

**TOWN OF MIAMI LAKES, FLORIDA
WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES
SPECIAL TAXING DISTRICTS**

July 30, 2001
4:00 P.M., Town Hall
6853 Main Street
Miami Lakes, Florida 33014

Mayor Wayne Slaton called the meeting to order at 4:20 P.M.

In addition to the Mayor, the following Council members were present at roll call: Vice Mayor Roberto Alonso, Councilwoman Mary Collins, Councilman Robert Meador, Councilman Michael Pizzi, Councilwoman Nancy Simon, and Councilman Peter Thomson. Staff members present were Town Manager Merrett Stierheim, Town Attorney Nina Boniske and Town Clerk Beatris M. Arguelles and from the Consulting Group, Diane Wright.

The Town Manager announced that the purpose of the meeting was to go through the Special Taxing Districts currently in effect in the Town. He stated that a consensus was needed from the Council in order to establish the Millage and to figure out the amount of funds to be allocated in the 2001-2002 Budget.

Security Guard Districts: The Town Manager presented two scenarios for consideration by the Council: One: to keep the status quo, wherein district residents pay the County overhead in excess of \$35,000/year, or Two: to reconstitute the districts as Town operated districts. He noted that in both cases, a special taxing district remains and funds are collected and kept separate from the Town's general operating funds.

Following discussion regarding how the districts would work and from what entity the Districts would receive services, there was a consensus to reconstitute the Security Guard Districts as Town Operated Districts.

Street Lighting Districts: The Town Manager presented two scenarios for consideration by the Council: One: to kept the status quo, wherein District residents pay the County overhead in excess of \$29,000/year, or Two: to dissolve the district and fund through the Town's operating budget.

The Manager recommended dissolving the district. He noted that all Miami Lakes residents currently participating in the lighting district would see a decrease in their tax bill as it pertains to the lighting district as it would no longer be included as a line item on the bill. He also noted that efficiencies and better services should be available under Town management.

Following discussion, there was a consensus to dissolve the Street Lighting Districts and fund the operation through the Town's operating budget.

Parks Maintenance Districts - The Town Manager presented two scenarios for consideration by the Council: One: to keep the status quo, wherein District residents pay the County overhead in excess of \$100,000/year, or Two: to dissolve the districts and fund through the Town's operating budget. He explained that of all the districts, it was the most complicated because not all residents of the Town were currently paying into the district, and some were not receiving any benefit from the existing district.

The Town Manager recommended eliminating the district, citing a recurring issue brought up at the Strategic Planning Sessions that there was the need to bring a sense of unity to the Town. He noted that a one mil increase in the Millage rate would generate \$1.6 million, which would fund the existing park district at \$1.2 million and designate \$400,000 specifically for improvements in the currently non-park district areas. He mentioned that there are substantial assets belonging to the District that will be turned over to the Town for use in all areas of the Town.

There was lengthy discussion and debate regarding the impact of dissolving the districts. Councilman Pizzi expressed opposition to increasing the Millage to the residents of the West side. He expressed concern over what will be gained by the increase and what will it cost. He opined that the Town needs to end the segregation between the "East" and the "West" and therefore must abolish the special parks districts, but not by increasing the taxes to be paid by the residents in the West. He recommended exploring other avenues such as cutting overhead and engaging in cost saving measures in order to be able to abolish the district without increasing taxes.

The Town Manager reiterated that additional monies are needed in the budget in order to provide for improvements in the West area of the Town.

Vice Mayor Alonso noted that it would cost money to hire additional people to perform the additional work that is not now being performed in the West area. Additionally, he noted that the park district also maintains the medians, the landscaping and tree canopy. He added that a lot of work needs to be done in order to bring the areas not currently in the district to be the same as the district areas and that this too will require funds for trees, shrubs and other vegetation, irrigation, maintenance, etc. He also mentioned that the town would also need to acquire land (which will require additional funds) for establishing tot-lots in the area. The Vice Mayor suggested a tremendous increase in services could be attained with a minimal amount of additional funds.

Councilman Pizzi recommended setting the Millage rate at the current level (2.447) and abolishing the special taxing districts. He suggested that the council should try to see if the Town could maintain the services and provide additional services (to those not currently serviced) and that at the end of a year, the Town could be in a better position to determine the amount that is needed.

Councilwoman Simon expressed opposition to increasing the Millage and suggested working with the budget to try to reduce costs and maximize the use of the funds the town already has. She also expressed concern over budgeting \$1.0 million for contingency reserve.

The Town Manager reiterated that the preliminary millage is merely a starting point from which the council will work down and that the purpose of the workshop was to discuss whether to dissolve the districts. With regard to the preliminary millage, he expressed confidence that the Council will be able to reduce the millage in the end. He also mentioned that 75% of the population in the Town would effectively receive a reduction in taxes if all the districts were abolished.

It was explained that by setting the millage at 3.447 and dissolving the special tax districts, the typical house in the West Lakes area would pay less than \$60 more; that the typical house in the Royal Oaks area would pay less than \$100, and that the typical house in the old district area would pay approximately \$150 less than they pay currently.

Following additional discussion, there was consensus, that the Parks district would be dissolved.

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 5:25 p.m.

Approved this 14th day of August, 2001

Attest:

Wayne Slaton
Hon. Wayne Slaton, Mayor

Beatris M. Arguelles
Beatris M. Arguelles, Town Clerk