

City commission

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budge on the price.”

Drumm also said that county staff told him that billing the city’s property taxes and garbage assessment does not cost the county any additional work.

Mayor Cornell Harvey, who voted against staying with the county one more year, said, “The county is fleecing us yet they want to consolidate with us.”

The mayor also said the county employed delaying tactics by not giving the city the information it asked for. What information had not been provided by the county was not clear.

Drumm agreed saying, “The delay was very well orchestrated.”

Com. Felicia Harris said, “We can’t continue to push this off on someone else. We don’t have to wait on the county. We have the authority to demand the information that we need.”

“Now we have to make a piss-poor decision with piss-poor information at a piss-poor time,” she said.

Drumm said, “We came back to you ready to go at the first meeting in February.”

Harris insisted the commission did not have enough information to make a decision.

Com. Vincent Williams wanted to know if there was enough time to train someone to do the job for the city.

County tax bills are mailed out by mid-September and due for payment the first of November.

Mayor Harvey told Drumm that the city could offer the job (of billing and collecting property taxes) to his, Drumm’s, current administrative assistant.

“We can hire you a new assistant,” Harvey said.

“My colleagues think we are headed down a bad path. But I don’t agree. I think we do have competent employees who can do the job (of billing and

collecting property taxes),” Harvey continued.

Then he began to discuss who the job should come under and said the City Clerk, Naomi Atkinson, did not want the job.

Atkinson quickly said, “Mr. Mayor, I don’t mind having the job under me, I just want time to prepare.”

Commissioner Julie Martin said, “\$6,000 (referring to the increase the Tax Commissioner is requesting from the city) isn’t much of an increase when you are facing a potential train wreck.”

“We don’t need to do this under pressure,” she continued. “We need time to properly prepare and to get organized.”

“The potential is there to lose more than \$6,000 if we start shifting people around with our back against the wall. We can’t use current staff in a job they aren’t prepared for,” she said.

Drumm commented that it wouldn’t be a train wreck.

Com. Williams said, “Let’s give ourselves time and after 2018 we will do the billing ourselves.”

The commission told Drumm to begin preparations to take over the billings and collections immediately so the city would be ready to bill its own 2018 property taxes and garbage assessments.

Prior to the vote City Manager James Drumm presented two first year scenario costs: \$141,052 includes the more expensive software necessary for property tax billing and collection and \$119,000 which includes a cheaper tax billing / collection software.

Along with the software costs included an additional employee plus benefits, postage, legal fees and advertising.

The vote to contract with the County and Tax Commissioner for one more year to provide the property tax and garbage assessment billings was four to one with Mayor Harvey voting no. □

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JIA’s Conservation Director and endorsed by the Authority’s board without any public input, violating national standards for public land planning and, ironically, ignoring the “public engagement” opportunities cited in the BMGP application.

• The BMGP does not provide a mechanism for public input regarding a permitted activity after it takes place. Allowing the JIA to serve as

judge and jury in evaluating the impact of its own beach stewardship activities negates accountability, limits its objective analysis of permitted activities, and could result in questionable beach management projects and practices.

• The JIA claims that the SPA’s regulatory process limits the Authority’s ability to undertake small-scale projects, such as those necessitated by “unanticipated environmental developments.” However, the permitting process for various small-scale

maintenance projects was simplified by legislation enacted in 2013 that allows a simple “letter of permission” to be issued by the DNR in lieu of adherence to the formal permitting process. For example, last year the JIA received a single letter of permission to repair hurricane damage at multiple dune crossovers within the SPA’s jurisdictional area.

• The application’s statement that “the permit would only apply to actions carried out by the JIA on non-leased land” does not rule out the use of the

BMGP to benefit a private enterprise operating on non-leased land. In that regard, recall the JIA’s sanctioning the Westin hotel’s use of an ATV towing a flatbed trailer on the beach from Great Dunes Park to the Westin in order to provide on-the-beach delivery of amenities to the hotel’s customers.

• The SPA has been in force since 1979, during which time all applicants seeking to conduct activities within

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