

# ***BIG - C***

## ***Barrier Islands Governmental Council***

### MEETING MINUTES

September 30, 2009

#### Present::

Belleair Beach	Vice Mayor Kathy Mortensen
Belleair Shore	Mayor John A. Robertson
Clearwater	Councilman George Cretelos
Indian Rocks Beach	Commissioner Terry Hamilton Wollin
Indian Shores	Mayor Jim Lawrence
Madeira Beach	Mayor Pat Shontz
North Redington Beach	Mayor William Queen
Redington Beach	Mayor Nick Simons
Redington Shores	Mayor Bert Adams
Treasure Island	Mayor Bob Minning
St. Pete Beach	Commissioner Jim Parent

#### Guest Speakers:

Supervisor of Elections (Pinellas County)	Deborah Clark
Progress Energy	Melissa Seixas Bob McCabe

#### Guests Present:

St. Pete Beach	Mike Finnerty, Mayor
Madeira Beach	W. D. Higginbotham
Indian Shores	Carole Frelan

	Joan Herndon
	Marcia Grantham
	Pat Newsome
	Bill Smith, Councilor
Sand Key Sun	Phyllis Johnson
Treasure Island	Carol Coward
Indian Rocks Beach	Jo Nocera
	Bert Nocera
	R. B. Johnson, Mayor
	Joanne Kennedy, Vice Mayor
	Daniel Torres, Commissioner
	Jose Coppen
	Dean A. Scharmen, Public Svcs.

City Manager

Charles S. "Chuck" Coward, City

Convention/Visitors' Bureau	Rhonda Sanborn
Sen. Dennis Jones' Ofc.	Doris Burns
Barrier Islands Gazette	Rob Piccirillo
Belleair	Stephanie Oddo
South Pasadena	Kathleen Peters
Tampa Bay Beaches CoC	Doreen Moore
	Robin Grabowski
Judicial Candidate	Keith Meyer
Redington Beach	Fran Yurasko
Pinellas Co. Planning	Sandra Knoebel
Pinellas Panning Council	Linda Fisher
Sand Key Civic Assoc.	Nick Fritsch
N. Redington Beach	Jerry Knight
Tampa Bay Newspapers	Bob McClure

Commissioner Wollin welcomed attendees to Indian Rocks Beach.

**1. Pledge of Allegiance**

**2. Roll Call**

**3. Approval of Agenda**

Mayor Robertson moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mayor Pat Shontz, and unanimously carried.

**4. Approval of Minutes of June and August meetings.**

Mayor Robertson moved to approve the June and August 2009 Minutes, seconded by Mayor Adams, and unanimously carried.

**5. Approval of Treasurer's Report for August 2009.**

Mayor Lawrence reviewed a charge of \$48 representing the purchase of a plaque for Nicole Elko, Pinellas County Coastal Management.

Mayor Robertson moved to approve the August 2009 Treasurer's Report, seconded by Commissioner Wollin, and unanimously carried.

**6. Correspondence:**

Brickfield e-mail: Mayor Lawrence stated his receipt of an e-mail from Pinellas County Commissioner Neil Brickfield inquiring when the beaches citizen representative's seat on the MPO Citizen Advisory Committee will be filled. Mayor Lawrence requested all beach municipalities research citizen volunteers who may be willing to serve on the MPO Advisory Committee which will be voted on at the next BIG-C meeting.

TDC letter: Mayor Lawrence stated the BIG-C must re-nominate a representative for the BIG-C seat on the Tourist Development Council. He continued that the BIG-C would like to re-nominate Mayor Bill Queen, North Redington Beach, to fill the Barrier Islands Governmental Council seat on the Tourist Development Council. Mayor Minning moved to nominate Mayor Bill Queen with Mayor Pat Shontz seconding, and unanimously carried.

