

APRIL 08, 2004-TOWN HALL MEETING

The Board of County Commissioners, Walton County, Florida, held a Town Hall Meeting on Thursday, April 8, 2004, at 6:00 p.m. at the Mossy Head Community Center.

The following Board members were present: Larry Jones, Chair, Tim Pauls, Vice-Chair, Commissioner Lane Rees, Commissioner Ro Cuchens and Commissioner Kenneth Pridgen. Mr. Ronnie Bell, Interim County Administrator, was also present.

Commissioner Cuchens led with prayer and Chairman Jones, host commissioner, called the meeting to order. Chairman Jones presented a power-point presentation that introduced each commissioner and gave a brief description of each county office. Mr. Jones also explained current and future projects for Walton County.

Chairman Jones opened the floor to public comments. Ms. Cathy Combs questioned about county maintenance on privately owned roads. Chairman Jones explained that state statutes strictly prohibit spending public funds on private property. He also explained that there is a county policy that allows a private road to be grated for half of an hour for a fee of \$25.

Mr. Lee Bass questioned if he could expect an increase in the Annual Fire Protection Special Assessments during the next year. Mr. Bell spoke briefly about the rate and stated that the methodology used for MSBU special assessments was in the process of being updated. He further stated that the Governmental Services Group (GSG) was scheduled to present several options to the Board at the next BCC meeting. Mr. Bass asked if the fee is per parcel or per structure on the parcel. Mr. Bell stated that it was established for improved properties and the rates are \$25.00 per residential and \$82.00 for commercial.

Mr. Charles Reese expressed concern with old trailers in Oakwood Hills that he feels are a fire hazard. Mr. Bell assured Mr. Reese that the issue would be looked into.

Ms. Teresa Owen addressed the need for a summer recreation program in the area. Ms. Monte Posey, Parks and Recreation Manager, stated that the director of the program must have a bachelor's degree in physical education or a related field and must be certified in CPR and first aid. Ms. Posey further discussed the possibility of developing land to construct a park in the area. Mr. Tom Terrell agreed with the comments made by Ms. Owen regarding the need for a summer recreation program.

Further discussion was held concerning the need for a storm center for the elderly people in the area.

Mr. Bass inquired about the location of the financial records for the fire departments. Mr. Bell stated that he was not sure but he would contact Mr. Bass with the information.

Mr. Reese spoke about the need for a sheriff's sub station in the Mossy Head area. Chairman Jones stated that he encouraged the idea. He reminded Mr. Reese that the Sheriff's Department was independent of this Board.

One citizen requested an update on roads that had been deeded to the county in 1988. Mr. Russ Barry, Public Works Director, explained that there is a two step process in accepting roads that have been dedicated to the county. He said that once a road, which must meet county standards, has been dedicated to the county; the county has the option of accepting or denying the road. If the road is accepted, it becomes the responsibility of the county to maintain the road. Further discussion was held regarding various areas in the area that the public felt did not meet county standards.

Mr. Terrell addressed several issues regarding Walton County. He first congratulated the commissioners for their initiative to go to Washington D.C. to acquire assistance for Walton County. He encouraged the people in the area to get involved and informed about the changes that are occurring in the Comp Plan and LDC. Mr. Terrell also spoke about the importance of proposed the Mossy Head Industrial Park. Commissioner Pauls stated publicly for the record that he was in favor of the Mossy Head Industrial Park. He expressed concerns that he has had concerning the park. Commissioner Pauls also spoke about traffic concurrency issues that the area might face in the future.

Other issues such as installation of fire hydrants and traffic lighting were also discussed.

Chairman Jones introduced Mr. Bob Bonezzi, developer for Blackstone. Mr. Bonezzi discussed the current status and the future plans for the development. He then opened the floor to questions and public comments.

The Board thanked the public for attending the meeting and encouraged them to contact the Board with their suggestions and concerns. Chairman Jones stated that the commissioners not only represent their own district, but each commissioner represents the entire county.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

APPROVED: _____
Larry D. Jones, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Martha Ingle, Clerk of Court