

**CITY OF PUNTA GORDA, FLORIDA
LOCAL OPTION SALES TAX COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
CHARLOTTE HARBOR EVENT CENTER
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2019 1:00 P.M.**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mary Boeringer, Burnt Store Isles; Tom Cavanaugh, Team Punta Gorda; Kelly Gaylord, District 2; Jay Gile, Burnt Store Meadows; Mary Harbour, Visual Arts Center; Melissa Lockhart, District 5; Ashley Maher, Charlotte Community Foundation; John Miller, Punta Gorda Isles Civic Association; Gene Murtha, History Center; John Peterman, District 1; Don Sabatini, District 4; Jim Sanders, Economic Development Partnership; Bob Sifrit, Historic District Homeowners Association; Robert Toth, Seminole Lakes; John Welsh, Boaters Alliance; John Wright, Punta Gorda Chamber

MEMBERS ABSENT: Julia Bowser, District 3

CITY EMPLOYEES PRESENT: Debby Carey, City Councilmember; City Manager Howard Kunik; Melissa Reichert, Communications Manager; Kristin Simeone, Finance Director; Pam Davis, Police Chief; Ray Briggs, Fire Chief; Mitchell Austin, Chief Planner; Mark Gering, City Engineer

CALL TO ORDER/ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Ms. Melissa Reichert, Communications Manager, confirmed there were no public comments at this time. She then requested members' feedback on the action register provided by Mr. Sabatini.
- Messrs. Sifrit and Cavanaugh spoke in favor of the action register.
- Mr. Murtha commented an action register was not needed, opining the minutes were sufficient.
- Discussion ensued, with consensus of members to include an action register going forward.

WORKSHOP TOPICS

- A. Minutes
 - Ms. Gaylord MOVED, Mr. Wright SECONDED approval of the September 30, 2019 minutes. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.
- B. Sales Tax Projects from 2015 Election
 - Ms. Reichert drew attention to the sales tax projects list previously requested, asking members for their comments.
 - Mr. Miller confirmed additional projects would be reviewed at the November 18, 2019 meeting.

- Mr. Cavanaugh announced Team Punta Gorda would submit three projects for consideration prior to the deadline for public suggestions.
- Mr. Sifrit inquired when members would receive material regarding projects suggested by the public.
- Ms. Reichert replied material on those projects should be ready by December 15, 2019.

C. October Projects

- Mr. Mitchell Austin, Urban Design Planner, Mr. Mark Gering, City Engineer, Ms. Pam Davis, Police Chief, and Mr. Ray Briggs, Fire Chief, then proceeded with presentations on proposed local sales tax program projects.

Bayfront Activity Center

- Would rehabilitate interior and exterior of structure and address Americans with Disability Act (ADA) compliance issues. Historic grant funding possible. Tenant participation in improvements possible. Operating costs expected to remain the same or decrease. Design work likely to be contracted separately. All work to meet current hurricane codes.
- Project's alignment with the scoring criteria reviewed.
- Mr. Miller inquired as to the impact of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's 50% rule.
- Mr. Austin replied certain exterior improvements, particularly architectural enhancements, included in the estimate would not be considered under the 50% rule.
- Mr. Welsh inquired as to the inclusion of air conditioning repairs, stating the building's air conditioning system required work.
- Mr. Austin replied he was unaware of any such issues, stating he would investigate same.
- Mr. Toth noted the program would not be voted on until November 2020, inquiring as to how the expenditures could be denoted in 2020.
- Mr. Austin replied staff had completed the project's Capital Improvement Sheet pursuant to City Council's direction, acknowledging the project was not yet funded.
- Ms. Gaylord confirmed funds denoted in 2020 should cover the project's costs if it proceeded in 2021.
- Scoring sheets completed.

Henry Street Sidewalk

- Would fill sidewalk network gap on Henry Street between US 41 and Shreve Street. Drainage work related to swales and connection to a tidal water body included.
- Project's alignment with the scoring criteria reviewed.
- Ms. Gaylord questioned if all sidewalk would be installed on one side of the roadway.

- Mr. Austin replied same would depend on drainage conditions, explaining crosswalks would be installed at Lemon Street and McGregor Street.
- Discussion ensued regarding installation of sidewalks related to new commercial and multi-family development.
- Mr. Cavanaugh confirmed drainage conditions might prevent installation of sidewalk along certain portions of Henry Street.
- Ms. Gaylord stated this project would impact a large residential population.
- Mr. Wright confirmed this project was a City Council priority.
- Scoring sheets completed.

