



# Taxation, Revenue, and Utilization of Expenditures (TRUE) Commission

Dr. Keshan Hargrove, Chair

## TRUE COMMISSION Special Meeting Minutes

August 14, 2023

4:00 p.m.

Don Davis Room, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, City Hall

**Attendance:** Commissioners Dr. Keshan Hargrove (Chair, arr. 4:22), Velma Rounsville (dep. 5:34), Bruce Tyson (dep. 5:03), Kim Pryor, Daniel Henry, Carter Jones, Charles Barr, Ramon Day (arr. 4:14)

**Excused:** None

**Absent:** None

**Also:** Jeff Clements – City Council Research; Tommy Carter – Council Auditor’s Office

The meeting was convened at 4:11 p.m. by Commissioner Barr and the attendees introduced themselves for the record.

Regarding the City’s proposed Capital Improvement Plan, Commissioner Tyson asked about the reason for the proposed new police mounted unit facility at the Equestrian Center being shown as a Public Works project rather than a Sheriff’s Office project. He also asked about the reason for high school pools being built by the City rather than with school district funds. He said he thought that the school system and the City used to share the cost of construction and operations. Jeff Clements said his understanding is that the school system doesn’t have any funding to build pools so the City bears the full cost.

Commissioner Jones asked why the proposed JCCI budget shows such a large increase (double from the first year). Mr. Clements provided a brief history of JCCI and the City’s funding to the organization for its annual Quality of Life study and its topical studies on City government and social service issues. The City, the United Way and other funders reduced their funding level during the 2008-09 recession and JCCI ceased operation in 2016. Commissioner Day described the effort to resurrect the organization by supporters who see its value to the community and the rationale for the funding level being suggested. Mr. Day, who is on the JCCI board, said the board’s intention is to use City funding as start-up capital to get the organization started while they do fundraising from foundations and other sources. He said that his group has filed with the state Division of Corporations and been assigned JCCI’s original tax ID number to resume operations. The funding will not be needed until April of 2024 as the organization is restarted.

Commissioner Pryor asked about accountability measures for use of the public funds. Mr. Day described the JCCI board structure and the study process, which is open to any interested member of the general public. JCCI’s staff act as neutral convenors facilitating community discussion and recommendations on important topics of the day. In response to a question from Commissioner Pryor about the benefit to the community from the public investment, Mr. Day said it provides a source of community-driven studies

that reflect the participation of average citizens who reach consensus (voting is not permitted) and he sees this as an opportune time to revitalize the organization.

**Motion** (Day/2<sup>nd</sup> Henry): the TRUE Commission recommends that City Council allocate \$271,605 to JCCI in FY2023-24

Commissioner Rounsville said she had no experience with JCCI since she hasn't been in Jacksonville that long so didn't feel as though she could cast an intelligent vote. Commissioner Jones said that in the age of the internet and AI, studies on all sorts of topics are easily obtained. Commissioner Henry said that Jacksonville suffers from doing endless studies, many of which have a particular slant because of how they're done, that never get implemented. Mr. Day said he has spoken to the Council President, the Finance Chair and the City's Chief Administrative Officer and they are all supportive of an appropriation, but feels the endorsement of the TRUE Commission would lend a valuable hand to the effort. Commissioner Pryor reiterated her concern about accountability for the public funds and the failure of implementation of so many previous studies. Commissioner Day said the accountability lies in the public participation/consensus driven nature of the process.

**The motion failed 3-4-1** (Rounsville abstained).

Henry suggested developing performance benchmarks and parceling out public funding on a matching basis with private funding.

Commissioner Day described the TRUE Commission's previous study on the Sheriff's Office that recommended a substantial increase in the number of officers to reach 2.73 officers per 1,000 citizens, 765 to reach that ratio and then an additional 20 per year to account for growth. Hiring 148 officers for each of the next 8 fiscal years would reach the desired average, which is the average of the 4 largest cities in Florida. The mayor's budget proposal recommends 80 new officers.

**Motion** (Day/2<sup>nd</sup> Rounsville): the TRUE Commission re-transmits its recommendation that the City Council create 148 new JSO employee slots and appropriate sufficient funding for those positions each fiscal year for the next 8 years to reach a ratio of 2.73 officers per 1,000 citizens.

Commissioner Jones asked how the City would keep the new employees it creates since Jacksonville has a reputation as a training ground for employees who then leave for higher salaries elsewhere. Commissioner Day said the City needs to deal with sufficient incentives to keep employees, which includes an attractive pension plan and participation in the Social Security program. Mr. Day said the inadequate number of officers means that all of the department's time and effort are devoted to responding to calls for service leaving no time for officers to build relationships with citizens and businesses by walking the streets and developing personal relationships. Chair Hargrove emphasized the importance of good training for the officer to build a quality workforce. Commissioner Pryor noted that Sheriff Waters only asked for 80 new positions. In response to a question from Commissioner Henry, Commissioner Day said that the capacity of the police academy is about 150 per year, so the recommended 148 should be achievable. Mr. Henry suggested a possible amendment to the motion to state that the funding for the new positions could come from any source, not just ad valorem taxes.

**The motion was approved 7-0.**

**Motion** (Day): the Commission extends an invitation to Sheriff Waters to attend the September commission meeting to discuss JSO staffing issues – approved unanimously.

**Motion** (Day) the TRUE Commission recommends that City Council appropriate funds for new full-time position on the City Council staff equivalent to a Research Assistant dedicated to staffing the TRUE Commission – **approved 6-0**.

**Motion** (Day) the TRUE Commission recommends that the City millage rate for FY23-24 stay at 11.3169 – **approved 6-0**.

Commissioner Day said that Council President Salem has said that he wants the growth in ad valorem revenue from increased property values to go to pay-as-you-go capital programs or to debt reduction.

Future meeting invited speakers

September – Sheriff Waters

October – Public Works contract management

November – Procurement Code re-write

December – 1Cloud implementation

The meeting was adjourned at 5:48 p.m.

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Posted 9.8.23 10:30 a.m.