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Robert J. Kerstein (Interviewer)

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RK: This interview will be with Mr. Rick Smith who served as a management consultant during the Freedman administration. Thanks for speaking to me. Can I ask a little bit sir about your background, where you were born and so on?

RS: Sure. I was born in Tampa, and went to school here—went to a Jesuit high school and onto a Jesuit liberal arts college for my undergraduate degree and then I went to Florida State for my Master’s Degree. I had worked for a time toward a doctorate at University of California at Berkeley, but I did not complete those studies and came back to Tampa and planned to teach. And then as I, when I returned, [I] met some folks that were involved with Dick Greco’s administration who had just got a program started called Model Cities and was hired to join the staff to put together like a think-tank group to do long range planning. And I stayed with the city for about eight years and then left to start my own business. Had my business—a net planning and consulting business for about eighteen, nineteen years. And then returned to Tampa in ’96 to take a position in Dick’s, Dick Greco’s administration. And then subsequently served for a time with the Mayor Iorio. And then retired this past February.

RK: And you look very good in retirement.

RS: Thank you [laughs].

RK: Where did you first meet Sandy Freedman?

RS: Sandy was on City Council when I first met her, and I believe it was back in the ‘70s, but I’m not sure exactly. But it was in that capacity as a City Councilperson that I first met her. And, and then, in terms of our serious business relationship, when she was in the process of transitioning from Chairman of City Council to Mayor after Bob Martinez announced that he was going to run for governor, that’s when she called on me and we got started on a series of projects in earnest. I didn’t know they were going to be a series when I first started with her. But we started one and it led to a subsequent, another project, and so forth.
RK: And it was always as a consultant during her administration?

RS: Yes.

RK: What was the first project sir?

RS: The first project involved the building and zoning department. It was called Housing Inspection and Community Services. The acronym was HICS. And a chronic complaint in many administrations from the politicians perspective is, the slow process that it took—that one has to experience when getting building permits and plans for building subdivisions and so forth. And so Sandy asked me to look at the entire operation from the regulatory requirements, the staffing of the, of the execution of those requirements and how that overall process worked, and come up with recommendations to streamline it.

[cell phone rings] Excuse me while I turn this off.

So we, what that entailed in a nutshell was looking at the city code of ordinances as it pertained to all the building and development regulations. Finding what of those, which of those regulations were being, administered, and which ones were not; and which could be streamlined—if there were duplications. And also how to make the process more, in today’s terms, customer friendly to the developers and general contractors and building tradesmen. So that project entailed code revisions, staff reorganizations, process renewal in terms of changing the way the work flowed, and also producing materials that would make the, make the process more easily understood by the folks who were coming in and asking for the plans to be reviewed and to get the building permits.

I think, and I’m not sure of this—but I think that some of those same documents are still used today. And that project was completed in 1987. So that project began in 1985, and was completed in 1987. And the, a corollary activity that took place was looking at the fiscal impact of these operations and one of the things that I had suggested to her was that I thought that we could—we should put more emphasis on recapture of the cost associated with these services because they were pretty specialized, and pretty intensive. And that the fees associated with the issuance of permits had not been examined for many, many years. So it was sort of like they had enacted these ordinances, five, ten years prior, put these fees in place based on some sort of swag that you know some guess of what it would cost to administer it, and then never look at again. And so we did that and ended up coming up with a model for them to use that basically allowed her to see the level at which, what it was costing to administer these programs and then what the public was being charged, specifically. I say the public—in reality this was a specialized, excuse me, a specialized group of contractors, subcontractors and developers for whom the services that were inadequately being charged were being subsidized by the general population. So we basically gave them a model that said, here’s how you establish your cost, this is the income that’s associated with these fees, and then brought that to the mayor, or to the Chief Financial Officer, and said, this is what it’s costing, this is what we’re recovering. Now to the extent that you want to have this service be paid totally by the developer, contractor, community, then you just adjust it accordingly. Or if you want
RK: And do you recall what the Mayor’s decision was? Were the fees increased significantly?

RS: Yeah they were, well two things happened. One was we just updated the fee structure to sort of bring it up to 1987 standards, so I don’t remember the, the exact date that, that these codes were last revisited. But I’d say an estimate would have been five to ten year time frame. So one thing that was easily done and, and you know, you had to get concurrence from them, from the trades community, the plumbers, electricians and the contractors was, you know, just the cost of living has gone up. So even if you assume that the base, when it was originally enacted was correct, you could extrapolate that forward at three, two, five percent a year and say, this is what it ought to be. That’s the first thing. Then the second thing was—and that gave, gave her a set of numbers.

