

**COLUMBIA COUNTY**  
Board of County Commissioner

DATE: February 07, 2007  
TYPE: Workshop  
TIME: 10:00 a.m.  
LOCATION: Columbia County School Board

County Manager Williams opened the meeting by stating the meeting was a workshop and that any motions of the Board are guidance only and the motions would have to be restated at the next public Board of County Commissioners meeting. The Board agreed that they would be offering consensus and not formal motions.

**Ellisville Utility Project** – The Implementation Schedule was reviewed. The wastewater facility plan was scheduled for submission in November 2006, but was submitted to DEP approximately a week ago. This does not cause concern for the county engineers since the schedule allows a sufficient amount of time for makeup. The estimated completion date continues to be November 2008. Currently, the project cost is \$7,000,000. That amount excludes the land purchase of \$980,000. This project will be paid for from legislative appropriations, state revolving loan funds, and through Community Issue Budget Request (“CIBR”) funds. The County will consider pledging state revenue sharing dollars as a repayment guaranty. There will be subsidation of repayment, which will begin in 2009. Negotiations continue with the City of Lake City regarding utilities.

**Unincorporated Area Utility** – The County considers the following issues to be non-negotiable: Any utility must have equal representation on the governing board, any regional utility would have to have equalized rates for the city and unincorporated area, and there must be an understanding that that the unincorporated area has a need that must be given attention and served. To date the City has not agreed to equal representation or equalized rates. The City has agreed to a reduction in the subsidy that is charge unincorporated area residents. The County believes it is in their best interest to be a wholesale purchaser of water from the City. The County’s engineers have been directed to grow a regional utility on the wastewater side. The four components are allowing individual septic tanks in the appropriate areas, allow cluster tanks, package plants designed for advanced wastewater treatment standards only, and lastly a central wastewater system such as the City operates. The vision is designating appropriate areas and conditions where any of the four would apply. There are still some issues that must be resolved. A comprehensive policy is being drafted for consideration that will address the wastewater issue. There is a Plan “B” in place for water if the County and City cannot reach an agreement. The County continues to move aggressively toward a county utility. The County Manager noted that at the last Planning and Zoning Board meeting three (3) proposed developments were denied on issues relating to wastewater. There is a need to give clear definitive guidance as to what is acceptable, and that there are no misunderstandings with the current law regarding requirements.

**CONSENSUS: The County move forward in expanding utilities with the thought in mind that the County and City may be able to consolidate utilities into a regional utility in the future with equal representation.**

The Private Utility Ordinance will be reviewed on a page-by-page basis by Attorney Brian Armstrong at an upcoming workshop. The ordinance will become an intricate part of the overall plan for utilities on the County side. The consultants have also been asked to draft general descriptions of various ordinances the County will be required to adopt. County Attorney Feagle mentioned the LDRs relating to sewer and water hookups should be reviewed and addressed at the same time.

County Manager Williams discussed with the commission the **Springs Protection Bill** that will be filed soon. There is an official basin map outlining the Itchetucknee Springs basin, which stretches across the entire county. The proposed bill enables the SRWMD to adopt a spring-shed protection zone, which many possibly believe will be the basin. That being the case, many parts of Columbia County will become a regulated area. Particularly from the standpoint of wastewater. The map is a work product of DEP and the SRWMD. The County Manager reviewed concerns with the bill.

**Connector Road Project** – County Manager Williams reviewed a map showing CSX Railroad and the Lowes Home Improvement area on the West side of town. He gave an update. The County is still dealing with four property owners. The last phase is going to require massive amounts of dirt to balance out the 43 foot differential in grades. The dirt will come from the site by cutting down hills on the site. Tests are being done to make sure the conditions will support the plan. Testing rights should be available by the end of the month. The wetlands are 80,000 square feet. The County can mitigate from land bank acreage. A vehicular tunnel is in the plans to ensure one property owner will not have impeded access. If testing supports the plan, surveys, appraisals, land negotiations, including possible eminent domain proceedings will follow. The County currently has \$7,148,705 to apply toward this project. \$4,322,705 is the money left over from the special gas tax levy for the bypass. \$2,826,000 is County Incentive Grant Program (“CIGP”) funding through Department of Transportation. Real Road is the only other project that may impact the \$7,148,705.

