

A Special Joint Workshop Meeting of the **St. Pete Beach City Commission** and the **Treasure Island City Commission** was held on **Wednesday, May 31, 2000** beginning at 3:10 p.m. in Legion Hall at City Hall, 7701 Boca Ciega Drive, St. Pete Beach, Pinellas County, Florida. The meeting was called to order by St. Pete Beach Mayor Ward Friszolowski.

Pledge of Allegiance
Roll Call

PRESENT FROM ST. PETE BEACH: Mayor Ward Friszolowski; Vice Mayor Jim Myers; Commissioners Rachel Crepeau, John Phillips and Peter Blank; City Manager Carl Schwing, and City Clerk Theresa B. McMaster.

PRESENT FROM TREASURE ISLAND: Mayor Leon G. Atkinson; Vice Mayor Butch Ellsworth; Commissioners Mary Maloof, Barbara Blush, Stephanie Lavino; and City Manager Charles Coward

SPECIAL GUESTS PRESENT: County Commissioner and President of the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) Calvin Harris; PSTA Executive Director Roger Sweeney; and George Boyle of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

Mayor Friszolowski reviewed the Agenda, stating that Opening Remarks would be made by Carl Schwing, City Manager of St. Pete Beach; Charles Coward, City Manager of Treasure Island; County Commissioner and President of the PSTA, Calvin Harris; and PSTA Executive Director Roger Sweeney. He stated that the meeting would then be open for questions by the members of the City Commissions.

Mr. Coward provided background information on the possibility of extending a planned trolley, which will go from Sand Key south to John's Pass Village, through Treasure Island and St. Pete Beach south to Pass-a-Grille. He stated that he and Mr. Schwing met separately with Brian Smith, Executive Director of the Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), to discuss the potential assets and liabilities of such an extended service, with both of them expressing concern about joining the PSTA District formally and what that would mean to tax rates in their respective cities. Following that, he stated a meeting was held in February, and the possibility that PSTA might be willing to extend this trolley service on the basis of a contract, with the cities each paying for the actual services provided rather than joining the District legally and being subject to millage, was discussed.

Mr. Schwing stated that he and Mr. Coward felt the meetings were very productive, reiterating what Mr. Coward had stated regarding the contractual arrangement that would need to be entered into with PSTA in order for the trolley to come south of John's Pass. He stated that their concerns, in addition to the possibility of having to join the PSTA District, were operational costs, the uncertainty of the length of time for the DOT grant, as well as what would happen if for some reason the trolley failed. He stated that information from both meetings held was then presented

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to the Commissions of both cities, along with information about the general fund subsidy that would need to be provided by each city to operate the trolley, which he stated for St. Pete Beach would be about \$50,000 per year. Mr. Schwing stated they felt it best that both Commissions hold a joint meeting, hear the presentation on the trolley proposal from the PSTA, and then have a question and answer session. He then introduced County Commissioner Calvin Harris, President of the PSTA

Commissioner Harris stated that the major industry in Pinellas County was tourism, and that last year there were 4.7 million visitors to Pinellas County with a \$10.2 million dollar impact. He stated that Pinellas County competes with other areas for visitors and has a responsibility to try to improve things. He stated that they were looking for a way to transport tourists up and down the beaches that was both convenient and charming, and that the proposed trolley offers a way to do that. Mr. Harris stated that PSTA was committed to making this proposed system work.

Roger Sweeney, Executive Director of the PSTA thanked Brian Smith, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Planning Organization, and George Boyle of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for their assistance in the financing of the trolleys. He briefly reviewed the genesis of the trolley system, stating that the trolley was scheduled to begin service from Sand Key to John's Pass in January of 2001, running every half hour from 6:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., 365 days a year.

Mr. Sweeney then presented the trolley proposal, stating that the PSTA was offering to extend the service south of John's Pass to Pass-a-Grille. The fare would be \$1.00, with senior citizens and students paying ½ of this amount. All day passes would be available for \$2.50. He stated that the trolleys held 34 passengers, were powered by compressed natural gas (CNG), and had a wheelchair lift and a bicycle rack.