And then the second thing was, what is the recovery rate that you want to shoot for? And then you blend those two numbers together. And we ended up with I think with 80% recovery, or it might have been 90%, but it was somewhere where the development community and the building community were paying the [coughs], excuse me, the, the brunt of the cost for those services.

RK: Did this have to go before City Council for approval?

RS: Yes.

RK: Was that any problem?

RS: No. We, of course talked with each one of them. The key to getting that passed by City Council was to make sure that the building trades supported it. And they did, and the way that we got them to support it was to guarantee them that those cost increases that were going to be charged to them for these permits and plans, examinations and so forth, and inspections was going to be sort of fenced off and used exclusively for those services, rather than commingled into the general fund and used to buy more police officers or, or something else that the general fund provides.

RK: And is that easy to show?

RS: Yeah, it is. Yeah, they—and they’re continuing to do it now, in fact they’ve, my understanding is they’ve, they’ve expanded those fees and actually put in other major fees. For example for technology enhancement, so they add another dollar on—I’m not sure what the number is, but it—another amount of money onto the permit associated with either providing for laptop computers or more modernized fleet of automobiles, and all of that of course is to make it easier for the development community and the building community to get permits, to get inspection scheduled, and to get their projects
ultimately, CO’d is the term—Certificates of Occupancy—so they can close on them and sell their houses and sell their commercial buildings.

RK: But this isn’t an enterprise fund per se?

RS: No, no. It’s, it’s a special fund identified within the general fund.

RK: Is there any way you can characterize the regulatory changes that you recommended and were adopted? More specifically I’m wondering, were these perceived by the developers in the building community as more onerous or—as far as they have to jump through additional hoops from their perspective? Or was it moving the direction of deregulation? Is there anyway you can characterize?

RS: Yeah, I, I think it was—I hoped it would be more the latter, but the, the—there were several problems. One was, the code, remember we had to go back to the, to the law itself. And there were conflicts that were replete throughout the code in terms of regulations that had been put in by the storm water department for, to take care of onsite retention and the landscaping interest in the parks department to make sure there were adequate number of trees, and then the parking requirements of the transportation department that you’d had to have X number of parking spaces for certain, so, so many numbers of square feet for a commercial building. So you had all of these things that were produced in a vacuum as it were, the way the codes are passed then at least, was they would, they would throw these—I don’t mean throw, but they would submit these ordinances to City Council and then the last fragment that was on the ordinance would say, anything in conflict with any of the aforementioned herein, is summarily to be null and void.

Well the problem was no one ever went back to figure out well, where are those conflicts and what’s null and void? Because the storm water people still feel that their position is paramount, the tree people feel theirs is paramount, the parking people you know, et cetera. So one of my recommendations to her was that she, in the, in the absence of total consolidation of these codes into one chapter which, they, the City Attorney’s Office did not want to do, that she hire or, or, create a position who’s equivalent to a super department head, who had that sort of status. I called it a Czar, who would be over those various departments and make decisions—make the call. Are we going to—is this number of parking spaces adequate? And it makes for the requisite on site retention? And the number of trees works? Even though it may not be to the letter of what the associated guidelines are. So the code will specify one thing, then, then the department comes out with its policies. And once those policies can be administered, administratively altered by someone who’s given that authority. So that’s why—that’s how we handled those kinds of situations.

RK: And who is appointed to that position?

RS: That position evolved after I was gone. They didn’t have that while I was still working on that project but that’s essentially what, Fernando Noriega became or Steve
LaBrake or Bob Harrell—all of those folks who inhabited, or who had that position of director of that particular department. So you need someone who’s got political savoir-faire to deal with all of these different departments, you know.

RK: Did your recommendations get to the point of actually calling for a change in regulations, say for example regarding storm water? Because we had to make regulations more stringent for example?

RS: I think, I think there were in some instances, I don’t really recall any specific ones right now, Bob. But what, what I did was basically take all of the, the requisite regulations and consolidate the administrative provisions associated with how those were going to be executed, and made, made those—put those in one place, essentially instead of in multiple chapters of the code. And, and that set the stage really, the evolution of that project set the stage for the next project that I did for her which was she liked that work so much that she said, now what I’d like you to do is, what you did for building and construction purposes, we’re going to do the same thing for the entire City of Tampa code. And, and so that launched another project that took approximately two, two and a half years.

