

Columbia County
Board of County Commissioners

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MEETING: Regular
DATE: March 15, 2007
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
LOCATION: School Board Administration

Commissioners in Attendance: Ronald Williams Stephen E. Bailey
 Dewey Weaver Elizabeth Porter
 George Skinner

Others in Attendance: County Manager Dale Williams
 County Attorney Marlin Feagle
 Deputy Clerk Sandy A. Markham
 BCC Secretary Carolyn Baker

Chairwoman Porter called the meeting to order. Sheriff Gootee offered prayer. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America followed.

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Building and Zoning Department

Small Scale Land use Amendments:

(1) CPA 0160 John Best and Roger Parsons District 5

Applicants are requesting a comprehensive plan amendment on 1.53 acres to change the land use from *Residential Low Density* and *Residential Very Low Density* to *Commercial*. The property is located beside Cool Breeze Mobile Home Park off of SR 47. The public hearing opened and closed without public input. Commissioner Porter said she has no problem with the amendment.

MOTION by Commissioner Williams to approve. Second by Commissioner Weaver. The motion carried unanimously.

(2) CPA 0165 J.C. Marsh & Sons, Inc. Dist 1

Mr. Sam Oosterhoudt is requesting a comprehensive plan amendment on 9.03 acres to change the land use from *Residential Low Density* to *Commercial*. The property is located on U.S. 441 North and is South of the Days Inn Hotel, and is in very close proximity to the new Target Distribution Center. The public hearing opened and closed without public input.

MOTION by Commissioner Williams to approve. Second by Commissioner Weaver. The motion carried unanimously.

(3) CPA 0166 F.S. Oosterhoudt District 1

Mr. Sam Oosterhoudt is requesting a comprehensive plan amendment on 5.8 acres to change from *Residential Low Density* to Commercial. The property is adjacent to the property listed in CPA 0165. The public hearing opened and closed without public input.

MOTION by Commissioner Williams to approve. Second by Commissioner Bailey. The motion carried unanimously.

Zoning Amendments:

Z 0462 J. C. Marsh & Sons, Inc. – District 1

Mr. Sam Oosterhoudt is requesting a change from *Residential Single Family Mobile Home 2* to *Commercial Intensive*. This is the same property listed above in CPA 0165. The public hearing opened and closed without public input.

MOTION by Commissioner Williams to approve. Second by Commissioner Skinner. The motion carried unanimously.

Z 0463 F.S. Oosterhoudt – District 1

Mr. Sam Oosterhoudt is requesting a change from *Residential Single Family Mobile Home 2* to *Commercial Intensive*. This is the same property as is listed in CPA 0166. The public hearing opened and closed without public input.

MOTION by Commissioner Williams to approve. Second by Commissioner Weaver. The motion carried unanimously.

Subdivision - Variance

V 257 Rimrock Development, Gleason Place, Unit II – District 3

This is a request for a variance to change the road right-of-way from 60' to 50' and to change the cul-de-sac radius to 40' on the commercial subdivision behind Publix known as Gleason Place. The property is 10.4 acres. The County Engineer recommended approval as long as curb and gutter are installed. There are plans to install the curb and gutter. The public hearing opened and closed without public input.

MOTION by Commissioner Skinner to approve. Second by Commissioner Weaver.

Commissioner Weaver said that he assumed Rimrock does not have plans to ask the county to accept these structures. The reply from Ms. Connie Scott was that the maintenance is going to be private.

Subdivision - Major

SD 0217 Gleason Place Unit II – District 3

This is a preliminary plat submission for a Commercial Subdivision. There are 19 lots being developed by Rimrock Development. The development will have curb and gutter and maintenance will be private.

MOTON by Commissioner Skinner to approve. Second by Commissioner Bailey. The motion carried unanimously.