## 7. New Business:

### A. Deborah Clark, Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections

Deborah Clark acknowledged City Clerks Marcia Grantham and Deanne O'Reilly as well as all City Clerks and their municipal responsibilities. Ms. Clark stated that State Statute does not mandate the Supervisor of Elections to conduct elections; it is done by policy and contract. State Law does not require the Supervisor of Elections to do anything for municipal elections except to provide a list of registered voters. She continued that her office provides full turn-key support for all municipal elections and have done so for years.

Deborah Clark presented a PowerPoint presentation reviewing programs such as voting by mail, which has become more popular. She continued that currently there is a Federal legislative bill in the U. S. House of Representatives to mandate "no excuse absentee voting" nationwide which increases voter turn out and is more convenient for voter participation. Oregon has conducted all of their elections by mail and has a consistently high voter turn out, no massive voter fraud and now the entire state of Washington will begin conducting that state's elections by mail.

Ms. Clark addressed the following topics:

***Voting By Mail*** - the Supervisor of Elections encouraged voters to sign up for mail ballots in 2008. It is legal in the state of Florida for any registered to sign up for a mail ballot for every election in which the voter is eligible to vote. The number of voter requests for mail ballots were increased by 400% in 2008 (between January and November). More

people are voting prior election day, either by an early voting site or by mail. In the recent St. Petersburg September 1 primary, 54% of voters cast their ballot, prior to election day, by mail.

**Ballot Mailing Schedule** - is a point of discussion. The past mailing schedule is consistent with what is being done today. What may be gaining attention is the greater number of mail ballots and the impact it could have on election results. There is a legal deadline to get ballots out to oversea voters. Also ballots for military personnel are mailed at the same time as they are anywhere in the world. In 2008, 70% of the mail ballots which were returned late were mailed within 4 weeks of the election. She stated her belief that it is not right to allow the media or the candidate(s) to determine when ballots should be mailed to voters, and stated there are no better reasons to mail ballots than the ballots are ready to go out and voter request(s).

**Election Costs** - Ms.Clark stated the Supervisor of Elections Office staff has done a remarkable job managing and reducing election costs. Election costs increased, between the years 2000 and 2008, 282% as a result of mandates at the state or federal level. Approximately five years ago, research was begun to reduce election costs such as reducing the number of polling locations and reducing the number of poll workers by combining precincts at the same polling location which resulted in saving a tremendous amount of money which is passed on to municipalities.

Ms. Clark stated that early remote voting sites were eliminated. By law, the Supervisor of Elections must provide early voting sites at elections offices, therefore, the three early voting sites, for the 2008 general election, cost \$60,000 each. Most, if not all, of Florida municipalities have opted out of providing early voting as a result of the costs.

As election day costs have been reduced dramatically, that will help to balance out the cost of mail balance. Also, contracts with vendors have been re-negotiated. The cost of printing ballots has been reduced 30%; the contract for delivering equipment and supplies

to polling places and returning to the election center was recently re-negotiated and effected a 30% reduction; and a savings of a couple hundred thousand dollars will be realized by using an Oldsmar envelope supplier.

Ms. Clark stated that a majority of municipalities are seriously conducting all of their elections by mail. Florida Statute does not allow the Elections Office to conduct a mail ballot election if there are candidates on the ballot, therefore, for a complete mail ballot election, the Florida Statute would have to be changed.

Ms. Clark addressed municipalities changing their city election date to coincide with the general election; some cities are considering it while other cities have made the change. The advantages are cost savings, voter turn out will increase while the disadvantages can be voter drop off (long general election ballots), press coverage for city elections may diminish. Some cities have lengthened the terms of office so that elections are held less frequently which reduces the cost. More municipalities which have the authority to fill a vacancy look at that rather than the cost of a special election.

**Election Schedule** - Many cities have moved to the March date. The gubernatorial primary is scheduled for August 2010 which provides more time between the primary and general elections.

**Supervisor of Elections Website** - Ms. Clark asked for helpful suggestions and stated that more and more information is being posted as suggestions come are received.