What had happened was, the City Attorney’s office had been trying, for literally ten years to update and consolidate and streamline the entire code of ordinances. What they had was a compilation of years of weekly council meetings where ordinances were passed the way I described them with that last phrase in them. And so you had all these barnacles that had built up throughout the code, dealing not only with, you know—dealing with every part of the city governance; building construction, public safety, code enforcement, water, sewer, all the utility functions. So what, what—and there was something like, it was fifty some odd chapters at that time; fifty-five chapters. And what we did was streamline all of that by providing for a uniform—one chapter talks about how the entire code is going to be administered. So we reduced from fifty some odd chapters to just around thirty. It was either twenty-nine, thirty, or thirty one, you know, they probably have added a few since I’ve been gone, but.

And then the second part of that project which was important to Mayor Freedman was as I had found in the case of the building, building related codes where they had these fees established for many years ago, the same thing took place throughout all of the other regulatory services that the city administered. Because departments generally were concerned with the, the regulatory provisions, what it was they were going to extract from the developer, the builder, you know, whoever it was that wanted their services in terms of requirements. This is how, if you’re going to build a road in the City of Tampa, it’s going to be built, built to these specifications. They were more interested in the service delivery standard in terms of the product itself because eventually, even if these were private roads, they knew the developer was going to turn them over to the city. So it was in the departments’ best interest to set a standard that they knew could be maintained.
RK: Can you explain why you would have a private road and then turn it over to the city?

RS: Developers love, love to do that, because they can build it, say and it’s part of this overall development, and we’re going to gate it. And we’re going to, as part of the common area fees, we’re going to maintain that, the landscaping, the sidewalks, all of that kind of stuff. And it sounds great—it sounds great to the city because you know, we won’t have to worry about maintaining that road, because the common area fee is going to maintain it. Well over time, the developer gets out, things evolve and now all of a sudden no one is taking up the, seeing that there is a fund to maintain that road. There are lots of examples of that that are not in these newer developments. There’s, there’s some right here in Palma Ceia right around the golf course, people that are living on the golf course, a lot of those roads that come off of MacDill Avenue are private roads that go to those houses. So those people are responsible for those roads. Well they, you know, as you know, those folks are fairly wealthy; and they feel like their tax dollars ought to be taking care of what, you know if they want bricks, they should be able to put brick roads out there, or, you know, at least have it repaved at their will, you know at their request. And they don’t quite understand that, hey, this isn’t a city road. So, but….

RK: And then they actually, the roads are legally transferred to the city?

RS: Yeah, yeah. And once they do that—now those, I don’t believe have been, but some have been. And then once they are city right of way, then the city transportation department, public works department is responsible for their maintenance. So we have the storms like we did last year, and it washes out the substructure, and you got these potholes all over the place. Then people are calling, they want the potholes filled, you know, and they want it resurfaced and so forth.

RK: Can I ask, as I’m just interested in this topic. As far as like, in New Tampa and the gated communities there, are they, were they being built when you were consulting with the city or were they later?

RS: They were later.

RK: OK.

RS: The, New Tampa, I think was on the, on the radar screen during, and, and I may stand corrected on this, because once I finished this project in ’87 I’m not sure whether Ken Good, I think Ken Good was beginning his work out there in New Tampa. But I think most of it came to pass during Martinez’s administration. And then when Dick Greco came back in, following Sandy, he really escalated the, the interest in New Tampa, and in annexations in up there in, taking in more of the, affluent development.

RK: Ok, I think I took you astray from your main theme, I apologize.

RS: It’s OK.
RK: You were speaking about looking at the code.

RS: Yeah, and one of the—what the point I was leading up to was when one of the things that we had found in the building related codes was remember we had, we updated a lot of, of the fee structures. And the, the city at this point really was in dire need of some financial strategies. Other than, you know, refinancing bonds which is typically the program that finance directors latch on to.

Sandy, I think, Mayor Freedman wanted to make some parts of the service delivery system to citizens who had very specific and specialized interests; the responsibility of that part of the community to pay for them, ok? So two things happened in addition to the reorganization and streamlining of the regulations associated with the entire code of ordinances. We looked at, when were these fees that are authorized in these various chapters enacted, and when were they last revisited? And when I found that that was more than a year ago, I marked all of those for running a fiscal impact on them. And came back to her and the finance director, and George, and the chief of staff, and said, *here are top potential targets where there is revenue to be had if you make the adjustments, because these various fees that are authorized in the code have not been updated for five, ten, some of them for, since they were initially authorized.*

