

**Utility Advisory Committee**  
**Tuesday, July 25, 2006 – 6:30 p.m.**  
**100 North Andrews Avenue, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room**  
**Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33301**

<b>Board Members</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>2006</b>		
		<b>Cumulative Attendance</b>		
		<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>	<b>Total</b>
Bunney Brenneman, Chair	P	7	0	7
Richard Barrett	P	7	0	7
Bob Caine	P	6	1	7
Christine Campbell, Vice Chair	A	5	2	7
L. Thomas Chancey	P	6	1	7
Bob Cole	P	6	1	7
Caldwell Cooper	P	4	1	5
Joe Holland	P	7	0	7
Dr. Magdalene Lewis	P	6	1	7
Terri Murru	P	6	1	7
Fred Stresau	P	6	1	7
Dr. Geri Udell *	A	1		
Clare Vickery	P	4	3	7
Nathaniel Wilkerson	A	5	2	7

\*no meeting notification provided

**City Representatives**

Peter Partington, City Engineer  
 Mark Almy, City of Fort Lauderdale Staff  
 Shannon Vezina, Public Information Officer

**Guests**

Lynn Shatas, FPL  
 Trevor Underwood

**I. Call to Order**

Chair Brenneman called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m.

**II. Roll Call**

The recorder, Alexandra Grant, took roll call.

[Ms. Vickery arrived at 6:50 p.m.]

**III. Self Introductions**

**IV. Approval of Minutes – May 30, 2006 Meeting**

Joe Holland made a motion to approve the May 30, 2006 minutes. Fred Stresau seconded the motion. In a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes – June 27, 2006 Meeting**

Fred Stresau made a motion to approve the June 27, 2006 minutes. Bob Caine seconded the motion. In a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Chair Brenneman requested to move up discussion of item 1 under Item VI: Update on Workshop. There were no objections.

**VI. Update on Workshop**

**Chair Bunney Brenneman**

Peter Partington advised he had forwarded Ms. Wilson's material to the City's grant professional who was still working on this information. He strongly suggested that 3-4 key Committee members and staff hold a planning meeting the following month to get professional input and organization of the workshop. He deferred to Shannon Vezina, staff's public information officer.

Ms. Vezina stated she had contacted the Broward Center for the Performing Arts regarding scheduling the workshop. Saturday, November 11 was available and a room was being held on that date from morning through afternoon. She summarized the tentative format for the workshop.

Mr. Partington was concerned about having enough material to fill the time slot schedule as the workshop's purpose was to disseminate Ms. Wilson's information.

Ms. Murru raised the following points:

1. It was important to get qualified information for lay people to understand
2. The Committee needed to be cognizant that involving the general public was not always the best method to achieving such goals.
3. It was important to engage professional staff.

Monica Wilson advised she had spoken to nonprofit organizations and would provide additional information to the Committee.

Ms. Wilson agreed that solar energy was not 100% the solution just yet. She felt incorporating public input was good and had always seen a high attendance rate at such workshops. She agreed that providing information on websites and via brochures made sense. Ms. Murru recalled that public turnout at different previous workshops had been disappointing. Ms. Vezina spoke of various ways invitations were disseminated to residents.

Mr. Chancey advised he had recently attended the American Society of Landscape Architects convention and felt these professionals could design something ...Florida Urban Forest ISA Conference and the Intl. Society of Arboriculture....

Mr. Barrett agreed with Mr. Chancey's suggestion to seek input from landscape planners and professionals.

Mr. Chancey felt the stimulus was not strong enough to cause much public participation. He felt that if a professional organization conducted a probe and identified the correct stimulus, public involvement on this issue would increase.

Chair Brenneman summarized various lists used to send out invitations to the public. Joe Holland felt video usage was essential and suggested using DVDs for small group presentations. Ms. Vezina added that an article was included in city packets to neighborhood associations.

