REPORT OF THE COUNTY BUDGET TASK FORCE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, JANUARY 24, 2011

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The County Budget Task Force Meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. on Monday, January 24, 2011, in the Town Council Chambers. On roll call, the following members were found to be present: Acting Chair Erica Elliott, Bobbi Horwich, Bruce McAllister, and Jere Zenko. Chairman Jack McDonald and Member Cynthia Simonson were absent.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Elliott led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITIZENS

No citizens requested to speak.

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Mrs. Horwich and seconded by Mrs. Zenko.

Mr. McAllister asked that the following items be added to the agenda:
1) An expression of gratitude to Jack McDonald for chairing the Task Force,
2) An expression of hope that the Task Force Committee meeting would continue under the guidance of the Mayor Elect, and
3) An item of discussion to add the Palm Beach County School Board under the authority of the Inspector General because the School Board controls a large portion of the budget either directly or indirectly.

Mrs. Horwich and Mrs. Zenko agreed to the motion as amended. The motion to approve the agenda as amended was approved unanimously.

V. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 23, 2010, MEETING

Motion to approve the minutes of the November 23, 2010, County Budget Task Force meeting was made by Mrs. Zenko, seconded by Mr. McAllister, and was approved unanimously.

Chair Elliott thanked Mayor Jack McDonald for the concept of the County Budget Task Force. She stated that it was a great group of people, that it had to remain vibrant, and that more input was needed from the community.

Mrs. Horwich distributed a copy of the Palm Beach County Budget Fact Sheet. A copy was submitted into the record. She stated that the Task Force and TAB (Taxpayer Action Board) was making a difference and the County was listening.

VI. PALM BEACH COUNTY SHERIFF'S BUDGET AND REFUSAL TO BE UNDER THE INSPECTOR GENERAL'S AUTHORITY

Mr. McAllister reported that there is a question under the Charter as to whether the Sheriff's Office could be brought under the supervision of the Inspector General. He recommended the Task Force pursue whatever means were appropriate to have the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office within the authority of the Inspector General.

Fred Scheibl of TAB reported that the County Commission would be holding a meeting on January 25 and would discuss the Charter review rules. He said there is a possibility that five community meetings would be scheduled to discuss Charter review. He explained that Charter review could change the structure of how the Constitutional officers report or could bring the Sheriff under the Inspector General. He suggested the Task Force members participate.

Mr. McAllister asked if the Charter review meeting could discuss the school board coming under the authority of the Inspector General. Mr. Scheibl responded that the school board was not subject to the Board of County Commissioners.

In response to a question from Chair Elliott, Mr. Scheibl stated that TAB was always looking for volunteers, particularly people to attend County budget meetings. He stated that the school board would be added to TAB's purview. Chair Elliott said that she felt the Task Force could spend some time reviewing the ways that it could assist TAB. Mr. McAllister agreed that assisting TAB would be a good way to accomplish the objectives of the Task Force.

Mr. McAllister proposed that the Task Force recommend to the Town Council that the Town of Palm Beach formally request to the Charter Commission or the Board of County Commissioners that the Sheriff's Office be subject to the oversight of the Inspector General.

Mr. Scheibl informed the Task Force that the Sheriff's Office could volunteer to be under the Inspector General's oversight, the County Commission could be asked to move forward with a ballot issue, or the Charter review could put the Sheriff's office under a different status.

Mr. McAllister added that the issue could be addressed with the Legislative Delegation.

Chair Elliott suggested that a letter be written to the other municipalities to take similar action.

Motion was made by Mr. McAllister to recommend to the Town Council that the Town of Palm Beach take a position with the legislative representatives in Tallahassee, the Palm Beach County Commission, the group that was established to implement the ethics ordinance, the League of Cities, the school board, and the Sheriff's office that the Sheriff's office and the school board be brought within the oversight of the Inspector General. Mrs. Zenko seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Deputy Town Manager Bradford stated he would prepare a memorandum to the Town Council with a resolution that would include all the issues that had been discussed.

Mr. McAllister volunteered to write a letter to the Palm Beach Daily News.

VII. ADOPTION OF A PROPOSED SCOPE OF SERVICES FOR FLORIDA TAX WATCH STUDY

A. Report from Florida Tax Watch on Proposed Scope of Services upon Consultation with Taxpayer Action Board

Chair Elliott reminded the group that they had been working on a proposal for Florida Tax Watch to update the former study that had been done for the Town. She stated that Florida Tax Watch had been asked to be more specific on some of the items and to get a price for the proposal

Deputy Town Manager Bradford reported that he had spoken to Robert Weissert of Florida Tax Watch (FTW) and there had been a communication breakdown. He stated that he had believed that the Task Force wanted TAB's input on what a good scope of service might be for FTW to create a report or analysis. He said that Mr. Weissert never received that message. He reported that FTW had spoken to Mr. Scheibl but mostly focused on funding.