Subdivision – Minor

SD 0219 Lee Acres - District 3

This is a final plat subdivision approve on a minor subdivision located on 3.51 acres. The acreage will be divided into three lots. Lots 1 and 2 will be one acre, and lot 3 being 1.5 acres. The property is zoned rural residential, which provides one dwelling unit per one acre. The property is located on SR 242 in front of Wingate Estates.

MOTION by Commissioner Skinner to approve. Second by Commissioner Weaver. The motion carried unanimously.

Gateway Regional Utility Authority

Mr. Stewart Lilker asked that while giving his presentation that the Board keep in mind the old American Indian saying that he ended his presentation to the City with, “No tree is so foolish as to have branches that fight among themselves.” Mr. Lilker presented his proposal for a Gateway Regional Utility Authority (“GRUA”). The presentation is attached and made part of the minutes. He concluded his presentation with a 1967 quote by former President Johnson, “It was the right thing to do. It was the right time to do it. The right man, and the right place.” In Mr. Lilker’s opinion, a GRUA for Columbia County would be the right thing to do, and it’s the right time and place to do it. Mr. Lilker expressed the City and County has the people it would take to put together a successful GRUA. Mr. Lilker requested the Board consider passing a resolution in favor of the principal of the proposal.

Commissioner Weaver stated the original proposal of the County for a Board of Directors was 3 County Members and 2 City members. He said the amended proposal of the County was 3 City members, 3 County members, and one member from Fort White. In Commissioner Weaver’s opinion, if a GRUA is put into place, the Authority should have the power to select its own employees and not be forced to take on employees that may be considered unproductive. Commissioner Weaver said it is not a “deal breaker for him,” but he personally does not support Payment in Lieu of Taxes, because in the end, it is the customers that wind up paying the money to cover the payment back. The commissioner said he did not believe Mr. Lilker’s presentation was that much different than the County’s original proposal. He expressed appreciation for Mr. Lilker’s comments.

Mr. Lilker state he has never received an amended proposal and that the proposal he received a couple of weeks ago was the same proposal read from. Mr. Lilker supports retail water and wastewater, and said he does not support double billing authorities. He said since presenting the proposal to the City, he has spoken with Commissioner Williams and Councilman Ward who

have both indicated they support the proposal. Also, according to Mr. Lilker, the County Manager said that if #5 is the only obstacle, he would be in favor of the proposal. Commissioner Williams wants to see equal rates for all.

Commissioner Williams said Mr. Lilker's proposal sounds almost identical to the original proposal submitted to the county, other than the wholesale rights. He said he would be willing to rethink the proposal, but wants to hear the City indicate they are willing to extend utility lines to areas needed within the county. He said he didn't support Payment in Lieu of taxes. Commissioner Williams said he does not want to be in the utility business, but wants to make sure Columbia County is being served. He said he would support an authority that would serve the City and the County as long as the DUDA is served, and the prime property outside of the DUDA located on the Ichetucknee Trace is protected.

Mr. Lilker believes everyone can work together to resolve the fundamental differences.