Ms. Clark summarized by stating that revised cost estimates have been forwarded to the cities, and some of the elections costs have been reduced and those savings have been passed on to the municipalities.

Ms. Clark expressed her congratulations to the City of Indian Rocks Beach on its selection of Charles Coward as City Manager.

Ms. Clark expressed her appreciation for the invitation to the BIG-C meeting, and asked for questions from attendees.

Mayor Lawrence inquired about the process to change a municipality's election date and Ms. Clark stated there is a new statute, effective July 1, 2008, which states that municipalities can, by ordinance, change their election day so it coincides with the primary or general election where there is a countywide or statewide election. There is a provision that the candidate qualifying period must be at least 14 days long. She continued that even though the statute allows cities to have their election in conjunction with the primary election, she stated there is concern that those elections are becoming too partisan. If a city is having its election in conjunction with the primary, that is a partisan election even if there are non-partisan candidates on that ballot; voters perceive the primary is a partisan election at which political parties select their nominees. As the primaries consistently have poor turn out, Ms. Clark expressed hope that mail ballots will improve that situation.

Mayor Robertson stated his municipality changed their election from November to March at the request of the Supervisor of Elections, and found that March was more advantageous on the beaches as that is when a lot of the homeowners are here.

Ms. Clark stated her belief that as a result of having multiple elections on the same day, more media attention is given as well as more voters are here rather than in the summer months and elections costs are shared when elections are held on the same day. Cost estimates indicate that when a "stand alone" election is held on a day when there is no other election, municipalities incur all the election costs. If municipalities have all elections on the same day, elections set up, ballot and mailing costs are shared. However, it is up to each municipality to decide what is best for their voters.

Ms. Clark stated there have been two all mail elections, Oldsmar had their regular city election in March and on the same day, they had a mail ballot election in

unincorporated East Lake area, which received a 63% turn out in the mail ballot election. Belleair Bluffs had a recent referendum election on September 3, and experienced a 38% turn out.

Ms. Clark stated she will forward the information regarding the envelope company.

B. Melissa Seixas/Bob McCabe, Progress Energy

Chairman Lawrence introduced Melissa Seixas, Community Relations Director - Progress Energy, who, in turn, introduced Bob McCabe, Progress Energy Lighting Department, who addressed municipal light pole testing.

Mr. McCabe addressed improvements to the holiday lighting receptacles on the poles which Progress Energy maintains. The receptacles located on the decorative poles are leased, monthly, from Progress Energy, while others are located on distribution poles and there are receptacles that municipalities own, which will incur a cost for repair.

Leased receptacles do not incur repair costs as they are included in the monthly lease. Any issues related to non-working holiday receptacles should be outlined in a recent mailing which should be completed and returned by October 15 in order to have 30 days to make the necessary repairs. He urged testing of the holiday receptacles throughout each community to be certain that all receptacles are in working in anticipation of the holiday season.

Mr. McCabe stated Progress Energy owns the wood distribution poles, however, municipalities own the those receptacles. He stated that anything above the riser is up to Progress Energy to fix at no cost to municipalities. If the receptacle itself is not working and Progress Energy is called in for repair, an invoice for straight hourly costs will then be generated.

Mr. McCabe stated that Progress Energy has forwarded the lists to each municipality, which should be completed and sent back to Progress Energy by October 15, after which Progress Energy will make the repairs by November 15 and will then forward a statement of costs for those repairs. Municipalities may also make any repairs.

Mr. McCabe addressed adding receptacles to additional poles and stated they are running 8 - 10 weeks out for new construction. Receptacles and risers can be added at any time throughout the year which can avoid the holiday season crunch.

Mr. McCabe advised that all distribution facilities are according to the National Electric Safety Code which are not the same as household receptacles. Only qualified individuals with proper safety equipment should check the receptacles.

