

Minutes – December 10, 2008
At the Indian Shores Town Hall

Present:	Belleair Beach	Council Member Kathy Mortensen
	Belleair Shore	Mayor John A. Robertson
	Clearwater	Vice Mayor George Cretekos
	Indian Shores	Mayor Jim Lawrence
	Indian Rocks Beach	Vice Mayor Terry Hamilton Wollin
	Madeira Beach	Mayor Pat Shontz
	North Redington Beach	Mayor Bill Queen
	St. Pete Beach	Mayor Mike Finnerty
	Redington Beach	Mayor Nick Simons

Guest Speakers: Ms. Karen Seel, Pinellas County Commission
Bob Clifford, Executive Director, TBARTA

Guests Present:	Jim Frishe	State Representative, District 54
	Joan Herndon	Vice Mayor, Indian Shores
	Carole Irelan	Council Member, Indian Shores
	Steve Sutch	Council Member, Indian Shores
	Bill Smith	Council Member, Indian Shores
	R.B. Johnson	Mayor, Indian Rocks Beach
	Jerry Knight	Vice Mayor, No. Redington Beach
	Linda Chaney	Commissioner, St. Pete Beach
	Fred Steiermann	Commissioner, Redington Beach
	W.D. Higginbotham	City Manager, Madeira Beach
	Russell Livernois	Chief, Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue
	Rick Walker	Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue
	Nicole Elko	Pinellas County Coastal Management
	Linda Fisher	Program Planner, Pinellas Planning Council
	Sandra Knoebel	Planner, Pinellas County Planning
	Melissa Seixas	Community Relations Mgr, Progress Energy
	Kristi Cheatham	Ext. Affairs Mgr, Clearwater Gas
	Art Newsome	Pres, Indian Shores Property Owners Assn
	Bob McClure	Editor, Tampa Bay Newspapers
	Jose L. Coppen	Indian Rocks Beach
	Mary Sutch	Pres, Indian Shores Women's Club
	Frank Yurasko	Pres, LaContessa Condo, Redington Beach
	Gina McPherson	Reporter, Barrier Island Gazette

1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Roll Call

Mayor Lawrence thanked Deputy Clerk Elaine Jackson for taking minutes of the meeting, the Public Service personnel for setting up the auditorium, Mary Sutch of the Indian Shores Women's Club for the beautiful decorations and Vice Mayor Joan Herndon and Council Member Carole Irelan for arranging for the food.

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion was made by Mayor Robertson, seconded by Mayor Queen, to approve the Agenda for the Big-C Meeting of December 10, 2008, subject to adding under Item 8. Miscellaneous, a report from Chief Livernois, Pinellas Suncoast Fire and Rescue District, relative to pending legislation. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Minutes of October 2008.

Motion was made by Mayor Robertson, seconded Mayor Queen, to approve the minutes of October 2008. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Approval of Treasurer's Report of November 2008

Vice Mayor Cretekos reported a balance of \$1,161.19 after a disbursement of \$263.40 to Digital Eel for web page service. Motion was made by Mayor Roberts, seconded by Mayor Queen to approve the Treasurers report for November 2008. Motion carried unanimously.

6. New Business:

Mayor Lawrence stated that one of his goals as President of the Big-C was to improve open communication with the Pinellas County Commission, by inviting the members to speak at the meetings. Commissioners Duncan and Stewart have appeared in the past, and this month Commissioner Seel agreed to speak.

County Commissioner Karen Seel, District 5, reported the County dedicated one percent of the gas tax revenues for traffic signal system studies to improve real time traffic flow at Gulf to Bay Blvd. as a priority and at 54th Ave. in Pinellas Park at US. 19. Signals are readjusted every three to five years. She invited officials to visit the traffic signal center to view how the system is operating.

Commissioner Seel reported the state of the County is good, and fortunately there are no major budget fluctuations. The County is presently deciding what major projects to present via the federal economic stimulus package, one being the Starkey Rd. improvement from Park Blvd. to Ulmerton Rd, which is ready to go. The County is anxious to begin its own stimulus package, due to lack of business for engineers, architects and contractors.

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Orientation meetings have taken place with the two new County Commissioners, consisting of operational and administrative matters and healthy discussions relative to issues and new ideas. The County Administrator has been directed to conduct meetings with city managers and administrators for ideas and opportunities for consolidation. The Property Appraiser will be taking into account foreclosures, relative to property rolls and removal of highest and best use criteria.

The County has asked for a review of the construction project process - in particular, the new jail medical wing. The final budget close out was approved, but the project went from \$30 million to \$36 million. Four engineers, four contractors and four architects will review the process and advise where improvement can be made.

Commissioner Seel distributed updated brochures relative to Gulf Blvd. Road Improvement Project and stated she was pleased with the progress.

Mayor Shontz expressed concerns relative to the recent meeting whereby the School Board voted to close some community schools. Commissioner Seel suggested interested parties check with local school board officials regarding budget and union constraints and teachers pay increases.