This body of work was about a twenty year period that they were trying to deal with. They were trying to take the ordinances that had been enacted—codified, that is the term that’s used. After the City Council approves an ordinance, it’s sent to the codifier, in this case to Tallahassee, an organization called the Municipal Code Corporation, is the people who do this work for the city. And they’re the ones who transfer the individual ordinances into the code book, and then those supplements and updates are published on a periodic basis. So there was, an important part of this agenda was finding this additional revenue and also putting a, a philosophy in place that was based on a strategy that people who are getting specialized services over and above what the general public receives, those should be handled differently than what comes to you as a citizen of Tampa for your ad valorem tax dollar. Sort of like, your ad valorem tax dollar is in this bucket, and when you pay those, pay those taxes and so forth you get public safety services, response to E911, you know, people to respond to you for code violations, neighbors that are making a mess of their property next door, and those kinds of things are part of sort of the basic bundle of rights if you will that you get for your ad valorem money.

If you’re going to have a party for your daughter, and you want to put a tent on your, in your backyard, you ought to pay for the tent and the permit associated with it separately, and if you wanted a police officer there to regulate traffic because you’re going to invite two hundred of your favorite families over, then you ought to pay for that police officer’s time. So that, there were all of these kinds of opportunities that were identified to say, *here, if we look at the world this way, this is what we have in the code right now. This is what we would have to adjust in the code based on what’s written there. And here are the other things that we might want to add in the future.* And, and that launched subsequent work on, on very specific projects that, that would come to pass. Like in the police department with off duty police officers and, and things like that.
RK: You gave examples that were, more or less ad hoc, your daughter’s having a big party and you’d want police officers or, and so on. Were there any neighborhoods maybe through their neighborhood organization or maybe a gated community that wanted a continuous high, higher level of a certain type of service and was willing to pay a fee for it on a continuing basis?

RS: Yes. But I didn’t really get into that part of it until the subsequent project with TPD…

RK – Ok.

RS - …where we, we would look at putting in major reforms in the overall department organization and service delivery structure. But I’ll, I’ll talk about that if you, you—specifically, that work is referred to as extra duty or off duty work. And the problem associated with it at the time of the subsequent study was that off duty work was handled by what are called brokers. The model that was being used in the police department at the time was that individual police officers would be contacted by a citizen or a business owner or whomever. I want, I would like you to come over here and do this for me. You know, I’m going to have a carnival at school; I need you to, to be here. And you know, we’re going to collect a lot of money, I need security here. But all of [the] negotiations and fees and discussions were all handled officer to client. Rather, so—it was like whatever the market would bear.

And subsequently what we ended up doing was having all of that work scheduled through the police department itself where officers were assigned the work rather than negotiating the work. And there were, there were tremendous benefits to accrue by going to this different model. One, they could account for all of the officers all of the time, because there’s a—one of the things that you worry about a lot with police officers is how much off duty work they undertake. There are regulations about how many, how many hours they can work. And if they exceed that, and they get into difficulty—you know, they fall asleep at the wheel at the end of a shift, or they get in an accident, and the litigious society…

[End Tape 1, Side A]

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[Tape 1, Side B]

RK: So we were speaking about some police officers….

RS: And the concern about whether they had the requisite amount of rest before they’d come to work or before they, they go on their off duty job and, and so forth. Primarily one of the concerns there is if they, if it’s found that that was not the case, then the city has, has more culpability in terms of suits against it when officers are found to have exceeded the, the requisite number of hours that they can, they can work.
So what this new model did for the city and for the mayor was that it gave her a single point of accountability in this extra duty office to take in the requests from all sorts of business people or individual citizens who wanted these services, make sure that everyone had an equal opportunity within the police department to get those, get those jobs, so you rotate them. And then the payment for the work associated, instead of being made to the individual police officer was made to the City of Tampa. And then the city in turn, paid the police officer as a part of his regular pay check for regular work, extra duty work and so forth.

And, and so one of the other things that we put in place was associated with that, was a two dollar an hour overhead charge to take care of litigation, workers compensation, injuries, those kinds of things. So funds were set up to handle that part of the, of the needs as well. And so now, the—when I was, before I retired, I found that in the last year that one program, extra duty, is a five million dollar revenue stream. Five million dollars. Pretty significant because you can, you, I think the officers are basically charged the city’s charges for the officers, times somewhere between twenty-three and twenty-five dollars an hour. So do, you do the math into five million, and it’s quite a bit of money.

RK: Did you have to get approval from the police union before you adopted that change?

