

APRIL 10, 2003 – JOINT WORKSHOP

The Board of County Commissioners, Walton County, Florida, held a Joint Workshop with the Economic Development Council on Thursday, April 10, 2003 at 5:00 p.m. at the Freeport Community 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.

The following EDC members were present: Tom Powell, John Gillis, Joyce Sanders, Pam Tedesco, Barbara Chairman Jones, Rachel Thomas, and Mayor Mickey Marse.

Mr. Powell spoke about the status of their implementation plan for economic development for FY 2002-03. He also spoke about projects that have been active within the past six months. He told about one project known as “Project Tide”, a large retailer consisting of a \$30-40 million project. Mr. Powell also spoke about “Project Raven”, a \$55 million project that would employ about 375-500 individuals. One project, “Project Ivey”, is a German based manufacturing company of firearms and is proposed for the Freeport Industrial Park. There are also four other proposed projects for various locations throughout the county.

Mr. Powell explained that the EDC has been working with the City of DeFuniak Springs in an effort to resolve issue relating to Professional Products.

Mr. Powell also spoke about Florida's Great Northwest and the outlook for future economic development projects. He presented information on EDC's efforts to increase funding from private sources.

Commissioner Rees stated that he has seen significant improvements and further commented on the importance of working together.

Commissioner Pauls complimented Mr. Powell on the steps the EDC has taken to accomplish their vision. He asked Mr. Powell to comment on the commissioner's weaknesses and the improvements he felt could be made. Mr. Powell stated that the Florida Great Northwest does the marketing to attract the people to Walton County for the EDC to make the sell. The EDC attempts to work with the customer and he encouraged the Board to proceed with preparing the Industrial Park for the customer. He explained that improvements are being made to the Freeport Industrial Park. Mayor Marse stated that he has funding left to purchase asphalt for the roads in the park.

Mr. Powell spoke about the county constructing a building that could be leased to potential businesses. He also stated that the EDC is interested in securing businesses that sell to firms outside of the county in order to bring new money into the county.

Commissioner Pauls questioned what efforts have been made regarding dredging. Mr. Powell explained that two obstacles existed regarding dredging, which was the lack of federal funding for the Corps of Engineers and a location to place the spoil once removed from the creeks. The funding issue was being addressed until Congressman Scarborough resigned. Mr. Powell stated that he has attempted to schedule a meeting with the parties involved to settle the issue; however, the individuals have not had an opportunity to meet. Commissioner Pauls stated that he would like to see this issue

presented to Baskerville-Donavan to discuss a possible solution. Commissioner Rees stated that he had spoken with the Lobbyist who stated that he could assist the county with obtaining federal funding.

Mr. Gillis stated that the people want to see progress, more paved roads, growth, additional education and medical facilities. Commissioner Pauls encouraged members of the EDC to help solve the infrastructure issues, such as the four-laning of U.S. Highway 331. Mr. Underwood commented that one portion of Highway 98 would be opening tomorrow.

Commissioner Rees questioned what other steps could be taken to encourage economic development. Mr. Powell stated that good communication, improved infrastructure, and continuing with the implementation plans are all positive for economic development.

Ms. Rachel Thomas expressed her appreciation for the cooperation the EDC has received from the commissioners and their being able to work together.

Mayor Marse advised the Board of a potential 80-acre site located on East Bayloop Road that would be a good area for the dredging spoil. He suggested the county and the City of Freeport jointly purchase the property. Mr. Powell commented that it could be costly to haul the dredge material to the property location due to the distance. Commissioner Pauls asked that the issue be researched further. He also asked the EDC to look at the county's permitting process to determine how it can be expedited. Mr. Powell stated that the EDC has previously looked into this matter and stated that resolving the discrepancies between the LDC and the Comprehensive Plan would help resolve the

permitting process. Commissioner Pauls advised the members of the EDC that the county is currently working on resolving those issues.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

APPROVED: _____
Larry D. Jones, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Martha Ingle, Clerk of Court