Mr. Sweeney stated that they were dedicated to making this trolley system a success and were continuing to search for additional sources of revenue. He stated that the beach cities from Clearwater to Madeira were already in the PSTA District and pay a millage rate. He also stated that they received a grant that would pay for a portion of the system. The contract that has been proposed for Treasure Island and St. Pete Beach would charge only for services provided on a per mile per vehicle hour fee of \$47.00 times 33 hours/day. Mr. Sweeney stated that this would total \$560,000 gross/year. Part of this \$560,000 would be paid by an FDOT grant (\$220,000) and passenger fares (\$100,000). The balance would be charged to St. Pete Beach and Treasure Island. He further stated that all fares collected would go to offset the cost to the Cities.

Mr. Sweeney then answered questions from Commission members about the number of stops, the schedule, and how the fares would be collected (electronic fare boxes). He also answered questions about the expected life span of a trolley (10 years) and variables that would impact the \$47.00/hour rate in the future (drivers' wages, cost of fuel, fuel economy).

Vice Mayor Myers stated that, according to the schedule, Pass-a-Grille would actually have trolley service from 7 a.m. through 9:30 p.m. rather than from 6:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., and Mr. Sweeney

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agreed that this was true.

In response to a question from Commissioner Blank, Mr. Sweeney stated that the trolley service would continue for a minimum period of one year, and that the contracts they were offering to St. Pete Beach and Treasure Island would start January 1, 2001 and end December 31, 2001. He cautioned the Commissioners that the development period would probably exceed 12 months and asked that the trolley service be given the time necessary to succeed. Mr. Sweeney stated that if it proved unsuccessful, they would "get out of it."

Commissioner Harris stated that he expected the trolley system to succeed and that he expected to "wear them (the trolleys) out."

Mayor Friszolowski asked if we could count on the County's support of using tourist development tax dollars to offset the \$50,000 cost of the City of St. Pete Beach to help this thing start.

Commissioner Harris responded that they had no control over the tourist development dollars, but that the County Commission supported this concept and thought that it would be self-supporting.

Further questions were answered by Mr. Sweeney regarding trolley "back-ups" in case of problems (8 additional vehicles on order), how the projected ridership was established (combined yearly ridership of both St. Pete Beach and Treasure Island was 125,000), and the continuation of the FDOT grant (must apply each October for the following year).

Mayor Friskowski asked Mr. George Boyle of the FDOT if he would address the FDOT grant further

Mr. Boyle stated that the project approved was for two years and if the project proved to be successful, other sources such as the local Transit Advisory Group might continue its funding.

Mayor Friszolowski stated that to change the transportation system in St. Pete Beach with only a two year guaranteed grant puts the City in a difficult position.

Mr. Boyle stated that the funds to start this project came from seed money for start-up projects.

Mr. Sweeney stated that the PSTA would try to request a multi-year agreement, but stated that he could not assure that this would happen - that all he could commit at this time was one year of definite funding.

Discussion continued and questions were answered regarding possible alternate sources of funds, the St. Petersburg trolley system, if the funding would be stopped in the case of a major catastrophe (no), type of funding for this project (congestion mitigation funds), possible changes to the schedules, if the number of trolleys would be adequate for the ridership (looking at ordering additional trolleys already), and how the total cost of \$560,000 was split.

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Mr. Coward commented that much information was shared today and that each City has issues peculiar to them that would need to be addressed. He stated that he would recommend to his City Commission that they discuss this issue further and try to identify the key issues, both positive and issues of concern. then he would address the issues of concern with the PSTA.

Mayor Atkinson stated that he would encourage public input as well.

Mayor Friszolowski stated that this was a Public Workshop and was not intended for public comments, but that follow-up meetings would be held and public comments would be welcomed then. He also stated that comment sheets were available for those who wished to write their comments to the Commission.

Carol Vallee, St. Pete Beach resident and owner of the BATS bus/taxi service, asked what the total cost of this route would be.

Mayor Friszolowski responded the cost for the trolley from John's Pass to Pass-a-Grille would be \$560,000.

Ms Vallee asked what the cost of the total route from Clearwater to Pass-a-Grille would be

Mr. Sweeney advised that he did not have that answer.

Commissioner Blank asked if there was a "drop dead" date for the participation of St. Pete Beach.

Mr. Sweeney responded that they were flexible as far as dates. He stated that they planned to start the trolley service in January 2001, and that they would require 60-90 days notice for scheduling.

There being no further business. the meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Mayor

ATTEST:

City Clerk