RS: No, but I, they were aware of it. They, most of the consternation on a lot of these reforms that were being introduced to the police department was work through sixteen different implementation teams that were made up of the police officers themselves. So what happened was, I did the management study with the, the help and support of the department personnel. I had some people assigned to me and I basically supervised the work. When the mayor told me that she wanted the, that, those recommendations all implemented, [coughs] excuse me, I arranged to have implementation teams for, that—we had over two hundred recommendations. They crystallized into sixteen major areas. And so I set up sixteen teams, and then I basically worked with the team leader to set up the meetings, to work through the recommendations, to rework the work flow associated with the program, or restructure if there was any restructuring to be done.

And [this] also involved not only police officers, but other City of Tampa personnel. So for example, some of those reforms were associated with hiring standards and training standards. So we would bring the HR people in and have them sit in on the committee. They were, they were members of the committee as well. So your point about labor, the union support, the, the officers who were members of the union were also participating as members of the team. So they would, there was communication, but I never asked for any formal sign off from them because it was all perceived by the administration to be a management issue and not subject to any collective bargaining discussion.

RK: But they were cooperative in general?

RS: Yeah, yeah. I think, I think the most, the most contentious of the sixteen was clearly the extra duty because there were some higher ranking officers who were brokering the
bigger jobs and didn’t like to go away from that, that model. You know, they were running this, the Tampa Stadium job, and the dog track and the Jai-alai Fronton and, and the Publix grocery store. And then you’d have some that were running the funeral details, and so those guys were a little bit resistant. But we had the backing of the mayor, she said she clearly, she wanted to do it. The public safety director understood what the liability issues were [in] staying with the model that we had. And they were very significant liability issues.

RK: And who was the Public Safety Director?

RS: Bob Smith. So I mean, he may have done some politicking with the unions, but you know, I wasn’t aware of it. But, but all of those sixteen major reform areas, and that’s what I put on this list, those, that—those are the hand outs. What I have on this sheet of paper is a list of the sixteen major reform areas to be undertaken in the implementation of the police department program.

RK: And that would have been about when, time wise?

RS: This was in, 1991 was the actual implementation part of this. The study was in, it began in 1989, and worked into 1990. And then in January of ’91 is when I went to the roll calls and addressed the individual officers. So I was the one who was carrying the message to them. They wanted to make sure [laughs] they, they knew who the heck, who the target was. [Laughs]

But it, it in general, that was probably before a lot of these team management implementation strategies found their way into management culture. It turned out to be a very successful accident of mine because I knew I couldn’t implement all of the recommendations the mayor told me, directed me, to do by myself. So I figured the way to do it is to get them to buy into it. They way to get them to buy into it was to set up these implementation teams; then that would ensure they would be knowledgeable of what we’re talking about, and use them to carry the message back to the troops, even if some of the troops would be upset by that, at least they would have the information. And, and that’s, that’s how that happened.

RK: Did any of these recommendations involve to any degree, neighborhood policing?

RS: There was, yeah, the one of the, one of the items that’s on the list had—it’s called workload analysis. And it basically looked at how calls for service were, were handled by the uniform districts. And the idea was to provide more time for the officers to make the contact with the citizen groups by relieving them of some of the report writing requirements. So what that set the stage for was some of the minor, minor types of events that the police dealt with, were then moved to civilian operations like when people would, were reporting a bicycle stolen, or a lawn mower stolen or something like that, they would just file a report. Those reports would be taken by civilians, they, they’d take it over the phone; they’d give them, give the citizen a report number which he could use
for the insurance purposes, and then they, their requirements were satisfied and that never involved a police officer. That was all being handled by civilians.

So that freed up a portion of the officer’s time who heretofore was having to go to the house, sit down, take the report information, typically on a notepad which then they had to transfer to a form, then the sergeant had to review it, then a lieutenant had to review it, you know, all of that kind of stuff. So we freed them of a lot of that kind of minor type of events, and, and that enabled them to do more of what that terms, self-initiating, calls. And that’s how it was monitored. So police use signals for, for every kind of event that they’re involved in, even when they eat lunch, there’s a signal for that, or eating a meal. And so we could, we could account for those individual contacts with citizens that were to be oriented, and foster this community policing that would bring this more personal contact in with the public.

Now that, that strategy and that, that type of service delivery has moved light years from our primitive attempts back in the early ‘90s, they’re far more sophisticated now. But that was, that was how it was handled then.

RK: Was any contact, formal contact between the police officers or representatives of police officers and neighborhood associations? Was there anything like that?

RS: Yeah. They had a, an organizational component within the police department that was called crime prevention that was another area that was worked on. And these, this office did a couple of things. One, it, it produced literature and information to go to citizens for you know, how to better secure your house, and, and enable an officer to make a personal call if they, if they so requested it. To go and do like a, like the utility companies now do for energy audits, they do like a security audit and then give you an idea you know, your door jam needs to have a three-quarter throw on the lock and that kind of three-quarter inch throw and so forth.