There was a five minute recess at 11:15

**County Jail Project** – This facility will cost in the area of \$42,000,000 (includes architectural and engineering fees and utilities). The attorney visitation corridor (cost \$1,190,000) has been removed from the current plan and is not reflected in the \$42,000,000. Court employees believe eliminating the corridor would be a mistake from a financial and safety standpoint. Also not included in the cost is the price for wetland mitigation and geotechnical work. The County Manager said, “While the debt service can be generated to pay for it [jail project], it ties up all of your pledgable collateral. It’s one thing to make a payment, it’s something else to pledge, and

not every revenue you have is pledgable revenue.” The County Manager expressed concern and was clear that tying up pledgable revenues would not be a healthy and sound move for the county. He gave suggestions for consideration for reducing the overall cost of the jail project. The ongoing concern was expressed with the inmate population being made up of primarily VOP inmates and inmates waiting to go to prison. There was also concern expressed that new and pending legislation will severely impact the jail population causing more overcrowding.

If the proposed Property Tax Reduction Act makes it to ballot, the general consensus is that it will pass. It was noted that an additional homestead exemption of \$25,000 would negatively impact the county budget by \$2,497,249. The Columbia County’s general fund budget is a total of \$32,300,000. \$20,000,000 of the general fund is generated from property taxes. Currently, the Sheriff’s budget is \$12,000,000 or sixty percent. The new jail and staff would result in the Sheriff’s budget requiring eighty-five percent of the funds collected from property taxes. He explained that if the County is forced to trim the budget back \$2,497,249 it will very likely force the County to have to trim funding for outside agencies.

Commissioner Weaver noted that for all of the trimming the Governor is planning, there are no plans to trim any of the State’s budget. The County Manager explained that in a sense, small counties have been their own enemies. Some counties were financially able to take the additional revenues generated from growth and offer a rollback to their citizens, but instead decided to do something else with the monies, which resulted in people becoming angry. The County Manager said that Columbia County took all money generated from the increase in the property tax roll this past year (‘05-‘06) and the prior year (‘04-‘05) and placed it into the Jail Project Fund.

For these reasons staff made a recommendation that the County not move forward with the jail until the legislature convenes and their actions can be gauged. He concluded that while he realizes the jail is likely the largest need this county currently has, he could not in good conscience recommend the county continue to move forward with completing the jail until the actions of the legislature are known.

Commissioner Williams asked if the County once again would look into the possibility of hiring its own judge. The County Manager and Clerk of Courts explained the matter is not based on the cost of a judge, but instead is based on caseload and would have to go through a judicial review. This may also lessen the County’s chance of getting another circuit judge. Another concern is that the judge would be on the county’s payroll and may have a hard time remaining neutral. It was expressed that the likelihood of getting something like this approved is a very slim chance.

Commissioner Skinner asked the Clerk, who currently holds the office of President with the Florida Association of Court Clerks if he would get more information on the possibility of a county hiring their own VOP judge.

The workshop recessed at 12:00 for lunch and reconvened at 1:15.

**Impact Fees** – School impact fee study indicates that single family detached mobile homes should have an impact fee of \$3,490. This information was sent to the County’s legal consultants (Nabors, Giblin, and Nickerson) who in return reviewed the number and sent a letter back to the school system asking for specific information. The information related to student station cost, land cost, general cost, future needs, credits, state funds, housing characteristics, and school site donation. County Manager Williams said that to his knowledge the school system has not yet provided all of the requested information. Once the attorneys have completed the school impact fees study, the school system and the County will need to contract together to handle certain issues. The County may charge an administrative fee for levying and collecting the impact fee. It will be up to the County to decide if they will charge the administrative fee and how much the fee will be. These numbers are not final.

