

TAB 2

Meeting Notes
Joint Meeting of the Board of County Commissioners, Manatee County,
and the City Commission, City of Palmetto

April 3, 2012, 6:00-6:55 pm
Manatee Civic Center, Palmetto, Florida

Attending for Manatee County: John Chappie, Chairman, Larry Bustle, Robin DiSabatino, Michael Gallen, Donna Hayes, Joe McClash, Carol Whitmore, County Administrator Ed Hunzeker, and County Attorney Tedd Williams

Attending for City of Palmetto: Charles Smith, Brian Williams, Tambra Varnadore, Mayor Shirley Groover Bryant, City Attorney Mark Barnebey, Alan Tusing (Director, Public Works), Jeff Burton (Director, Palmetto CRA)

Agenda: 7th Street Extension to Haben Boulevard

Mayor Shirley Bryant gave an update on the status of this project and acknowledged the issues that have prevented its completion, primarily funding. The 7th Street Extension was on Palmetto's Capital Improvement Plan through 2008, but was removed from the CIP in 2009. The project had to come off the CIP list for 3 years in order to qualify for CRA funds because of statutory requirements. Expenditures to date for the traffic light: \$750,000, of which \$400,000 came from an MPO grant and \$386,000 from Palmetto CRA funds. The City also expended \$30,000 for engineering regarding the 7th Street Extension. The roadway was not part of the Palmetto CRA District until recently when the new CRA plan and boundaries were approved. Extending the road through Estuary Park is not viable because the area was developed with grant funds that would have to be repaid if the area does not remain a park. The flashing light on Hwy 41/301 does not meet FDOT requirements to be turned on as a full light due to DRI levels.

Commissioner Chappie asked if the City of Palmetto like to see 7th Street extended. Discussion included whether the Palmetto City Council had previously voted in favor of the 7th Street Extension and the preferred route through the property; if the current City Commission would provide the County with a format vote of their position as was requested by Donna Hayes, Chairman of the Civic Center Authority; the economic benefit to the downtown of Palmetto if 7th Street was extended; hoteliers that are interested in building a hotel in that area; possibilities of generating business activity for Palmetto and the Civic Center. Many of the commissioners for Palmetto and Manatee County voiced opinions in favor of solving the problems and moving forward on the extension of 7th Street.

CRA Director Jeff Burton noted that the Palmetto CRA's five-year plan has no money currently earmarked for that intersection. Requesting MPO dollars will take a five year period also. It may be possible for the City, CRA, the County to undertake a joint effort with MPO matching dollars, but it would take 5-7 or more years depending on the MPO.

Mayor Bryant asked if the County Commission had taken a vote that the 7th Street Extension could be routed through the Civic Center parking area. Commissioner Chappie answered that the County would not want to take a stand without knowing the City's position on this matter.

Commissioner McClash gave a history of the 7th street light since its inception in 2000. He distributed a memo at the meeting with attached copies of correspondence and actions taken by Palmetto, Manatee County and FDOT on the project. He emphasized the issues that have been unsolved: traffic lights too close together; on-ramps that will need to be modified for merging traffic; FDOT requirements still unfulfilled as stated in the letters provided; development in violation of the development order; FDOT work program dollars that cannot be used in place of the developer's contribution; bankruptcy of the developer; whether easements were ever granted for the road; and whether additional right-of-way is needed. He stated his main concern was the safety of drivers and encouraged the commissioners to consult with FDOT and experts for advice. He noted the upcoming Charette will provide an opportunity to talk about the problems and work towards solutions.

Commissioner Bustle mentioned that the Charette doesn't bear on the problem of extending 7th Street. He asked that the City of Palmetto respond back to the County's letters, stating no objection to the extension of 7th Street, with the purpose of bringing business to the Civic Center and allowing for the building of a hotel. Commissioner Whitmore agreed and asked that the City also state the route preferred for the road so that potential hoteliers could be provided some detail.

Mayor Bryant stated that the City of Palmetto has had many discussions with county staff in pursuit of having 7th Street extended and assumed that these discussions were communicated with the County Commission. No vote has been taken since she became Mayor to reverse an earlier vote made while Mr. Bustle was Mayor. The City made a policy decision to install the red light and has expended funds on the project. Commissioner Williams agreed that the City has been involved in this project for 12 years. Commissioner Smith stated that Mayor Bryant is authorized by City Charter to send a letter to the County Commission; no vote of the Council is needed.

Attorney Mark Barnebey discussed the results of the last FDOT traffic study of the intersection; the DRI levels at just under 44%; FDOT cannot take into consideration any projected traffic. The City will pursue talks with the developer on the DRI issues.

L.K. Nandum, FDOT District Traffic Engineer, joined the commissioners and said his office will look at the intersection, review the crash history and get back to the commissions about these concerns.

Commissioner Tambra Varnadore summed up the discussion by observing all present want the intersection improved. FDOT will review the safety issues; everyone would benefit from a hotel at the Civic Center; explore partnerships for additional funding to fund the whole traffic solution; keep city and county staffs working together with regular reports back to each Commission.

Notetaker: Kim Godbee, Manatee County