

Board of County Commissioners

Minutes of
November 21, 2002

Chairman Williams called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Commissioner Montgomery opened with prayer, and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America followed.

Commissioners In Attendance: Ronald Williams, James Montgomery, Dewey Weaver, George Skinner, and Jennifer Flinn.

Others Present: County Coordinator Dale Williams, County Attorney Marlin Feagle, Assistant County Coordinator Lisa Roberts, and Deputy Clerk Sandy A. Markham.

Chairman Williams welcomed everyone in attendance, and recognized their newest Board member, Jennifer Flinn. On behalf of the other Board members, Chairman Williams welcomed Commissioner Flinn aboard.

I. Patti Bridge - Commissioner Williams gave a brief history on the **Patti Bridge** dilemma. Approximately two months ago staff recommended replacing the bridge. A decision was ultimately made to pull the issue from the agenda until all of the commissioners had an opportunity to look at the bridge, and see for themselves the overall condition of the bridge. Commissioner Williams explained that prior to taking any action on closing, repairing or replacing the bridge, he held a town meeting in the Deep Creek area to provide information to, and hear from his constituents on the matter.

Commissioner Williams asked if there was a commissioner present who wanted to take staff's previous recommendation to replace the bridge. There was no motion offered to accept staff's recommendation.

Per Mr. Marlin Feagle, the bridge can't be left standing unattended in its current condition.

Commissioner Williams asked if there was a motion to call for a public hearing to consider closing the bridge/road at the December 19, 2002, Board of County Commissioners Meeting.

Motion by Commissioner Weaver, "So moved." Second by Commissioner Montgomery. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Williams invited anyone present who didn't have a chance to attend the town meeting to come forward to speak, and also asked if there was anyone present that would not be able to attend the future public hearing to come forward and speak.

Mr. George E. Alford said that he objected in years past to the closing of Patti Bridge and the Patti Bridge Road, and he still does. He explained that he has utilized the road for seventy-five years and would like to continue to do so. Mr. Alford accused Commissioner Williams of barricading the road a few years ago by having county workers haul in dirt. Mr. Williams informed Mr. Alford that he was mistaken. Mr. Alford said, *"A few things have come to light. You're going to get paid no matter if you close the road, or open it. If you close the road the surrounding land owners are going to pay you pretty good. If you leave the road open and rebuild the bridge, then you're going to give the contract to someone to build the bridge, and you'll decide who will get the contract, and you'll get your kickback there. You're going to get paid one way or another."*

Commissioner Williams informed Mr. Alford that he was mistaken again, and that he alone could not make the decision, it would be a decision of the entire Board. Mr. Alford was of the opinion that eight out of ten people in the Deep Creek area were against closing the road. He criticized Commissioner Williams for advising the Lake City Reporter that the result of the town meeting was a 50/50 split. Commissioner Williams replied that his comment to the Lake City Reporter (regardless of what they printed) was: Out of "all" of the people he has spoken with regarding the bridge, the feeling is probably a 50/50 split. He explained to Mr. Alford that many of the conversations did not take place at the town meeting. Regardless of what Commissioner Williams said, Mr. Alford was of the opinion that Commissioner Williams had conspired with the other commissioners and has already persuaded them to vote "his way," which is in favor of closing the road and bridge.

Mr. Thomas (no first name provided) said he doesn't believe there has been any conspiring or coercing that has gone on. Mr. Thomas stated that he couldn't see a reason for the road to be closed. He was of the opinion that the Thomas' want the road closed, because they own the land on both sides of the road, and they have hunting issues that would be settled by closing the road. Mr. Thomas said that he enjoys riding that road with his grandchildren and showing them the wildlife. He said he adamantly opposes the closing of the road. He told the Board that many dollars have been spent on ridiculous projects such as building panther trails across interstates. He felt the Board should invest the money to repair the bridge. He thanked the Board for their consideration.

