



*Beaufort County
Capital Project Sales Tax
Commission
Agenda*

Monday, May 12, 2014

6:30 p.m.

Whale Branch Early College High School
169 Detour Road, Seabrook

Members:

Mike Covert
Craig Forrest
Scott Graber
Jeffrey Robinowich
Bill Robinson
Scott Richardson

1. Call to Order
Chairman Craig Forrest
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Approval of Capital Project Sales Tax Commission minutes
A. April 28, 2014 meeting ([backup](#))
4. Public Comment
A. Each presentation not to exceed 10 minutes
5. Adjourn

Capital Project Sales Tax Commission – April 28, 2014 Meeting

Call to Order:

Chairman Forrest opened the meeting and asked everyone to stand and say the Pledge of Allegiance.

Attendance: All Capital Project Sales Tax Commissioners were in attendance

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

Chairman Forrest asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the April 21, 2014 meeting. A motion was made, a second was given and the Commissioners approved the minutes unanimously.

Public Comment:

Chairman Forest reminded the public the Commission is to listen and take into consideration the projects presented and what order those projects should go, if a 1 cent sales tax referendum is put on the ballot in November of 2014. He stressed this meeting is not the time to discuss if there should be or shouldn't be a referendum. It's strictly time for the public to come forward and let the Commission know what projects they would like to see on the list for the November referendum. Chairman Forrest said the Commission has two missions: to formulate a question that will appear on the ballot and to prioritize a list of projects that would be included in the referendum.

Chairman Forrest reminded the presenters to try and stick to the 10 minute limit for presentations and that all questions from the Commissioners will be held until the presentation is completed.

He also let the public know if they do want to make a presentation to check in with Mrs. Nelson and that each presenter should address the Chairman and Commission and state their name and affiliation at the Podium.

Bluffton Mayor Lisa Sulka is called to the podium.

Town of Bluffton Presentation:

Mayor Sulka says the Town has many needs but there are 3 major needs she will be presenting:

1. Bluffton Parkway Phase 5B – 2.5 mile realignment of Bluffton Parkway costing \$28M – there are no other sources of funding for this project, project opens up key commercial areas for growth and tax revenue would increase. Operation and maintenance costs would be similar to the existing Bluffton Parkway Phases 1-4. There would be short-term construction and engineering jobs for this project and long-term jobs would come from commercial enterprises on sites opened by the Parkway.

2. May River Initiatives – sewer connections in six areas along the May River, hydrology projects – expansion of stormwater pilot program. Taxes and fees could fund this project but that could take decades, it is not eligible for Community Development Block Grants, sewer operation

and maintenance costs are handled by BJWSA but the stormwater maintenance would be taken on by the Town of Bluffton, construction and engineering jobs would be needed for the project, this project helps Beaufort County as a whole because people, beyond Bluffton, use the May River for recreational and job purposes.

3. Bluffton Public Development Corporation – need infrastructure in this commerce park to bring in more businesses and economic development. The MCIP could supplement the funding but waiting for this funding could put off the project for years. Once the project is completed the Business Park's Property Owner's Association will handle all of the maintenance costs. It's an area that will focus on bringing jobs to Beaufort County which will bring in tax revenue.

Questions from the Commission to the Town of Bluffton:

Vice-Chairman Richardson asks about Bluffton Parkway Phase 5B – why should we go back and fix something when we should have done it right the first time. Mayor Sulka said she believes that is a case of misinformation. She said this project was on the list to be funded in the 2006 referendum but it kept being bumped further down the list and then the money from the referendum ran out leaving this project unfinished. Vice-Chairman said \$28M is a lot of money to construct 3 miles. Colin Kinton, Beaufort County Traffic Engineer, stood up to answer the question. Mr. Kinton said the cost of \$28M is a realistic number. It's to acquire right of ways, actual construction, inspections and more during a project. Commission Covert said he agrees that \$10M a mile just seems a little outside of normalcy. Mr. Kinton said there are Engineers who come up with the cost estimate and the cost estimate is in today dollars. Then that cost estimate is forecasted out 3-5 years. There is also a 20%-30% contingency amount of money put into the cost estimate. Vice-Chairman Richardson asks Mr. Kinton if there is a minimum number of bids the County requires for a project. Mr. Kinton said 3-5 bids. Vice-Chairman asks if the impact fees that could fund some of the projects, if a project is funded from the 1 cent sales tax and impact fees are collected later, could some money be returned? Gary Kubic, Beaufort County Administrator, walks to the podium and says all of the Engineers estimates would be made available to the Commission members. Mr. Kubic says this project is a joint endorsement between the County and Town because it is the only project that was on the 2006 referendum that didn't get completed. The County is obligated by law to seek any funding source for projects. As far as fees, Mr. Kubic explained those have to be created by traffic studies or impact studies. If fees are in place, they were predicated on emerging needs of a prior study. If a new study were made for additional fees then there would be a new process for assigning those fees. Commissioner Graber asks Mayor Sulka the path of the project appears to follow the SCE&G right of way, will the right of way be acquired from SCE&G and will the County pay market value for the right of way. Jim Ayers, Town of Bluffton Engineer, says not necessarily because there are several land owners along the project route that also have right of ways. Mr. Ayers explains the cost estimate of the project does include purchase of right of ways from the land owners. Mr. Graber asks what percentage of the cost estimate is for right of way purchase. Mr. Ayers said he didn't know but would pass that to the Commission. Commissioner Graber asks

