



South Florida Water Management District

BIG CYPRESS BASIN BOARD REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

July 5, 2011

10:00 AM

Collier County Government Center

Commission Chamber, Bldg F, 3rd Flr, Naples, FL 34112

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
John Sorey		Present	
Noah Standridge		Present	
Fred Thomas		Present	
John Vaughn		Absent	
Daniel DeLisi	Chair	Present	

Introduction - Introduction

1. Call to Order - Chair, Big Cypress Basin Board

Mr. DeLisi called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. DeLisi.

3. Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Mr. Thomas, seconded by Mr. Sorey to approve the February 25, 2011 Big Cypress Basin Board Meeting Minutes. Vote called. Voting yes: John Sorey, Fred Thomas, Noah Standridge and Daniel DeLisi. Motion passed.

4. Agenda Addendum

No addendum to the agenda.

5. Abstentions by Board Members from Items on the Agenda

No abstentions by Board Members from Items on the Agenda of the Big Cypress Basin Meeting of July 5, 2011.

New Business/Workshop - Regulatory and Public Affairs

6. Acceptance of the Utility Revenue Study on Water Supply and the Wastewater System at City of Everglades City (presentation by Jennifer L. Woodall, P.E., Vice President, Engineering and Architectural Services, Tetra Tech - 10 minutes)

Ms. Woodall reported that in 2010 TetraTech prepared an Infrastructure Analysis Study as part of the City's Master Plan which was conducted to evaluate the City's current utility revenues in order to meet the needs of the projected expenses of the Utility and to bring the City into compliance with the State and Federal regulations. Among the recommendations of the master plan was a 5 year capital improvement program (CIP) of projects totaling approximately \$9.4 million. Grant funding is important for this program to meet regulatory compliance and grant applications have been submitted to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) State Revolving Fund Program and the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Development Program's pre-application meetings have been held.

Ms. Woodall stated that they also prepared a customer bill comparison survey with the other Cities in Collier County and the average total is \$47.85 (water and sewer combined).

Mr. Sorey recommended two critical items in the motion: 1). they set the utility system up as an enterprise fund and 2). increase the rates as compared to other communities in area.

Mr. Thomas also recommended that a support letter be provided to the Board of tax revenue funding.

Motion moved by Fred Thomas, seconded by John Sorey to approve the acceptance of the Utility Revenue Study with conditions: 1). they set up the utility system as an Enterprise Funding Program; 2). they take action to increase the rates to be more realistic with the other communities; and 3). provide a support letter for funding. Vote called. Voting yes: John Sorey, Fred Thomas, Noah Standridge and Daniel DeLisi. Motion passed.

7. Legislative Update (Ernie Barnett, Director Everglades Policy & Coordination, ext. 2110)

Mr. Barnett reported on Bills with significant changes that effect the South Florida Water Management District (District) and Big Cypress Basin (Basin). They are: Senate Bill 2142 - Water Management Districts; House Bill 7001 - Growth Management; Senate Bill 2096 - State Financial Matters and Senate Bill 224 - Local Government Accountability. These legislative changes include: posting monthly financial reports to the districts' websites; during the legislative process, a line item budget of all water management districts is reviewed; the Legislature will set a revenue cap of ad valorem funds for each district; and a requirement for each district will be to post the final budget to their websites.

Board Comments:

Mr. Thomas requested that the Basin Board members be kept informed during the Legislative Session. Mr. Barnett agreed that he will include the Basin Board when providing legislative updates during the session.

8. Big Cypress Basin Budget Development (Clarence Tears, Director, Big Cypress Basin, ext. 7601 and Thomas Olliff, Director, Budget Bureau, ext. 2132)

Mr. Tears gave a recap of the Basin's accomplishments of capital and restoration projects and indicated which local government partnerships have been completed. He reviewed an itemized list of the Basin's planning and monitoring projects and explained the importance of their continued development. He talked about the District's guiding principles for the development of the Basin's FY2012 Budget. He also reported on the anticipated recurring ad valorem revenues by comparing FY2011 with FY2012. His summary included a total of \$9,228,746 for recurring ad valorem revenues for FY2012, a total baseline cost of \$6,532,532, staff's recommended projects/initiatives totaling \$4,948,077. To meet the needs of the Basin's total budget, a difference of \$2,251,863 will be required from Basin reserves.

