

APRIL 22, 2004-TOWN HALL MEETING

The Board of County Commissioners, Walton County, Florida, held a Town Hall Meeting on Thursday, April 22, 2004, at 6:00 p.m. at the Paxton Agriculture Center.

The following Board members were present: Larry Jones, Chair, Tim Pauls, Vice-Chair, Commissioner Lane Rees, Commissioner Ro Cuchens and Commissioner Kenneth Pridgen. Each department head was also present to answer any questions.

Chairman Jones led with prayer followed by the pledge of allegiance to the American flag. Commissioner Pridgen, host commissioner, called the meeting to order. He presented a power point presentation that introduced each commissioner and gave a brief description of each county division-Finance, Human Resources, Planning and Development, Citizens Services, Public Works and Transportation, and Emergency Response. The presentation also explained current and future projects for Walton County.

Commissioner Pridgen then turned the meeting over the other members of the Board. Commissioner Pauls spoke about several issues that he feels are going to affect Walton County in the future such as the Northwest Florida Greenway Project, the Bay Area Sector Plan, and the SIS Program. He also spoke about the growth that he feels is going to take place in the north Walton County area and how it will affect the citizens in the Paxton area. Commissioner Pauls further discussed storm water utilities and wetland regulation. He felt that these issues are extremely important to Walton County and the public should be aware of them.

Chairman Jones also discussed the growth in Walton County. He stated that the entire county would be affected by the growth and the citizens need to be prepared. He

also spoke about the benefits of growth in the South Walton area. He talked about the ability to generate revenue and how it allows the county to keep the ad valorem rate at a reasonable rate. He stated the Walton County has the 14th lowest ad valorem rate out of 67 counties.

Commissioner Rees spoke about the importance of agriculture to Walton County, especially in terms of how it can relate to tourism. He commended Mr. Bruce Ward, Extension Office, for the work he has done on the issue. He stated that there are opportunities to relate agriculture and tourism to help benefit the people in Paxton. Commissioner Rees also spoke about the opportunity of Hwy 331 being looked at as a corridor for people to travel to and from Alabama.

Commissioner Cuchens welcomed the people to the meeting and thanked them for coming. He also thanked them for being so supportive.

The floor was opened for public comments. Mayor Hayward Thomas expressed appreciation to the Board for their hard work and dedication. Mr. Bill McRae, Paxton City Councilman, complimented the commissioners on everything that has been done for the Paxton area. He stated that Lakewood Park is looking excellent and suggested that the church next to the park be made part of the park. Mr. McRae stated that there were still a few small items that needed some work. Ms. Angie Biddle, Grants Coordinator, stated the county was working on obtaining a grant for those projects.

Mr. Joe Melton also expressed appreciation to the Board for all that has been done in the community.

Ms. Kerry Stewart questioned the status of the Natural Bridge process. She asked if the property has already been purchased. Ms. Biddle responded that the property has

not been purchased yet, but the county was reviewing possibilities for funding of the project.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

APPROVED: _____
Larry D. Jones, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Martha Ingle, Clerk of Court