Consent Agenda

- (1) Invoice – Donald F. Lee & Associates, Inc. – General Engineering - \$8,010.00**
- (2) Invoice – Donald F. Lee & Associates, Inc. – Real Road Extension - \$276.25**
- (3) Invoice – Donald F. Lee & Associates, Inc. – Ralph Green Road - \$436.25**
- (4) Invoice – Donald F. Lee & Associates, Inc. – Turner Road - \$97.50**
- (5) Invoice – Donald F. Lee & Associates, Inc. – Lear Court - \$325.00**
- (6) Invoice – Donald F. Lee & Associates, Inc. – Pinemount Hwy./CR 252 – Fire Station - \$1,223.75**
- (7) Invoice – Donald F. Lee & Associates, Inc. – Ralph Green Road - \$436.25**
- (8) Invoice – Donald F. Lee & Associates, Inc. – Replace Property Corners – Mikesville Church Road - \$743.13**
- (9) Invoice – Darabi & Associates, Inc. – Closed Landfill Monitoring - \$24,663.45**
- (10) Invoice – Darabi & Associates, Inc. – Winfield Permit Renewal - \$2,798.99**
- (11) Invoice – Darabi & Associates, Inc. – Winfield Landfill Monitoring - \$5,732.51**
- (12) Utility Permit – BellSouth Telecommunications – CR241 at Swift Creek**
- (13) Utility Permit – BellSouth Telecommunications – SW Dorothy Terrace**
- (14) Utility Permit – BellSouth Telecommunications – SWSisters Welcome Road**
- (15) Veterans Service Office – Special Travel Authorization – Reimbursement for Mileage – Susan Melton**
- (16) Columbia County Fire Department – Request to Cancel Check # 82349 Payable to Costal for Tanker Repair and Transfer Funds to Equipment Repair Account to be Disbursed to Appropriate Vendor Making Repairs - \$15,000.00**
- (17) Columbia County Public Library – Resolution – Fees and Fines Policy Revision**
- (18) Purchasing Department – Automatic Vehicle Locator Systems (AVLS) – Award to Kennedy's Communications (Nextel).**
- (19) Invoice – South East Environmental Geology – Bascom Norris Road Extension - \$510.00**
- (20) External Budget Amendment Number 06-14 – Southside Recreation - \$250,865.32**
- (21) State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program (SHIP) – Release of Lien – Robert M. and Amanda S. Eastabrooks - \$8,000.00**
- (22) Public Library – Declaration of Junk County Property – See Attached List**
- (23) Public Library – Construction Grant Application - \$500,000.00**
- (24) Agreement – Ralph S. Hardee, Jr. P.E. – Professional Engineering Services Including assistance with General Accounting Services Board (GASB) 34**

Compliance

(25) Permission to Enter Private Property – Bob Andrews, Property Owner – 568 NW Nye Hunter Drive – Clean Swale to Prevent Flooding of Roadway

Motion by Commissioner Williams to approve. Second by Commissioner Weaver. The motion carried unanimously.

County Fire Department Budget

This presentation will be considered the mid-year review of the County Fire Department's Budget. From the beginning of the year the County began experiencing large deficits in the equipment side of the budget. There were also deficits in personal services costs. In reviewing the deficit, the County found an addition error in the budget presented during the budget workshop during the prior year. The concern then became then that it was not reflected in the non ad-valorem assessment that was adopted by the Board. The mathematical error did not reflect in the non ad-valorem assessment because that was the money that was appropriated from the MSBU Fund balance for the purchase of the equipment. County Manager Williams the equipment side of the budget is now balanced and there is a \$445,154 surplus.

Motion by Commissioner Skinner to carry forward the \$445,154 from last fiscal year to this fiscal year. Second by Commissioner Bailey. The motion carried unanimously.

County Manager Williams asked the Board to re-consider the approved inter-county loan from the MSSD to purchase the land and carry out the needed building construction and remodeling for the Fire Department. He said that an alternate option needs to be considered. The original plan was do an inter-county loan of \$3,000,000 and to repay it with a half million dollars per year in debt service, which was programmed into the fire budget. When the County began to look at fire impact fees, there became a legal question as to whether you could capture the depreciation from an inter-county loan. The County Manger said if that is not possible, it would be in the County's best interest to simply do an outside loan with a financial institution so the \$3,000,000 could be captured for depreciation. He asked the Board to approve the "either-or" scenario based on the impact fee study. That would be to either proceed with the inter-county loan from MSSD for \$3,000,000 or to do a \$3,000,000 loan from an outside financial source.

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

There is a \$21,000 deficit in personal service costs that is primarily attributed to overtime. The payroll records indicate that is primarily contributed to overtime relating to ISO inspections and the transition period when all needed staff had not yet been hired. The County Manager suggested that depending on how we do the loan, inter-county or through an outside financial institution, the debt service payment be adjusted to make sure personal service costs are covered.

