**Taxation, Revenue, and Utilization**



**of Expenditures (TRUE) Commission**

**Niki Brunson, Chair**

**INTERNAL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

**February 20, 2018**

**2:00 p.m.**

**City Council Conference Room B**

**Suite 425, City Hall**

**Attendance:** TRUE Commissioners Ben Wasson, Nikki Brunson, Clayton Levins

**Also**: Jeff Clements – Council Research Division

See attached sign-in sheet for additional attendees.

The meeting was called to order at 2:09 p.m. and the attendees introduced themselves for the record. Commissioner Levins recapped the committee’s discussion from the previous meeting.

The first topic for discussion was TRUE Commission communications, particularly how the commission can communicate its views in a timely manner to its appointing authorities, to the general public and to the media. Commissioner Levins advocated against the commission approaching the media to advocate for its views, preferring to issue meeting minutes and reports and letting the media access and read those on their own. Commissioner Wasson took the opposite view, believing that the TRUE Commission has a unique position as an unbiased entity that represents a wide variety of viewpoints and could serve a useful public information function by at least raising important issues, not necessarily taking a stand one way or another. Commissioner Levins recommended that there be a strict protocol for the commission to make statements approved by the whole body and that no individual presume to speak for the body. He suggested that the whole commission might adopt several approved talking points at each meeting that speak to issues pending before the body to convey to any interested parties.

Commissioner Wasson said that policies need to be developed for taking official positions, raising issues that need public attention (without taking an official position one way or another), and individual commissioner statements (strongly discouraged).

Jeff Clements suggested that consideration may need to be given to establishing some procedural rules for individual commissioners undertaking personal investigations, lest an individual’s action become problematic for the full commission. Mr. Wasson suggested that individual commissioners desiring to investigate an issue inform the commission staff before they begin, with staff conveying that information to the commission officers and placing it on the agenda for the next full commission meeting for discussion and authorization to proceed with a special project. After further discussion the group decided that individual initiatives should be communicated by staff to all commissioners so that everyone will be aware of what will be discussed at the next meeting.

Mr. Levins suggested that language be crafted to define what constitutes a “special project” and how those projects are to be pursued, beginning with an individual or several commissioners being authorized to make initial investigation and bringing the findings back to the full commission for a presentation and discussion before the commission decides whether or how to proceed further. Mr. Wasson suggested that the committee compile some draft language for amendments to the Policies and Procedures on the topics that have been discussed so far (communications, special topics). The commissioners asked staff to keep the full membership informed about when meetings regarding the potential privatization of JEA take place so that any interested members can attend to follow the issue from start to finish. The issue is so important to the City’s future that the TRUE Commission could play an important role by being a body to raise important considerations and present pros and cons on a variety of issues without taking a firm stand for or against the proposal.

Mr. Wasson suggested that properly formatted reports from standing committees and special projects could form the basis for the commission’s quarterly and annual reports with very little extra work needed. Mr. Levins suggested that the commission collectively adopt “talking points” for big issues that explain the relevant issues involved to help inform the public. Commissioner Wasson asked if a mechanism existed for the commission to receive assistance from non-commissioners in doing research, drafting reports, etc. Mr. Clements did not know of anything in the commission’s legislative authorization or policies and procedures that addressed the topic, either by means of authorization or prohibition.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:08 p.m.

Jeff Clements, City Council Research Division

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