

APRIL 3, 2003 – TOWN HALL MEETING

The Board of County Commissioner, Walton County Florida, held a Town Hall Meeting on Thursday, April 3, 2003 at 6:00 p.m. in the Paxton Agriculture Center.

The following Board members were present: Larry Jones, Chair, Tim Pauls, Vice-Chair, Commissioner Lane Rees, Commissioner Kenneth Pridgen, and Commissioner Ro Cuchens. Mr. Michael Underwood, County Administrator, and Attorney Gary Vorbeck, Director of Legal Services were also present.

Mr. Underwood opened the meeting by welcoming those individuals in attendance and introducing each commissioner.

Commissioner Pridgen, host commissioner, stated that it is a privilege to serve the people and that he is willing to help people with their needs. Each commissioner made an opening statement.

Mr. Bill McRae, Paxton City Councilman, welcomed the commissioners to the area. Mr. McRae spoke about Lakewood Park, Florida's highest point, and the upgrades that need to be made to the park. Mr. McRae spoke about the short-term and long-term goals that have been set for the park. He also complimented the county on the excellent job they are doing with maintenance at the park. Commissioner Pauls commented on the county parks being an asset and stated that the commissioners should focus on those assets. Chairman Jones thanked Mr. McRae for his efforts in trying to improve the park. Staff will look into undertaking the improvements that need to be completed.

Mr. James Robbins asked if the county could help with installing additional fire hydrants in the Paxton area. Mr. Underwood advised that it would be up to the City of

Paxton to install fire hydrants. However, if it were outside of the city limits it would require water lines to be run to the area first.

Mr. David Mathis questions why the sheltering of animals has to be sent out of the county. He felt that the people pay taxes in Walton County and the money should be spent in the county. Chairman Jones commented on the current research being done on the animal control issue and stated that it is scheduled to be discussed at the next commissioner's meeting.

Mr. David Jones, President of the Mossy Head Volunteer Fire Department, stated that they do not have the proper equipment to protect the residents of their fire district. He stated that a proposal was recently submitted for the purchase of new equipment and questioned the status of that purchase. Mr. William Imfeld, Financial Director, stated that he has been working with Mr. Ronnie Bell, EOC Director, on the proposals. He also commented on the assessment that Mr. Bell has requested to be done on all of the fire departments in order to determine each of their needs. Governmental Services Group is currently performing the assessment. Mr. Imfeld stated that the proposal would be presented to the Board in the near future.

Mr. Marvin Collier, Construction Manager, gave an update on activities he is currently working on for the Paxton area. He stated that he is working on the grant project for the fairground area. Mr. Collier thanked Mr. Bruce Ward for his work toward all of these projects.

Mr. Underwood introduced Mr. Hayward Thomas, Mayor of Paxton.

Mrs. Ann Sexton voiced concern with the poor parking area for school buses and requested assistance from the county for providing fill for the area. Chairman Jones asked

Mrs. Sexton to contact the School Board to request assistance. If they need to they will contact the county for help. Commissioner Pauls commented that it would depend if the property were school property or county right of way, whether or not the county should provide the fill.

Ms. Sally Merrifield requested an update on the ball fields. Mr. Pat Markey, Parks and Recreation Director, explained that he recently met with an engineer regarding the project. Two options will be presented to the Paxton City Clerk. He stated that a grant in the amount of \$200,000.00 has been received and the county will help with the construction of three little league fields. He felt that work would begin soon, but would not be complete until the next little league season.

Ms. Jane Wright, DeFuniak Springs resident, spoke about the proposed jail. She stated that citizens are aware that a new facility is needed, however, they are concerned with its location. She questioned the extent of the security that is needed. Ms. Wright encouraged everyone to contact the commissioners to voice their comments or concern whether they are in favor of the location or opposed. She stated that people need to be informed of the ongoing activities throughout the county.

Mr. Russ Barry, Public Works Director, spoke briefly about the road paving plans and alternatives for paving. The audience applauded Mr. Barry for the work he is accomplishing and for keeping the public informed.

There being no further comments, the commissioners thanked everyone for attending and the meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

APPROVED: _____
Larry D. Jones, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Martha Ingle, Clerk of Court