Also, while on the subject of fire stations, the County Manager reported both sites have been acquired where the new stations will be built. The engineering plans are back on renovation for the new stations and are under staff review. He mentioned the operating procedures have a section to be re-written based on new findings. Once that is complete, the policy will be reviewed by County Attorney Feagle before being presented for the Board's consideration.

Fire Department Auxiliary Unit

This is a request for the Board to bless an auxiliary unit for the Columbia County Fire Department. The historical problem with auxiliaries is that in general, they lack controls and needed checks and balances. From a staff prospective, the efforts to create an auxiliary unit (with controls) that will assist the Fire Department could be a very positive move. County Manager Williams stressed the need to ensure proper controls are in place before fund raising commences. He said that he assumes the auxiliary will want to file for a 501(C)(3) designation since it would make the fundraising more attractive to those being solicited.

The plan is that money raised by the auxiliary will go toward helping victims of burned homes, Christmas for needy children and those types of events.

Motion to endorse the concept of an auxiliary and authorize the County Manager and the County Attorney to prepare a letter to be sent back to the Department explaining specifically what the County would like for them to provide in the way of controls. Second by Commissioner Bailey. Commissioner Weaver asked that County Auditor Dick Powell review the controls. The motion carried unanimously.

Sheriff's Fleet

At the prior meeting (March 01, 2007) the Board requested the Sheriff supply a Vehicle Inventory List prior to the Board giving further consideration to the Sheriff's request for \$400,000 to replace approximately 16 vehicles within his fleet. If the request for funding had been approved at the last meeting, the money would have been paid from the debt service allocation for the new Columbia County Jail in this fiscal year's budget.

Commissioner Williams would like to table the matter for 90 days, which would give the legislature a chance to meet as their decisions could make a negative impact on the County's budget by three-five million dollars.

Commissioner Bailey question who was considered a "Patrol Officer." He learned that School Resource Officers and Civil Division Officers are considered "Patrol Officers" as well as those officers out on the street.

Commissioner Skinner felt it would be helpful if the Inventory List provided the names of the law enforcement officers assigned to each vehicle. The Sheriff responded the issue is the mileage on the car and not the name assigned to the car. Commissioner Skinner stated the names will assist the Board in determining where the vehicle is being used.

The entire Board felt the inventory list was very vague. There was uncertainty about which cars needed to be replaced. The Chair explained she believes the Board would like to know in detail what the officer's detailed position is within the department prior to making a decision.

Sheriff Gootee explained there will only be a limited amount of 2007 Crown Victoria vehicles made. He was concerned that with passing time that he may not be able to locate the needed 16 cars for purchase in the '07 models, and pointed out the 2008 models will also cost more. The Sheriff is interested in replacing the first 16 cars on the list of 131 vehicles provided to the Board. The list provided is broken down into law enforcement/patrol, corrections and

administration. He further explained everything designated as “Law Enforcement” is a patrol officer unless the list designates otherwise.

Commissioner Bailey said that the Sheriff’s mechanic expressed a need to replace the Luminas and there is only one Lumina reflected on the Sheriff’s Fleet list in the first 16 vehicles. He asked for clarification. The Sheriff said the mechanic was referring to the Luminas assigned to patrol. He will take those Luminas off of patrol and give to the School Resource Officers and Civil Officers. The Sheriff assured the Board he would not ask for the cars if he did not need them.

The Board stressed that the new cars should go to those patrol officers who are on the roads everyday responding to calls and dealing with crime on a routine basis, and should not be given to officers assigned to positions such as School Resource Officers, or Civil Process Servers.

Motion by Commissioner Weaver to allocate up to \$400,000 for the purchase of Crown Victoria vehicles. The money must be used to purchase Crown Victoria cars only and must be given to the road patrol deputies. Second by Commissioner Bailey. Commissioner Williams and Skinner voted in opposition to the motion. The vote carried with Commissioner Porter voting in favor of the motion. The County Manager recommended the payment come from the jail debt service payment allocation.