the Mayor if a business or person has expressed interest in opening a business in the area of this new route once it is completed. Mayor Sulka says yes. She says this area of the new route is where the Town would like to see growth and where the Town can handle growth. The Mayor also stressed by straightening this section of Bluffton Parkway will make it easier for hurricane evacuations and give a better opportunity to talk with Jasper County about taking Bluffton Parkway all the way to Exit 3 at Interstate 95. Commissioner Robinowich brings up extending Bluffton Parkway to Exit 3 is very important. He says so far Beaufort County has been blessed but one day he says it could happen if a hurricane were to come and the entire County will have to evacuate. He says extending Bluffton Parkway to Exit 3 is going to be a blessing. Chairman Forrest comments the Bluffton Parkway is currently functioning. He says it may not be exactly the way everyone wants it but it does work. Chairman Forrest says the Town may feel some push back because of the cost. Chairman Forrest says he had also heard a significant amount of the right-of-ways were going to be donated. He asks if that is still the case? Mayor Sulka says there are some that still plan to be donated and says she will get a breakdown of what is going to be donated and what the market value of the donation is. Chairman Forrest says this project stands out because it was leftover from the 2006 referendum. He says the public may ask, "if you didn't deliver in 2006 what makes us think you will deliver in 2015". Vice-Chairman Richardson asks Mayor Sulka who owns the land at the Bluffton Public Development Corporation. Mayor Sulka says the Town owns 11 acres and the remaining 38 acres is owned by the developer of the Park. Vice-Chairman Richardson asks exactly where the road would be built. Mayor Sulka says it is a ring road that would complete the road off the circle and go around to where the nature path is on Buckwalter Parkway. Chairman Forrest asks would the right-of-way have to be purchased. Mr. Ayers says the Town owns one right-of-way and the other right-of-way would have to be acquired from the existing developer. Chairman Forrest says the \$6M price tag seems high. Mr. Ayers says the Town will get a better explanation of costs to the Commission. Vice-Chairman Richardson asks for a breakdown on costs of all the projects. Commissioner Graber asks about the May River Initiatives. He asks if there is a proof that septic tanks are failing and if those failings are polluting the May River. Mr. Ayers says the study can't for certain say the septic tanks are polluting the May River but there are years of studies showing an increase of bacteria and concurrent failing septic tanks that drain into the May River water shed. Commissioner Covert asks Mr. Ayers if he has documentation that shows were bacteria into the May River where Oyster beds have been closed. Mr. Ayers says yes. Commissioner Covert asks for the documentation. Commissioner Covert then asks about the ring road at the Bluffton Public Development Corporation – he asked the Mayor to send addition information to the Commission on whether the \$6M is just for the road or if that also includes utility, water and sewer, etc. Commissioner Covert also asks if the Town has looked at impact fees to fund this project? Mayor Sulka says the Town already has an impact fee structure through the County. She explains the utility tax credits are something they work with the utility companies on. Mayor Sulka says the utility companies worked with the Town in the purchase of 11A last year. She added, MCIP revenue would be a way the Town could bring in money if businesses move into the area.

Beaufort County Presentation:

Mr. Kubic addresses the Commission first by answering the question that Chairman Forrest asked earlier in the meeting and Commissioner Covert remarked on – why can you do it now but you couldn't then? Mr. Kubic said the worst economic down turn occurred in 2008. Impact fee collection went down to zero which was a major factor in funding the projects. He goes on to say if it weren't for the State Infrastructure Bank we wouldn't have gotten this far along on the 2006 referendum list of projects. Mr. Kubic then gives a quick summary of the Beaufort County presentation. He tells the Commission, the list they are about to see is 25 projects that started out as 85 projects. Colin Kinton, then takes the podium to go over each project and says when the County was picking projects they looked at the need for each project including safety, capacity improvement, connectivity, multi-modal needs and economic development. He says the County also looked at public requests, and infrastructure utilization.

The following are the Beaufort County projects presented.

