

Clearwater, Florida, March 7, 2005

A meeting of the Pinellas County Charter Review Commission (CRC) (as created by Chapter 80-950, Laws of Florida) was held in the Swisher Building, Second Floor Conference Room, 509 East Avenue South, Clearwater at 5:04 P.M. on this date with the following members in attendance:

Alan Bomstein, Chairman
Ricardo Davis, Vice-Chairman
James F. Coats, Sheriff
John Bryan, City of St. Petersburg Councilmember
Karen Burns
Katie Cole
Roy Harrell
George Jirotko
Louis Kwall
Roger Wilson

Absent:

Jim Sebesta, State Senator
Susan Latvala, County Commissioner
Robert C. Decker

Also Present:

Kenneth T. Welch, County Commissioner
Robert E. Jackson, City of Largo Mayor
Stephen M. Spratt, County Administrator
D. Gay Lancaster, Chief Assistant County Administrator
James L. Bennett, Chief Assistant County Attorney
Dennis Long, Senior Assistant County Attorney
Chris Staubus, Assistant Director, Utilities
Kurt Spitzer, KS&A
Other interested individuals
Arlene Smitke, Board Reporter

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AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Approval of Minutes
3. Presentations
 - Commissioner Ken Welch
4. Continued Discussion of Local Boards, Authorities and Districts
5. Review of MGT/Pinellas Assembly Reports
6. Discussion of CRC Process
7. Administrative Matters
 - Discussion of Calendar
 - MGT Report – Estimated Cost to Update
8. Other Business
9. Adjournment

WELCOME

Chairman Bomstein called the meeting to order and welcomed the members, and indicated that Senator Sebesta, Commissioner Latvala, Mr. Decker, and Ms. Churuti would not be attending, and that Chief Assistant County Attorney James L. Bennett would be representing the County Attorney's Office.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Bryan moved that the minutes of the February 28 meeting be approved; whereupon, following discussion, Mr. Bryan withdrew his motion and the matter was deferred to allow the members sufficient time to review the minutes.

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DISCUSSION OF CALENDAR

Deviating from the agenda, Chairman Bomstein announced that the next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 22 at the Swisher Building; that the following meeting will be Monday, April 4 at the Young-Rainey STAR Center; that subsequent meetings will be held at various locations throughout the County; and that further information will be forthcoming.

PRESENTATION BY COMMISSIONER WELCH

County Commissioner Kenneth T. Welch expressed appreciation to the members for their service on the Commission and indicated that he concurs with the opinions expressed by Commissioners Morroni and Seel that the Pinellas County Charter is extremely limited compared to those of other large urban counties, and that intergovernmental coordination is a vitally important issue.

Commissioner Welch briefed the Commission on his concerns regarding delivery of services, specifically in the areas of fire, transportation, and human services, citing the disparity of fire service rates in the communities of Lealman and South Pasadena and the need for highway and transit service governance by a single entity. He related that planning is underway for a Human Services Planning Council, and Chief Assistant County Administrator D. Gay Lancaster provided input. Responding to query by Chairman Bomstein, he suggested that funding authority for the proposed Human Services Planning Council might be provided under the charter.

In response to query by Mr. Kwall, Ms. Lancaster stated that the matter of a county-employed human services ombudsman has not been discussed, but may come up at a future date; whereupon, Chairman Bomstein indicated that while such an issue is not within the scope of the CRC, he would be amenable to including general recommendations to the County in a final summary report.

PRESENTATION BY THE COUNCIL OF MAYORS

City of Largo Mayor and Mayors' Council Vice-Chairman Robert Jackson referred to the Pinellas Assembly process and indicated that a meeting had been set in February to formalize the recommendations of the Assembly; that after ten months, some mayors had not yet reviewed the recommendations with their councils; and that it may be some time before the information will be available for consideration by the CRC.

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Mayor Jackson stated that the charter should be revised to remove obstacles to delivering services at the least cost; and noted that there are areas where the cities and counties should be working together. Regarding issues to be addressed, Mayor Jackson indicated that EMS and first-responder fire services seem to be working well; that the library system need not be considered; and that examples of functions which should be handled countywide include joint-use drainage improvements, health issues, homelessness, and substance abuse. Responding to queries by Mr. Kwall regarding the consolidation of fire services, he acknowledged the disparity of rates and services, and pointed out that each of the various fire departments has its own salary and pension plans; that not all districts have the same needs; and that competition for employees is not necessarily bad; but noted that eliminating smaller districts that cannot provide mutual-aid services could be advantageous.