Representative Frishe stated the tax increase relative to school districts is called the "Required Local Effort", which is based on property values and constitutionally requires the State to provide a consistent system of public education statewide. Part of the formula requires wealthier counties to pick up part of the effort locally. In addition to lottery funds, the Legislature has approved more new funding for education every year, except for last year. The State took \$600 million out of transportation budget and put it into health care and education. The school budget increased \$9 million, however, enrollment decreased by 2500 students. A major amount of money was spent on transporting students to maintain balance. In lieu of a tax increase, it is more important to live within our means, which means hard decisions will need to be made. He stated the issue of the highest and best use as appraisal criteria has been removed as of January 1, 2009.

Bob Clifford, Tampa Bay Area Regional Transport Association, gave a presentation, outlining TBARTA achievements and goals. TBARTA was established by the State legislature to look at transportation from a regional perspective. The Tampa Bay region has numerous agencies that are all doing their own thing, wherein TBARTA is trying to look at it more holistically and in an organized way. Regions are lacking effective public transportation systems, such as commuter and light rail systems, thus the present local systems are struggling to handle the volume of commuters. Public transportation needs to have a plan for the future, provide facilities in a more timely fashion, at reduced cost per family, more frequent service, alleviate congestion on the main thoroughfares with bus rapid transit, and connect neighboring counties effectively.

Mr. Clifford addressed the vision for the future of a successful, vibrant transportation system, with solutions to these transportation challenges, such as a transit version of the interstate system that will contribute to economic development of all seven regions from Citrus County in the north to Sarasota County in the south, taking into effect land use coordination and funding provided by tolls, local option gas taxes, impact fees, and a combination of state, local and private sector funding. The master plan will be adopted by the end of February.

7. Old Business

A. TDC and FSBPA BIG-C Representative:

Motion made and seconded to approve appointment of Mayor Pat Shontz as the Big-C representative to the TDC. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion made and seconded to approve appointment of Indian Shores Council Member Bill Smith as the Big-C alternate representative to the FSBPA. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Update on Penny for Pinellas Gulf Boulevard Beautification Program.

Mayor Nick Simons addressed his memo relative to his meeting with Brian Smith of Pinellas Planning Department, wherein it was determined that the undergrounding of utilities was not an option, as costs were prohibitive. Penny for Pinellas money will be available on October 1, 2009, and there was a possibility of accelerated funding as projects are defined, rather than \$7 million per year for the 2010-2015 period. Master plan concepts should be presented to the Big-C for review, with Pinellas County having the final approval and funding, after reimbursement for projects already completed. Funds will be available in nine short months, thus planning needs to start immediately.

C. FSBPA Dues and BIG-C Assessment

Motion made by Mayor Robertson, seconded by Mayor Queen to assess each municipality \$475 each for the FSBPA membership yearly dues, plus \$100 each for BIG-C assessment for operating expenses, for a total of \$575.00. Motion carried unanimously.

8. Miscellaneous

Chief Russell Livernois, Pinellas Suncoast Fire and Rescue District, addressed the pending legislation proposed by Commissioner Janet Long to consolidate fire service and realign district boundaries. He stated if passed, it would affect every household in the district, as it would necessitate a raise in the fire fee, or the station would have to close down by FY 2011/12. The ISO requires an aerial truck within 2 1/2 miles of a built-up district, thus insurance fees would go up as well as a result of the station closing, since trucks will be at 4 mile intervals.

The Commission is also considering taking away more than \$427,000 in EMS support from the fire district. He requested the BIG-C oppose said legislation and write to the Delegation expressing their objections and concerns.

Members expressed concern that the County was attempting to torpedo the station, based on some EMS problems, and forcing redistribution of boundaries and personnel because service is based on a set fee, and questioned whether it was constitutional, since the district residents voted for the present system. Fees are comparatively low for fire services, however, beach communities pay the highest cost of EMS service.

A. Legislative Update.

Representative Frishe reported elected officials are working on changes to the current year budget, as revenues are down \$3.2 billion. Another \$1.2 billion will be eliminated from next year's budget. The Legislative Delegation meeting will address the controversial matter of fire district legislation. This issue will affect municipalities in the Pinellas Suncoast Fire and Rescue District. The County does not like flat rate fee, preferring a millage approach. Representative Frishe reported on looking for ways to pare down costs on fire service, and stated he was eager for reforms and would like to see a flat fee per foot. The second Pinellas Delegation meeting will be held January 9, 2009 at 9:00 A.M. at St. Petersburg College Campus auditorium.

B. Beach Update

Nicole Elko, Pinellas County Coastal Management, reported \$170 million collected from doc stamps. Normally \$30 million would go to the Florida Beach Renourishment Fund, however, only \$5 million or less will be available. Needed projects are Treasure Island, Long Boat Key and St. Pete Beach, which is slated for 2009, with the \$40 million Sand Key project next on list and scheduled for 2010. Federal appropriation requests have been submitted - \$4 million for this year and \$4 million for next year.

Ms. Elko reported on the conference held by American Shore and Beach Preservation Association, (ASBPA) a national, non-profit organization, scheduled for October 2010 at St. Pete Beach at the Trade Winds Resort. Federal Agency representatives, biological organization representatives, and federal funding representatives will be attending. She requested Big-C representatives attend the conference, be educational co-chairs, technical aspects to tourism. Field trips will be planned for visits to communities, panels held, and short courses (Beaches 101).

Meeting adjourned 10:50 A.M.

The next meeting of the Big-C will be held on January 28, 2009 at the Redington Shores Town Hall