**Fire Impact Fee** – On the basis of the study, the maximum fire impact fee that can be charged is \$24. It was explained that the County put too much cash into the start up of the new fire department, which artificially reduces the impact fee. Also, when the County levies the impact fee, it is automatically assumed that the budget will reduce the fire assessment. That is because the County will be removing future capital outlay reserves from that budget. Technically, one will be reduced while the other is being implemented. The only thing the County can recoup is the capital expense that the County has not paid for. The County Manager suggested it would be wise to revisit its budget to determine the different scenarios before a fire impact fee is implemented. The County is studying what would happen they were to transfer some of the cash expenditures to a loan and then repay the cash fund that money was originally taken from.

**Corrections Impact Fee** – The proposed impact fee is:

\$296.27 Single family home  
\$271.84 Multi-Family  
\$320.69 Mobile Home

**EMS Impact Fee** – The reason EMS has been the biggest issue is because that none of the historical data has been tied to property use/type. Efforts have been underway to generate the needed data into a useful form to be used by the consultants.

**Transportation Impact Fee** – The County used Arcadis as a consultant who specializes in transportation. Their report on transportation impact fees is expected to be delivered today to the offices of Nabors & Giblin.

The enabling ordinance that would implement impact fees has already been prepared. The ordinance requires a 90 day review per Florida law.

**County Fire Department Implementation** – This is the newest county department.

The last interviews for personnel were conducted February 01, 2007. Two firefighters are still in training and will complete their training in March 2007.

All equipment purchases have been made, except for some of the boarding and turnout gear, and also some non-ISO needed equipment to be placed on some of the vehicles. The County Manager said, “We’ve got what we need for the ISO review, but the staff has requested

additional equipment, which we've agreed to buy. Some of that has not yet been added to the vehicle."

Equipment transferred from the volunteer departments and placed in the paid department was two, three thousand gallon tankers, and the seven new engines the County bought the year before for the volunteers. The County has purchased from the fire budget seven new service units, two new fire engines, two additional three thousand gallon tankers, three cornex boxes for the training facility, training pumps, 30 sets of new turnout gear (more is needed), ISO standardized equipment for all of the vehicles and approximately 56 SCBA Cascade System units. The County believes they now have everything needed to have a successful ISO inspection.

The new fire stations have been a slow moving process. The first phase plans are complete for Station 43 (f/k/a West Columbia Volunteer Fire Department) to become a permanent station. The second phase plans have not been received from the engineers.

The County has two new stations to build. The plans for those two stations are not complete. Land was recently purchased across from Bethel Church to build one of the two needed stations. The other new station will be in Fort White, which will also house rescue personnel when complete. All of the needed facilities are not expected by the end of the fiscal year. Commissioner Bailey asked what could be done to get the plans back expeditiously. The commissioner said it seems to him they've had a little bit too long and the county may need to look at another engineer. The County Manager said that in hindsight the county should have possibly considered another engineer, but the plans are far enough along now that another engineer would have to begin from scratch. Commissioner Porter suggested the County make note of who the engineer is so they don't have this same situation in the future with other building projects. Commissioner Bailey asked that contact be made with the engineer to encourage them to complete the project. Commissioner Bailey said the people on the Eastside and in Fort White need to lower ISO ratings and increase fire protection. County Manager Williams said that as long as the County can demonstrate that the fire departments are being built, the East side of the county would not be penalized, and the grading will be done as if it were in place with all of the appropriate equipment and the rates would apply to everyone at the same time.

The ISO application has been submitted and the County must now wait for the review. The County's weakest rating/link is water supply.

There are issues with overtime expenditures especially since no overtime was budgeted. It has been incurred due to insufficient staffing. The County Manager said that the adjustment of personal services will be made from debt service prior to completing the building loan.

Communications – A large amount of money has been spent to improve overall communications. There was late implementation and there are still problems to be worked out. The problems have more to do with getting the required number of telephone lines run than anything else. Also, the cost for running those lines is astronomical. The second issue dealing with communications is an issue with dispatch. During the conversion from the City to the Sheriff's Department there were some glitches and are still some glitches to be worked out. The Sheriff promises there will be

continued improvement to work through all of the glitches. The good news is that the FCC approved a microwave transmission license after the County entered into the contract. A microwave system could replace the need for telephone lines.