1. Bluffton Parkway Phase 5B - 2.5 mile realignment of Bluffton Parkway costing \$28M
2. US 278 Traffic Adaptive – updating the software in the traffic signals along US 278 from Hwy 170 to the Hilton Head Island bridges. The software would allow the traffic signals to automatically update timing during heavy traffic times.
3. Planning and Engineering of US 278 widening from the Hilton Head Island bridges to Squire Pope Road. Currently the widening of the bridges is not on the SCDOT list and the road is already at capacity. One of the bridges is almost at its lifespan.
4. Jenkins Island HHI Gateway project. Change median crossovers in front of the Blue Heron Point and Windmill Harbour.
5. CC Haig Boat Landing and Pinckney Wildlife access change. Easier and safer access to both.
6. US 278 Access Management – changing intersections for different roads along US 278 between the HHI bridges and Hwy 170.
7. Spanish Moss Trail – adding several miles to the existing pathway
8. Depot Road sidewalk
9. Salem Road pathway construction
10. Technology improvements to Woods Memorial Bridge informing motorists the bridge is open and providing re-routing information.
11. Bluffton Parkway Phase 1 Pathway Completion – connecting 0.1 mile of sidewalk between the 46 traffic circle and Myrtle Park.

12. Adjustments to Bluffton Parkway/SC 46 Roundabout
13. Burnt Church Rd, MC Riley, Ulmer Rd Pathway and Intersection Improvements
14. Lake Point Drive and Old Miller Rd pathways and connections
15. Joe Frazier Road – turn lanes, bike and pedestrian improvements
16. Parris Island Gateway at Savannah Highway – new mast arms for the traffic signal and a second left turn lane will be added
17. Parris Island Spine Road – new 0.9 miles of 2-lane roadway and multi-use pathway
18. Mast Arm Upgrades to signals across the County making the traffic signal much more wind resistant.
19. Flashing Yellow Arrow Upgrades – new safer traffic signals with addition flashing yellow arrow for left turns
20. Traffic Signal Battery Backup System – allows traffic signals to stay on when there is a power outage. Battery will last 8-12 hours.
21. Sea Island Parkway @ Lady's Island Drive Intersection Rebuild – install new mast arms to replace failing traffic poles and lines
22. Meridian Road – bike and pedestrian pathway along Meridian Road to Lady's Island Drive
23. Middle Road/Coosa Safe Routes to School – 2.4 miles of pathway connection.
24. WK Alston Connector – road to connect WK Alston to Wal-Mart parking lot off Robert Smalls Parkway
25. Bluffton Parkway Phase 6 Planning and Engineering – planning and engineering for the extension of Bluffton Parkway to Exit 3 of I-95.

All projects total just under \$90M.

Questions from the Commission to Beaufort County Officials:

Commissioner Graber asks if the projects were put in order of priority. Mr. Kinton says no. He grouped the projects in order of location. Commissioner Graber said he was perplexed because the 4th project Beaufort County presented was to benefit one neighborhood – Windmill Harbour. Mr. Kubic addressed the Windmill Harbour project doesn't just affect one neighborhood. He says it affects all motorists driving down US 278, locals and tourists. Vice-Chairman Richardson interjects and explains to Commissioner Graber the Windmill Harbour intersection is one of the dangerous intersections in the County with people coming off the bridge at a high rate of speed.

Mr. Graber asks if the County plans to prioritize the projects. Mr. Kinton says the way the projects are grouped together, it is in a priority structure. Commissioner Covert suggests going item by item and asking questions on each project.

1. All questions asked during the Town of Bluffton project

2. Commissioner Covert asks about maintenance costs and if this software upgrade is necessary or every time there is a software upgrade, is Beaufort County going to want to replace the signals? Mr. Kinton says this new software upgrade will be sufficient for the County for the next 10-15 years. Commissioner Covert asks if there are any SCDOT funds that could fund this project. Mr. Kinton says not at this time there are no SCDOT funds for this project. In the entire Lowcountry region, the top priority for the SCDOT is to widen and resurface Hwy 17 from Exit 5 to the Georgia state line. Mr. Kinton explains this project will take all SC and Federal money for this region.

Vice-Chairman Richardson makes a statement about the fact that in the Beaufort County presentation, every project is listed as having no other funding available. He asks couldn't all of the projects be funded within the County or Town budget? Mr. Kinton says the County would have to raise taxes in order to fund these projects.

3. Vice-Chairman Richardson asks if this project includes raising the Karl Bowers Bridge? Mr. Kinton says yes. Commissioner Covert asks the \$5M marked for this project is only for planning and engineering of the project. Mr. Kinton says yes. Chairman Forrest comments he believes \$5M is too low.

4. Commissioner Robinowich asks if this project could be called something other than the Windmill Harbour project because by calling it that, there is a perception the project is only helping the residents of Windmill Harbour. Chairman Forrest says there have been several scenarios for this project. Chairman Forrest would like a detailed plan of what the County plans to do with this intersection.