High Springs Fire Interlocal

Negotiations have been underway with the High Springs Fire Department to negotiate a new interlocal agreement for fire protection on the South end of the county. The agreement will have a provision in place that will ensure the County can discontinue their services after transition is complete with the new Columbia County Fire Department.

MOTION by Commissioner Weaver to approve the interlocal subject to County Attorney’s review. Second by Commissioner Skinner. The motion carried unanimously.

Surplus Acreage

At the entrance of Southern Oaks County Club right-of-way there is 11/100th of an acre the County is being asked to consider as surplus. Should the Board see fit to declare this property surplus, Attorney Feagle would be able to negotiate a sell with the property owner (no name provided). According to the County Manager, County Engineer John Colson believes this property is expendable

MOTION by Commissioner Williams to declare the property surplus. Second by Commissioner Skinner. The motion carried unanimously.

Special Projects - Commissioner Williams (District 1)

Purchase tables and chairs for Winfield Community Center (\$3,000), and playground equipment for Deep Creek Community Center (\$8,000).

MOTION by Commissioner Williams to approve. Second by Commissioner Weaver. The motion carried unanimously.

Access Control System

The County is beginning to have problems with the card access system used at the courthouse to gain entry into the building. The System has failed twice in ten days. The access control system's company has been sold and the parts have changed. Maintenance is going to take over the responsibly relating maintenance and is requesting the Board approve upgrading the access control system in the courthouse and in the Tax Collector's Office. The cost to do so will be \$43,126.81. Funds will be allocated from General Fund Contingency.

MOTION by Commissioner Skinner to Attorney Feagle's review. Second by Commissioner Weaver. The motion carried unanimously.

Special Projects - Commissioner Porter (District 5)

Commissioner Porter asked that \$2,000 be allocated to the Lake City Cheerleading Association. She said the association is aware this is an assistance that can only be provided one time.

MOTION by Commissioner Williams to approve. Second by Commissioner Bailey. The motion carried unanimously.

Patti Bridge

Patti Bridge, located on Cansa Road (f/k/a River Road), was closed after the Department of Transportation deemed the road to be unsafe for travel. There were citizens who did not want to see the road closed and eventually the matter was taken up by the Circuit Court who found the Board acted within the law. No appeal was filed with the First District Court of Appeals. Now that this is a dead issue, Attorney Feagle asked the Board how they would like to address the dismantling and removal of the bridge

MOTION by Commissioner Williams to remove the bridge. Second by Commissioner Weaver.

Commissioner Skinner made an apology to Mr. Winton Thomas asking him to forgive him for the way he voted on the issue previously.

Adjoining land owner Mr. Winton Thomas asked what the possibility would be of having the bridge taken out and left on his property. He said that he may be able to repair the bridge one day or even use the concrete. Attorney Feagle will contact Department of Transportation and speak with them regarding their regulations and liability relief. Commissioner Williams said that all agreed and it is in the best interest of all that the bridge come out.

Commissioners

Commissioner Bailey said that he is having a problem on **Washington Street** at the **Junk Yard and Recycling Center**. He said that he isn't getting any response from Code Enforcement and needs something done regarding the "mess" around the business. He explained that the junk is getting out of control and is everywhere. The commissioner said they are illegally parking on the

road sides and have dumpsters and old trucks out front. He asked what it would take to get something done, and when would Code Enforcement be taken over by Mr. Bill Lycan.

County Manager Williams said he would visit the site and speak to the owners and will also speak with Code Enforcement. He explained if it becomes necessary, charges can be filed against the owner. As far as the transfer of Code Enforcement to the Solid Waste Department, the County Manager explained that there are two vacant positions and once filled, the department will be transferred. Commissioner Bailey responded he believes the one officer should begin reporting to Mr. Lycan immediately.

The Sheriff was asked to handle the illegal parking issues. Sheriff Gootee said they would be happy to assist and would even have the vehicles towed if necessary once the county has erected "No Parking" signs. Commissioner Bailey said he would call for the signs tomorrow.