## **8. Old Business:**

### **A. Status of County Coastal Management Position.**

Chairman Lawrence stated he wrote a letter to County Administrator Bob LaSala, approximately 6 weeks ago, expressing concern on Dr. Nicole Elko's position. At the Florida Shore and Beach Preservation Association meeting, several members talked to a representative from the Army Corps of Engineers who expressed concern about the permitting process, obtaining permits and ecological issues involved with beach renourishment. Chairman Lawrence then phoned three of the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners expressing concern on filling Dr. Elko's position, which prompted a return call from County Administrator LaSala who explained the County's efforts in filling the gap until an RFP is issued to hire a consultant to do the job.

Chairman Lawrence continued that he had a conversation with Will Davis, Pinellas County Environmental Department, who was urged by County Administrator LaSala to respond. As a result, a tentative meeting has been set with Jackie Kieser, Army Corps of Engineers, Will Davis, Pinellas County Environmental Dept., and BIG-C members to advise

what the County is doing to cover this issue and what the Corps of Engineers will be doing to assist. He suggested setting a meeting for Monday, October 26, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. at the Town of Indian Shores, which attendees affirmed, and stated a final notice will be sent out to BIG-C members.

#### B. Off-Shore Oil Rig Drilling Sub-Committee Report

Chairman Lawrence stated a subcommittee was formed to review the pros and cons and obtain data on the off shore oil rig drilling issue. He further stated a draft of a potential resolution was sent out and then introduced Bill Smith, Councilmember, Town of Indian Shores.

Councilmember Smith stated committee members (composed of Mayor Bob Minning, Nick Fritch and Bill Smith) have been working on building a case opposing off shore drilling to include networking with the Suncoast League and other local leagues and communicating with as many state senators as possible. He addressed the FSBPA Annual Conference and the need for a BIG-C Off Shore Drilling Resolution. The Committee wanted to take advantage of the FSBPA Conference to help build a network of support around the state. Debbie Flack, FSBPA, was of tremendous assistance which resulted in holding a BIG-C branded session at the Conference which garnered approximately 20 attendees from around the state including Sen. Dennis Jones and Susan Glickman.

He continued that BIG-C is gathering a lot of attention with the FSBPA as it is one organization which speaks on behalf of 11 cities. FSBPA has been collecting resolutions opposing off shore drilling from around the state and approximately half of those have come from BIG-C communities or other resolutions which have been passed along to the FSBPA.

He stressed the need for the BIG-C to produce a resolution opposing off shore drilling, a copy of which was included in the agenda packet. The Committee is requesting consideration and adoption of this resolution, or a reasonable facsimile, at this meeting. The

proposed resolution focuses strictly on off shore drilling in Florida waters, i.e. within 10 miles of the Florida coastline.

Councilmember Smith then turned the meeting over to Chairman Lawrence for a vote on the resolution.

Mayor Robertson observed the rigs, which have been utilized in Australian waters, are the same type of rig being proposed for use in the 3 - 10 miles offshore, however the maps refer to a "protected area" around Pinellas County, which covers 3 miles which leaves 7 miles which is well within a danger of having a spill or residue coming up on shore. He moved to approve the resolution, with Commissioner Wollin seconding the motion.

Chairman Lawrence opened the meeting to discussion.

Commissioner Cretkos stated his request to strike Whereas Clause #2 from the resolution as it dilutes the resolution by casting a negative light.

Mayor Robertson concurred with deleting Clause #2, seconded by Commissioner Wollin.

Councilor Smith stated as an example if Sarasota County is not a protected county and they experience an oil spill, Pinellas County may get the oil by way of a "loop" current which can carry anything around the entire coast of Florida, even the east coast.

