

# Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

**Date:** May 21, 2020  
**To:** Board of Directors  
**From:** Benjamin H. Pingree, PLACE Director  
**Subject:** Summary Minutes to Board of Directors Meeting of March 12, 2020

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## **MEMBERS PRESENT**

<b>COUNTY</b>	<b>CITY</b>
Commissioner Bryan Desloge, Chair	Commissioner Elaine Bryant, Vice-Chair
Commissioner Kristin Dozier	Mayor John Dailey
Commissioner Nick Maddox	Commissioner Curtis Richardson
Commissioner Mary Ann Lindley	Commissioner Jeremy Matlow
Commissioner Bill Proctor	Commissioner Dianne Williams-Cox
Commissioner Jimbo Jackson	
Commissioner Rick Minor	

## **I. AGENDA MODIFICATIONS**

- There were no agenda modifications.

## **II. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD ON NON-AGENDAED ITEMS**

3-minute limit per speaker; there will not be any discussion by the Commission

There were no speakers for non-agendaed items.

## **III. PRESENTATIONS**

- Citizen's Advisory Committee Chairman's Report
  - Elva Peppers provided an overview of the CAC Retreat on February 12, 2020, and CAC meeting on February 27, 2020, which included the following: role of committee members, a summary of the Blueprint Agency structure, revision of the meeting minutes per committee feedback, and the desire for the designation of one permitting agency for multi-jurisdictional projects. One citizen speaker who opposed the Northeast Gateway, stated that it was unnecessary and that the Killlearn Homes Association did not represent all of the resident opinions.
- Blueprint Project Updates
  - Autumn Calder provided an overview of the Blueprint projects which included the following: a Beautification Award from the American Public Works Association for the improvements at the Orange/Meridian Community Space, community engagement updates, projects highlights, and the execution of six contracts for infrastructure projects since the December 2019 IA Board meeting.

- Betsy Couch with the Knight Creative Community Initiative spoke briefly on collaboration with Blueprint on various projects.
- A copy of the presentation is on file at Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency.
  
- Office of Economic Vitality Project Updates
  - Cristina Paredes provided an overview of the OEV projects which included the following: anticipated impacts of COVID-19 on the Tallahassee-Leon County community and community recourse coordination, outreach and support for Continuing Operation Plans.
  - A copy of the presentation is on file at Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency.

#### IV. CONSENT

**ACTION TAKEN: Commissioner Williams-Cox moved, seconded by Commissioner Richardson to approve the Consent Agenda.**

**The motion passed 11-0 with Mayor Dailey out of Chambers.**

1. Approval of the January 30, 2020, Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
**The Board approved Option #1: Approve the January 30, 2020, Board of Directors meeting minutes.**
  
2. Acceptance of the Status Report on Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Infrastructure Projects  
**The Board approved Option #1: Accept the March 2020 Status Report on Blueprint Infrastructure Projects.**
  
3. Acceptance of the Status Update on Sound Mitigation for the Capital City Amphitheater  
**The Board approved Option #1: Accept the update on sound assessment and mitigation strategies at Cascades Park.**
  
4. Approval of the Reappointment of Kathy Bell to the Citizens Advisory Committee  
**The Board approved Option #1: Reappoint Kathy Bell to serve a second three-year term on the Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Citizens Advisory Committee.**
  
5. Acceptance of an Analysis on Memorializing Community History and Culture in Blueprint Projects  
**The Board approved Option #1: Accept the analysis on memorializing community history and culture in Blueprint Infrastructure projects, which continues using current project processes, additional resources, and project profiles to identify historic & cultural resources.**

Commissioner Desloge announced that the IA Board meeting would break at 3:45 pm for a joint City-County-School Board press conference regarding the impacts of COVID-19 on Tallahassee-Leon County.

**V. GENERAL BUSINESS**

**6. Acceptance of the Status Report on the Arena District Convention Center Project and Consideration of Next Steps**

Ben Pingree and Cristina Paredes provided a joint presentation to the IA Board on the Arena District Convention Center Project included project history and past IA Board actions, partner collaborations, a comprehensive market analysis, and an overview of the facility requirements to provide the best benefit for Tallahassee-Leon County. The 2014 cost estimate, 2020 cost analysis, and future budget impacts. The construction of the Convention Center would create between 1,167 and 1,734 new jobs with an estimated economic effect to Tallahassee-Leon County of \$218.5 to \$295.4 million.

Susan Dawson provided information of the substantial amendment process and clarified that amendments to the cost of projects did not constitute substantial amendment because the original intent of the project would not be altered. Furthermore, the Sales Tax Committee anticipated that project costs would increase over time. Therefore, an amendment of the project would only require a majority vote of the IA Board. A copy of the presentation is on file at Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency.

