

## JANUARY 14, 2002 – WORKSHOP

The Board of County Commissioners, Walton County, Florida, held a Workshop with staff from the Department of Environmental Protection on Monday, January 14, 2002 at 9:00 a.m. at the Coastal Branch Library.

The following Board members were present: Commissioner Tim Pauls, Commissioner Herman L. Walker, Chairman Lane Rees and Mr. Michael Underwood, County Administrator. Commissioner Gene Ryan arrived later in the meeting.

Chairman Rees called the meeting to order introducing staff members from the Department of Environmental Protection Agency who were present. In addition, self-introductions were also made by other individuals whom were present.

Commissioner Walker commented on previous difficulties the county has encountered with DEP and felt that a better understanding is needed between both parties. He also voiced his appreciation for DEP staff meeting with the commissioners.

Ms. Mary Jean Yon, Director of District Management, spoke on the importance of communication. She stated that there are 16 counties in this district and Walton County is now being classified as a county in the middle bracket.

Commissioner Walker spoke about his involvement with DEP and the county's attempt to abide by DEP's rules while trying to serve the residents of the county. He asked about various ways to correct problems that exist.

Mr. Russ Barry, Public Works Director, spoke about two phases of roads, one phase being those roads that have currently been issued cease and desist orders. He also stated that better communications are needed.

Ms. Yon stated that she would like to establish a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to open a line of communications between her staff and the county in an attempt to better the situation. She stated that she abides by the rules and also wants her staff to. She stated that she has spoken with Representative Brown who is writing legislation regarding the rules for dirt roads.

Commissioner Pauls spoke about how rules can be manipulated to be unfair. He showed maps of south Walton depicting large amounts of State and Federally owned lands. He pointed out that he has not been able to obtain a permit for three years and how delays are very costly. Ms. Yon stated that she would like to look at ways to work through it and want damages minimized as much as possible.

Commissioner Walker stated that he held a meeting with the Florida Association of Counties and stated there is a need to analyze the rules to determine if they are being used right. The rules should be made clearer if necessary.

Commissioner Walker addressed the lengthy process the county went through to obtain the State owned lands for the Governmental Education Center and the problems associated with it.

Ms. Yon stated that with the help of the TAG Team, she hopes to work through these problems and to determine a better way to keep from preventing the county from paving roads. Ms. Celeste Cobena recommended placing staff from Tallahassee on the TAG Team as well as from Pensacola for better communications.

Ms. Yon explained that DEP is headquartered in Tallahassee and further explained the composition of DEP.

Mr. Jay Odom, resident, explained problems that he has encountered with DEP and the slow permitting process. He spoke about difficulties with the mitigation process, no direct rules for mitigation and the continuous offers that pass back and forth. He stated that there is no mechanism for giving mitigated property to DEP. A mechanism needs to be established for secondary impact.

Mr. Underwood advised that the county is attempting to create north-south corridors in south Walton to alleviate some of the traffic congestion, however, they are not able to because of the delays with DEP. Discussion was held regarding delays with permitting for other projects in which the county is awaiting a response from DEP.

Commissioner Ryan arrived.

Commissioner Ryan voiced concerns that the CORP and DEP is not always playing by the same rules. He is concerned with delays, which creates problems for the county with additional damages to roads that are ready to be paved. He stated that there are cost factors involved with the delays Mr. Ryan feels that the process needs to be simplified.

Commissioner Walker stated that it is time to move forward.

In closing, Ms. Yon stated that communication is a key factor. She feels that there is a commitment from both the county and the DEP to work together without compromising the environment or the rules. She stated that she is optimistic that this will happen with the help of the TAG team.

Commissioner Walker voiced his appreciation for DEP staff meeting with the county to discuss these issues. Chairman Rees also voiced his appreciation for everyone's participation.

Ms. Bonnie McQuiston, Walton County Taxpayer's Association, introduced the members of their Board and invited everyone to stay for a luncheon sponsored by the Walton County Taxpayer's Association.

There being no further business, this portion of the meeting was adjourned. The commissioners requested Ms. Yon to travel throughout the county with them to view various roads.

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
Lane Rees, Chairman

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Martha Ingle, Clerk of Court