SOPs – The SOPs must be adopted by the Board. The SOPs are still being reviewed and should be ready for adoption soon.

### **Review of Policies**

Emergency Procedure Policy – In order for FEMA to pay overtime during emergencies, the County must have an Emergency Procedure Policy (“EPP”) in place. An emergency policy drafted by FEMA was presented to the Board. County Manager Williams reviewed the highlights of the draft policy. The Board will take time to review and give further consideration to the policy.

A portion of the EPP addresses pumping. The Chair feels there should be a separate non-emergency pumping policy. She said the policy should address frivolous request for pumping. Commissioner Williams agreed.

Travel Policy – This policy was amended in February 2005. The County Manager recommended Section 2(a), Section 2(b) and Section 2(c) be eliminated, and wording be added that will place the same travel requirements on the County Commissioners as it does county staff. An allowance will be added for emergency situations. The Commissioners agreed with the recommendation.

Special Projects Budget – There have been suggested amendments presented to the Board regarding this budget. The County Manager said the requests range from completely doing away with the fund to restricting it to certain expenditures that benefit county property. There was a brief discussion. The County Manager asked if there were any requests to consider specific amendment language. The commissioners each agreed the policy should not be amended.

Board Meeting Rules and Procedures – An interim policy was adopted recently. Input was provided at the time the interim policy was adopted, particularly relating to the portion of the policy that provided the public with two (2) minutes to speak. The interim policy does not address the Commissioner/County Manager staff meeting overview. The Board was advised that there have been suggestions made by the public that have already been supplied to the commissioners. A final policy needs to be prepared.

There was a mix of opinions regarding the time limit on public input/speaking; Commissioner Williams said that perhaps the policy needs to provide for language that reads “up to 5 minutes.” He said that should not be five minutes per agendaed topic, but a total of five minutes.

Commissioner Skinner believes three (3) minutes is a lot of time to speak. County Manager Williams said that no matter how much time is placed in the policy, clearly the chair or a couple of members of the Board should have the right to extend the time, which puts into place checks and balances. Commissioner Porter and Williams felt there should be consistency in the amount of time given to each member of the public and allowing extensions could present problems.

There was a point made by Citizen Barbara Lemley that if a person is given 3 to 5 minutes to speak and a commissioner(s) interjects their thoughts during the citizens allotted time or begin asking questions of the citizen, it would expend the time allocated to the citizen to speak. Citizen David Rountree pointed out that typically, he and other citizens will speak on several issues at length during budget hearings. The County Manager expressed the Board would have to agree to exempt the budget hearings in the final policy. Commissioner Porter did not think budget hearings and workshops should have the 3-5 minute limit. Citizen Stewart Lilker complimented the Chair on her control and handling the public speaking of the last meeting. He suggested that as a general rule, most people say what they have to say within a reasonable amount of time, and that the Board should consider no time limits. He said he also has a problem that the rules does not say that the agenda has to be finished 48 hours before a meeting, which gives the public fair, timely access to the information to be discussed at the meeting. Finally, he believes the issue of rules and procedures should be advertised for a public hearing to receive input before adoption, because this policy directly applies to and affects the citizens. Commissioner Williams and Porter disagreed expressing almost everything taken up by the Board would have to be advertised for public hearing since almost everything directly affects the public. Commissioner Bailey added that historically very few citizens attend most of the scheduled public hearings. He asked if a citizen doesn't normally come, how they would know what is normally done or how much time is allocated. Commissioner Williams was of the opinion that no public hearing is needed to direct the Board on how to run a meeting. Commissioner Weaver said he would like to see the public be given 3 minutes to speak with the Chair having the discretion to extend the time if needed. Chairwoman Porter feels a maximum amount of time should be set.