**Citizen Comments:**

Kevin Graham, Executive Director, Florida State University (FSU) Real Estate Foundation, spoke in favor of the Convention Center project, historical impacts of collaborations with Tallahassee-Leon County, and of FSU’s commitment in partnership with BPIA. Including a commitment to an aesthetic and feel that reflected the community, not FSU specifically.

Dr. Shawnta Friday-Stroud, Florida Agriculture & Mechanical University, (FAMU), presented the IA Board with an alternative proposal for a multipurpose stadium and retail space and stormwater management facility at the corner of Adams Street and Orange Avenue a total estimated cost of \$40 million. This facility would provide economic development, beautification, and stormwater management to the Southside.

Commissioner Desloge adjourned the meeting at 3:43 pm for the joint City-County-School Board press conference regarding COVID-19. He reconvened the meeting at 4:17 pm.

Ben Pingree addressed the questions received during the break to frame the forthcoming debate. Regarding the cost estimates, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amended Interlocal Agreement included a local commitment of up to \$20 million however, the expanded facility and subsequent increased costs of approximately \$40 million and debt services of \$13 million would come the from the Intergovernmental Agency through the OEV

budget. The new proposal from FAMU was not an agendaed item, however, with IA Board direction, staff could develop an analysis and agenda item for formal discussion and consideration of that project.

**Commissioner Maddox moved, seconded by Commissioner Williams-Cox to approve Option 1 and bring back an agenda item for consideration of funding (up to \$10 million) the FAMU proposal.**

**Option 1: Accept the market feasibility study conducted by HVS on the proposed Convention Center project and direct the IMC to proceed with the following actions:**

- **Develop and execute a Memorandum of Understanding with FSU to formalize the development, operational, and maintenance responsibilities for the new convention center in accordance with the content of this agenda item.**
- **Commensurate with the execution of the MOU, work with FSU to conduct a cost feasibility analysis and visioning session with community partners and authorize the expenditure of up to \$500,000 for the construction of a convention center, as recommended by HVS study and allocate funding from OEV’s unallocated fund balance.**
- **Include the \$40M estimate for bonding and debt service in the development of the FY 2021 Office of Economic Vitality’s budget.**

Commissioner Lindley expressed her preference to separate the two proposals. Her files indicated conversations regarding a conference center beginning in 1997. Florida is the third largest state in the Union with over 500 agencies and organizations that Tallahassee-Leon County anticipated hosting for meetings and events. The Convention Center represented an advantage to the economic assets and synergy offered in the future.

**Commissioner Lindley offered a substitute motion, seconded by Mayor Dailey to approve Option 1.**

**Option 1: Accept the market feasibility study conducted by HVS on the proposed Convention Center project and direct the IMC to proceed with the following actions:**

- **Develop and execute a Memorandum of Understanding with FSU to formalize the development, operational, and maintenance responsibilities for the new convention center in accordance with the content of this agenda item.**
- **Commensurate with the execution of the MOU, work with FSU to conduct a cost feasibility analysis and visioning session with community partners and authorize the expenditure of up to \$500,000 for the construction of a convention center, as recommended by HVS study and allocate funding from OEV’s unallocated fund balance.**
- **Include the \$40M estimate for bonding and debt service in the development of the FY 2021 Office of Economic Vitality’s budget.**

Commissioner Dozier expressed her appreciation for the goals expressed by her colleagues and fully supported separating the two projects. Regarding the Convention Center, she expressed concerns with some of the logistical details such as parking, maintenance, capital improvements, etc. and was not ready to develop and execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with FSU until those issues were worked out. She suggested delaying the MOU in favor of further analysis and supporting agenda item at the May 21, 2020 IA Board meeting. It would also allow for greater public engagement and community feedback.

Either Ben Pingree stated that approval of the original or substitute motions would direct staff to begin negotiations and actions listed in Option 1. The substitute motion provided flexibility to refine the cost estimate for the project. Parking could be further vetted and if the IA Board approved the motion on the floor, staff would be working to resolve. Parking would be a required commitment from FSU before Blueprint would agree, under the motion.

Commissioner Dozier acknowledged FSU's commitment to working with Blueprint and their comments about access and the look and feel of the facility. All were important, particularly public access, if the project included sales tax or City and County funds. However, long-term maintenance and parking could be equally as critical and costs could escalate if the parking was not accurate. She could not support the motion or its substitute without further analysis and reporting to provide answers.

Regarding the proposal by FAMU, Commissioner Dozier supported a future agenda item with more information on the project and an analysis of overlap of funding with Infrastructure because of other stormwater projects in the gateway area.

Commissioner Minor confirmed that should the IA Board decide to move forward with the Convention Center, 100 percent of the funding would come from sales tax dollars and would not increase the tax burden of Tallahassee-Leon County. He questioned who would bear the burden of possible cost overruns. Ben Pingree confirmed that OEV would carry overruns related to construction or benefit from underruns.

