



The League of Women Voters® of Orange County

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LWVOC PRESENTATION TO CONSOLIDATION OF SERVICES COMMISSION:

April 10, 2006

Good evening, I am Deirdre Macnab, Co-President of the League of Women Voters of Orange County. I thank you for this opportunity to present the views of the League.

Your Commission had an important task, namely to make recommendations about consolidation of services between Orange County and Orlando which will help deliver services more effectively, and more economically. By using economies of scale, and opportunities to enhance intergovernmental cooperation our taxpayers will benefit from what could be a significant improvement on their return on investment.

We, the Orange County League, have been following your progress and would like to present our observations in three areas of particular interest to our members. These areas are water, parks and recreation, and transportation.

WATER: In the area of water utilities, we were particularly interested in the many areas in which Orange County, the City of Orlando, and the Orlando Utilities Commission are presently cooperating. The fact that they are already working together through interlocal agreements and informal arrangements speaks well for the flexibility of the technical staffs and for the possibility for further cooperation and possible consolidation of some of these services. The experience of the Jacksonville Authority points to some of the added efficiencies that are possible.

The recommendations made by the committee were, of course, of particular interest. It is probably a good initial step that certain concrete and more easily implemented proposals are included. For example, the development of a joint city-county bio-solids processing facility and the recommendation that Orange County implement a rate for the already approved Stormwater Utility Fee. However, the most important proposals and the ones that the League can most heartily endorse are those for on-going study. We strongly support the recommendation for a joint committee consisting of high-level technical staff and policy makers to be established to continue to evaluate the possibilities for consolidating the water related services of the County, City, and the Orlando Utilities Commission. This approach opens the way for future economies and efficiencies. **We endorse the recommendations of this committee.**

PARKS AND REC: The League finds one of the best examples of a section of government service where consolidation could be effective is in the area of parks and recreation. Citizens do not care who runs the parks, they just want plentiful and nearby facilities they can use easily and safely.

The number of personnel and budgeted figures are not too dissimilar (Orange County has 276 personnel, and budgets \$32.3 M;

Orlando personnel is 260, \$25M budget including Leu Gardens and Dubsdread.) Several County parks are within municipal boundaries, including Cypress Grove - Edgewood, Ivey Lane - Orlando, Marks St. Senior Center - Orlando, Warren Park - Belle Isle.

Although the parks and recreation subcommittee suggests the advisory boards of each entity should meet jointly at least semiannually, as was previous practice, and that a website be set up, listing facilities, it is disheartening for the committee to recommend the parks and recreation services NOT be consolidated. Where is the imagination or vision on a larger scale? It appears from its list of presenters that they were all from Orlando or Orange County, and no input from outside sources was heard.

Visionary recommendations from the committee could have followed the proposed Seminole County joint use agreement between its cities and County with the School Board for an exemplary model

arrangement. Other similar arrangements exist in Volusia County, Ocoee, and Maitland.

In summary for Parks and Recreation, we urge this subcommittee to reconvene, review its thinking, and build on the examples already in place to provide at least one recommendation for true intergovernmental cooperation and service consolidation.

TRANSPORTATION: In the area of transportation, the League supports the concept of a regional approach. We found the recommendations of the Transportation committee to have a great deal of merit.

Historically, we have vigorously supported the work of Orange County, the City of Orlando and other municipalities in the county toward establishing an integrated multi-modal mass transportation system. So we are pleased to support the recommendations of the Transportation committee to establish a secure, stable, adequate and dedicated funding stream for Lynx.

We agree that a recurring source of funding be established for transportation infrastructure, capital and maintenance. Therefore, we support the recommendation that the Orange County Board of County Commissioners utilize the additional capacity in local option gasoline tax by at least two cents per gallon to provide a recurring source of funding for these infrastructures.

We agree that it is not appropriate to completely consolidate all transportation services at this time. However, it is imperative that Orange County and the City of Orlando's transportation planners coordinate, not only with each other, but with all other municipalities in Orange County. We see the inclusion of the other municipalities in the county in planning and possibly in joint purchasing of hardware and software as a needed first step in such an approach and were glad to see this mentioned.

And lastly, we urge that all efforts be made for the City of Orlando and Orange County to work jointly and cooperatively as our region plans, funds and implements a multi modal mass transit system. **We heartily endorse the recommendations of this committee.**

Again, the League of Women Voters of Orange County wants to recognize that your assigned task was formidable and commend each of you for stepping forward to meet the challenge. We look forward to the final recommendations of the Commission.

Thank you.

Deirdre Macnab, Co President, League of Women Voters of Orange County