

MARCH 11, 2008-VISIONING WORKSHOP

The Board of County Commissioners, Walton County, Florida, held a Workshop on Tuesday, March 11, 2008 at 2:00 p.m., at the South Walton Courthouse Annex. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss visioning for Walton County.

The following Board members were present: Commissioner Larry Jones, Chairman; Commissioner Sara Comander, Vice-Chair; Commissioner Kenneth Pridgen; Commissioner Brannon and Commissioner Meadows. Mr. Ronnie Bell, County Administrator; and Mr. Mike Burke, Interim County Attorney; were also present.

Commissioner Comander, Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order.

Mr. Mark Martin, Planner, briefly discussed the plan as outlined in the Visioning Packet. He stated that several visioning plans from other states and counties were included to use as guidelines in determining a Visioning Plan for Walton County. He feels that it is vital that the Board along with municipalities, schools, businesses, Tourist Development Council, Economic Development Council, and constituents work together in one direction to establish a visioning goal. He referenced Jackson County's visioning plan and the process that was taken to set up their plan. Mr. Martin said that Jackson County found it beneficial to hire an outside consultant to assist in the visioning process.

Ms. Shirl Williams, Assistant County Administrator, stated that this would be a huge task and that utilizing some of the ideas used by Jackson County would be beneficial.

Commissioner Comander stated that this will be a difficult but advantageous procedure. She feels that the people of the county should be given an opportunity to share their ideas for the future of Walton County.

Mr. Martin agreed that visioning must include the community not just leadership. He feels that community input is greatly needed.

Commissioner Comander stated that this process was more than land planning. She said that she had received an email from Mr. J. B. Hilliard asking that senior citizens be given the opportunity to be more involved.

Commissioner Pridgen asked how long the visioning process had been in place in Jackson County. Mr. Martin stated that it was begun in 2002. Commissioner Pridgen asked what some of their obstacles were. Mr. Martin said that the biggest issue was keeping everyone going in the same direction.

Commissioner Meadows asked who would be responsible for leading the process. Mr. Martin said that a consultant was hired in Jackson County to get the process started. He said that the Chamber, Commissioners and Planning Department were involved in the vision building. Commissioner Comander said that in Jackson County there are still members who meet regularly to discuss the path the process is taking.

Commissioner Meadows asked whether the visioning would be incorporated into the EAR Amendment Workshops. Commissioner Comander stated that the EAR is for planning and zoning and that visioning would be a separate area. Ms. Blackshear stated that although it overlaps, the visioning process would go beyond the scope of the EAR. Commissioner Comander suggested completing the EAR Amendments before going any further with the process.

Commissioner Meadows asked whether a consultant would be hired or would someone from the Planning Department be utilized to head the visioning. Commissioner

Comander feels that there are people within the county that has the qualifications to work as a visioning consultant.

Chairman Jones stated that with a county wide initiative, communication needs to take place between all the areas, Chamber, EDC, TDC and schools, to determine the level of interest and to hear recommendations for someone capable of leading a visioning process. He also said that if a consultant is hired, funding will need to be discussed by all involved.

Commissioner Brannon asked how long the facilitator was in place in Jackson County. Mr. Martin stated approximately one year. Chairman Jones said that a visioning process has no definitive end. He stated that consistent growth will always be compared to the visioning plan. Commissioner Comander feels that this is a great tool for recruiting new businesses into the county.

The Board consented to allow Commissioner Comander and Mr. Martin to communicate with all the entities to be involved with the visioning process.

Mr. Mark Schnell, Planner and Urban Designer, urged the Board to move forward with a visioning process.

Ms. Anita Page, South Walton Community Council, spoke in favor of a visioning process. She urged the Board to get public input and instill a sense of community pride.

Mr. Bob Hudson, Walton County Tax Payers Association, spoke in favor of a visioning process and urged the Board to make sure that the citizens of Walton County were involved.

There being no further business, the workshop was adjourned 2:40 p.m.

APPROVED _____
Larry Jones, Chair

ATTEST _____
Martha Ingle, Clerk of Court