Commissioner Minor spoke to the long-term economic benefit to Tallahassee-Leon County after construction, \$108 million to \$185 million annually with 800 to 1,367 full time employees, but also questioned what other types of projects might be possible if the IA Board chose not to move forward with the Convention Center. Ben Pingree stated that the primary opportunity cost with the Convention Center project was the location. Positioned between the Tucker and Turnbull Centers, it provided for an economy of scale in the middle of the Arena District and Downtown and was adjacent to scalable facilities. To address speculative projects Mr. Pingree compared the financial commitment to Project Juggernaut and Alabama Street, two projects presented at the December 2019 IA Board meeting. For a similar investment, the IA Board could consider approximately 20 Project Juggernauts, which was expected to create 953 skilled labor jobs and an economic impact of \$140.6 million over 10 years. Projects such as Alabama Street would not have the economic impact of the creation of hundreds of jobs, however, the improvement to quality of life and the value provided to the surrounding neighborhoods mattered greatly to the people served. Mr. Pingree stated that the IA Board could focus all financial resources to the mega

projects that would generate visitors and spending. However, he hoped for a blend of projects that attracted visitors and businesses to Tallahassee-Leon County and supported the existing communities.

Commissioner Richardson questioned if FSU would retain sole ownership of a sales tax funded facility. Ben Pingree stated that FSU agreed to defer to the IA Board, as the funders of the project, regarding the terms, conditions, and size of the facility. The long-term lease options, or ownership and the associated maintenance, would be negotiated in the MOU. However, a primary tenet of the partnership must be public access and use. Referencing the management transition of the Civic Center/Tucker Center in 2012, Commissioner Richardson expressed his concern that the Convention Center look and feel like a community facility not a publically funded FSU facility.

Furthermore, Commissioner Richardson stated that as a member of the Sales Tax Committee, there was one point of consternation for him in the discussions of the Performing Arts Center. That it would have been funded by local sales tax dollars, yet many would have been unable access to the facility. For example, small non-profit organizations. He stressed that a Convention Center project, funded through sales tax dollars, must be a community asset. Furthermore, he requested that community access be built into the MOU to create opportunities for the broader community.

Commissioner Matlow stated that he fully supported contributing to projects that improved the Orange Avenue and South Adams Street area. He also expressed concern that the IA Board would consider spending \$53 million with one-week notice. He though it unacceptable to the taxpayers to not be informed of a major investment following months of conversation. Secondly, he felt it unwise to commit to the project given the uncertainty of the economic impact of COVID-19. Furthermore, he ventured that when the IA Board agreed to funding the project at \$20 million, they believed that it would be a full sized Convention Center and that partners would contribute to the funding. He did not think it correct for local governments to fund the project fully. He wanted projects to come forward and expected that, like in the presentation by FAMU, the partnership options included funding also.

Commissioner Matlow questioned if Tallahassee-Leon County needed a Convention Center. He stated that the city needed investments that reduced crime problems, fought back against economic segregation, and addressed poverty. He would not support the motions on the table because it was irresponsible and reckless to allocate of ten-years of sales tax revenues with only four months of collections without larger community conversations. He encouraged further analysis on the Convention Center and the FAMU proposal too including the full economic impact and funding partnerships or alternatives.

Commissioner Bryant supported the need for a Convention Center as an economic driver and stressed the importance of maintaining a holistic viewpoint. She offered recommendations for a May 2020, agenda item that addressed Commissioner Dozier's questions and ensured funding for FAMU, as it was imperative that publically funded investments be made from a community perspective. Furthermore, she emphasized that as jobs were created, it was incumbent on the IA Board and OEV

ensure inclusion of the currently underserved communities in Tallahassee-Leon County.

Commissioner Jackson expressed his support for the Convention Center and noted that if only 10 percent of the statewide organizations with offices in Tallahassee utilized the space, there would be a conference, and the associated influx of people and dollars, each week. Coupled with the jobs created by the construction and 1,300 full-time jobs once complete, it supported improvement to the rates of poverty and crime.

Commissioner Williams-Cox she supported the construction of the Convention Center for the economic benefits to Tallahassee-Leon County. She spoke to the need for public access, additional funding, and for major stakeholders to be included in the process beginning today. Furthermore, she supported the FAMU proposal too, noting that it deserved equal evaluation.

Commissioner Maddox clarified his earlier motion requesting an agenda item that evaluated the possibility of supporting the FAMU proposal. He did not anticipate the complications it created and with his understanding of the will of the IA Board to isolate the two issues, **Commissioner Maddox withdrew his original motion.**

Commissioner Dozier noted that while the topic of the Convention Center might come before the IA Board many times in the future, the motion on the floor delegated the authority to the Intergovernmental Management Committee (IMC) to negotiate and execute an MOU with FSU and for staff to spend \$500,000 for the next steps in the process. Respecting that, she reiterated her concerns about parking and the larger budget impacts of the pandemic. She strongly encouraged an update at the May 2020, IA Board meeting that coincided with the budget discussion (workshop) allowed staff to address the larger concerns without slowing down the project.