Mr. Chancey recommended pursuing professional organizations and vendor sponsors to increase public turnout at the workshop. Ms. Murru suggested that Mr. Chancey and Mr. Cole provide names of potential vendors.

## **V. Old Business**

- **Line Clearing and Test Area Update.**

**Lynn Shatas, FPL  
Fred Stresau, Chair Tree Sub-Committee  
Gene Dempsey, Urban Forester, and Mark Almy**

Lynn Shatas of FPL advised that line clearing at the Verena substation was complete. The project had been a success and there were no complaints. She thanked the Committee for its input on this project.

Mark Almy added that the pilot program went exceptionally well with great responses from FPL and the public.

Chair Brenneman advised that she had attended the Poinsettia Heights neighborhood association meeting along with Commissioner Rodstrom and Gene Dempsey. Residents there had lots of compliments for FPL. Mr. Almy stated he was impressed with the education of homeowners and commended the Committee on these efforts.

Ms. Murru wanted to go forward with phases 2-6. Mr. Stresau suggested that staff provide the City Commission with a report on how the line clearing project went. He felt it was better to focus on palms to build a rapport with the community first, then address leafy trees later.

Ms. Shatas advised she would get back with FPL vegetation staff to work with Mr. Almy and staff regarding problem trees. She agreed to keep the Commission informed.

Ms. Murru made a motion that the Committee encourage FPL, staff and advisors to inform the City Commission on the success of the pilot program and ask the City Commission for authorization to move on to the next areas.

Dr. Lewis seconded the motion. In a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Chancey spoke of the critical need for the tree canopy. He stressed that cutting down trees was not the answer but rather educating residents was the best approach.

- **Update on RFP – Consulting Services**

**Electrical Infrastructure: Needs Assessment & Strategy.  
City Staff and Fred Stresau, Selection Committee**

Mr. Stresau advised that the Selection Committee had met and agreed on a direction. The purchasing manager would make a recommendation to the City manager to place this item on a future City Commission agenda.

Ms. Vickery asked how negotiations would be handled. Mr. Partington stated he would get further clarification on this. Mr. Stresau stated that an RFP had been sent out and the purchasing department made recommendations based on City statutes. This was only done for Phase 1.

- **Other Old Business: None**

## **VI. New Business**

- **Update on Workshop** **Chair Bunney Brenneman**

This item was discussed earlier in the meeting.

- **Municipalization & Undergrounding of Fort Lauderdale Utilities**

**Trevor Underwood**

Chair Brenneman introduced Trevor Underwood, a Fort Lauderdale resident, who would give a presentation on his research on municipalization and undergrounding of utilities.

Mr. Underwood explained that this proposal addressed the local distribution systems for electricity, telephone, internet access and cable services in Fort Lauderdale. He felt there was an opportunity for the City to create and own the underground utility distribution system, then rent it to competing multiple service providers. Multiple entities would need to use the lines. He felt the big payoff would come from owning the network and renting it to different entities. He added that this should remove the need for tree clearing.

Mr. Underwood stated he believed this process could be done on a costless basis. He spoke of the current monopoly situation in place which came with high priced services along with indirect charges and various costs of restricted competition. He explained that by normal estimates, monopoly profits ranged from about 10% to 20%. He explained that in the same way, the City could have enough profit margin to cover the debt financing of a bond issue. Income from

renting the utility distribution system to service providers would service the interest and capital on the bond. He cautioned that the alternative was to have this process done piecemeal with the City not even owning the underground distribution system. He felt the City should go out and contract companies to dig the holes for the undergrounding process.

Mr. Cooper pointed out that this was a multi-billion dollar project. He questioned whether a 10-20% profit charged by the City for electricity over the next 20 years would really add up to these figures. Mr. Underwood responded affirmatively and explained that this could be covered over a 25-30 year bond.

