and how much they are appreciated. The motion was seconded by Mayor Glover and passed unanimously. The Airport expansion was briefly mentioned.

Electing Officers and Term. Comm. Strong asked that the Board consider changing the Charter to state that the officers be elected for a 2-year term. Changing the By-Laws was discussed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS / REPORTS FROM CITIES

Cinco Bayou. Cmbr. Carroll showed the ceremonial FRDAP check they had received from the State. She also invited everyone to look at the drainage ditch that nobody claims to own, which has been cleaned out thanks to labor provided by prisoners. She passed on for information that she had purchased the list of registered voters in Cinco Bayou from the County, and only 29% of those on the list were accurate. Returned letters mailed to those on the list accounted for 66%! She was very concerned about the inaccuracy of the list, and the sentiment was echoed by those present. Pat Hollern's office said there was no way to purge the records, and Comm. Ransom said that Ms. Hollern said she *does* purge every year. Comm. Ransom suggested that Ms. Hollern be sent a copy of the returned envelopes.

Crestview. No report.

Destin. No report.

Fort Walton Beach. Publix opened last Wednesday. The NWFL Ballet Building has had the floor poured, and the new library and Acura buildings are having the steel set now. The City also had a great 4th of July celebration with standing room only in the crowd.

Laurel Hill. The Mayor had fired the City Attorney twice last month, and the City Clerk also on June 29, and is now in Tallahassee trying to get rid of three council members by recall or other means. Another rezoning issue is coming before the Council. A hearing on the restaurant rezoning is scheduled for next month, and the citizen who is trying to have this restaurant seems to be the responsible person for all of this turmoil. The background of these actions was discussed.

Mary Esther. Volunteers for the Code Enforcement Board are being solicited, with two applications received thus far of the five needed. The City is looking much better thanks to the Code Compliance. We are getting ready for the Veteran's Day Parade. The City has also received two FRDAP checks, and would like to have them presented at the September dinner meeting by Jerry Melvin, along with the other cities who have received these. Mayor Thomas said, suppose he is selected as representative of the year, he could be awarded a certificate (a plaque, Comm. Strong said). Cmbr. Carroll asked if we had a representative on the CAC for the Penny Sales Tax, saying that we haven't had a representative coming to the meetings, and possible candidates were discussed.

Niceville. No report.

Shalimar. No report.

Valparaiso. Preliminary budget numbers are not good – need the penny sales tax! Revenue sharing looks good. They have to drill a new well because one of their wells went out. The fireworks display was very successful last night with a large turnout. The City did a survey with their customers on garbage in an effort to reduce worker's comp, and all of the residents were in favor of back-yard pick-up, so their rates will be high. The September dinner meeting will be sponsored by Valparaiso at the Eglin Officer's Club on the 20th, and having television and/or newspaper coverage at it was discussed. Comm. Strong said that they used to always invite and pay for the press to attend these meetings, and have gotten away from it because they were the only ones who were doing so. Mayor Thomas mentioned having Col. Bird there, and Col. Smith said he would check his schedule.

County. Commissioner Ransom had nothing more to report.

Eglin AFB. Col. Smith said that there was a Tops in Blue coming up this Saturday night.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Thomas said that the next meeting is Thursday August 2nd. Cmbr. Carroll also mentioned the new storm shutters, thanks to a FEMA grant, on Town Hall. It has also reduced their air conditioning costs. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:12.

John Thomas
for John Thomas, President
Wh *Approved 9/4/01*

