

Highlights of the October 21, 2009 COBWRA Meeting at Palm Isles

Robert Weisman, PBC Administrator

Mr. Weisman spoke about the **2010 County Budget**.

The county operating budget is over \$1.6 Billion and provides many vital services including Fire-Rescue and the Palm Beach Sheriff's Office—together which account for half of the entire budget. Our county finances are the only ones rated AAA in the State of Florida by all three rating agencies and one of about 20 counties in the entire country. When we need to borrow money, these ratings helps us get the lowest interest.

- About \$400M is for Fire-Rescue. The County library system accounts for \$119M.
- The General County budget of \$1.1M includes:
 - \$74M for debt service including a new jail and building Scripps Research Institute in Jupiter.
 - Reserves are \$85M – 40M less than 2 years ago since some reserves were used to reduce taxes.
 - The *Ad Valorem* portion is \$822M including \$418M for the Sheriff, \$49M for the other constitutional officers, \$280M to run county departments and \$74M for Palm Tran, grants and social services such as helping the homeless.
- The County must live within the money coming in from taxes. It can't print money like the Federal government and can't issue bonds for operating costs.
- Money is not coming in the way it has in the past meaning we must adjust what we do to match the dollars from taxpayers. Next year will be worse.
- The increase in millage rate from 3.7811 in 2009 to 4.344 for 2010 will not actually bring in more dollars. The reason long-time homesteaders' home values decreased, they will see a small increase in taxes because of the Recapture Rule. When the Assessed Value is less than the Market Value, this rule requires the Assessed Value to be increased by the lesser of the increase in the Consumer Price Index or 3%. This year's CPI increased 0.1%. Long-time homesteaders will see a 0.1% increase in their Assessed Value.
- Recent home buyers will see a decrease in taxes owed. The drop in home values has leveled the difference between recent and long-time Homestead taxpayers.
- How can the County provide the services the people want when the revenues are constant or are going down because home values are still falling? The honest answer is "It can't be done!" We need an open discussion with the people to decide what to cut and what to keep when we expect property values to fall another 10% next year. The county has already cut 600 employees and those left will not get a pay raise.
- The first BCC workshop on the 2011 budget will be 1:30 pm, Oct 27, 301 N Olive St, West Palm Beach.

Officials' Reports

Commissioner Burt Aaronson promised the County would install the **traffic signal at Flavor Pict** and Hagen Ranch Roads by Thanksgiving, 2009. Finishing **Lyons Road** from Atlantic Ave to Boynton Beach Blvd should be bid by Jan 2010 and constructed by 2012.

Commissioner Shelley Vana reported she is meeting with Broward County officials to discuss how climate changes will affect our water supplies.

State Senator Ted Deutch, Dist 30, reported the State also faces a tremendous budget shortfall. Senator Deutch believes it is time to eliminate the unfair and ridiculous sales tax exemptions. The Governor is considering a special session to deal with funding for Tri-Rail, drilling for oil in the Gulf of Mexico, and an agreement with the Seminoles on State revenue from their gambling casinos.

State Representative Kevin Rader, Dist 78, reported the state gets no revenues from the estimated \$1.5 Billion taken by the Seminole tribe casinos. Property insurance continues to be an issue for the legislature.

State Representative Maria Sachs, Dist 86, said her Blue Ribbon Committees will meet Nov 19 to discuss ideas for education, disaster preparations and insurance.

Capt. Marty Bechtel, PBSO Dist. 6, reported the crime statistics for October so far: 36 residential burglaries, 73 vehicle burglaries with most unlocked, 7 business burglaries and 5 stolen cars. The Sheriff's Office never calls to **solicit funds**. Hang up when you get such calls.

Mike Baker, Lake Worth Drainage District, reported the construction behind homes along the **C. Stanley Weaver Canal** would be finished by April 2010.

COBWRA Committee Reports

Debbie Murphy, Vice Chair of the Health and Flu Shots Committee, reported flu shot clinics ended Oct 14 with 6,437 people from 47 communities served. **Joan Brunswick, Chair**, reported **H1N1 flu shots** for 46 communities would begin when our vaccine is available. **Gerry Morrison, Chair of Growth Management**, reported the proposals heard at the Oct 6 meeting.

- The proposal by **Mazzoni Packing Facility** (on Boynton Beach Blvd between Alden Ridge and Palm Isles) for 3 new medical office buildings and a new storage building was approved with seven conditions.

Future Meetings (Open to the public)

Nov 3, 6:30 pm: Growth Management at PBSO Dist. 6

Nov 18, 9:30 am: COBWRA meeting at **Ponte Vecchio**, Jog Road between Boynton Beach Blvd and Gateway.

Speakers: Sheriff Bradshaw & State Attorney McAuliffe