Mr. Cooper pointed out that his firm, Cooper Properties, was one of the largest taxpayers in the City and had tremendous numbers "shoved off to them because they owned commercial properties throughout the City." He was concerned that once this project began, commercial properties would have to bear the brunt of these costs. Mr. Underwood explained that on an ongoing basis, this program would not result in tax costs, rate hikes or special charges, simply because the City would be renting the use of its lines. It was actually cheaper to rent to multiple suppliers than have various people digging their own trenches. The offset, which would normally be an additional charge, would be avoided because of the more open and competitive environment. The rental income the City would collect would more than pay for the cost of debt service. Mr. Underwood further pointed out that as the monopoly, the City could choose to set its charges at any level required to service its debt. He pointed out that this was currently being done by a privately owned monopoly.

Mr. Cooper asked if Mr. Underwood had conducted any research as to the advantages and disadvantages of putting lines underground. Mr. Underwood stated there were advantages in areas with strong winds or freezing temperatures. Mr. Cooper stated he had no problem with undergrounding but questioned whether this would result in worse effects in the long run.

Ms. Murru asked if Mr. Underwood's research indicated any legal way for the City to move faster on this issue in light of the current contract that expired in 2009. Mr. Underwood stated the City was in a strong negotiating position because the contract expired in 2009. He felt there was no point in waiting until 2009 to take any action. Instead, the City should move forward with this process as it would take a long time. Progressively, as lines were buried street by street, they could be connected to the existing infrastructure. Ultimately, the City would take over the existing infrastructure. Mr. Underwood suggested establishing a

group of experts who wanted to expand upon his proposal as outlined and turn it into a workable proposal. He suggested that this group conduct a feasibility study quickly by known experts in different areas. Then the group could work the proposal in a form that could be presented to the City Commission who would then put it forward to the public for a vote.

Ms. Murru explained that there had been controversy as to whether undergrounding was the best option. She stated that she saw no reason why Mr. Underwood's plan could not fall into place with the steps the Committee had already been discussing.

Mr. Underwood believed that the best research evidence he had studied showed that this would have positive results. He felt personally that the benefits to the City would be overwhelming.

Ms. Murru stated that the City was moving toward hiring a staff consultant to provide objective opinions on this issue.

Ms. Vickery pointed out that many Bellsouth poles held FPL equipment and spoke of conflicts which arose as a result. She felt one entity controlling these poles would avoid a lot of conflicts. She agreed with Mr. Underwood that with one party in control, it was easier to coordinate while making money.

Monica Wilson advised that money was in place for initial start up costs for this effort. She referred to *State Bill 1980* that was specifically in place for hurricane mitigation efforts. This bill was in the amount of \$1.5 billion. She added that there were also other monies generated through federal grants in the amount of \$5.6 billion, of which Florida would get \$1 billion.

Mr. Underwood stressed the need to put together a group of experts creating a concrete proposal.

Mr. Barrett felt this discussion was moving exactly in the direction the Committee had desired from the beginning. He agreed that it made sense for the City to own its own utility infrastructure.

Mr. Holland stated he hoped the RFP for contractors could be steered in concert with this proposal. Ms. Murru suggested following the City's RFP format.

Ms. Murru suggested that the Committee invite Mr. Underwood to serve on a task force or sub-committee to utilize his expertise and work in conjunction with the Committee and possibly the consultant hired.

Mr. Stresau made a motion to forward Mr. Underwood's report to the City Manager with a request that he review this expeditiously before making his recommendation to the City Commission on the appropriate action regarding the scope of work for the energy consultant.

Ms. Murru seconded the motion. In a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

- **Other New Business**

No discussion was held.

**[Ms. Vickery left the meeting 8:25 p.m.]**

**VII. Good of the Committee**

No discussion was held.

**VIII. Next Meeting – Tuesday August 22, 2006, 6:30 p.m.**

Chair Brenneman advised that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday, August 22, 2006.

**IX. Adjournment.**

There being no further business to come before this Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.