Mr. **Guy Br m** said that due to safety issues, he opposes closing the county road. He said if there were an instance in which Hwy. 441 had to be closed at the Deep Creek area that the re-routing of traffic would be long and limited. Mr. Brim feels a closure will be a large hindrance to the citizen in the area should an emergency arise. He reminded the commission that he wrote a letter some time back explaining his concerns. He said, *"I say repair the bridge, and keep it open. There are people who use it."*

Mr. **Ronnie Hughes** stated he was speaking from his experience in farming, well drilling and construction. He said he inspected the bridge and feels the bridge could be repaired for a reasonable price. He said that overall, the bridge is in good shape with the exception of some needed repairs to the pilings. Mr. Hughes said he could see the wear from the acids in the water and the corroding, but believes the pilings had holes in them when they were installed. He feels the county road should remain open. He expressed the same safety concerns expressed by Mr. Brim. He said, "No purpose is served by closing the road."

Mr. **Ed Delk** said he and his grandchildren enjoy taking drives down the Patti Bridge Road. He reminded the Board that that is a "through" road. He said, *"When you get past the Thomas' land, you can go anywhere you want to. It opens several traveling options."* He told the commission that the time would come when a citizen would "need" for the road to be open. He informed the Board that there was an instance awhile back when he was having heart trouble, and there had been a wreck on the bridge. He said, "I had to use the Patti Bridge Road." He was concerned this type of situation may happen again. He agreed with the others speaking, that the Bridge should be repaired and that the road should not be closed to the public. He told the commission he uses the road every day. He too feels the Thomas' have a hunting issue they hope to resolve by closing the road. He said, *"I don't care nothing about hunting, but if they're so crazy about it, let them fence the property off."* He reminded the Board that the roads in the forest are heavily traveled, and are all one-lane bridges. He said, *"You ever hear of wrecks on those bridges."*

(Clerk's Note: See Section VII, Page 8 below for additional comments.)

II. Mr. Wiley Page, a consulting firm member for PBS &J spoke regarding the Florida Department of Transportation's Master Plan for Interstate 10. They are in the process of conducting a long range master plan for I-10 from Madison County, to Interstate 295 in Duval County. He explained their purpose, the studies in progress, their objectives, and tasks. He said that as things progress, they will be back with periodic updates/status reports over the next 18 months.

III. Mildred L. Hill

(1) Frazier Green Road – Petition to Relocate a Portion of the Road. Ms. Hill was not present. This item was temporarily passed over. See below.

(Clerk's Note: See Section VIII below.)

IV. Consent Agenda:

- (1) Financial Management – **BA # 02-07 – Rum Island Park** - \$4000.00
- (2) Utility Permit – Bell South Telecommunications – **SW Marvin n Burnett Road**
- (3) **South B rley Avenue** Project – Acquisition of Right –of-Way Settlement – Parcel No. 15 – **James R. & Charlene L. Joyner** - \$7,000.00
- (4) Resolution– Adopting A Local **M t gat on Strategy**
- (5) Florida Department of Transportation – Donation of 468 Square Feet to the Florida Department of Transportation – Southwest Corner of **S sters Welcome Road** to US 90 – Installation of Mast Arm Signal – Approval of Grantor's Statement – Approval of County Deed & Resolution
- (6) Invoice – CSX Transportation – Signal Maintenance at SR-129 - \$1,237.00
- (7) Emergency Medical Services – Refund Request – **Ohio Casualty** - \$53.35
- (8) Emergency Medical Services – Overpayment Request – **BCBS of Flor da** - \$158.10
- (9) Emergency Medical Services – Overpayment – **Champus Tr care** - \$86.10
- (10) Suwan ee River Economic Council, Inc. – State Housing Initiatives Partnership ("**S.H.I.P.**") – Release of Lien Agreement – **Rose Cr bbs a d M ke Knox**
- (11) **Dale W ll ams** – Request Vacation Leave from 11/25/02 thru 11/27/02

