

MINUTES

BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL SURVEYORS AND MAPPERS

PRIVATIZATION COMMITTEE MEETING

Pink Shell Beach Resort
375 Estero Blvd.
Ft. Myers, Florida

January 5, 2005

The meeting was called to order by Pam Nobles, at 10:36 a.m.

Members Present:

Pam Nobles, Chair
Jeff Cooner
Dennis Blankenship
Sidney Greer

Members Not Present

Others Present:

Marilyn Evers
Henry Echezabal
Steve Gordon
Harley Gilmore
Omar Armenteros
Louis Lebron
Beverly Sutphin
Ronnie Taylor
Lanier Matthews

DISCUSSION OF PRIVATIZATION

A representative from the Florida Surveying and Mapping Society, Steve Gordon was present at the meeting and he addressed the committee. Mr. Gordon handed out to the committee a copy of the proposed language for privatization. Mr. Gordon advised the committee that he and others met with the Department in November and Mr. Leon Biegalski was assigned by Diane Carr as their point of contact. Mr. Gordon advised the committee that he was waiting on the department to provide him with the department's performance standards statistics.

Ms. Nobles asked the committee to review the proposal and to take a close look at the business plan timeline. Ms. Nobles stated that in accordance to the timeline the business plan would be considered and reviewed by the Governor in March. Ms. Nobles stated if necessary the board could notice a telephone conference call prior to March.

After discussion it was the consensus of the committee that the performance standards were necessary in order to consider the package and some members still had questions regarding the proposal.

Mr. Cooner asked Mr. Gordon if the corporation board of directors would be comprised of any board members. Mr. Gordon stated no. Mr. Gordon stated that the board would appoint two licensees and the department would appoint two lay persons.

Ms. Nobles asked if the appointments were not complying with the contract agreements would the board have the authority to remove the appointments. Mr. Gordon stated that the corporation is in business to provide service and if the service is not being provided then the contract obligations would have to be addressed.

The committee discussed the hiring of staff and who would have the final decision making authority, the board or the corporation. Mr. Stabley advised the board that the corporation has the hiring authority. Mr. Cooner stated that this could be addressed in the contract negotiations and Mr. Stabley agreed.

Ms. Nobles asked the committee if they had any comments or suggestions regarding the proposal. Mr. Cooner stated that he needed more time to review the proposal and was sure he would come up with more questions. The committee agreed.

Mr. Cooner asked Mr. Gordon what would be the board's benefit to move forward with privatization. Mr. Gordon responded the privation would hope to cure the revolving door with executive directors and prosecuting attorneys, the board would have more control of the day to day administrative operations, and the board could be more consistent. Mr. Gordon stated that the board has had 7 executive directors in 8 years.

Ms. Nobles stated that even with executive director changes the administrative functions continue since the administrative functions of the department are similar. Ms. Nobles stated that when a new prosecuting attorney is assigned to the board, training starts all over again. Mr. Knap stated that the administrative staff has been consistent.

Mr. Cooner stated that the department has not provided the board with bad staff, it's just the staff does not stay. Ms. Nobles stated that the board in the past has had to lobby to keep Ms. Patterson.

Ms. Nobles advised the committee if they had any issues with the proposal the committee and board would need to address them now.

Ms. Sutphin asked Ms. Nobles if the legislative budget commission or the Governor's office had a question regarding the numbers included in the proposal, who would be their contact person.

Mr. Gordon stated he would be the contact person.

Mr. Greer stated at this point he did not feel the board could meet the timeline and he suggested postponing the proposal to next year's legislative session. Mr. Gordon stated he felt the timeline could be met. Ms. Nobles stated that if the board decides the time line was too short it would not exclude the board from presenting the proposal next year.

Mr. Greer stated that considering the number of active surveyors practicing in Florida he did not see how privatizing would be financially feasible. Mr. Greer stated that he felt in a short period of time, if the profession went private, that the licensee's fees would have to be increased. Mr. Gordon stated that the financial numbers provided in the proposal were obtained from the department.

Ms. Nobles stated that the time line can change but the rest of the document would stay the same.

Mr. Greer stated that he found it to be very difficult to consider privatization when state employees were present in the room. Mr. Greer stated that the state employees would be out of a job. Ms. Nobles stated they would not be without employment. Mr. Greer stated he would like a representative from the Engineers Board to attend the next meeting. Mr. Greer stated he would like to hear how it is working for the Engineers.

Ms. Nobles stated that they have a really good operation going. Ms. Nobles stated the Engineer Board started out with limited staff and now staff size has grown. Ms. Nobles stated that she has reviewed the OPPAGA reports and FEMC was operating very efficiently.

Mr. Cooner asked if operation fees increased dramatically how that would be handled by the board or corporation. Mr. Gordon advised Mr. Cooner that each year the department would submit appropriations to the legislature. Mr. Gordon stated it should be the same allocation process that is in place now. Mr. Gordon stated that the board would provide the department with proposed appropriations and if the department does not accept the proposal, the board has the authority to attach comments to the budget request. Mr. Gordon stated he see this as an asset to the board, in that, the board has the ability to provide comments for the legislature to consider. Mr. Cooner stated that the trend is that the board takes in more money than is being spent and the legislature at any time can ask for a money sweep.

Mr. Cooner asked what would happen if the corporation fails. Ms. Nobles stated that the functions are then returned to the Department.

Ms. Sutphin questioned the budget proposal numbers. Mr. Gordon advised Ms. Sutphin that the numbers were projections. Ms. Sutphin asked if the board was going to be responsible for accurate number information. Mr. Gordon stated that the numbers projected should be accurate as they were provided by the department.

The committee discussed staff assignments and Ms. Nobles advised the board that everyone would have to be up to speed on licensure issues.

Ms. Nobles stated the day to day functions of the board office will be out sourced if the board goes private all other functions would stay the same.

Mr. Armenteros reminded the committee that the board was appointed to protect the public not the surveyor and that the public would be better served going private.

Mr. Stabley advised the committee that included in the proposal under the expenses he did not see any projected cost for investigations. Mr. Stabley stated that in accordance to 455, F.S. the corporation would be responsible for record keeping also.

Mr. Knap addressed the board with comments regarding the proposal. Mr. Knap stated that the biggest omission in the proposal is staffing. Mr. Knap stated that there are many employees in the department that handle day to day surveying and mapping board functions. Mr. Knap provided examples such as mail room staff, revenue staff, application review staff, personnel record keeping staff, call center staff, license maintenance staff, record update staff, and complaint analyst. Mr. Knap stated he could not see how 4 persons could handle all those functions. Ms. Nobles stated the individuals hired would have to be able to handle multi-tasks.

Ms. Sutphin asked Mr. Gordon how the proposal of 4 employees came about. Mr. Gordon stated that the department provided functions; time spent doing the functions, and statistical information.

Ms. Nobles stated that the goal is stability. Ms. Nobles stated that she felt the Engineer Board has achieved that.

Ms. Nobles reviewed with the committee board office functions. Ms. Nobles stated many functions such as testing and continuing education could be out sourced back to the department.

Ms. Nobles asked the committee to review the proposal and be prepared to present questions at the general business meeting. Ms. Nobles advised the committee that the committee would need to decide if the board should move forward with the proposal.

There being no other business the meeting adjourned at 10:50 a.m.