

Local Option Sales Tax Citizen Committee
June 16, 2020
Milton, Florida

The Local Option Sales Tax Citizen Committee met at 9:05 a.m. on the above date with the following members present: Chairman Ed Carson, Dean Easterwood, Fredrick Barrow, Jonathon Hamby, Amy Cozart, and Grey Burge. Also present were the County Administrator (Dan Schebler), Budget Director (Jayne Nicholas), and Strategic Planning and Performance Manager (Sabrina White).

- 1) **Call to Order-** The meeting was called to order by Chairman Ed Carson in the Santa Rosa County Administrative Center, Board Room at 9:05 a.m.
- 2) **Approval of Minutes from December 3, 2019 -** Burge moved approval of the minutes for the December 3, 2019 Local Option Sales Tax Citizen Committee meeting, the motion was seconded by Barrow and approved by the Committee.
- 3) **Program Discussion -** Schebler gave an introduction of the remaining LOST sales tax fiscal years. Sabrina White discussed the June 2020 report.

White stated that revenues received over the last three years totaled \$27.3 million, a decrease is expected in revenue due to COVID-19.

White continued the program discussion with anticipated actions for each category of the LOST program. Carson pointed that only half of the allocated amount had been spent on transportation and drainage. White confirmed that not all projects have been completed and there are more expenditures to come.

Public Safety: White highlighted completed projects within the public safety category, and potential changes with Berrydale Fire Dept.'s request. She also explained that the next fiscal year projections are dependent upon COVID-19 impacts. Carson asked about the blue highlighted projects and what that signified; White explained that indicated additional funding sources were added to the project in conjunction with the local option sales tax.

Capital Equipment: White moved to the next category and explained that all items originally listed had been purchased with roughly \$17,000 remaining.

Public Facilities: White moved to the next category, where she explained that most projects in this category are still under construction. However, the Navarre Beach public restroom project will be completed within days. The Pace Library project is on hold until revenue impacts due to COVID-19 are determined. Many projects in this category received grants to aid in completion, such as the Archie Glover boat ramp and County Extension 4-H building. Carson asked for clarification on the budget of the Fidelis Community Center project and why the cost increased to the point that it was no longer feasible. White explained that the condition of the building was worse than previously

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estimated, but due to its recent historical building designation, grant opportunities have opened, and staff is now pursuing.

Recreation and Natural Resources: White went on to discuss the Fidelis recreation project and its upcoming groundbreaking. Bagdad Mill Site, a floating dock system and \$800,000 project, is only using a small portion of LOST revenue. Navarre Park has had wetland permitting issues and construction should begin soon. The Benny Russell Park project is slated to start next month. The Pace fitness court is complete and is only waiting on stickers. Burge asked for clarification on the date of the groundbreaking for Fidelis. White explained that it was the upcoming Friday.

Transportation and Drainage: White expressed that many projects are complete, such as Settler's Colony, Venetian Way, and the south end Health Department drainage projects. White further expressed that sales tax funding was only a portion of the HMGP drainage projects the projects would likely have not occurred or been substantially delayed without the local option sales tax.

White went on to discuss district road paving and the recommended amount to allocated for FY21 as \$150,000 to District 1 and District 3, with \$275,000 to Districts 2, 4, and 5.

Hamby asked if staff was able to resecure state funding for the Ranchettes and Whisper Bay drainage projects. White stated that the funding had not been secured. Schebler explained that the HMGP grant had timing issues, but we are still pursuing the necessary easements.

Cozart asked how areas are chosen to create sidewalks. White explained that the LAP program offsets those costs and areas near schools are often given a higher rating for funding. Easterwood asked for an update on the Pea Ridge Connector project. Schebler explained that it is out for bid now and expect a response on that by the end of the month.

White discussed the program changes as identified in the support documents. Cozart asked how the water for the Benny Russell splash pad would be paid. Schebler explained that a tap fee was not anticipated for the splash pad due to a prior agreement with Pace water System.

White concluded the program discussion by explaining that over \$20.7 million worth of projects have been accomplished with only using \$5.9 million in LOST revenue.

- 4) **Other Business** - Schebler explained that sales tax revenue is a piece of the overall annual budget and that most capital projects are on hold for the next fiscal year due to revenue uncertainty caused by COVID-19. The current year's impact is an estimated \$2 million. The Sheriff's budget does not include any capital requests using sales tax revenues. The

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Local Option Sales Tax expires on December 31, 2021 due to legislation passed last year by the Florida legislature requiring renewals to be on a general election ballot. Schebler requested that the committee put the referendum on the Nov. 3rd ballot.

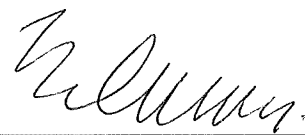
Carson asked for clarification on paving within the different districts. Schebler explained that it is recommended to balance out the allocations to the rest of the districts.

Carson suggested a motion to the commission regarding the paving allocations. Barrow made the motion and Easterwood seconded the motion. The motion was approved by the Committee.

Carson suggested a motion to the commission regarding the local option sales tax half penny renewal on the 2020 November ballot. Burge clarified that we are asking for a renewal, not an addition to the sales tax. Shebler confirmed. Burge made the motion and Easterwood seconded the motion. The motion was approved by the Committee.

Schebler asked the committee for thoughts or ideas for telling the story of the sales tax. Carson expressed that messaging should be focused on leveraged projects. Burge recommended staff speak before the Pensacola Board of Realtors. Barrow expressed that he felt staff and the committee must do a better job telling the citizens the good things that the sales tax accomplishes and does not go to pay staff salaries. Carson explained citizens want better infrastructure and parks, yet they oppose additional tax. Hamby expressed staff should focus on the grant projects and how we have leveraged the state and federal monies. Barrow stated there is no such thing as over marketing. Easterwood suggested snippets of information related to the sales tax accomplishments. Discussion continued regarding the methods for communicating the benefits of the sales tax program.

- 5) Adjournment** – With no further business to come before the committee, Carson adjourned the meeting.



Ed Carson, Chairman