Freeman House Assessment and Renovations

- Registered on National Register of Historic Places. Would fund historic building evaluation and related renovations. Historic grant funding possible for evaluation and construction. Tenant participation in improvements possible. Construction estimate produced by Public Works' staff based on the structure's known condition. Roof last evaluated in 2015. Evaluation costs based on City Hall's historic building evaluation.
- Project's alignment with the scoring criteria reviewed.
- Mr. Murtha opined the building had not been adequately maintained over the years, suggesting operating costs should be determined for its maintenance.
- Mr. Wright inquired as to the project's prioritization.
- Ms. Kristin Simeone, Finance Director, stated replied projects submitted were unfunded and years were identified for desired implementation if funding became available.
- Mr. Wright inquired when sales tax funds would become available.
- Ms. Simeone replied funds would be disbursed monthly beginning in January 2020.
- City Manager Kunik explained the Freeman House was gifted to the City by the Charlotte Community Foundation, noting it was previously located adjacent to the Bayfront Punta Gorda campus. He recalled it was relocated around 2005 or 2006, noting the City had paid for relocation and renovation with sales tax funds. He concluded by commenting favorably on the historic structure.
- Scoring sheets completed.

Historic District Infrastructure

- Based on analysis conducted by ISS Engineering. Would address sidewalk gaps, street lighting and drainage. Promoted public safety. Grant funding not anticipated. Joint participation not anticipated. Would directly benefit special-needs populations, particularly low- to moderate-income and minority populations. Additional operating costs related to drainage, sidewalk and lighting anticipated.
- Project's alignment with the scoring criteria reviewed.

- Ms. Gaylord inquired as to how this project related to the Historic District Street Lights Project.
- Mr. Austin replied one concerned the east side of the Historic District and the other was for the west side.
- Mr. Cavanaugh confirmed the Punta Gorda Housing Authority would not be responsible for any of the project costs.
- Mr. Murtha questioned if different levels of priority were given to the sidewalk, lighting and drainage portions of the project.
- Mr. Austin replied a prioritization schedule had been developed to implement the project over time, explaining the different portions were interrelated.
- Mr. Miller inquired if additional detail was available regarding this project.
- Mr. Austin replied affirmatively, offering to provide the report to members.
- Mr. Sifrit questioned if members desired to discuss projects as a group.
- Discussion ensued with Ms. Reichert explaining projects would be discussed in greater detail when the Committee began prioritization of same.
- Mr. Peterman noted Dover Kohl had identified the area east of US 41 as having affordable housing, questioning if the project would increase property values.
- Mr. Austin replied property values in the area had increased significantly, opining the Citywide Master Plan had examined how to balance land value and development opportunities.
- Scoring sheets completed.

Park & Facility Signs to Reflect New Brand

- Continuation of previous project. Would rehabilitate remainder of existing outdoor decorative signage to match current City branding. No grant funds available. Joint participation not anticipated. No special-needs populations served. Same materials to be used as existing signage.
- Project's alignment with the scoring criteria reviewed.
- Ms. Gaylord inquired as to the lifespan of the signs.
- Mr. Austin replied the existing aluminum signage was in good condition and would last for some time.
- Ms. Gaylord suggested the signs be replaced as they aged.
- Mr. Austin replied contractors were unlikely to rehabilitate and install one sign, noting the City had a difficult time procuring bids for the initial project due to its limited size.
- Mr. Murtha spoke in favor of cohesive City branding, opining the estimated cost was minimal.

- Ms. Gaylord inquired if the Trabue Park sign mentioned in a footnote would be paid for with funds from the Fishermen's Village settlement.
- Mr. Austin replied he believed so.
- Scoring sheets completed.

Harborwalk- US 41 NB Bridge Underpass Improvements

- Widening of existing, narrower than standard Harborwalk path addition of lighting similar to that installed at US 41 Southbound underpass. Relatively high project cost for small area due to construction constraints caused by the bridge height. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) grant funding or joint participation possible. No special-needs populations directly served.
- Project's alignment with the scoring criteria reviewed.
- Ms. Gaylord commented the path was heavily used by both cyclists and pedestrians and served individuals with special needs, noting the narrowed pathway might not be safe for individuals using assistive devices such as walkers or wheelchairs.
- Mr. Mark Gering, City Engineer, explained FDOT had previously limited the sidewalk to no more than 10 feet in width. He then noted a Submerged Land Lease would be required from the State.
- Mr. Murtha confirmed staff desired to widen the path to 12 feet.
- Scoring sheets completed.

Harborwalk - Laishley Park Marriage Point

- Discussed but not funded during creation of previous sales tax program. Would redesign hardscape, correct existing ADA issues and add a gazebo along northeastern portion of Harborwalk. Environmental conditions would be considered during selection of construction materials. Signage regarding park rentals would be installed.
- Project's alignment with the scoring criteria reviewed.
- Ms. Simeone noted this project was approved for funding in the previous sales tax program; however, same was unfunded when the Veteran's Park project was determined to be a higher priority.
- Mr. Miller inquired as to the ADA compliance issues.
- Mr. Austin replied the City's ADA Transition identified ADA-compliance issues at this location.
- Scoring sheets completed.

