

JUNE 12, 2002 – WORKSHOP

The Board of County Commissioners, Walton County, Florida, held a workshop on Wednesday, June 12, 2002 at 9:00 a.m. in the Boardroom of the Walton County Courthouse to discuss the county's Road Policy.

The following Board members were present: Commissioner Tim Pauls, Commissioner Herman L. Walker, Chairman Lane Rees and Commissioner Gene Ryan. Mr. Michael Underwood, County Administrator, Attorney Gary Vorbeck, Director of Legal Services, and Ms. Martha Ingle, Clerk of Courts, were also present.

Commissioner Walker led with prayer following the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

Chairman Rees called the meeting to order.

Mr. Russ Barry, Public Works Director, was present to give an overview of the Road Policies. Mr. Dan Arner, the newly hired County Engineer, was also present.

Mr. Barry presented a draft version of the Right-of-Way Policy for Walton County. He stated that the policy only covers roads that belong to the county and that they would be looking for a systematic way to deal with roads. He gave a definition of right-of-way, which is land that the county owns the fee, has title to, right of use, or easement devoted to or required for use, for the roads and its associated structures and appurtenances, required for use as a transportation facility. For the purposes of the policy, ROW shall mean not only the right-of-way as defined, but also roadway easements, prescriptive easements, etc. He then explained that prescriptive easement is where the county constructed the road and has maintained it for a period of more than four years. Easements can also include drainage easements and utility easements.

Ms. Estelle Harrell, a resident of Ten Lake Estates, stated that the county does not have an easement at Ten Lakes, but they are maintaining the roads.

Mr. Barry explained the Design Criteria for roads and the required width. Commissioner Pauls stated that he would like to see flexibility when it comes to the width of roads. He further stated that any subdivision or development that will dedicate roads to the county should have a minimum of 50' of right-of-way.

Mr. Bob Register commented that the Land Development Code says the county has the right to continue maintaining roads within subdivisions, but they must be upgraded to code. Mr. Barry stated that policy would clarify these types of issues.

Mr. Crim suggested placing dates on roads according to when they were constructed. Mr. Barry stated that he would look into this.

Ms. Sharon Louge-Higgins questioned the issue of private roads being taken over by the county and what standards would apply. Commissioner Pauls explained that a lot would be determined by the dedication.

Mr. Barry explained that Design Criteria is to provide guidelines for roads the county designed whether done by the county or under contract or by a developer. Commissioner Pauls suggested that the policy contain wording regarding pervious/impervious surfaces.

Mr. Barry reviewed the section entitled Roadside safety and what steps should be taken to enhance safety. Other topics in the policy addressed were Bike Paths, Culverts, Ditches and Swales. Driveway Connections were discussed with Commissioner Pauls questioning the 10-year traffic volume projections.

Landscaping, Lane Widths, and Shoulders and Border Areas are also part of the policy. Commissioner Pauls stated that landscape agreements are needed with entities that will install and maintain landscape on county right-of-ways. He also commented that “Industrial” should be defined.

Parking and the ability to provide adequate off-street parking and loading facilities were also discussed and will be part of the policy. Mr. Crim commented that parking requirements for ADA also needs to be clarified. The commissioners also requested clarification of towing and No Parking areas.

The last two sections in the policy are Utilities and Work in the Right-of-Way. Mr. Barry explained that there are inspectors who review the utility issues. He also explained that the county must approve any work in the right of way before it is done.

Ms. Estelle Harrell questioned the commissioners on how the roads at Ten Lake Estates were added to the road system map when they were not addressed during any board meeting. She stated that she wants the roads abandoned and put back to private. Commissioner Walker advised that he has had several calls regarding this situation and has requested Mr. Bell to research this for him. He stated that he would do what the community, as a whole, wants keeping public safety in mind.

Mr. Bob Register questioned the road policy and the public purpose. He commented that he knows of roads that serve only one individual and questioned what will become of these roads. Commissioner Ryan stated that roads are paved for multiple purposes, not only the number of residents on the road. Chairman Rees advised that the Public Works Department would be looking into this issue.

Mr. Barry agreed to add information to the policy regarding private roads that become public roads and traffic coning devices.

Ms. Sharon Louge-Higgins spoke about new development along CR 30A and the congestion caused by them. She stated that she had spoken with the Division of Forestry and they told her that the county should have required Arvida to provide property for additional exits onto Highway 98 during the development phase. Commissioner Walker stated that they are aware of the problem and will look at ways to correct it in the future.

In closing, Mr. Crim commended Mr. Barry for drafting the policy and questioned if additional public input would be allowed. The commissioners advised that additional meetings would be held and the public would have time to speak. Mr. Barry will make the necessary changes and present the policy back to the commissioners for review.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

APPROVED: _____
Lane Rees, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Martha Ingle, Clerk of Court

JUNE 12, 2002 – WORKSHOP

The Board of County Commissioners, Walton County, Florida, held a workshop on Wednesday, June 12, 2002 at 1:00 p.m. in the Conference Room of the Emergency Operations Center to discuss Growth Management issues.

