

Sept. 29, 2009

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Convocation explores community corrections, jobs, sports authority

Fast-tracking a community corrections center, creating a sports and arts authority and putting economic development bonds to work to create jobs were explored today by elected officials from Sarasota County, the cities of Sarasota, Venice, North Port, and the Town of Longboat Key during a convocation at the Venice Community Center.

The officials also unanimously opposed offshore drilling in Florida waters. That topic is widely expected to become an environmental battleground during the 2010 legislative session that begins in March.

County and city representatives also were updated on the planning for a community correction center and detention facility by Wayne Applebee, the county's criminal justice coordinator, and David Bennett, project consultant. The plans are being re-evaluated with a possible focus on the proposed corrections facility.

Representatives from the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce briefed officials about the formation of a sports, entertainment, and arts authority for Sarasota County. Over the next few months, chamber officials plan to conduct an outreach effort with each city and other chambers and to explore how to create an authority.

Convocation members also discussed potential savings through operation and service collaborations, a possible second library in the city of North Port and uniform addressing ordinance for the county.

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