Historic District Street Lights

- Project related to area west of US 41. Would install decorative streetlights at strategic locations; certain areas in the district already had such lighting. Grant funding not anticipated.

- Project's alignment with the scoring criteria reviewed.
- Scoring sheets completed.

Alligator Creek – US 41 Pedestrian Bridge II

- Related to existing gap in US 41 Multi-Use Recreational Trail (MURT). FDOT participation anticipated with \$290,000 identified for engineering and design of project in Fiscal Year 2024/2025. FDOT typically funded construction two years following engineering and design. City might be required to match FDOT's funds.
- Project's alignment with the scoring criteria reviewed.
- Mr. Welsh confirmed FDOT's funds would be provided toward the end of the sales tax program.
- Ms. Gaylord inquired as to a footnote regarding widening the roadway.
- Mr. Austin replied Charlotte County's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) had noted US 41 would require widening to six lanes to the Burnt Store Road intersection. He noted the LRTP extended through 2040, and the widening might not occur.
- Scoring sheets completed.

Public Safety Building Expansion

- Current structure no longer adequate for level of service provided by Police Department and Fire Department due to growth of the City; additional space required for personnel and storage of records. Continued service level growth would be hindered by current structure. Grant funding not anticipated. Special-needs populations served. Plans included expansion of the rear of the building and rehabilitation of the current facilities. Certain departmental programs constrained by the current facilities.
- Project's alignment with the scoring criteria reviewed.
- Mr. Miller confirmed additional detail could be provided in the future.
- Mr. Sabatini confirmed the project presented this date had been scaled back.
- Mr. Wright questioned if the Police and Fire Departments preferred to remain in their current location.
- Ms. Davis and Mr. Briggs replied the current location allowed for prompt response times.
- Ms. Maher inquired how long the departments could remain at their current location if the project was funded.
- Mr. Briggs replied ten to fifteen years.
- Ms. Gaylord confirmed cost estimates were current, questioning if a buffer had been included to account for increasing construction costs.
- Mr. Gering stated he could not predict whether construction costs would increase or decrease, noting planners often anticipated a 5% increase in costs.

- Mr. Cavanaugh opined the project was beneficial; however, he believed additional avenues of funding should be investigated, such as impact fees.
- Ms. Simeone replied impact fees for public safety had not yet been established; therefore, funds had not accumulated for this type of growth. She explained the consultant studying impact fees would provide a draft impact fee schedule for City Council's consideration, explaining staff did not yet know what impact fee for public safety would be set. She noted such fees could only be used for the portion of the project related to new growth.
- Mr. Miller questioned if staff had calculated the amount of funds generated if the highest fee schedule were selected.
- Ms. Simeone replied fees related to public safety would generate approximately \$3 million dollars over ten years.
- Mr. Wright questioned if the building might become solely a Police Department or Fire Department with a separate building constructed for the other department.
- Mr. Briggs replied the City did not currently own suitable property for such a plan.
- Scoring sheets completed.
- Ms. Gaylord inquired if any projects were slated for later in the sales tax program.
- Ms. Simeone replied projected dates might be adjusted as funding was not available.
- Ms. Gaylord questioned if years should be considered during prioritization.
- Ms. Reichert replied prioritization would be discussed at a future meeting.

D. Complete Count Committee

- Ms. Reichert confirmed Councilmember Carey and Mr. Murtha were interested in participating in Charlotte County's Complete Count Committee. She noted residents would also be offered an opportunity to participate.

STAFF COMMENTS

- Mr. Gering explained scheduling of projects would account for all aspects of the projects, availability of funding and staff time.
- Mr. Cavanaugh inquired as to improvement of a boat ramp at the Bayfront Activity Center.
- Mr. Gering replied the ramp had been constructed circa 2010, explaining constraints related to the ramp's location and permitting had limited same to hand-launches.
- Mr. Welsh questioned if the ramp would become a motor-launch ramp.
- Mr. Gering replied he had not heard any discussion of pursuing such a change.

MEMBER COMMENTS

- Mr. Sabatini remarked conversations sometimes focused on details not pertinent to the Committee's task.

- Mr. Cavanaugh inquired if additional meetings might be required.
- Ms. Reichert replied additional meetings could be scheduled if necessary.
- Ms. Gaylord suggested an additional meeting be scheduled tentatively for February 2020 to ensure members would be available.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS

- Ms. Julie Jackson, President of Learn to Sail, expressed concern regarding the slipperiness of the boat ramp at the Bayfront Activity Center, noting several volunteers had slipped.
- Ms. Reichert requested members submit their score sheets prior to leaving.

ADJOURNMENT

- The meeting was adjourned at 2:28 p.m.

Communications Manager

Recording Secretary