And then that same office would be the contact for the neighborhood organizations. So if they were having a, a community meeting of the neighborhood association and wanted a police there, the officers who were in one of the units that patrol that area to come and speak to them, or one of the managers, a lieutenant, a captain, or so forth. Then they would request through that office and then that would be scheduled for them.

RK: Did certain police officers—and I wonder if this relates to you recommendations—focus on particular neighborhoods with the idea of getting to know the citizens?

RS: Not, they do and they don’t. That the, when they are assigned to a particular shift, and to a particular area, Charlie area, David area, or Adam area, whatever, they are encouraged to do that as a part of the normal course of events during the shift. However, police officers are constantly, not, well constantly is not the right word—periodically, rotated into other jobs. So because of promotions, that you know, they, he’s a, he starts off as a patrolman in one area, and then a, a corporal position opens up in another area, or in the headquarters, and he gets promoted to corporal, or he gets promoted to sergeant,
and that sergeant is to regulate [and] oversee the off duty office, and then he’s taken out of patrolling, he’s moving to the headquarters, it’s….

So, in contrast with civilian positions where you can say, this is my CIO, my Chief Information Officer, his responsibility is to run police technology. During those days, they would have someone assigned a major, a captain, assigned as the chief, Chief Information Officer, although it wasn’t called that back in those days. And then there would be an opportunity to advance and take a position in some other part of the organization, maybe handling personnel, and they’d move from there into the personnel area.

And that, was a, was one of the things I always had difficulty with police administration officials trying to convince them to leave people in certain positions for a long period of time indefinitely perhaps. Because a position like a Chief Information and Technology Officer, where you’re dealing with computers and all the nuances of communication systems, you need someone who really is very specialized. Now the compromise is, you put someone in who is a sworn position, and then you hire a civilian who is the knowledgeable one. But then you really you know, not getting the most for your money. But given the paramilitary mindset, you know, they always want to have someone who’s sworn in the official chain of command, so it gets into all that cultural stuff. You need anthropologists, a lot of anthropologists to work with [laughs]—cultural anthropologists; a very good degree to have, to do any kind of organizational development, work on organizational change. And, and a lot of psychology courses too [laughs].

RK: I think prior to the time you were engaged in the study of the police department, you had the mayor’s policy regarding take home cars, police officers no longer able to take home the cars—I think that was prior to your study, is that true?

RS: Yes, it was.

RK: Did you notice any consequences of that in terms of your….

RS: Oh yeah, there was a lot of fall out from it. In fact they, when I first went into the department that was the, the thing I would hear about all the time, about how the mayor wanted to take the take home cars away and didn’t want to hear it, any rhyme or reason for it. And so it was good that we took the year or so to work through the entire labyrinth of all of the vertical and horizontal issues throughout the organization rather than to try and come up with one project. Like if I had tried to follow up with the extra duty project on the heels of the take home cars, we probably would have had a wholesale revolution in the department, it was that—they were that adamant about it.

Because you figure when you, when the mayor made that decision, a police officer is probably now losing about ten, in those days, probably ten thousand dollars easily because that was his second car for the family. You know, he now has to buy a car, he’s, he’s now going to have to use that car to come to work and…. So, anyways, it was, I’m not sure all of the reasons why the mayor decided to do that, but I’m sure it had to do
with the budget office and the finance office believing that it was a cost saving measure. That they could, they could keep their cars in the fleet that they had running constantly, and the problem was that there wasn’t an adequate vehicle replacement program in place. So the fleet really got run down significantly.

And but it, you know, it, police operations are very expensive. I mean when I was involved in this project the police budget was somewhere between twenty-five and fifty million dollars. I know it’s over a hundred million dollars today. And there were probably somewhere around six to seven hundred officers. Today there are over a thousand. You know, and police officers are very expensive. They, they require a lot of training, a lot of supervision, and they’re very important people. They provide very important service to us. But it’s an expensive operation.

RK: Another issue that arose regarding the police department that got some attention clearly in the newspapers, and it was [a] concern to some, I think, neighborhoods, were charges of police brutality. There was a person I believe over in here, I think I have the wrong name, I apologize, but who was killed, I believe as use of a chokehold. Did any, did you notice any consequences of this type of concern?

