

Half-Cent Sales Surtax Citizens Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, December 15, 2025

Opening

The regular meeting of the Half-Cent Sales Surtax Citizen Advisory Committee was called to order at 4:09p.m. on Monday, December 15, 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, Elena Laguardia, Amy Lasswell, John Lasswell, Jason Lewis, and Kim McManus. Alternates: Jeralyn Forcier, and Virginia Morgan. Absent: Ed Albanesi, Javelyn Arvay, Kate Dowdie, Barbara Little, Terence Mahoney, Jen Stevenson, Norvie Veracruz, Heather Barnes, and Dr. William McCormick.

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

Public Attendees—None.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the September 15, 2025, regular meeting were then approved with a motion by Mr. Cook and seconded by Ms. Morgan. A vote was taken, and the motion was approved.

Financial Reporting

Mrs. Weber presented the financial reports. She reviewed the 25-26 Sales Tax Receipts. She also reviewed projections and noted that the numbers in bold were actual numbers. She then presented the Monthly Revenue slide. She noted that the Nights of Lights timeframe was shortened by two weeks, so it remains to be seen if that will affect receipts. She also stated that there are more sales tax holidays. Next, she reviewed the Quarterly Revenue slide and then the combination slide of Monthly and Quarterly. Lastly, she reviewed the Funding Sources slide.

Presentation of DRAFT Annual Report

Mrs. Cubbedge presented the draft of the annual report. Mr. Lewis asked about surveying the community for items for the second half cent sales surtax before presenting the report. Mrs. Cubbedge stated that it should remain as it is since the people voted for these items. She felt it was better to just keep telling the story. The committee discussed putting a survey out through SAC groups and whether that would be a good idea. Mrs. Cubbedge stated that if they want to do a survey, then she will tell the School Board. The consensus was that it would be good to get community input and that they are listening to the community. Mrs. Cubbedge noted that she could include a slide thanking the community and asking for input. Mrs. Cubbedge also noted that she put in the history of the sales tax, and the committee added a few notes here and there. Mr. Lewis asked if the district would borrow in the next ten years for projects. Mrs. Cubbedge said they would need to gather input before they take on another big project. She noted that the district does need a new high school, but high schools are very expensive. Mr. Lewis asked if high schools were about \$85 million and Mrs. Cubbedge stated that it was probably closer to \$100 million.

Ms. Morgan noted that the power point needed to say that the previous debt is paid in full and Mrs. Cubbedge agreed. The committee noted that a “collected to date” slide would be beneficial. Mrs. Cubbedge reviewed each category, and she noted that the students at South Woods Elementary School (SWES) were very excited about the expansion. Mr. Cook noted that it would be beneficial to have “testimonials” from students and faculty about the impact of the sales tax. He also noted there should be a “sum it up” slide to review. Mr. Lewis agreed that it should show how students have been impacted. The committee discussed the effect of Treaty Oaks Preparatory Academy (TOPA). Mr. Lewis asked the enrollment of TOPA and Mrs. Weber stated that it was about 540. Ms. Morgan asked if it was a K-8 and Mrs. Cubbedge stated that it would be, but it opened as a K-6.

Next, Mrs. Cubbedge reviewed future projects. Ms. Morgan asked why Elementary O School was not listed and Mrs. Cubbedge explained that it was not a sales tax school. Mrs. Cubbedge then explained the Schools of Hope. She explained that they need to keep in mind the Schools of Hope when planning future schools. Ms. Laguardia asked who owns the facilities in the district and Mrs. Cubbedge stated that the school district does. She also explained that the half cent sales surtax is for capital expenditures only. Ms. Laguardia asked if the charter school would be privy to the funds and Mrs. Cubbedge stated that yes, they would be able to ask for half cent funds. Ms. Laguardia asked how much they could get. Mrs. Cubbedge explained that their request would have to be spent in one of the four categories, so it must fit in the list to meet the ballot language. Mrs. Weber explained that the millage is not paid all up front. She stated that the charters will receive funds also, but it will work the same way as the sales tax. The charters will submit FTE numbers, and their amount will be adjusted accordingly. Mrs. Weber stated that the district will be good stewards, so when the funds are received by the district, then the district will send funds to the charters. Mr. Lewis asked about oversight for the millage. Mrs. Weber stated that the millage has its own advisory board like the CAC. Ms. Laguardia asked how many charter schools were here in St. Johns County. Mrs. Cubbedge stated that there are four (4): Therapeutic Learning Center, St. Johns Community Campus, St. Augustine Public Montessori and Treaty Oaks

Preparatory Academy (TOPA). Ms. Laguardia asked how many total students TOPA would have eventually and Mrs. Cubbedge stated about 800. Ms. Laguardia also asked if TOPA would need a new building and Mrs. Cubbedge said they could add one, but they are only eligible for their share of the half-cent sales tax. Mr. Cook asked if TOPA buildings are public facilities and Mrs. Cubbedge stated technically they are public. Mrs. Cubbedge stated that they could discuss this question with the attorneys. Ms. Forcier asked if the attorneys could come to the next meeting. Mr. Cook said that the CAC could get the information and review it and then provide feedback to the School Board. Mrs. Cubbedge stated that she would send the annual report to the committee after reframing it based on their comments. Ms. Flores asked if there had been communication with the public regarding the Schools of Hope (SOH). Mrs. Cubbedge stated that they had presented it to principals and the FOCUS group (PTO and SAC). She stated they continue to schedule meetings about SOH. She said she is also evaluating and trying to reduce the district footprint. She also stated that she does this every year in regard to relocatables, but she is doing it earlier this year. Mr. Lewis asked how it would work and Mrs. Cubbedge stated that she is not quite sure how it would work. She further stated that they would have to look at the process, if the district is asked.

Public Comment

None.

Next Meeting Date/Time

The next meeting will be held on Monday, March 9, 2026, at 4:00pm, St. Johns County School District, The Fullerwood Training Center, 10 Hildreth Drive, St. Augustine, Florida.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:08pm by Ms. Laguardia.

Minutes submitted by Judith Harvey.