Chairman Lawrence asked to poll each BIG-C member:

Robertson	Belleair Shore	Yes
Shontz	Madeira Beach	Yes
Minning	Treasure Island	Yes
Queen	N. Redington Beach	Yes
Simon	Redington Beach	Yes

Cretekos	Clearwater	Yes
Wollin	Indian Rocks Beach	Yes
Finnerty	St. Pete Beach	Yes
Adams	Redington Shores	Yes
Mortensen	Belleair Beach	Abstain*
Lawrence	Indian Shores	Yes

Resolution passes by a vote of 10 to 0 with 1 abstention.

Ms. Mortensen stated this subject is coming before the Belleair Beach Council Meeting on Monday, and it is anticipated to pass, however, she must abstain until that meeting.

Chairman Lawrence stated the resolution will now be put in final format for his signature. Chairman Lawrence requested assistance with a mailing list of who should receive the resolution.

Chairman Lawrence announced speakers who are in support of oil rig drilling who are the Florida Petroleum Council, Tallahassee, and requested assistance in obtaining speakers who are opposed to oil drilling.

**9. Miscellaneous:**

A. Legislative Update

Sen. Jones' representative – no report

B. FSBPA Update

Councilmember Smith commented the FSBPA Board Meeting, held the first day of the conference, and addressed the Walton County Erosion Control Line regarding the State

Statute establishing a line at which the state could do beach renourishments.

This is going to the U. S. Supreme Court; oral arguments are scheduled for December 2, 2009; at issue is whether there was a "taking" when the state established the erosion control line years ago. The state has hired an expert from Yale University, and there may be a special assessment to the beach watch members in payment, approximately \$1,000 to the BIG-C, or \$100 per community.

Councilmember Smith mentioned Stan Tate, President of FSBPA, and David Tate, Executive Director of FSBPA, are both resigning, therefore, Debbie Flack, Legislative Director of FSBPA, has been elected FSBPA President. He continued that Nicole Elko is no longer a Director as a result of the elimination of her position within Pinellas County, and several Directors with 3 year terms were extended with Bill Smith being elected as a new Director. The FSBPA Board consists of 12 members with the BIG-C now having a representative on the FSBPA Board.

Chairman Lawrence extended congratulations to Councilmember Smith in obtaining a seat on the FSBPA Board.

Chairman Lawrence stated the national convention (ASBPA) would like as many city representatives/mayors/elected officials to attend the opening session scheduled for October 14, 2009 @ 1:00 p.m. He continued that the BIG-C is being presented with a national award which means attendance at the awards ceremony at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 15, 2009 and stated he will be attending that ceremony and invited BIG-C members to join him. Also, the BIG-C will be presenting Dr. Nicole Elko with a recognition plaque for her service.

#### C. Penny for Pinellas Update

Chairman Lawrence stated he and Mayor Simons met with Brian Smith, liaison

between the BIG-C and Pinellas County for the Penny for Pinellas Gulf Boulevard.

Mayor Simons invited Mr. Smith to address questions regarding projects which have been approved and is in the hands of Pinellas County government, in addition to Indian Shores' and Clearwater's requests for reimbursement. He continued that there was no "point person" within Pinellas County government from which to obtain answers.

He stated a request was made to institute a procedure so that local governments could proceed with plans for Gulf Boulevard improvements and would know who to contact, what the timetable was and when to expect approval for some of the projects.

Chairman Lawrence stated that, regarding the June 22 Budget Workshop, the CIP Plan meant a 25% decrease in the amount of money that the 11 cities would receive, i.e. from \$35 million down to \$26.25 million and a 2 year delay in the initiation of the program, 2011 to 2013. When the county passed that budget, they also passed the CIP which prompted a letter to the County Administrator (LaSala) requesting verification of the 25% decrease. Chairman Lawrence received a response from the County Administrator who confirmed that if the 25% decrease passes, the CIP is also passed. However, the CIP is reviewed every 3 months and totally briefed every 6 months. Chairman Lawrence stated he attended a meeting and addressed the elected officials stating that while the staff has a job to do which is to meet the holes and make everything balance, it was a mistake to treat Gulf Boulevard Beautification as a brick and mortar type project when it was not a project, but a commitment. It was a commitment passed by the Board of County Commissioners on June 8, 2008. He stressed to the County Commission that it was a commitment the County Commission made and urged Commission Members to stand behind the commitment.