Ben Pingree confirmed that staff would prepare a status update for May 2020, and future meetings also; similar to project updates on infrastructure. Moreover, while the motion on the floor authorized the IMC to execute the MOU, staff would not proceed to execution without answers to all the questions and concerns raised by the IA Board.

Commissioner Lindley supported an update in May that included parking, community involvement, vicinity traffic, etc. She clarified however, that execution of the MOU could proceed if resolved prior to May 21, 2020.

Commissioner Proctor quoted Mr. Pingree's earlier comment that the "improvement to quality of life and the value provided to the surrounding neighborhoods mattered greatly to the people served." He could not support the Convention Center until the IA Board took action to generate life throughout the whole community; that included the Fairgrounds. The IA Board was not fair in its prioritization of the necessary improvements at that facility. He referenced celebrations by sports teams from Southside schools and stated that could not support, in good faith, the allocation of funds to a project that could not be fully utilized by all citizens. He understood the value of the Convention Center to Tallahassee-Leon County. However, the IA Board did not seem to understand the value to the Southside of installing indoor plumbing at the Fairgrounds.

Regarding the proposal by FAMU, Commissioner Proctor stated that he was not against it but reminded the IA Board that the reasoning for not funding improvements at the Fairgrounds was the prioritization list. The IA Board committed to that list, which included improvements at the Fairgrounds, but would not consider reprioritizing funding for that project. Yet with a three-minute presentation by FAMU, the IA Board was willing to give a \$10 million placeholder. FAMU was not on the list of committed projects but the Fairgrounds were. He thought that was a deceptive, 'bait and switch' by the IA Board.

Commissioner Minor agreed with Commissioner Dozier's concerns of parking and ensuring that the Convention Center was a community asset. He respected the talent of staff however, the speed with which the decision was moving in asking staff to resolve those questions when it was not clear to him that consensus existed amongst the IA Board. It did not seem to be the proper approach. He noted serious concerns about the process and input of the IA Board on the MOU. He supported the project however because, even at the conservative estimate, over the lifetime of the Blueprint 2020 program it could mean a \$1.6 billion economic impact on Tallahassee-Leon County. He would vote in favor of the motion on the floor, even with his reservations, and asserted that they reach consensus on the issues in the coming months.

Mayor Dailey expressed his support for the Convention Center project.

Commissioner Desloge likened the Convention Center to Cascades Park in that it would be the most transformational project by OEV. He noted the significance of the commitment by FSU to shoulder the ongoing operation and maintenance costs. Furthermore, the many statewide associations located in Tallahassee-Leon County held in excess of 2,000 conferences annually. This project would provide the horsepower to the Tallahassee-Leon County to host larger conventions, which served to boost the tourism dollars also.

**The motion passed 10-2 with Commissioners Matlow and Proctor dissenting.**

**Commissioner Maddox moved, seconded by Commissioner Proctor, to approve bring back a future agenda item with the analysis of the FAMU economic development proposal and consideration of funding for \$10 million.**

Commissioner Proctor stated that, regarding process, the FAMU proposal was not included in the voter approved project list. However, he was willing to go out of bounds for the value provided to Tallahassee-Leon County.

**The motion passed 12-0.**

Commissioner Maddox reminded Commissioner Proctor that the Blueprint 2020 program allocated \$12 million to improvements at the Fairgrounds. It was inaccurate to claim that the IA Board had not considered renovations. Those improvements

would be made at the Fairgrounds within a few years and much of that was a direct correlation to Commissioner Proctor's hard work and determination.

Commissioner Richardson also commended Commissioner Proctor's advocacy of the Fairgrounds and directly attributed the funding allocation in the Blueprint 2020 program to his dedication to the project.

**Commissioner Dozier moved, seconded by Commissioner Matlow, to include an agenda item in the May 21, 2020, Budget Workshop analyzing the fiscal projections for the out years of the OEV program (at 1% and 3%), the bond comparison (\$40M and \$50M), and develop a revenue scenario where the increased sales tax revenue from building the convention center would be applied to revenue forecasts.**

**The motion passed 12-0.**

VI. **CITIZENS TO BE HEARD ON NON-AGENDAED ITEMS**

3-minute limit per speaker; there will not be any discussion by the Commission

There were no speakers to be heard.

VII. **ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 5:37 p.m.

*The next Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Board of Directors Meeting  
is scheduled for:*

**Thursday, May 21, 2020, at 3:00 p.m.**