During discussion and referring to the issue of disparity in millage rates among various communities, Mr. Wilson pointed out that mill value varies according to property values in each community; whereupon, Mr. Spratt indicated that various charts and schedules exist depicting a unified millage throughout the unincorporated area, and unified millage rates throughout the county for fire service and fire and EMS combined. He noted that city services are funded by revenue from ad valorem taxes as well as various other sources, and offered to provide a separate report showing anticipated tax shifts under alternate service delivery options; and Chairman Bomstein called attention to the document titled *Pinellas County Fire and EMS FY 04/05*, a copy of which has been filed and made a part of the record.

DISCUSSION OF LOCAL BOARDS, AUTHORITIES, AND DISTRICTS

Attorney Bennett referred to Article V, Section 5.02.b of the Pinellas County Charter and reviewed the 16 boards, authorities, districts and councils referred to therein and described in detail in the agenda package, a copy of which has been filed and made a part of the record; and Senior Assistant County Attorney Dennis Long provided input. Mr. Bennett noted that the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) is responsible for administering the Special District statute, Chapter 189; that it designates each as either a Dependent or Independent Special District; and that the DCA list is not yet inclusive of all Special Districts. Discussion ensued regarding the definition of Dependent versus Independent Special Districts and how that status affects the CRC's ability to bring it under charter authority for purposes of future policy changes.

During discussion, further information was provided by various members and staff regarding the Police Standards Council, Unified Personnel Board, Mosquito Control

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Board, and the Water and Navigation Control Authority; and the members expressed interest in hearing presentations by Rodney Fischer of the Construction Licensing Board; the Chairman of the License Board for Children's Centers and Family Day Care Homes; Mike Gustafson of the City of Pinellas Park, the Pinellas Park Water Management District; Dennis Jones on behalf of the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) (when Senator Sebesta will be in attendance); and Commissioner Stewart, regarding future mass transit. Referring to the licensing boards, Mr. Harrell requested further information regarding the powers of the boards and whether the County could fill the role of the boards if they were eliminated; and Chairman Bomstein stressed the importance of hearing varying opinions regarding the value and functions of the boards and urged the members to contact him or Mr. Spitzer with the names of individuals who may wish to speak.

DISCUSSION OF CRC PROCESS

Deviating from the agenda, Chairman Bomstein indicated that Agenda Item No. 6 would be addressed at this time; whereupon, Mr. Spitzer conducted a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which has been filed and made a part of the record, explaining Dillon's Rule and Home Rule, specifics of the Pinellas County Charter, and the amendatory process.

Points of discussion included the following:

The 1998 CRC's failed attempt to achieve full Home Rule status.

Need to paint a picture of the desired end results and why the process must change to achieve those results.

Need to continue to focus on individual issues to avoid all-or-nothing results.

New legislators will not take office until after the vote on proposed amendments.

Two issues are involved: transfer of power from legislative level to county level; and the dual vote requirement - municipalities' power versus the county's power.

There is no forum for cities and county to talk strategically, build consensus; no entity to which the legislature is comfortable delegating power.

Referring to recommendations of the 1998 CRC, Chairman Bomstein suggested establishment of an ongoing body to address consolidation of service issues and gain public support; whereupon, Mr. Harrell urged that the name and focus of such a group be

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geared toward strategic planning, rather than specifically tied to consolidation of services; and Messrs. Bryan and Bomstein indicated that savings realized through cost reductions would make a greater impact if used to improve the quality of life in the county than if divided among individual citizens.

UPDATE OF MGT REPORT

Mr. Spitzer related that MGT of America's *Pinellas County Government Services Improvement Study* was completed 13 years ago; that the study was intended to be a tool to the 1992 CRC; and that the consultant's research had identified \$20 million of potential savings within seven service areas; whereupon, he listed various recommendations and noted that many have been implemented. He indicated that MGT has proposed to redo the study within an approximate 90-day timeframe, focusing on the five areas where potential cost savings had been identified.

During discussion, Mr. Harrell reiterated that the focus should not be on consolidation, but in gaining knowledge; and that input should be solicited from cities, constitutional officers, and the legislative delegation; and Mr. Davis expressed concern that resources not be expended on issues not considered viable. Chairman Bomstein suggested that MGT be directed to study efficiencies and economies without regard to ownership, as opposed to consolidating all services at the county level.

Following further discussion, Ms. Cole moved, seconded by Mr. Jirotko, that Mr. Spitzer proceed to hire MGT to update the study in the areas of construction services and fire services. Chairman Bomstein suggested the inclusion of police services, and Ms. Cole concurred. Discussion continued; whereupon, the motion was amended to solicit a proposal from MGT to conduct a study in the areas of fire, police and building services; and upon call for the vote, the motion carried 9 to 1, with Mr. Harrell casting the dissenting vote.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 P.M.