He continued that during the discussion portion of the Budget, County Commissioner Brickfield addressed the issue and urged other Commission Members to address the Gulf Boulevard commitment, which generated discussion. Three of four County Commissioners spoke in support of the Penny for Pinellas program and elicited a promise from County Administrator LaSala to review the issue within a three month time frame as well as give the

Commissioners more flexibility in decision making regarding projects that get funded, do not get funded, get pushed out or pushed up. Staff had been making those decisions and the County Commissioners wish to become more directly involved in the process.

The worst that can happen is a 25% less than what the communities thought they had; while the best that can happen is 100%. Chairman Lawrence stated that, as an organization, prior to the April 2009 review, as many “spade in the ground” projects should be placed into the application process so when County Commissioners review, they are able to see there are projects which can effect beautification and improvement within a relatively short time.

Mayor Simon stated that in order to bring a project out of the ground will require design and design requires an investment and municipalities do not want to make that investment without knowing how much and when, which was the question raised to Brian Smith.

Mr. Smith reviewed the budget reduction proposals in the early workshops, the \$35 million for 5 years would be proposed to be reduced by 25% so instead of \$7 million per year, it would \$5.25 million a year and would begin in 2013 rather than 2011.

However, the County Commission recognized that, even though they were formally adopting the CIP at that meeting, there would be a workshop later to fine tune it as a result of project reduction costs were coming in lower and the revenue might be different. The County Commission desired to set a workshop in January 2010, however County Administrator LaSala stated revenue will be unknown which then moved a workshop to April 2010.

Mr. Brian Smith urged municipalities to be ready with projects for 2011 versus 2013.

Chairman Lawrence stated the BIG-C should get all of the projects in and then make the determination of which project can be done immediately versus projects which can be done later.

Mayor Queen stated his proposal is laying on Peter Yauch's desk and has heard nothing regarding its progress.

Mr. Smith stated he can get a response within a week or two on the project.

Mr. Smith suggested creating a sub-committee to gather all municipalities' projects, so that he can meet with Pete Yauch and define priorities.

Chairman Lawrence announced the Pinellas Legislative Delegation has two meetings (November and December) and he will be speaking at the November meeting. He will address oil drilling and Mayor Manning will be speaking at the December meeting on the same subject.

Robin Grabowski, Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber of Commerce, advised BIG-C members the Board has voted and approved their resolution regarding offshore oil drilling which will be disseminated, and offered assistance in getting the resolution out to everyone who should have it.

Stephanie Otto, Commissioner, Town of Belleair, stated Belleair passed a resolution opposing offshore oil drilling.

**City Updates:**

Belleair Shore	None
Madeira Beach	Seafood Festival at the end of October;
Treasure Island	No kegs on the beach;
N. Redington Beach	None
Redington Beach	None
Belleair Beach	Next BIG-C Meeting is Wednesday, October 28 at Belleair Beach; City Hall Open House is Thursday,

October 22, from 5:00p - 7:00 p; will make another attempt to pass a resolution regarding offshore drilling at the Monday night meeting.

Redington Shores

None

St. Pete Beach

Coral Reef developer made a community presentation which was a good meeting and very encouraging; and which may move forward in the next six to ten months;

Indian Rocks Beach

Saturday, October 17 is the annual Oktoberfest held in Kolb Park, and includes Kinderfest (from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. for ages 12 and under) as well as a polka band, bratwurst, beer wagon and a "wife throwing" contest.

Clearwater

Power Boat races the weekend of October 3 - 4; Jazz Holiday on October 15 - 19 at Coachman Park;

Indian Shores

60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Charter Signing held at the Pub on September 24; expressed appreciation to attendees

## 10. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.