RS: When, when I was doing the study, I would sit in on the chief’s regular staff meetings. And I know there were discussions about it; the thing that found its way into my recommendations was that I felt that the police department really needed to have a full time legal advisor. Because all of the people who were in the room were police officers, but there was no lawyer who was, essentially the legal advocate for the police department, to advise the chief. So one of the other recommendations was to get a full time legal advisor for TPD, and they subsequently hired one. And I believe the guy’s still there, his name is Kirby Rainsberger.

And he would sit in on the staff meetings and I think one of—there are a couple of reactions I had to those events, although I wasn’t involved in mitigating any of them or negotiating their, the results out. One, the, the department needed to reevaluate its training program. And so we did wholesale reexaminations of the curriculum associated with the police academy as it relates to both the initial training and what’s called the “in service training.” Every year they would have twenty hour of—forty hours—of in service training, where they went to the academy and would give, essentially updates on different things; that’s the time when they recertify with the weapon, they go to the range and make sure they can shoot, hit the target and so forth. And as part of that curriculum, that use of excessive force, or whatever it’s, it was termed, I forget now—was reexamined, and that whole, that part of the program was updated. So that’s, that was one issue.

The second is that the department is administered by SOP’s, Standard Operating Procedures. Everything is like a military operation and you, you are schooled in those SOP’s, you keep them in the vehicle with you, and now they’re on the computer, the little laptop computer so they can easily access them. And those SOP’s were also updated and reexamined. Now the, the, my point about the legal advisor is, had the legal advisor been in those meetings they, all of this work would have been done a lot more timely. I’m not
saying that Melvin Hair’s situation would have been, would not have happened, but to the extent that there was any insufficient part of the SOP’s themselves or the, the lack of training, or you—the legal advisor would have jumped on those kinds of things because they understand the potential liability for the city as that probably was proven to be. Not just in terms of the, the political fallout, but you know, the financial implications of what might happen in terms of suits and so forth.

RK: Did your recommendations sir deal at all with hiring and recruitment, and I guess more specifically, when people think of the Freedman administration, sometimes they think about efforts to expand hiring to minorities and women. Did that enter into your support?

RS: Yes, yeah, very much so. One of the things that we talked about was introducing, or I’m not sure it was, maybe not—but reintroduction because I think they had done it in the past—these various programs that were oriented at getting younger people interested in police work. They had cadet programs and they had, there are some other volunteer groups that—the name escapes me right now—where they would get young people interested.

The next thing was to get a more, more, a better organized effort at recruiting people at the junior college and college level. Because we were just beginning to see the next level of police officers to come into the department not being just a high school graduate. Now that we were seeing—this is in the late ‘80s, early ‘90s—guys that had at least two years at the junior college. And of course, Bennie Holder, who was Sandy’s appointee once Andy Gonzalez left, who is an African American, it took that to an even higher standard, saying, I want all college graduates in here. And, and now—to address the minority issue, they specifically put in different programs to provide for scholarships and, and to help mitigate the cost when they went to the academy run, being run by HCC, they set up funds so that people could get, like, scholarships or some kind of stipend in order to offset the cost.

So a lot of those things had the seeds for those programs back in, in this period of time when, when Mayor Freedman was in office. Because she, she, you’re right—she had a, the minority community was a very important priority for her. In fact her, her greatest source of pride I think was those housing programs that she, told the folks that she wanted to see certain numbers of new housing starts and certain number of rehabs, housing rehabilitation projects done. And I mean, from what we used to do back in the Model Cities days when you know, we were doing twenty-five houses a year and felt like we were doing great guns—to move to two hundred and three hundred houses you know, there was a significant effort. And then of course Fernando Noriega who worked for Mayor Freedman really became well nationally known as a housing expert because of the housing programs that Sandy wanted put in place.

RK: Did your work involve any recommendations regarding those housing programs?

RS: No. No, I was on—other than what we did earlier about getting the, facilitating the
permitting process, I, it wasn’t really directed toward you know, minorities or non-
minorities, it was just—mine was in the regulatory side.

RK: OK. So those are the three projects that you were involved with as a consultant
during the Freedman administration?

RS: Yeah, the major ones. I did some minor, other projects that helped out with, like the,
getting the cable television people ready for renegotiating the franchise agreement. And
several little ad hoc projects that I would get a call from the Chief of Staff from time to
time. But this was the major body of work that we did.

RK: This might be difficult to address, but can you kind of try to [give] a very broad
overview of—you were very familiar with the administration in different, your different
projects—is there any general statements you can make regarding kind of the direction of
the administration relative to the former administration? You were involved then with the
Greco administration—how did the Freedman administration kind of fit historically, in
terms of changes from what was and how perhaps some of the changes led to further ones
in the new administrations?