Mr. Tears confirmed with Mr. Olliff that due to Legislature's request for a 32% reduction, the FY2011 budget is approximately \$13.7 million; whereas, FY2012 is reduced to approximately \$9.2 million.

Board Comments:

Mr. Thomas requested that the real time modeling project be defined further. Mr. Tears explained that on the Basin website, opening and closing of structures and water levels can be viewed.

Mr. DeLisi reported that the \$15,749,783 is considered cash on hand. He also indicated that besides the baseline cost of \$6.5 million - staff will need additional guidance from the Basin Board to fund other local government projects.

Mr. Sorey suggested, as a direction to the staff, to look at the criteria and resources from the District and come back to the Board with a "wish" list of most important projects for recommendation, including multi-year funding. He indicated that there is \$1.8 million allocated in the City of Naples' budget for the Bembury Drive Septic Tank Replacement Program, and would like to see more earmarked for the project in the Basin budget. He would also rather see Basin dollars used for local projects and dollars from the District's portion be used for the Picayune Strand project.

Mr. Standridge requested that District staff provide a more detailed FY2012 tax revenue breakdown for both Basin and District funds.

Mr. Sorey would also like to see the breakdown of the revenue dollars from the District's portion.

Mr. DeLisi raised some concerns of providing a breakdown of all the accountings at the Basin level and also the District level. His perception of the level of service here is amazing and would not want this request to become counterproductive.

Ms. Meeker said she will review the tax information and let the Basin Board know if there are available funds to accommodate additional projects.

Mr. Standridge again stated that if the Basin Board received the two tax revenue breakdowns, it will give the Basin Board a clearer picture in determining where dollars will best accomplish the Basin's strategic priorities.

Public Comments:

Andrew McElwaine, representative of The Conservancy of Southwest Florida, commended the efficiency of the Basin staff and leadership of the Basin Board on the support of the Picayune Strand Restoration Project which is the largest recreational project, but it should receive funds not just locally, but both state-wide and federally.

Nick Casalanguida reported that Collier County is responsible for the secondary and tertiary systems. A one year extension has been placed on the canal maintenance agreement between the District and Collier County until a decision is made on ownership of the main canal system. They will work closely with the Basin staff to prepare a revised canal maintenance agreement. The County would also like to look at the equity fair share plan for the future and look forward to rebuilding the relationship with District staff. They, too, would like to see the dollars be used here in the County; and get assurance today that local government projects continue as they are currently proposed.

David Farmer wanted to thank the Basin staff for being available for questions and appreciate their quick turnaround with answers. It is of great importance to have the local branch available to the public. He would also appreciate both the District and Basin line item budget be placed and easily accessible on the District's website.

Tim Nance also agrees that Basin staff should remain local; he has great confidence in their management. He provided two letters sent in 2010 regarding concerns of the Basin dollars spent and look forward to a public meeting to hear more on the breakdown of the Basin's operational funding and tax revenue for Basin and District funds collected in Collier County.

Anthony Pires reported that the Basin Board was established to utilize taxes/millage to be spent in the Basin and expressed his concerns where funds are spent. He also mentioned that he sits on advisory committees in the area and when information is shared, its better for the community.

Dennis Vasey, a Naples resident, reported that in 1976, Big Cypress Basin became a separate basin within a 16-county District with a professional staff under the Basin Director's guidance, not the District. The direction of leadership changed and he would like to see it returned. Under the given mandate by the Governor, the millage rate is still adequate to meet the needs of the Basin.

W. James Flanagan III requested an accounting two years ago and to date has not received it. There is a need to keep the funds in the Basin. The Basin covers a county (Collier), separate and segregated from Okeechobee Basin, funds should be spent and kept in Collier. Policies and procedures should be changed if this is not happening currently. Budgets are being cut, mandates are being made, all the more reason to keep funds in this county.

Paul Mattausch, of Collier County Public Utilities, expressed his concern that a recommendation is made to include the \$100,000 that was cut from the ASR reclaimed water project if there is unspent or undesignated funds available - its important to make the project work.

Matthew Grabinski voiced his concern that the county needs transparency and to consider the fair share plan.

