

SALES TAX FOCUS GROUP MEETING MINUTES  
March 20, 2014 – 3:00 pm  
18500 Murdock Circle, Room B106, Port Charlotte, FL 33948

**In Attendance:**

Bill Abbatematteo, Donna Barrett, Ruth Bromberg, Rick Brunette, Tom Cavanaugh, Marcia Cullinan, John Dollinger, Judy Malbuisson, Julie Mathis, Gary Quill, Jim Quinn, Tom Rice, Todd Rebol for Kevin Russell, Dr. Doug Whittaker, John Wright, Brian Gleason, – Moderator

Charlotte County Government Staff: Dave Donohew, Hector Flores, Debrah Forester, Elaine Jones, Emily Lewis, Dan Quick, Jason Stoltzfus, Kelly Shoemaker

**Opening Remarks:**

Kelly opened the meeting at 3:00 p.m., distributed score sheets and minutes from last week, and asked for approval of minutes from March 6. Donna moved to approve; Rick seconded. Correction was made to read that minutes from the February 27 meeting were approved and not from February 20. Motion passed unanimously as corrected.

**Six (6) Quality of Life Presentations**

Pedestrian Bridge – Presented by Dan Quick, Director of Public Works

- Over State Road 776 to facilitate pedestrian traffic between Fairgrounds and Sports Park.
- DOT approved

Questions were asked from the Group about a tunnel instead of bridge, revenue sharing with parking fees at Fairgrounds, number of people served, current law enforcement staffing.

Harbor Walk/Gateway – Presented by Debrah Forester, Redevelopment Manager, Charlotte County

- Charlotte Harbor CRA established in 1992 but not funded until 2003.
- Completed projects have been done on an “earn as you go” basis.
- Gateway is Route 41 corridor from the water to Gardner Street.
- Several phases are in planning stages.
- Provide greater public access to the waterfront and related recreational activities.
- Encourage economic development as tourist destination.

Questions from the Group were asked about funds from the CRA, private development, land acquisition,

Charlotte Harbor Trails and Wayfinding – Presented by Debrah Forester

- Charlotte Harbor Redevelopment Plan to create a walk-able place & Master Plan for sidewalks.
- Improve several streets for greater access to Bayshore Live Oak Park and historical area.
- Connects to Gateway Project
- Working with FDOT

The Group had no questions on this proposal.

Veterans Memorial Park – Presented by David Donahew, Veterans Services Officer, Charlotte County

- For year-round use to honor military veterans from Charlotte County.
- Monuments, amphitheater, chapel, memorial plaques, educational markers, gazebos and benches.
- Location to be determined on county-owned land.

The Group asked questions about location, road access, land acquisition, grant opportunities, County Park responsibilities, partial funding, and partnership with Military Heritage Museum.

Family Services Center – Presented by Emily Lewis, Charlotte County Human Services

- In Parkside CRA.
- Currently holds 10 tenants and 240 to 300 visitors annually.
- Needs are better access, updated building facilities and utilities, ADA compliance, security and safety issues.
- Needs assessment shows current location is serving those most in need.
- Two (2) options, both can be phased.
- Option 1 - Remodel and replace building lost due to structural damage

The Group asked questions about renting commercial space as an option, phasing costs, square footage, federal grants and other funding, usage by non-profit groups, revenue from tenants, client usage during construction.

Kelly reported that two landscaping projects and the one for the airport terminal were disqualified from the list because they were not considered to be infrastructure. Therefore, the Group has now received all presentations.

**Public Comments:**

Leroy Furman spoke in support of the Veterans Park, especially having it located in Rotonda, the land is very appropriate, almost 200 retired veterans live in the area, and it would fill a park void in western Charlotte County and honor the sacrifices that veterans have made.

Roger Luedtke expressed his support for the Veterans Park in Rotonda, that it would supplement area Civics class lessons,

Arthur McGinnis talked about a similar park he visited in Taylor County and how inspiring it was. He stressed that it was specific to that county and expressed his hope that the proposed Veterans Park in Charlotte County would be approved.

Joan Fischer thanked the Group for reviewing the proposed projects and commended them for their questions. She further commented that she objects to the money already spent on the Family Services Center and hopes that only renovation is considered and the current location is maintained. She also supported the Veterans Park and her objections to the Cultural Center's project inclusion of the Port Charlotte Library.

Scott Andrichak voiced his objection to the sales tax extension but supports the Veterans Park project. He feels it is needed to honor the Charlotte County military veterans and families.

James Witterson spoke in support of the Charlotte Harbor Gateway project and the potential of this project to Charlotte County.

**Closing Remarks**

The Group discussed options and the process for ranking the projects and decided to select ones that they could definitely put at the top or the bottom of their choices.

The Group agreed to place the following seven (7) projects at the bottom of their priorities:

- Harborview Road, Phase 2
- Port Charlotte Middle School Replacement
- Sheriff's Administration Headquarters & District 2 Headquarters
- Justice Center Expansion
- Murdock Middle School Lightning and Surge Protection
- Two Water Storage Tanks
- Punta Gorda/Burnt Store/Babcock Wellfield Water Treatment Interconnect

The following eight (8) projects were agreed to be ones that the Group definitely places at the top of their priorities:

- Veterans Memorial Park
- South County Library and Archives
- Digital P25 Radio System
- County Schools Classroom Security Function Lock Sets
- County Schools Front Access Control
- County Schools Wireless Access Points
- West County Annex
- Sheriff District 1 (West County) Upgrade

The Group agreed to discuss the remaining projects tomorrow and refine their priorities then.

**Adjournment**

John moved to adjourn at 5:05 p.m. and Judy seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Minutes prepared by Bonnie Leroy.