County Manager Williams said he would be willing to draft language for the Board to consider. One scenario would have a specific time limit. The other will be more related to the specific events of the meeting at hand and no time limits. He agreed there should be an agenda deadline, and suggested the final policy clarifies this. The County Manager also recommended that he be allowed to draft two sets of language regarding the staff meetings and have Attorney Feagle offer his legal opinion.

Attorney Feagle said that it may be necessary to carve out an exception for an applicant that may come before the Board with the burden of proving their case to have to do so under the three minute time limit. The Chair said she had assumed that anyone who is on the agenda to speak would not be restricted to a time limit.

It was the general consensus of the Board that they would wait on additional language to consider at a future meeting.

There was a 10 minute recess at 2:00 p.m.

### **Project Status Update**

Recreation Interlocal Agreement – The County's proposed amendments have been forwarded to the City's attorney. It is the County's understanding that the City has no significant problems

with the proposed amendments. The County anticipates the agreement back in the very near future. The County obtained, through a piggy-back bid from Duval County, pricing for installing Musko Lighting on several of the playing fields, which included the Southside baseball fields re-light project, the Westwinds Softball Complex and Fort White Softball. Collectively, this is a \$970,800 project. This price is valid through mid February (17<sup>th</sup>). Should the County elect to obtain new pricing, there is a chance it will come back higher and the project will not be complete before the start of baseball season. The Board was asked if they wanted to proceed without the Memorandum of Understanding and without having title to the fields. The City is willing to reimburse the County \$300,000 of \$470,000 lighting project for the adult ball field.

Commissioner Weaver expressed that in his opinion the County should proceed with the project since there is more at stake than the City backing out. He said he did not believe the City would back out, and he doesn't think the County can afford to let the contract go by the wayside. He said, "I'd say proceed with haste on it." Commissioner Williams reminded the Board that there was an understanding that the County would get the ball tournaments contingent on the lighting. The Board was in agreement to move forward with the lighting project.

Ordinance Codification – The ordinances were codified, but did not include the Comprehensive Plan ("CP") or the Land Development Regulations ("LDRs"). There was a recommendation that the CP and LDRs be added by reference. There was discussion as to whether the Charter required the CP and LDRs to be inclusive in the overall code because of the language. The County learned that Municipal Code will codify the LDRs and CP for an additional \$10,000. The County may amend the LDRs and CP into the code, or add them as a supplement or appendix. The County Manager said that he and Attorney Feagle were inclined to suggest they be amended into the code. The code will be updated once annually. A disclaimer will need to be added regarding possible amendments. Attorney Feagle agreed with County Manager Williams. The County Manager explained unless the County elects to go with an appendix, they were going to wind up with an extremely voluminous book. The County Manager and County Attorney's final recommendation was that the LDRs and CP be folded into the overall code. The County is hopeful the work will be complete in approximately 60 days.

Main Library Renovation – Renovations have been planned and are underway for the library from state Equalization Funds. The architect for the project, Akin S. Akinyemi, was pulled from the project to assist with a time sensitive application that must be filed in order to be considered for library construction funding. If Mr. Akinyemi is not finished his portion of the application it is very near completion. The County Manager still needs to complete his portion of the application. The goal is to be funded from the state this year. There will be a resolution to be approved that will need to be submitted along with the application. Mr. Akinyemi should be focusing his attention back on the Main Library Project soon.

County Website – As was discussed at the last meeting the County will add an employee to its staff within a few weeks to manage the County's site.

Stormwater Mitigation Program - Recommendations have been made for corrective work in the Cannon Creek Basin that will alleviate basin flood problems, but no specifics on how to



implement the recommendations. A interview and selection process is now underway to retain consultants to implement specific projects within these basins. The County realizes that the only cure for some situations will be acquisition. There will be proposals to select engineers to assist. This is currently a \$6,000,000 dollar plan split 50/50 between the County and Suwannee River Water Management District. This is a \$10,000,000 plan over a 5 year period.

Litter/Anti-Litter Campaign – Roadside littering is getting worse. The County spends \$175,000 per year on litter pickup. Pickup is provided prior to the five mowing cycles per year. There is one additional pickup done around January. Resolution to the problem was discussed.

