



**SANTA ROSA
ISLAND AUTHORITY**

BOARD MEMBERS

Tammy Bohannon
Chairwoman

Janice Gilley
Vice Chair

Ed Guernsey
Secretary Treasurer

Dave Pavlock
Acting Secretary Treasurer

Thomas Campanella
Member

Jerry Watson
Member

W. A. "Buck" Lee
Executive Director

**SANTA ROSA ISLAND AUTHORITY
PENSACOLA BEACH, FLORIDA
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 27, 2014**

- 1-3. A Special Board Meeting of the Santa Rosa Island Authority was held on Wednesday, March 27, 2014, beginning at 5:03 p.m. Members in attendance were: Chairwoman Tammy Bohannon, Thomas Campanella (entered meeting at 5:08), Mr. Dave Pavlock, Mr. Ed Guernsey, and Mr. Jerry Watson. Ms. Janice Gilley was absent. Chairwoman Bohannon called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of meditation.

4. CHAIRWOMAN'S COMMENTS

Item # 1 – Workshop on Florida Supreme Court ruling on taxation for Pensacola Beach, FL.

Ms. Bohannon introduced the item and stated this was a workshop for SRIA Board Members to brainstorm regarding the taxation. She said there are concerns about the level of service Escambia County will be providing to the Island.

Mr. Guernsey told about the meeting he attended the previous Tuesday morning. He stated there will be changes, and that Escambia County will have to step up with funding in order for the SRIA to continue. He stated a government is best run when it's close to the people it is governing. He said the BCC are the ultimate decision makers, they decide funding, staff, and the Board.

Other points made by Mr. Guernsey:

- Other funding sources, such as parking meters or a MSBU tax.
- Town Hall Meeting on April 14, 2014 at the Our Lady of Assumption Church, 5:30 p.m.
- BCC meeting on April 10, 2014 at 9:00 a.m.

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- Sponsor needed for Senator Bill Nelson's bill (giving Escambia County the right to give title to the land)
- Goal date of September 30, 2015 for all changes to be in place.
- Possibly raise toll, but there are bond issues that would have to be dealt with.
- Lower lease payments to \$1.00, but not for Master Leaseholders.

Discussion was held on Master Leaseholders and subleases.

Ms. Bohannon made the following points:

- Takes 7.5 million to run the SRIA.
- Residential lease fees go away, but have resort tax.
- Continue receiving food, beverage and retail percentages from hotels, but do away with the bed tax to give hoteliers some relief.
- Stop giving Escambia County the current \$600,000.00 for the Road Bond as well as the \$200,000.00 for the Fire Station, this would help lower the SRIA budget.
- Public works does a great job, it would cost Escambia County much more money to duplicate the current services.
- Need source of perpetual funding for beach renourishment.
- Pay for parking, either meters or 1 charge for all day.
- What happens with Portofino Beautification fund?
- Waiting to see if Danny Kepner moves forward with another lawsuit.
- Need commercial leaseholders to work with us.

Dr. Campanella explained the difference between the lawsuits regarding Navarre Beach and Pensacola Beach. He stated as a separate entity from Escambia County, the SRIA was eligible for FEMA funds, and we could lose this.

SPEAKER:

Jim Cox – He said he had recommendations for the Board to consider:

- When do we cancel lease fees?
- When do lease fees get refunded?

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- He pointed out the amount escrowed by Escambia County is seriously deficient, considering the amount owed in refunds.
- Suggested dropping lease fees to \$1.00 on October 1st of this year. He stated Escambia County has enough money to carry the SRIA for a year.
- He encouraged the SRIA Board to make sure the \$4.8 million (in restricted funds) stays to benefit the Island.
- He encouraged the Board to spend the money the SRIA has to benefit the Island, before the County gets it.

Steve Speirs – Doesn't want parking meters, feels County will take/keep every dime they can, worries about residents fencing all the way down to the water. Encouraged audience and Board to raise their voices against this.

Steve Luppert – Complimented Mr. Lee on the good job Public Works does on cleaning the beach. He explained about the tax bills that will be going out and the consequences of non-payment. He wants the deed to his property. He encouraged the SRIA Board, with the exception of Dr. Campanella, (because he is elected) to quit and walk out. He said this would make a "noise".

Discussion followed.

Mr. Pavlock does not agree that parking meters would be a helpful solution.

Ms. Bohannon is concerned current legislation language is not strong enough to protect the current conservation areas.

SPEAKER:

Sally Chamberlin – She stated the SRIA should strongly demand the needed funds from Escambia County, since much of it is generated on the Island. She wants to keep a local governing body.

Mr. Lee told about the speech he has been giving to many groups, explaining the function of the SRIA, how we are funded, and where/how much money we send to other entities. It will be posted on the SRIA website Friday, March 28, 2014. He stated he is passionate about this Beach and is concerned about the building cap in the years to come.

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SPEAKER:

Terry Preston – She pointed out there will be no relief for delinquent taxpayers, that Janet Holly is bound by state statues. She encouraged the Board the drop lease fees to \$1.00, and to educate all Commissioners.

Mr. Watson said Commissioner Robinson needs support from other commissioners and encouraged the Board to try and help leaseholders facing hardship due to taxes.

There were questions from the audience.

Mr. Pavlock assured the audience that all Board Members were meeting with their County Commissioner to discuss this matter.

Mr. Lee stated he is meeting with each County Commissioner and their SRIA Board member to explain what the SRIA does, and to work on funding.

Mr. Watson stated all SRIA Board members are aware of the fact they need to work together with their Commissioner, he said the BCC knows how important the SRIA is, and they (BCC) don't want to be involved in the day-to-day running of the Island.

SPEAKER:

Tom Almon – Thanked the SRIA Board for having the meeting to discuss tax issue. He said the BCC lives to be re-elected, and the residents of Pensacola Beach are insignificant to them.

Julian MacQueen – He said he would like to see what each County Commissioner has to say on this matter, he feels Escambia County should want to protect the "Crown Jewel", Pensacola Beach. He loves the idea of creating a campaign to educate all of Escambia County about the economic advantage the Island gives to them. He stated the Island deserves its fair share of the monies brought in.

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He would not commit to any benefits he was willing to forgo, when asked by Ms. Bohannon.

Marilyn Hess – She suggested lobbying to create an entity similar to the TDC and have Escambia County fund it. She said the new "SRIA" could fund certain services and the County could fund others. She would like for there to be no toll, and also form a fund to help people pay back taxes owed, at a 2% interest rate.

Ms. Hess would not agree to continuing any type of percentage fees, when asked by Ms. Bohannon, and stated they were already at a disadvantage to other hotels due to the bed taxes, etc. She stated the people of the County use lifeguards, her customers do not. She would like to have \$1.00 lease fee October 1 of this year and just pay taxes.

5. ADJOURN

Adjournment:

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chairwoman Bohannon declared the Special Board Meeting of the SRIA Board adjourned at 7:28 p.m.



SECRETARY



CHAIRWOMAN

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