- (12) Sheriff Frank Owens – Traffic Recommendations – **Walter Little Road** area
- (13) Board of Adjustments/Planning and Zoning Board Member – Acceptance of Resignation of **Morris Anderson**
- (14) Adopt-A-Shore Program Agreement Between Columbia County and **Current Problems, Inc.** - \$8,000.00. **See attached agreement.**
- (15) **Minute** Approval – Board of County Commissioners – Regular Meeting– **June 20, 2002**
- (16) **Minute** Approval – Board of County Commissioners – Budget Workshop – **August 20, 2002**
- (17) **Minute** Approval – Board of County Commissioners – Regular Meeting– **September 19, 2002**
- (18) **Minute** Approval – Board of County Commissioners – Special Meeting– **September 30, 2002**
- (19) **Minute** Approval – Board of County Commissioners – Regular Meeting– **October 3, 2002**
- (20) **Minute** Approval – Board of County Commissioners – Regular Meeting– **October 17, 2002**

Motion by Commissioner Weaver to approve the Consent Agenda. Second by Commissioner Montgomery.

There was a call from the public for clarification on item #4. Mr. Dale Williams assisted.

The motion carried unanimously.

V. There was a call for nominations for a 02-03 Vice Chairman for the Board of County Commissioners.

Motion by Commissioner Montgomery to nominate Commissioner Skinner to serve as vice chair. Second by Commissioner Weaver. The motion carried.

VI. Mr. Marlin Feagle said there has been development plans submitted for Phase 1B of Wilson Springs. He recalled the plans were previously reviewed for Phase 1B. He said that the County originally agreed to accept the first phase,

and has approved it for the paving of the road (formerly known as Memorial Drive.) Phase II is now being submitted for approval. He explained that it isn't actually a development plan since it doesn't meet the specific requirements of the subdivision regulations, but it does deal with existing lots.

Commissioner Williams asked, *"Does it meet the guidelines we set forth when we entered into 'this' with Mr. Wilson to resolve the issue down there? Is it in compliance as is Phase I?"* Mr. Feagle responded, "Yes. Once that road is approved, it will be in compliance substantially with what the Board agreed to."

Commissioner Weaver said approval will alleviate a serious solid waste problem in that particular area, and will do away with the old green dumpsters.

Motion by Commissioner Weaver to approve subject to review by the County's engineer. Second by Commissioner Skinner. The motion carried unanimously.

VII. Citizen's Input

Mr. Rocky Raulerson, a Road Department employee complained that Mr. **Steve White** who is a fellow county employee (of the CCSB) and also a **volunteer fire chief** has threatened his life and made false accusations against him. He complained that he is having to work in a hostile workforce due to Mr. White's behavior.

He told the commission that the problem initially arose over his need to get a key from Mr. White in order to get ice from the Deep Creek Fire Department. According to Mr. Raulerson, after being denied access by Mr. White, he sought and received approval from Commissioner Williams to enter the station for the purpose of getting ice. Once Mr. White discovered Mr. Raulerson getting ice for his cooler, he went to his Road Department job and began cussing and threatening him if he, or other road department employees enter the fire station for ice.

He asked the Board to allow **access into the volunteer fire station**. He asked that county road department employees be allowed to get ice from the station instead of having to drive back into town.

Commissioner Williams stated he thought the matter had been resolved. Mr. Raulerson responded that Mr. Dale Williams said they would give him the combination to the lock if Mr. Hoyle Crowder approved, but couldn't give him a key. Mr. Raulerson reported that Mr. Crowder approved of him having the combination, however he said, "Once he was inside, I found the key had been removed by Mr. White."

Mr. Dale Williams added. He doesn't disagree with anything reported by Mr. Raulerson, but said, *"Simply put, the volunteer fire department chiefs are not county employees. They aren't under my jurisdictions or the Board's. They are appointed as chief by the governing board for the individual volunteer fire departments."*

Mr. Williams went on to explain that the initial request made by Mr. Raulerson was to have Mr. White removed as chief. Mr. Williams told the commission that he doesn't have that authority to do that, or does he believe that the Board has that authority. Mr. Williams has no problem with any member of the Public Works Department getting ice from the volunteer fire departments in a cooperative arrangement. Mr. Williams reminded the Board that because the chiefs and boards are autonomous, that the county holds the chiefs responsible for the inventory in those departments. He said, *"They have a right and an obligation to secure their buildings. In this particular case there is a concern that they can not maintain security by allowing unfettered access to their building."* Mr. Williams explained that because of the foregoing, he has instructed Mr. Crowder to meet with Mr. White and his board to work out some reasonable accommodation to allow for the ice. Mr. Williams believes this arrangement will be worked out, but that he could not fulfill Mr. Raulerson's request to have Mr. White removed as chief.

