

## What is Conceivable is Achievable

On Monday night, the PSJRA hosted a reception for WIM Associates (Walter Miller, Andrew Chin, Ed Nelson and Tony McCray) at the Washington Gym to provide a casual “meet and greet” opportunity among the residents of North Port St. Joe and Walt and his team. The event was beautifully (and deliciously) catered by Paradise Café (the restaurant/catering branch of the Korner Stop & Go). We were privileged to enjoy the attendance and camaraderie of 44...yes, count them...forty-four...involved citizens and residents.

We offer a special thanks to PSJRA board members Troy White and Annie Sue Fields; Advisory Committee Chair James Clemons; County Commissioner Nathan Peters; City Commissioner John Reeves; mayoral candidates Allen Cox, Mel Magidson and Debbie Ward; and City Commission candidates Jim Garth and David O’Barr for their attendance and support of this vibrant community. A huge thanks to Natalie Shoaf for filming the presentation to share on the St. Joe News Network. And an even larger thanks to each and every resident who attended, investing their time and sharing with us their opinions and dreams for their community—North Port St. Joe.

WIM’s presentation began with the NPSJ promise from the Friends of North Port St. Joe Strategic Plan: “Keep what we have; Upgrade it; Improve it—We are Here to Stay.” Time and again, the point was emphasized that the master plan for NPSJ will be a direct result of the wishes and dreams of the community itself. During the evening, a young woman asked me what the specific plans were for improvements on MLK Boulevard. I responded the way I always have, “We don’t have any plans until we hear them from you.”

Andrew Chin presented images of a city street and then enhanced it with trees, buildings, streetscape and other details. When plans begin to emerge for NPSJ, this type of visual enhancement will enable the community to say, “We like that,” and “We don’t like that.” Ed Nelson discussed economic strategies and spoke of housing “project” in Atlanta that has been revitalized to a clean, beautiful “neighborhood.” Above each slide was the statement, “It can be done.” Tony McCray spoke of the “holistic” approach to redevelopment—the stakeholders [the community] ARE the planning instrument, and the consultants define the spirit of their planning. Walter added that the final result will be a document with legal authority and entitlements to require conformation to the standards proposed in the plan—the plan of the people. The final slide summed up WIM’s approach, philosophy and encouragement to the audience, “What is conceivable is achievable.”

Particularly significant to me were the spontaneous verbal affirmations running through the audience as well as the unprompted bursts of applause. The spirit was high and the engagement was inspirational. In fact, we had to start flicking the lights to encourage people to leave...at 10 PM! To all this, I would like to add a heartfelt, “Amen.” I, for one, am so very encouraged and excited.

The audience was responded very positively to John Reeves’ dialog of the concept of extending Williams Avenue to connect with Martin Luther King Boulevard...immediately. The PSJRA board has voted unanimously to support this plan to physically unify the downtown area and NPSJ.

The most inspiring thing about last night: we were all working toward a common goal. There was no grand-standing; there were no “demands;” there was serious and candid dialog toward the future goals of the community. We invite all who attended to come again...and bring a couple more people with you! Your involvement will ensure success.