

## **Half-Cent Sales Surtax Citizens Advisory Committee**

### **Meeting Minutes**

Monday, March 10, 2025

#### **Opening**

The regular meeting of the Half-Cent Sales Surtax Citizen Advisory Committee was called to order at 4:10p.m. on Monday, March 10, 2025, St. Johns County School District, The Fullerwood Training Center, 10 Hildreth Drive, St. Augustine, FL by Mr. Lewis, Chairman.

#### **Attendance**

CAC Members--Present: Damian Cook, Alice Flores, Richa Jeetah, John Lasswell, Jason Lewis, Barbara Little, Kim McManus, and Jen Stevenson. Alternates: None. Absent: Ed Albanesi, Kate Dowdie, Elena Laguardia, Amy Lasswell, Terence Mahoney, Norvie Veracruz, Javelyn Arvay, Heather Barnes, Derek Barrs, Dr. William McCormick and Virginia Morgan.

School District staff--Present: Nicole Cubbedge, Brennan Asplen, Cathy Weber, Elizabeth Moore and Judith Harvey.

Public Attendees—None.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from the December 16, 2024, regular meeting were then approved with a motion by Mr. Cook and seconded by Ms. Little. A vote was taken, and the motion was approved.

#### **Election of Officers**

Ms. Richa nominated Mr. Lewis to remain as Chairman and Ms. Little seconded the nomination. There was a unanimous vote for Mr. Lewis. Mr. Lewis then nominated Mr. Cook as Vice-Chairman and Ms. Little seconded that nomination. There was a unanimous vote for Mr. Cook. District staff will continue in the role of Secretary.

#### **Financial Reporting**

Mrs. Weber presented the financial report. She first presented the slide of Sales Tax Receipts through February 28, 2025. The numbers in bold are actual receipts. She then reviewed the Monthly and Quarterly receipts as well as the four categories. The projected amount for 24-25 is \$24.6 million. The interest earned was \$3.2 million. She then reviewed the graphs for the Monthly Sales Tax Revenue which increased approximately \$1 million or 6% over the previous year. Next,

Mrs. Weber reviewed the graphs for the Quarterly Sales Tax Revenue as well as the combined graph of the Monthly and Quarterly Sales Tax Revenue. The total revenue received through 6/30/24 was \$227,095,972.

Next, Mrs. Weber reviewed the Summary of Funds with Sources and Uses through June 30, 2025. The ending fund balance was \$8.5 million. Mr. Lewis asked if the \$45 million designated for Elementary School N would remain constant or increase. Mrs. Cubbedge explained that they will hold at the \$45 million but if costs were to go up, then more funds would be added. Mrs. Weber stated that the \$45 million will probably not cover the cost of the building. Mr. Lewis asked if the elementary school would be built in the next two years and Mrs. Cubbedge stated that it would probably not be built in the next two years. She stated that they are still analyzing student stations and the distribution of students in that area. She also said they were watching the Treaty Oaks Preparatory Charter School and its impact on that area. Mrs. Cubbedge said they would do an analysis in a year, but the School Board members do want to stay with the plan of that elementary school. Mrs. Cubbedge said they will hold and then build when it is needed. Mr. Lewis asked about the impact of the scholarship money available to parents and Mrs. Weber stated that it will remove \$45 million from St. Johns County with about \$3.3 billion in school districts across the state. She said it cost the district \$25 million last year. She stated that the district is working internally on how to compete when a student with FES wants to take a class in our schools now. Mr. Lewis stated that these scholarships will impact the budget and Dr. Asplen noted that even though the students are not in our system, the district still must pay salaries and run buildings which affects the budget, so there is lower income but the same amount of expenses. Mrs. Weber noted that those homeschool, and private students are not counted in the budget, so less money but more students which impacts the budget. Mr. Lewis asked if the new charter school is eligible for sales tax money. Mrs. Cubbedge explained that with the current sales tax, the charter school is not eligible, but with the new sales tax, the charter school will be eligible for it. Mr. Lewis asked if it is by student and Mrs. Cubbedge explained that it is based on enrollment. She further explained that the school is built for 1,000 students and is projecting 750 for K-6 which seems to be a high number. She stated that they have applications in the 400-student range. She also noted that the charter school will not have buses, so it will be interesting to see how the FES affects the district and now how this charter school will affect the district. She noted that the district has not experienced this type of charter school before which is to have a competitor school directly across from one of our schools. Mrs. Weber noted that the school is a charter school which is not eligible for the FES scholarship.

## **Project Reporting**

Mrs. Cubbedge presented the project report. Mr. Rose has retired, and Mr. Cade has taken the position. She noted that he was highly decorated in the military and has an engineering background. She noted that the expansion at South Woods Elementary School (SWES) is now in process. She presented a location map and reviewed the status update that Mr. Pauly prepared regarding the project. She stated that it should be complete in December 2025-January 2026. She showed an aerial of the layout and that the project is about 8% complete. She noted that they will

tilt the walls in May and the topping out will be in July. She stated that they hoped to transition over winter break. She then presented several views of the expansion.

She then noted that several roof replacements are underway: Nease High School, Ocean Palms Elementary School, Bartram Trail High School, Pedro Menendez High School, Sebastian Middle School and Landrum Middle School. She noted that all these replacements are partial roofs because the schools are too big to be done in one summer.

She also noted that the teacher refresh on laptops was released.

### **Committee Comments**

Mr. Lewis asked about having another meeting at one of the new schools built with sales tax funds. Mrs. Cubbedge stated that they could consider it, but the time might need to be later when students would not be in the building. Mrs. Cubbedge said they could consider having the June meeting at a school since no students would be on campus in the summer. Mr. Lewis asked if the committee had an interest in going to possibly Picolata Crossing Elementary School or Freedom Crossing Academy. The committee indicated that they would be interested. Dr. Asplen said that the topping out is a public event and they could attend. Mrs. Cubbedge stated that she would work on having the June meeting at a school.

Ms. Little asked the location of South Woods Elementary School (SWES), and Mrs. Cubbedge explained that it is on SR 206 near SR 207 and SR 206. Ms. Flores asked if SWES was overcrowded, and Mrs. Cubbedge explained that SWES was the last school to be expanded since class size. She further explained that their enrollment had declined but has now increased so the decision was made to include their expansion in the sales tax funds.

### **Public Comment**

None.

### **Next Meeting Date/Time**

The next meeting will be held on Monday, June 16, 2025, at 4:00pm, St. Johns County School District, The Fullerwood Training Center, 10 Hildreth Drive, St. Augustine, Florida.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:42pm with a motion by Mr. Cook and seconded by Ms. Jeetah.

Minutes submitted by Judith Harvey.