

# **Columbia County Board of County Commissioners**

**March 07, 2024**

## **Workshop**

The Columbia County Board of County Commissioners met on this date in a scheduled workshop at the Columbia County School Board Administrative Complex. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Williams at 12:22 PM.

### **Commissioners in Attendance:**

Chairman, Ronald Williams

Commissioner, Robby Hollingsworth

Commissioner, Tim Murphy

Commissioner, Rocky Ford

Commissioner, Everett Phillips

### **Others in Attendance:**

David Kraus, County Manager (CM)

Kevin Kirby, Assistant County Manager (ACM)

Joel Foreman, County Attorney

Deputy Clerk, Amber Taylor

### **Agenda Items:**

- 1.) Discussion of Affordable Housing Proposals

A meeting was held on this day to discuss proposed affordable housing options for Columbia County.

**Commissioner Hollingsworth** stated that it will be difficult to convey to taxpayers that they will incur the cost of additional infrastructure necessary to accommodate new construction developments. Commissioner Hollingsworth, also feels that the decision reached by the Commission should be applied to all developers across the board moving forward, and should begin implementation starting October 1, 2024.

**Joel Foreman, Attorney** offered comment pertaining to public/private partnerships and how they can become problematic from a policy standpoint. Columbia County, as a government entity, is precluded from being a partner in an ownership capacity. However, as long as the partnership enterprise is serving public interests, the Commission would be permitted to donate startup funding towards private project. This could only be possible following extensive meetings and hearings concerning this matter. Mr. Foreman offered to obtain pertinent information and data pertaining to this process, to present to the Commission if they wish to proceed with this scenario.

Mr. Foreman also provided examples of long term possible revenue generation in accordance with the Florida Statute, which allow for fees to be assessed by the courts and then collected from criminal defendants to assist with supporting. Mr. Foreman also referenced state funded programs available for consideration by the Commission. Mr. Foreman asked for the Board's direction as to which options for consideration they would like for him to pursue for presentation. Mr. Foreman also stated that "This is fundamentally a policy issue".

**Chairman, Williams** proposed question to Mr. Foreman as to how larger cities develop funding sources for the development of low income housing.

**Mr. Foreman, Attorney** explained that the majority of programs are geared towards metropolitan areas. Columbia County does not meet specifications required to qualify for many of these funding sources and programs.

**Commissioner Murphy** acknowledged the need for affordable housing in Columbia County. He would remind the Commission that the County still needs to come up with approximately \$90 Million needed to maintain current obligations. Commissioner Murphy also made a point to reference, expense that is coupled with growth. Siting that for each tax dollar generated by new citizens, 78 cent goes directly towards Emergency Services and infrastructure.

**Kevin Kirby, (ACM)** Made mention for the record, of impending construction development on Bascom Norris. This will require the road widening/paving to accommodate excess traffic frequenting new commercial developments. The estimated cost of this project, will be upwards of \$10 million dollars. A budget to cover said costs, is still in the developmental stages.

**Commissioner Murphy** expressed concern with the infrastructure being able to support the additional traffic and public use of roads through the residential neighborhood surrounding Niblack Elementary School. He anticipates a financial need to address this in the future.

**Commissioner Ford**, made mention of the increase in cost for ambulance services cost going forward. This is an additional cost that will need to be accounted for in budgetary planning.

**Sylvester Warren, III** requested that the Commission review each proposal on an individual basis. Mr. Warren also reassured the commission that the residential neighborhood surrounding Niblack Elementary School is aware and prepared for the influx of traffic that will increase due to new construction in that area. He voiced, residents will utilize multiple entrances to the neighborhood to combat traffic congestion.

**Vanessa George, October Realty** gave brief overview of previous proposal provided to the Commission on affordable, single family homes for purchase. She offered clarification, that no financial backing from the Commission is needed for this venture. The proposed partnership with the BOCC was in reference to affordable rental properties.

**Micheal Allen, Sweetwater Appartments** gave brief overview of proposed development project. (See attached) to the Commission.

Extensive conversation ensued.

**Adjournment:**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:18 pm.

ATTEST:

---

Ronald Williams, Chairman

Board of County Commissioners

---

James M. Swisher, Jr.

Clerk of Circuit Court