

OCTOBER 23, 2003 – WORKSHOP

The Board of County Commissioners, Walton County, Florida, held a Regular Meeting on Thursday, October 23, 2003 at 6:00 p.m. at the Chamber of Commerce in south Walton.

The following Board members were present: Tim Pauls, Vice-Chair, Commissioner Lane Rees, Commissioner Kenneth Pridgen, and Commissioner Rosier Cuchens. Attorney Gary Vorbeck, Director of Legal Services, and Kira Coley, Staff Attorney, were also present.

The following School Board members were present: Mark Davis, Donnie Richards, Mildred Wilkerson, Bill Laird, and Daryl Barnhill. Superintendent of Schools, Coy Yates, Ben Holley, Attorney, Jim McCall, Finance Director, and Wayne Miller were also present.

Mr. Barnhill called the meeting to order.

Mr. Wayne Miller gave an overview of the five-year work plan. He stated that it is only a plan and subject to change. It includes information regarding school facilities, the new Mossy Head proposed school and one in south Walton contingent upon increased counts. The plan also covers maintenance issues for school facilities. The total cost is approximately \$4 million per year over 25 years. He spoke about the school board's budget and expected expenditures. There will be money to meet the needs of Walton County for the next 25 years. Most of the growth is in south Walton, which fluctuates in the amount of growth. He stated that they have additional stations above the number of students, but the stations are not located in the right places.

Commissioner Pauls questioned Mr. Miller regarding the school board's projected millage and what figure he uses as a growth factor. He stated that they use figures from the Tax Collector and Tax Appraiser's Office. Commissioner Pauls commented on the increase in assessed valuation and the need to be able to pay for infrastructure. Mr. Miller explained that Freeport Schools have flat lined in student growth.

Commissioner Rees commented on the growth of the Healthmark Hospital and the number of additional employees there and at Sacred Heart in south Walton. Mr. Miller commented that there are 14 students enrolled as a result of employment at the Sacred Heart Hospital. Commissioner Pauls commented on the importance of keeping up with the growth as it comes.

Commissioner Rees commented on initial numbers of students versus the growth that will be occurring. Mr. Miller stated that he has spoken with Arvida about the possibility of acquiring land for a future school to be shared with EPSCO and Watersound. Commissioner Cuchens questioned the current classroom size. Mr. Miller stated that Walton County is one of the lowest in the state. Changes could be made next year to free additional space reducing the number of students in each class.

Mr. McCall commented on the FTE projections (student counts), which is currently 6,350 students and is projected to increase to no more than 7,000. He stated that student growth over any five-year period has only been 13.5%. He spoke briefly about budgeting for the five-year plan to ensure there are adequate funds available. He stated that there is only a \$300,000 increase per year projected regarding the mill increase. He also reviewed the cost per square foot. He stated that the schools are at about

65% occupancy on the average; some schools have close to 100% and some only 40%. The average cost per student station is about \$13,570 to \$18,850.

Mark Davis commented on their ability to build schools where needed, however it is more difficult to provide adequate staffing them adequately. He stated that it is cheaper to run a larger school than two smaller schools. He explained the funding mechanism and how the funds are collected and redistributed by the state. Their millage is set by the state.

Commissioner Pauls spoke about some funding sources that will remain in the county where it is collected, such as automobile tags. Barnhill stated that they are prohibited from increasing their levy to enhance their schools.

One member of the audience voiced concern regarding available space for special school programs such as art classes. He spoke about school elimination and the transfer of students from school to school. He spoke about class size and stated that he felt that smaller schools are better.

Commissioner Pauls questioned the maintenance of facilities and how it is handled. Mr. Miller stated that most of it is done in-house. A Plant Manager, who oversees the needs of the school, handles grounds maintenance.

Commissioner Rees questioned the requirements for staff that Walton County Schools have. He stated that the ratio of staff to Principals is very low. Commissioner Rees questioned if it is possible to have two campuses at one school to help reduce staffing. Mr. Davis said that is possible and that is what they are looking at.

Chairman Jones addressed the Mossy Head Industrial Park and the property recently acquired by the county. He presented a map showing the location and explained

that a master plan is being developed for the property. He also explained the site where the PUD is being developed that would consist of 120 housing lots and a golf course in the first phase. He stated that the Board is looking forward to working with the school board to plan for an elementary school in Mossy Head to benefit the growth of the community. He stated that proper growth is important in order to bring the people in. Mr. Miller stated that they have looked at the Mossy Head area. Approximately 325 students are bused in from the west of the county. Chairman Jones commented that the next phase would be an implementation phase to determine what is needed to move forward.

Commissioner Rees commented on Florida's Great Northwest and the need for quality sites.

Mr. Laird questioned what type of businesses the county is considering for the Industrial Park. Chairman Jones commented on the funding the Board has set aside to entice businesses into the county, but is unsure of any particulars at this time.

Commissioner Pauls stated that a marketing study has been requested. He commented on the importance of developing the park correctly and felt that this will be more of a business park than an industrial park. Commissioner Rees commented on the knowledge-base businesses, which are less likely to move overseas. Daryl Barnhill questioned if there has been consideration given to the property changing to agriculture and any complications it may create with the adjacent residential properties. The commissioners felt that it would not be a problem because the industrial park plan does not meet the level of a DRI that requires approval by DCA.

Commissioner Pauls commented on the need for the Commissioners and the School Board to be aware of any plans for development of a corridor that would be

preservation and prevent development relating to the flyover pattern for Eglin. Mr. Miller commented that there is a move to set aside a corridor all the way to Gulf County.

Mr. Barry addressed the Board regarding road maintenance. He spoke about the delays on J.D. Miller Road. He explained that it was placed under a cease and desist order about 18 months ago. Once the order was lifted they authorized the county to once again apply for another permit. It has been continual delays, while the county is continuing to meet demands by the DEP. He stated that he is planning to proceed within the next 90-days if it goes as planned. Commissioner Pauls commented that he has asked the Public Works Department to stabilize the road until further improvements can be done.

Mr. Barnhill questioned if the bids have been let on the 30-A bike paths. Commissioner Pauls stated that the bike path would be going by Butler Elementary School within the next 30 days. Commissioner Rees also commented on the additional bike path at Walton Middle School and the progress there.

Mrs. Kira Coley, Staff Attorney, spoke about the Interlocal Agreement. She stated that the agreement was sent to the Department of Community Affairs who is now reviewing it. She stated that the agreement would be beneficial to both the schools and the county. The agreement requires the school board to provide information to the county and cities, in addition to the county providing necessary information to the schools and cities. It also requires an oversight committee to facilitate communications. This will also provide for a school board member to serve on the Planning Commission. She also spoke about the portion of the agreement that speaks about co-location, shared facilities

and emergency management. Commissioner Pauls voiced his appreciation to Mr. Barnhill for his work on the agreement and the effectiveness it will have.

Chairman Jones expressed his appreciation to the School Board members to work together on these issues. He also commented on the educators of Walton County and the great job they are doing.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

APPROVED: _____

Larry D. Jones, Chairman

ATTEST: _____

Martha Ingle, Clerk of Court