The following Board members were present: Commissioner Tim Pauls, Vice-Chairman Larry D. Jones, Commissioner Herman L. Walker, Chairman Lane Rees and Commissioner Gene Ryan. Mr. Michael Underwood, County Administrator, and Attorney Gary Vorbeck, Director of Legal Services, were also present.

Mr. Jack Arthur, Growth Management Director, and his staff were present to address what they feel are issues of concern. Mr. Arthur began by explaining the organizational structure of the Planning Department before he took this position compared to the current status. He also presented a proposed structure and new positions that he would like to fill in the future.

Mr. Arthur explained that he called this meeting because he feels that unwarranted attacks are being made on his department. He stated that citizens have verbally attacked his department, made false statements and are attempting to degrade his character. He spoke about wetland issues that have arisen and the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Arthur told the commissioners that his department did not make recommendations on projects in the past and feels it would be better to go back to that policy because of the conflicts that arise. He stated that he feels his department has not been given proper legal representation.

Mr. Arthur spoke about improvements he has made within his department such as improving upon the space deficiencies, improving the process, and making shorter meetings. He also spoke about their difficulties in dealing with interpreting the Code. The mission of the Planning Department is Interpretation, Compliance, Consistency, and Due Process, in regard to the Codes. He closed his presentation by asking how they can better their department.

Commissioner Walker stated that he believes the board has provided their support to the Planning Department. He also felt that the Planning Department has been given opportunity to consult with Attorney Vorbeck if needed.

Chairman Rees explained that he had spoken with Mrs. Henninger who explained that internal steps have been taken to better serve the public. She had explained that each project would be assigned to a certain employee, a team leader approach, and anyone inquiring would be able to correspond with that employee to get his or her questions answered.

Commissioner Pauls stated that he has experienced being in the applicant's position and is aware of the difficulties. He further explained that a vote by the commission is not intended to criticize the Planning Staff. He commented on how he is beginning to see recommendations come from the Planning Commission and Planning Staff that appear to be more the same, which shows the process is working. He stated that he realizes changes are taking place, but they take time. He is also aware of the frustrations with contradictions between the LDC and Comp Plan.

Commissioner Ryan stated that the Planning Department has been understaffed for a long time and the growth has placed a tremendous burden on staff. He stated that

Human Resource should be involved when there is a need for additional personnel. Commissioner Ryan also suggested printing an information sheet to keep the public aware of the status of projects in question and to make them aware of why decisions were made.

Commissioner Ryan stated that there are certain issues that arise that the commissioners should be made aware of so they are informed.

Discussion was held regarding the filling of wetlands. The Department of Environmental Protection submits to the county, a copy of every request made to fill a wetland in Walton County.

Mr. Arthur also stated that he does not feel his staff has an opportunity to defend themselves during Quasi-judicial hearings and they do not have proper legal counsel to represent their position.

Ms. Bonnie McQuiston stated that she would like to see the barrier broken down between the Planning Department and the public. She feels that it is a disservice to the public not to be able to communicate with staff. She also felt that Planning Staff needs to change their attitude. She spoke about difficulties in getting phone calls through to staff and getting a phone call answered. Chairman Rees stated that staff being assigned to certain projects should help with this situation.

Ms. Celest Cobena stated that she has called to speak with Jack and cannot get any response. She feels the Planning Department is attempting to squelch any public comment. She spoke about special arrangements that were made under the settlement agreement to fill the wetlands and how no commercial was allowed.

Ms. Kathy Gilbert stated that they have attempted to correspond by e-mail because they cannot get any response by phone.

Mr. Maurice Gilbert thanked the board for their public service and stated that county employees should be appreciated in many ways. Mr. Gilbert voiced concern with communications. He stated that he is concerned with the attitude of the presentation given by Mr. Arthur, as attitude plays a major role in public service. He also stated that taxpayers have a right to interface with staff regarding their concerns on various projects. Mr. Gilbert requested that the slides from this presentation be made available to the public in order to be able to respond to comments made. In closing, he also suggested that inconsistencies between the Land Development Code and the Comp Plan be corrected in order to correct the problems.

Commissioner Jones stated that in order to correct the problem, there must be willingness on both sides to cooperate and communicate. He stated that we need to move forward. He agrees that the Planning Department has a tough job and it is a difficult process.

Commissioner Pauls also commented on the challenges of minor development versus major developments and proper notice so that the public can be allowed informed input at the meetings

Mr. Underwood advised everyone that Jennifer is working to create a database for all calls and their response. She is also taking all of Mr. Arthur's calls and routing them to the proper individual, as they may not all be for him.

Commissioner Walker requested that Planning Staff continue making their recommendations because they are informative and help him to make better decisions.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

APPROVED: _____
Lane Rees, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Martha Ingle, Clerk of Court