RS: You know I’ve worked for, I worked for Bill Poe, I’ve worked for Dick Greco, I
didn’t work for Bob Martinez; worked with Sandy, and then again with Dick and then
with Pam Iorio. And they’re all very different and they all have their, their strengths and,
and their weaknesses I guess. But I think that the, the primary thing I noticed about
Mayor Freedman is that she really had a vision of what she wanted to accomplish. There
were certain things that were very important to her based on her values.

One of the most controversial things she did was implement a personnel policy called the
“B12” or something like that, which had to do with the use of, an inflammatory term for
African Americans. And, and one—I remember one time it occurred at the police
department while I was working there and that person resigned. And he was a major in
the department. And you know, he was a very good of
icer, he just made a foolish, not
thinking kind of just, the word came out. And you know he submitted his resignation to
Bob Smith and Bob Smith accepted it.

So, anyway, Sandy had a very high standard in terms of her moral and ethical values.
You know Pam’s talked a lot about it now, in the Iorio administration, but Sandy was
pretty much of that ilk as well. I mean, she wanted to have people cared for and she
wanted folks to, that were working for her and her administration to do all they could to
help people. And I think they, she was very successful at getting the bureaucracy to move
in that direction. I think that many mayors have felt [that] it’s difficult for politicians I
think in general, to try and deal with the entire vastness of the entire bureaucracy.
Because the City of Tampa, is if you compared it to a corporation would be one that has
like a holding company with 25 subsidiaries, you know, doing, doing all kinds of
things—police….

[End Tape 1, Side B]
RK: So the city is a complex organization?

RS: It is. It’s, and I, when I came back to the city as the, and later was responsible for all of the information technology in the city government, I realized how far more complex it was than I even envisioned. So, but my point is, as far as a politician who comes into elected office from a business perspective or from—even experienced with City Council—when you’re asked to be the Chief Administrative Officer, overseeing of that, or the Chief Executive Officer, overseeing all of this, and you see all of the multitude of issues—environmental, you know, health, public safety—now with homeland security and all of this—it can overwhelm them.

I worked with governors and there were certain governors that, they couldn’t even imagine themselves dealing with the entire vastness of the state bureaucracy. So, like those governors, mayors tended to focus on particular areas that they had an interest in, or a particular theme that they had an interest in. And I think in Sandy’s case, clearly housing was one of her greatest concerns. From an overall strategic perspective, she was interested in streamlining the government services, making it as responsive as possible. And wherever possible, to make it as customer friendly so that the citizen could understand what the services were and how they were to be provided.

And then thirdly to enable the, the government itself to be as fiscally responsible as possible. And, and so—and she had very good people around her to ensure that that would take place; the Chief of Staff who was George Pennington, and the Finance Director who was Lou Russo were particularly, particularly Russo was highly skilled at ensuring the financial stability of the City of Tampa. And similarly with the budget office, which is a chronic source of complaint throughout all organizations. But to its credit, they really kept the city in the black in years when many municipalities were struggling, and some in Florida were you know in dire straits, particularly down in Miami way, you know. So, I think that she—her genuine concern for people and her reaching out to everyone that our mayor now has very sophisticated uses of technology to, with databases and things that really ensure contact with the entire community. Sandy I think, we didn’t have computers back in those days and that level of sophistication. But she did it all in her head kind of, and she was, she was always out in the community, always approachable, and then would turn around and make sure that George got the message that something was to be done about the—George Pennington the Chief of Staff; and he would hop to it, I mean. So they had a pretty good team, you know, they were really very successful I think.

RK: Can I ask is there an irony here that some of the community in, at least one reporter for the St. Pete times, Mary Jo Melone, characterized the mayor as relatively aloof? Do you have any notion as to why?

RS: No, I don’t know, unless, see—in the—unless that occurred in the latter stages of her administration. After I finished the police and the cable TV project, Eddie Gonzalez who
was then the Chief of Police was approached by Janet Reno to go to Washington. And shortly after he was appointed head of the US Marshal Service, he asked me to go up there and replicate what I had done in TPD with the US Marshals. And so I left Tampa in ’93 I believe it was, and I think she was in office until ’95 or ’96 if I’m not mistaken. So I’m not sure if that—while I was with her, she was clearly riding the crest of the wave from her reelection where she brought in I think it was 80% of the vote, or 70%--it was an unbelievable number. I don’t—you would know better than I Bob, but whether that was unprecedented or not, but it was certainly among the more significant historical events I would think.

RK: Thank you very much Mr. Smith I enjoyed this interview, I learned a lot.

RS: OK. Thank you very much I appreciate the opportunity.