Mr. Raulerson reiterated, "He came to my job as a county employee, not a fire chief and made threats upon me." He felt Mr. White should face repercussions regarding his unprofessional acts while on the job. Mr. Williams responded, *"He's not an employee of the Board of County Commissioners, he is an employee of the Columbia County School Board. The Board of County Commissioners does not have employee managerial responsibilities for School Board employees."*

Mr. Raulerson asked if he should report the matter to the Sheriff's Department. Mr. Dale Williams' response was, *"I'm not telling you what to do, but if you feel that you've been threatened, that's your avenue."*

Commissioner Williams said from his prospective, he doesn't see a security problem with the inventory. Nonetheless, in a couple of months the Deep Creek Community Center will be complete with an ice machine, and he hoped the center's Board would have a different feel for letting county employees get ice. He said, *"It don't make any sense to drive 20 miles to get ice, when it is readily available at the department."* He was hopeful that the matter would be resolved very soon.

Mr. David Rountree asked since the Board's **minutes** aren't posted until after they've been approved, if the Board and Mr. Cason would meet to see if the minutes could be prepared, approved and posted to the web quicker.

On a separate matter, Mr. Rountree questioned what the "true" cost for repairing the **Patt Bridge** would be. He reminded the Board that the quoted price in August was \$155,000 for a two-lane bridge. He reminded the Board that the county only owns twenty-two feet of that roadway. He said, *"I don't think you can building a two lane bridge in a space of 22 feet. To do so would force the county into purchasing additional land, or taking the eminent domain process."* He asked that the taxpayers be provided with a reasonable and accurate cost estimate prior to the meeting on the 19th as to what it will actually take to replace the bridge. The response was affirmative.

The chair declared the meeting in recess until 7:00 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 7:00 p.m.

VIII. Frazier Green Road. The Chair made a final unanswered call once more for Ms. Hill to come forward regarding Frazier Green Road.

IX. Building a Zoo by Brian Kipper

PUBLIC HEARING (S): 1st Hearing Regular Land Use Amendments:

(1) **CPA 0103** – Board of County Commissioners – District 1. The request is to change forty acres from environmentally sensitive zoned to conservation zoned. The property is located one miles S.W. of White Springs. The Planning and Zoning Board recommended approval.

The Chair declared the public hearing open and called for input. There being none, the public hearing closed.

Motion by Commissioner Montgomery to approve. Second by Commissioner Skinner. The motion carried unanimously.

(2) **CPA 0105** – Windswept Land Trust - District 3. The request is to change 50.43 acres from residential low density zoning to industrial. The property is located off Arrowhead Road. The Planning and Zoning Board recommended approval.

The Chair declared the public hearing open and called for input. There being none, the public hearing closed.

Motion by Commissioner Skinner to approve. Second by Commissioner Flinn. The motion carried unanimously.

X. Commissioner Flinn expressed that she was proud to be in attendance, and to have the opportunity to represent District IV.

XI. Chuck Shane told the Board that he noticed there is another resignation on the Planning and Zoning Board. He also said, *"It's nothing new, but I heard a rumor that they were unable to conduct their regularly scheduled meeting recently, because there was no quorum. Their prior meeting was also held up twenty-minutes so they could get a quorum to meet."*

XII. As an informational item, Commissioner Williams said that when he resurfaces the road (no road name was provided) in front of Ms. Elizabeth Thomas' house, he plans to put a surface over the milling he placed in Ms. Elizabeth Thomas' driveway after the El Nino Storm.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Attest:

Ronald Williams, Chairman
Board of County Commissioners

P. DeWitt Cason
Clerk of Circuit Court