5. Commissioner Graber asks Mr. Kinton at sometime these bridges will have to be replaced. Mr. Kinton says yes. Commissioner Graber then asks why should we pay \$5M for a project that SCDOT will pay for. Mr. Kinton explains if the planning and engineering is done for the project, then it makes it easier for the County to ask for state and federal funding for the construction of the project.

6. no questions

7. Vice-Chairman Richardson asks for clarification on what the project of the Spanish Moss Trail includes. Mr. Kinton says the trail would include all the colors indicated on the map and build a bridge over Robert Smalls Parkway. Commissioner Graber asks about other sources of funding

for this project. Mr. Kinton says there are hints there could be matching funds but at this time there are no definite other funds. Vice-Chairman Richardson asks if this Spanish Moss Trail is really wanted. Mr. Kinton says it gets a tremendous amount of use and is an attraction for visitors. Mr. Kubic asks the Commission to imagine Hilton Head Island without all of the bike and pedestrian paths currently in place and what that provides the public's quality of life and connectivity. Mr. Kubic said the Spanish Moss Trail is the beginning of pathways North of the Broad River. Commissioner Robinson asks if there are any security measures that will be taken for those who are riding the trail all the way out to Whale Branch because the trail goes through some rural areas. Chairman Forrest brings the attention to the fact that Beaufort County is asking for \$27M in pathway projects and he feels that is a lot of money for pathway projects.

8. no questions

9. Commissioner Covert asks why someone would want to walk all the way from Battery Park to downtown. Mr. Kinton says the people may not have a vehicle to drive, or they choose to use an alternate way of getting to their destination.

10. Commissioner Covert asks if there is a plan to replace the Woods Memorial Bridge. Mr. Kinton says no.

11. no questions

12. Vice-Chairman Richardson asks why was it designed the way it was in the first place. Mr. Kinton says this is the first multi-lane roundabout constructed by SCDOT. Chairman Forrest asked about the accident history and said there is usually an educational process when a roundabout is opened. Mr. Kinton says there were quite a few accidents when the roundabout opened but most of the accidents were fender benders. SCDOT did look at the roundabout and made significant lane marking and sign changes and the amount of accidents have gone down significantly. Chairman Forrest says he has a hard time spending \$1.5M on the roundabout if it's only been open for a few years.

13. no questions

14. Vice-Chairman Richardson asks if pathways are really necessary. Mr. Kinton says the Town gets requests regularly from residents for more pathways.

15. no questions

16. no questions

17. Vice-Chairman Richardson asks why should Beaufort County pay for that road when whoever buys the Port Royal Port will come in and build the road. Mr. Kinton says infrastructure does provide economic growth. The land has been on the market for 10 years and creating correct infrastructure may make the land more appealing for a buyer. Vice-Chairman Richardson

asks what the asking price is for the land. Commissioner Graber says the price is changing constantly. Vice-Chairman Richardson says he'd rather come up with the \$18M and purchase the land and then do whatever we want to do with it. Commissioner Graber agrees with Vice-Chairman Richardson in the purchase of the port. Mr. Kubic speaks up and suggests the Commissioners reach out to the Town of Port Royal about proposing the purchase of the Port when they present to the Commission.

18. no questions

19. Commissioner Covert remarks to Mr. Kinton that he had mentioned these new flashing yellow lights were going to be a new Federal Standard. Commissioner Covert asks, if these are going to be a new Federal Standard than why don't we just wait and have the federal government pay for the new signals. Mr. Kinton responds the Federal government can set standards but doesn't have to pay for the implementation of the standards. Chairman Forrest says the chances of receiving any money from Columbia or Washington D.C. for any project is very slim.

20. no questions

21. no questions

22. Vice-Chairman Richardson asks if this project is to re-do the road and construct pathways? Mr. Kinton says it's primarily to do the pathways but there may be some traffic calming road work as well.

23. no questions

24. Vice-Chairman Richardson asks why wouldn't Wal-Mart pay for this road? Mr. Kinton replies saying some of the land is owned by the School District and some of the land is owned by Wal-Mart. So far Beaufort County has received easement from the School District but haven't received anything from Wal-Mart.

25. Vice-Chairman Richardson is worried it will be difficult for Beaufort taxpayers to approve building a road that is primarily in Jasper County. Mr. Kinton says there are benefits to building the road because of another hurricane evacuation route and another road running parallel to US 278. He says by paying for the design and engineering now, it sets up Beaufort County for additional funding for the actual construction of the road.

Chairman Forrest asks for any more comments or questions for Beaufort County. He then asks if there are any other public comments. Chairman Forrest reminds the public of the next two public meetings – May 12 at Whale Branch Early College HS and May 19 at HHI Town Council Chambers.

Adjourn:

Chairman asks for a motion to adjourn. Vice-Chairman Richardson gives the motion and Commissioner Robinowich seconds the motion. All vote unanimously to adjourn.