Chair Elliott asked for the cost of each area in the report. Mr. Bradford replied that it was common practice for FTW to provide that information.

Mrs. Zenko expressed concern with overlap. She said she would make the assumption that Mr. Scheibl would be actively involved with FTW to avoid any duplication and focus on issues that are truly important and prioritize those items.

Mr. Scheibl reported that he had spoken to FTW regarding three issues:
1) The Florida Retirement System (FRS) and doing some projections on County pensions;
2) Peer county comparisons; and
3) How the County compares to similar counties in jobs to the private sector.

He stated that there was consensus that the peer county comparisons were not worth a lot of time because it had been done before. He reported that Mr. Weissert had informed him that Tax Watch could not accept funding from governments (the Town). He suggested that Mr. Bradford call Mr. Weissert to discuss the funding issue. He stated that TAB has other coalition partners who may be able to help.

In response to a question about funding from the Civic Association or Citizen's Association, Ned Barnes of the Civic Association reported he had discussed the funding with the executive committee and they decided that at this point they would be more helpful in a supportive role for TAB.

B. Prioritize Town Staff Developed Scope of Services List

Deputy Town Manager Bradford reminded the group that at the last meeting he and the Finance Director had provided them with a two-page list of options for the Task Force to consider for inclusion in the study.

Chair Elliott responded that she had prioritized and categorized the list. She suggested Deputy Town Manager Bradford share her list with the other members as a starting point for discussion and input.

Mr. McAllister stated he deferred to Mr. Scheibl as to what should be addressed with the County Commission and how Florida Tax Watch could assist. Mrs. Zenko agreed saying that Mr. Scheibl should set the agenda and the Task Force could help raise the money.

Mr. Scheibl asked for a copy of the options for the scope of services. Deputy Town Manager Bradford asked that he be included in any discussions between Mr. Scheibl and Florida Tax Watch. Mr. Scheibl suggested Deputy Town Manager Bradford schedule a conference call with Florida Tax Watch.

C. Adoption of a Scope of Services for a Florida Tax Watch Study

VIII. MEMBER REPORTS

Mr. McAllister reported that when the Inspector General position was proposed the County enacted an implementing ordinance and then the Charter amendment was passed. He further reported that the County Commission had now established a drafting committee composed of two County representatives and two League of Cities representatives to tweak the implementing ordinance so that the municipalities could also come under the Inspector General's supervision. He stated that the drafting committee is now making substantive changes that he felt weaken the ordinance.

Motion was made by Mr. McAllister to request the Town Council to instruct the new Mayor (the Town's representative to the League of Cities) to fight any weakening of the implementing ordinance so that the Inspector General has the full authority that the County Charter contemplated and that the voters of the Town understood when they voted for it. Chair Elliott seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Zenko reported she had met with Nancy Bolton with Human Resources for the County regarding their health care program. She stated that $50 million of the program is not funded and 17% or $8.5 million of that is paid by the Town of Palm Beach. She spoke about the incremental costs and the compounding effect of the costs. She stated that the County had put the health care program out for bid this year. She talked about the County's eligibility audit, the buy-out program, and potential cost-saving changes that may be made due to the new government health care program.

Mrs. Horwich explained that the Budget Fact Sheet (distributed earlier) contained the tax history and the amount of employees included in the department of each Constitutional officer.

Chair Elliott reported she had been working with County Commissioner Shelly Vana on a contingency audit to identify lost revenues and mismanagement of expenses. She further reported that the County Administrator was interested in supporting the audit and would be preparing a Request for Proposals. She stated that she was assisting them in the proposal process.

IX. SCHEDULE MEETING FOR FEBRUARY

Mr. McAllister suggested the Task Force ask the Town Council for a re-clarification of how it would like the County Budget Task Force to proceed.

Mrs. Horwich asked about new members to replace Tim Moran and Mayor Jack McDonald. Deputy Town Manager replied that he believed the Mayor-elect would replace Mayor Jack McDonald and a new member would need to be appointed by Mr. Rosow for the vacant position held by Mr. Moran.

Deputy Town Manager Bradford proposed he include in the memorandum to the Town Council all the items that had been discussed in the meeting. There was agreement from the Task Force Members.

The Task Force scheduled its next meeting for Monday, February 28, 2011, at noon in Town Council Chambers.

X. ANY OTHER MATTERS

There were no other matters.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the County Budget Task Force meeting of January 24, 2011, was adjourned at 11:54 a.m.

APPROVED:

Erica Elliott
Acting Chairman