Commissioner Williams asked permission to fix a water problem at **Thomas Tire**. He said there is a big hole "there" that is being caused by water coming off the street (no street name provided).

MOTION by Commissioner Williams to "fix the water problem again." Second by Commissioner Bailey. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Williams again expressed concern that decisions made by the legislature may have a serious impact on the County's budget. Out of an abundance of caution a motion was made.

MOTION by Commissioner Williams to **freeze the Contingency Account** for 90 days, unless it is an absolute emergency that the funds be utilized. He used as an example money being needed to bring in a new industry. Second by Commissioner Weaver. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Williams asked Mr. Stew Lilker to very briefly explain what his position would be if the County agrees (in principle) to a **GRUA** and the City turns the idea down. Mr. Lilker responded that it would then be every man for himself. (Additional response below)

Commissioner Porter asked the Board to consider how they would manage the **Sheriff's fleet** replacement in the future. Commissioner Bailey said he feels a liberal comprehensive policy is needed. County Manager Williams explained the County has had an internal policy for years. He cautioned the Board that these types of policies could potentially cause problems if not written carefully as there are not and will not always be funds available to purchase cars.

Public Input

Mr. Gary Lear asked the status on impact fees, Rules of Procedure, website changes, commissioner e-mail addresses, Connector Road Project, legislative changes and possible impacts, and the new jail. The County Manager gave the same status report provided at the February 07, 2007 workshop (See Minutes). Regarding the e-mail addresses and the website, County Manager Williams explained the new Web Master began work a few days ago and a lot of work is being done on the site. He said only one commissioner has expressed a desire to have an e-mail. The other four commissioners would like to continue using the common channel for e-mail, which is through Board Secretary, Penny Stanley.

Mr. Lear asked if the County was planning on considering the Comprehensive Road Policy regarding long term planning. The Chair responded there are no current requests for modifications. He also asked if the County was ever going to establish strategic priorities for projects that have already been ranked and prioritized. He stressed the need for short term and long term planning. Commissioner Williams answered that the County has already done that and has a plan. Mr. Lear explained what he was asking of "the chair" and stated there is no plan in place. The discussion became argumentative as Mr. Lear did not feel the Commissioner understood his question of the Chair. Mr. Lear asked the Chair to direct Commissioner Williams to not answer his question he was asking of the Chair.

Mr. Lear spoke of the grading list from the Government Performance Project. In Mr. Lear's opinion, Columbia County's Government would not score above a "C" on any one of the five grading areas, and perhaps a "B" in the financial area. He said that overall he thinks the Commission is scoring "D's" and "F's". He said as a taxpayer he expects more for his money.

On another matter, Mr. Lear asked that as a citizen, when he comes before the Board during the public input phase to express his views and offer input that he does not, and should not expect to have to argue with a member of the Commission in order to state his opinions and views. He said it is "his time" to express his views without interruption and argument. Further, he does not expect other commissioners to answer a question that has been asked of the Chair.

Mr. Stewart Lilker complimented the Chair on her handling of the meeting and suggested that the proposed Rules of Procedure state that public questions should be asked through the Chair since that is common practice. Then the Chair could pick and choose someone to answer the questions being asked and it would possibly eliminate some of the confusion.

Regarding the GRUA, Mr. Lilker added to his answer asked earlier in the meeting by Commissioner Williams. Mr. Lilker said he would like to see someone take the first step and agree in principle to something that someone can "sink their teeth into." Commissioner Weaver said that he agreed in principal with most of the presentation, because it [Mr. Lilker's Proposal] is an interpretation of what the County's policy has already been. Commissioner Porter said the City has the County's draft regarding a GRUA and that draft is open for negotiations. Mr. Lilker responded he was just provided the latest proposal from Mr. Williams and the proposal did not have the changes suggested in his presentation. He said his request is for an agreement on the five principles presented, "It's just a statement of intent and purpose," said Mr. Lilker.