John Vaughn, former Basin Board member, wanted a clarification on the totals of the ad valorem taxes being collected from Collier County. Mr. Sorey reported that the Basin received approximately \$9.3 million and the District received \$10 million under the new tax rate.

Chelon Perez-Benitoa also expressed her concern that the tax revenue remain locally. This is a huge county and funds should be spent on projects here in Collier.

Pete Quasius, representative for Collier Audubon, reported that the water moves all the way from Orlando down through State and discharges right into Naples Bay, its imperative that the bay remain a water quality ecosystem since water does not respect boundaries. Also, the Picayune Strand Restoration Project is a local project, even though its considered an international and state project, we still need to support the big picture.

Further Board Comments:

Mr. Thomas indicated that the Basin needs to be treated as a whole different place and be concerned that the Basin's water resources are protected.

Mr. DeLisi suggested that a committee be formed with a board member present to be sure dollars are spent locally.

9. Approval of Request to the District Governing Board to establish preliminary budget and tentative millage rates to levy ad valorem taxes within the Big Cypress Basin (Clarence Tears, Director, Big Cypress Basin, ext. 7601)

Mr. Tears reported that the Legislature capped the amount of revenue for the Basin with a 32% reduction in ad valorem revenue and that staff recommends that the millage rate be set at .1633 mills.

Motion was made by Fred Thomas, seconded by John Sorey to set the FY2012 tentative millage rate at .1633 mills to levy ad valorem taxes within the Big Cypress Basin to provide a preliminary budget.

Vote called. Voting yes: Fred Thomas, John Sorey, Noah Standridge and Daniel DeLisi. Motion passed.

Board Comments:

Mr. Sorey would like to see the District maintain Clarence Tears as the Director of Big Cypress Basin and the Basin staff and current structure remain the same.

Mr. Thomas asked Ms. Meeker "were there any plans by the District to change the staffing of the Basin?" Ms. Meeker replied that there will be no change based on the input at the Board briefings last week as well as citizens and local representatives here. Staff asked Clarence Tears to maintain that title; and remain as manager of the Basin which does make this Basin different than the service center directors; it was a concern and I think having to deal with board members certainly justifies that. Staff is happy that he's pleased with the decision.

Mr. Thomas asked "what about the rest of the staff?" Ms. Meeker reported that they were never proposing changes to 'his' staff; there were proposed changes on the engineering side, but the decision was made that everything will remain the same. They provide a great service to the Basin under Mr. Tears' leadership. District staff is excited about that decision.

Motion was made by John Sorey, seconded by Fred Thomas, to approve the recommendation for Mr. Tears to remain as Director of the Basin and the staff will remain the same.

Vote called. Voting yes: John Sorey, Fred Thomas, Noah Standridge and Daniel DeLisi. Motion passed.

Standard Business - Conclusion

10. Public Comment

Staff Reports - Introduction

11. Contract Account Report

No comments.

12. Financial Reports

No comments.

13. Hydrologic Report

Mr. Tears reported that it is still dry and more rain is needed. He is working closely with Steve Ladd and Ananta Nath to keep structures closed to assist in groundwater recovery. Groundwater levels are starting to move in the right direction, but are still at historical low levels.

Mr. Thomas was concerned about the waterflows through the Caloosahatchee area. Mr. Strowd reported that the US Army Corps of Engineers has been releasing water through Moore Haven and LaBelle because of the heavy rains.

Mr. Sorey requested that a reminder be made that we are still under a strict water restriction.

14. Staff Activity Report

- Staff Activity Report Service Center

- Staff Activity Report Field Operations

Mr. Ladd indicated that we are ready if the rains come.

Mr. Thomas voiced a concern in finding a way to keep the Mid-Hawthorn Aquifer clean.

15. Board Comment

Mr. Sorey requested that the staff send the 'wish list' of project recommendations to the Basin Board for their review before the next Basin meeting on August 19, 2011.

Adjournment - Introduction

16. Adjourn

Motion made by Fred Thomas, seconded by Noah Standridge to adjourn the meeting. Voting yes: Fred Thomas, Noah Standridge, John Sorey and Daniel DeLisi. Motion passed.

Mr. DeLisi adjourned the meeting at 12:10 p.m.

Daniel DeLisi, Chairman

Big Cypress Basin Board

Noah Standridge, Secretary

Big Cypress Basin Board

(Corporate Seal)