

St. Petersburg City Council
BUDGET, FINANCE & TAXATION COMMITTEE

Committee Report for the Meeting of July 30, 2009

Members: Chair James R. "Jim" Kennedy Jr., Vice-Chair James S. Bennett, Jeff Danner, Wengay M. "Newt" Newton Sr. , & Karl Nurse (Alternate).

Call to Order

Approval of Agenda

Approval of Minutes of July 16, 2009

1. New Business

a. Notification Bid System

Mr. Louis Moore, Purchasing Director, provided a follow up discussion as requested at the previous meeting. Mr. Moore provided screenshots of the City's website depicting the improvements that were made since his last presentation. Mr. Moore indicated that five new vendor points of entry were added to the City's homepage. Mr. Moore also identified where terminology was changed to increase site consistency. Mr. Moore explained that he met with his staff to determine additional ways to reach and educate local vendors; he will notify council when additional ideas are finalized. Currently, the Purchasing Department is formulating several new strategies including: utilizing Channel 35, working with the Chamber of Commerce, launching the campaign "We Need You as a City Supplier." and carefully placing brochures at libraries and other public places. Ms. Curran suggested that additional vendor education components be added. Mr. Moore indicated that he is working with the Small Business Assistance Center to increase educational opportunities for local vendors. Mr. Danner felt that using the label "Doing Business with the City" on the City's website might clear up public confusion. Mr. Moore agreed and indicated that he could have that change made. Mr. Newton thanked the Business Development Center and discussed the importance of using local, small businesses. Mr. Bennett commented that we already communicate with every business in the city during the Business Tax renewal process and suggested that we could use that opportunity for further education and information sharing. Mr. Moore indicated that 20% of the vendors listed in the City's vendor database are St. Petersburg vendors. Mr. Nurse thanked Mr. Moore for being open to improving the process and commented on the importance of utilizing local vendors without increasing the cost to the City. Mr. Newton stated that we need to give local vendors the opportunity to competitively bid on our business and not a guarantee that we will always use them.

b. Great Explorations Children's Museum

Mr. Chris Ballestra, Downtown Enterprise Facilities Director, advised the committee that his office had received a letter from Great Explorations, requesting that the City suspend the organization's monthly capital reimbursement fees for the period of one year. Mr. Ballestra commented that many of the tenants, both not-for-profit and for-profit, currently renting city facilities are facing economic challenges. There was discussion on the dollar amount that the Great Explorations request represented. Mr. Ballestra invited Alan Kahle, Executive Director of Great Exploration, to join the discussion. Mr. Kahle indicated that the request was for a forgiveness of the capital reimbursement fee for one year. Mr. Kennedy requested clarification on the intent of the request; Mr. Kennedy wanted to know if it was a deferment or forgiveness. After discussing the request it was determined that Great Explorations needed to better define its request and that the organization needed to support its request with financial documentation. Mr. Ballestra explained the Great Exploration lease and indicated that the lease was valid through 2028. Mr. Ballestra reported that the City has not received audited financial documents for the organization's last fiscal year and that his department continues to request that documentation. Mr. Kahle indicated that their audit had been completed, but that the audit firm was waiting for payment to issue the official document. Mr. Danner inquired about the amount of the current subsidy. Mr. Danner indicated that he could not make a decision without reviewing the entire picture. Mr. Ballestra agreed and stated that his office could not make a recommendation until all of the facts were presented and reviewed. Ms. Curran indicated that she would like to see the Science Center of Pinellas, the St. Petersburg Museum of History, The Pier Aquarium and Great Explorations meet to discuss the possibility of consolidation. She commented that all of those organizations are experiencing economic challenges and that possible efficiencies could be identified. Mr. Kennedy agreed and stated that he would like to see both the executive directors and their respective boards participate in that meeting. Mr. Nurse commented that the City needs to help organizations find cost savings, as an example he stated that possibly a monthly Profit/Loss Statement was not needed and that organizations would save on accounting fees if they went to a quarterly report. Mr. Newton commented that in scenarios like this one, more fact finding and research needs to occur prior to meeting with council. Mr. Danner moved to request that staff provide the committee with all information related to the Great Explorations lease and Mr. Bennett seconded, the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Danner also moved to request that staff facilitate a meeting with the executive directors and their respective board members of the following organizations: Science Center of Pinellas, the St. Petersburg Museum of History, The Pier Aquarium and Great Explorations to discuss consolidation and ways to decrease costs. Mr. Bennett seconded and the motion passed.

c. Cooperative Brokers

Mr. Bruce Grimes, Real Estate and Property Management Director, briefly commented on the City's current process and policy related to cooperative brokers. Mr. Kennedy requested that staff provide a report and presentation related to the background of our current process and policy, ramification of changes and recommendation. Mr. Newton thanked Mr. Grimes for doing an excellent job on the Airport restaurant tenant project. Mr. Newton stated that it was of no fault of Mr. Grimes that the proposed Airport tenant went into bankruptcy. Mr. Bennett requested a report on the progress of the Al Lang negotiations.

2. Continued / Deferred Business
 - a. None

3. Next Meeting Agenda Tentative Issues

April 6, 2009

- a. Fiscal Policies
 - Jeff Spies, Finance Director
 - Tim Finch, Budget & Management Director
- b. Quarterly Financial Reports
 - Jeff Spies, Finance Director
 - Tim Finch, Budget & Management Director

August 20, 2009

- a. Mahaffey Management Study Update – AMS Planning & Research
 - Brad Scott, City Auditor

August 27, 2009

- a. Proposed Utility Rates for FY 2010
 - Richard Bulger, Billing & Collections Director
- b. Great Explorations
 - Chris Ballestra, Downtown Enterprise Facilities Director
- c. Deferred Compensation Plans and Pension Plans
 - Gary Cornwell, Human Resources Director

4. Adjournment – meeting adjourned at 8:51 a.m.

**BUDGET, FINANCE & TAXATION COMMITTEE
PENDING / CONTINUING REFERRALS**

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<i>TOPIC</i>	<i>DATE REFERRED</i>	<i>REFERRED BY</i>	<i>SCHEDULED / HEARD ON</i>	<i>RETURN DATE</i>	<i>STAFF RESPONSIBLE</i>	<i>SPECIAL NOTES</i>
Energy Conservation Program	04.23.09	Kennedy		09.10.2009	DeYampert	Kennedy requested update on status of HELP.
Deferred Compensation Plans and Pension Plans	05.28.09	Bennett		08.27.2009	Cornwell	Requested that staff begin looking at the possibility of offering a voluntary 401 pension plan option to non-union employees.
Mahaffey Management Study Update – AMS Planning & Research	06.18.09	Scott		08.20.2009	Scott	Update on management study.

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Cooperative Brokers	07.09.09	Danner		09.24.2009	Grimes	Cooperative Brokers-commissions on City leases.