County Manager Williams reminded the Board that former Commissioner William Whitley while serving as commissioner prepared a resolution for the Board, which was basically a position paper. Mr. Williams said he's sure that Attorney Feagle would be willing to "clean-up" the old document for the Board's consideration. This would provide Mr. Lilker what he is looking for and would offer a more formal position to the City as to the County's position. Commissioner Williams added the County would not have spent the money it has if it did not agree in principle that a GRUA would be in everyone's best interest. Mr. Lilker said he was asking that the Board go ahead and make a statement of principle that the Board agrees to, so that when he speaks to the Utility Authority he will be able to state that the Board agrees in principle. Commissioner Porter said there are a couple of things/words all of the Commissioner do not necessarily agree with. She said if the Board agrees to everything on the proposal that it could be interpreted that every member of the Board is agreeing to every word contained within and that everyone agrees to things they may not

agree to, for example, the PILT payment and hiring of all City employees. She said she did not believe anyone would have a problem agreeing to the titles of the five sections/principles, it is the details of each them that the commissioners have a problem with. She believes the solution would be to do a “cleaned-up” version of Mr. Lilker’s proposal.

Attorney Feagle said that he believes the PILT is a state statute issue. He said there are other taxing authorities to be considered such as the SRWMD and School Board. Mr. Feagle said that generally speaking in order to get a PILT you have to consider Florida Statutes 196 and 197 regarding exemption. Mr. Feagle referenced an ongoing lawsuit with CCA Prison and the issues the County has had to face in that suit. Mr. Lilker said he was familiar with and had reviewed the appeal.

The Board instructed staff to come up with a very simple list of five major points the County agrees with as a Board. Then, Mr. Lilker, the City, or the GRUA can look at and either agree or disagree.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

ATTEST:

P. DeWitt Cason
Clerk of Circuit Court

Board of County Commissioners

Gateway Regional Utility Authority

(“GRUA” or “The Authority”)

Proposal to the Board of County Commissioners – March 15, 2007, 07:00 p.m.
(Proposed to the Lake City Council – March 5, 2007, 07:00 p.m.)

Presented by Stewart S. Lilker
(e mail: StewLilker@att.net)

COMPOSITION OF THE AUTHORITY

A seven-member board of directors

- 3 members appointed by Lake City
- 3 members appointed by Columbia County
- 1 member appointed by the Town of Fort White

EMPLOYEES OF THE AUTHORITY

- All employees would be hired by the Authority
- All employees presently employed by the Greater Lake City Regional Utility Authority (“LCRU”) would be hired by the GRUA without penalty to longevity, seniority, or earnings.
- All employees employed by Lake City and involved in the administration, billing or other activities regarding the LCRU will be absorbed by the GRUA, or the city will be compensated equitably for their services.
- The same caveats apply to the Fort White Utility (“FWU”).

PAYMENT BY THE AUTHORITY FOR THE LCRU AND THE FWU

- Lake City and Fort White would be paid the appraised value of their respective utilities.
- An independent appraiser, agreed upon by all the parties, would appraise the assets and liabilities of the LCRU and the FWU.

GATEWAY REGIONAL UTILITY AUTHORITY – RESPONSIBILITY

- The GRUA will be the utility authority for the *whole* county.
- Lake City, Fort White and Columbia County will be out of the utility business.
- The GRUA will make payments in lieu of taxes (“PILT”) to the City, County and Town based on accepted governmental accounting principles.
- The GRUA will, from time to time, have public hearings to hear from the City, County, Fort White and the public.

Advantages of a County Wide Utility

- Lobbying power – The City, County and Town with its one hundred plus years of governmental experience presents a formidable force when acting as a united front.
- Managed growth – The City, County and Town will be able to concentrate on managing their growth without the distractions of running a utility.
- Environment – The GRUA would be able to develop a comprehensive environmental plan to protect the environment of Columbia County.