

MARCH 22, 2005 – WORKSHOP

The Walton County Coalition met in a workshop on Tuesday, March 22, 2005 at 5:00 p.m. at the Freeport Community Center.

The following individuals were present: Ronnie Bell, County Administrator, Darrell Barnhill, Walton County School Board, Commissioner Cuchens, and Jean Arrant, City of Freeport. Commissioner Brannon was not present due to illness and James Huffman was not present due to a death in his family.

The organizational meeting was called to order with Commissioner Cuchens nominating Commissioner Brannon to serve as Chair and Darrell Barnhill as Vice-Chair. The motion was seconded by Ms. Arrant. Motion passed with all in favor.

Ms. Arrant presented her concerns to the committee regarding the four-laning of U.S. Highway 331 and the need for additional parks and recreational facilities.

Commissioner Cuchens commented on his recent trip to Washington D.C. at which he was told that the fight for the four-laning of Highway 331 was in Tallahassee. He stated that the commissioners will take this issue to Tallahassee during their legislative session the last week of March. Discussion continued regarding the by-pass around Freeport. He said that the Department of Transportation states that they do not have the funds. Mr. Bell presented information relating to the \$410 million to widen Highway 331 from Highway 98 to the interstate. Commissioner Cuchens spoke about the extensive evacuation times.

Discussion was held regarding the need for additional recreational facilities and the number of children participating in the programs. Commissioner Cuchens asked about the acreage that Mr. Jay Odom had offered to donate. Ms. Arrant stated that he had

not yet decided that property. Mr. Bell explained that discussions are ongoing relating to the use of the old National Guard Armory. Commissioner Cuchens explained his desires to use the old Wal-Mart building for recreation, but the commissioners voted against it. Mr. Barnhill advised that the school board would be holding a meeting to discuss the use of their facilities by “for-profit” organizations.

Mr. Bell voiced concerns about the rising costs of insurance. Commissioner Cuchens suggested a joint participation agreement with the school board to help reduce the costs. Ms. Arrant advised caution when combining groups due to the claim ratio involved. Mr. Barnhill stated that he would ask the school board staff to work with Mr. Bell on this issue.

Mr. Bell also advised the committee members that the county tax payers are paying for a lobbyist and offered to combine services that relate to countywide issues.

Ms. Arrant mentioned that accessible care for seniors is also an issue that needs to be considered.

Mr. Barnhill asked about the proposed school site in Mossy Head. Mr. Bell advised that he is waiting to hear from the school superintendent, but does not feel that it will be any problem.

Mr. Barnhill asked for an update on J.D. Miller Road. Mr. Bell advised that the road is ready to be paved pending good weather. The contractor is ready to perform the work.

Mr. Barnhill also voiced concerns regarding safety issues and the need for sidewalks along Highway 331 from Highway 98 to the South Walton High School. He suggested that either the school board or commissioners could fund that project and seek


reimbursement from DOT upon completion. Another alternative would be to seek funding from the Community Traffic Safety Team. Mr. Barnhill also spoke about general safety issues on Chat Holly Road. Discussion followed regarding safety and the lack of right-of-way.

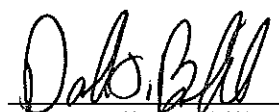
Mr. Barnhill addressed the need for property for schools. He commented that, when given the option, developers are choosing to pay the impact fee rather than provide land. Discussion was held about the need for additional schools in south Walton. St. Joe representatives previously commented that they are not marketing to families with school age children. Mr. Bell asked if the school board had considered purchasing state lands. Commissioner Cuchens recommended that the school board send a representative to Tallahassee with them during the Legislative week. Mr. Barnhill thanked the commissioners for the bike paths and sidewalks.

Further discussion was held regarding the four-laning of Highway 331 and the need for all Walton County entities to place pressure on the State. A resolution will be drafted by county staff for the other agencies to submit to the State regarding the four-laning project.

The next meeting of the Walton County Coalition Team will be held April 26<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. at the Freeport City Hall.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

APPROVED:   
Rosier Cuchens, Commissioner

ATTEST:   
Darrell Barnhill, Vice-Chair