Consideration was given to an additional litter pickup, which would cost \$30,500 per cycle, and an anti-litter campaign to promote public awareness. There were also suggestions to add signs that would reflect litter fines, making litter issues a part of code enforcement as the department grows, advertise the change in dates for trash pickup, support for Sheriff Department enforcement, and requirements that trash in bed of truck be covered with a tarp.

The Clay County Sheriff has agreed to send their enforcement officer over to assist with training and ideas regarding the litter problem. The Board agreed to set up a time for Clay County to send their officer over to speak to a committee who will make a recommendation back to the Board. A committee will be appointed at the next meeting.

Computer Upgrades – A number of upgrades were placed in the current year's budget. Upgrades are now complete for Veteran's Services. The largest upgrade is now underway for Emergency Management, Planning and Zoning and the Building Department. This will make it possible for the public to view a broad range of documents via the internet. There was very brief discussion regarding flood maps and the flood insurance rate map notification process.

School Resource Officer Survey – The results have been compiled. In summary, the results show that Columbia County provides eight school resource officers and their needed equipment and vehicles. The School Board does not contribute to the cost of those officers. However, the School Board does contribute \$100,000 to the City, and the City provides two officers for schools within the City limits. The Board was asked to recall that during the budget sessions the year before last, it was disclosed to the Board that Sheriff Gootee had designated the School Board's contribution to school resource officers to the City, and the County had to make up the lost revenue. The Sheriff decided it was in the Sheriff's best interest to let the School Board contract with the City. At the last budget session, the Sheriff made a request for the County to add funding for additional School Resource Officers. The Board made a decision to not fund the request. The Board asked that a study be complete, with an understanding that it was going to be used to help prepare for next year's budget. The study showed the most schools paid for their own resource officers. A committee will be appointed at the next regular meeting to meet with the School Board. A list has been compiled from each county department of all services provided by the County to the School System over the past three years. When possible, a cost was added to that list. That list will be provided to the Board.

LDR Revision Regarding Sign Regulations – In some situations the higher courts have passed rulings that are in conflict with the County's LDRs. A consultant was retained that specializes in signage law. A draft of proposed LDR amendments is expected in approximately two weeks.

Non Advalorem Assessment Roll Verification – No housing count had been done to verify solid waste collection billing for at least 5-6 years. When Waste Pro was selected another housing count verification was done. A discrepancy was found between the number of houses counted on a route-per-route basis versus the number of houses being billed. The differences in numbers must be reconciled. The County Manager will work with the Tax Collector and the Property Appraiser to compare data and identify reasons for discrepancy, and make sure those properties that are suppose to be billed will be added to the roll.

Code Enforcement Enhancement – The County Manager said that he hoped that the Sheriff would take over Code Enforcement. The County Manager explained that he thinks that Code Enforcements throughout the state seem to work better when handled by a bona fide Deputy Sheriff. It appears at this point that Sheriff Gootee does not want Code Enforcement. There is currently one employee in Code Enforcement. A recommendation was made that the vacant code enforcement position be filled as quickly as possible and that a third code enforcement officer be added. The third position is to be paid from an allocation earmarked for personnel at the Columbia County Detention Center. Instead of the officers being situated and overseen by Building and Zoning, the department of Code Enforcement will be placed under the County's Solid Waste Director, Bill Lycan. The County Manager explained that solid waste, illegal dumping and littering are related and Mr. Lycan is a very strong administrator and has excellent organizational skills. The County Manager said he believes the officers should be put in uniform, and that the County needs to go to a citation based system. Commissioner Weaver asked that before the two additional officer are hired that the department be transferred so that Mr. Lycan can be involved in the hiring process. Commissioner Porter said that Mr. Lycan has experience in this type of work from his prior work history in Marion County. Commissioner Williams asked that Mr. Lycan be compensated for taking on additional responsibility.

The workshop concluded at 4:15 p.m.

ATTEST:

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Board of County Commissioners

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P. DeWitt Cason  
Clerk of Circuit Court