

2016 Commission Planning Workshop
February 1, 2016
Milton, Florida

Present: Chairman Lane Lynchard and members Jayer Williamson, Robert “Bob” Cole, Rob Williamson and Don Salter. Also in attendance were the County Administrator (Tony Gomillion), County Attorney (Roy Andrews), Emily Spencer (Office Manager/Administrative Assistant) Budget Director (Jayne Bell), Public Works Director (Stephen Furman) and Clerk of Court (Donald C. Spencer). Lynchard called the meeting to order at approximately 1:00 p.m.

Lynchard said the Board received a couple of emails regarding the length of notice that was provided for this workshop.

Gomillion said this workshop was noted in the Board’s agenda that was published on January 7, 2016. He said the committee meeting was on January 11, 2016 and the Board approved those items at the January 14, 2016 regular meeting.

Andrews said this workshop was on the agenda and discussed publicly at the administrative meeting January 11th and action was taken at the regular meeting to set this date. He said statutory requirement, under the sunshine law, for notice is “reasonable notice” under the circumstances. Andrews said the “printed notice” in regard to this (workshop) was on January 27th, 28th. He said the guidelines as issued by the Attorney General’s Office are that they would prefer to have seven days’ notice. Andrews said the notice is only for the meetings, as such, not for the particular items that are set forth in the meeting. He said this is a workshop and the Board is not going to take any action in regard to any of the issues that are presented, other than the discussion in regard to the change order for the Bagdad Mill Site Park. He said because the Board is not taking any action today, he does not see having any problems with proceeding with the meeting.

Wallis Mahute said she does not agree that proper notice was given so that the public could participate in this meeting.

Lynchard said this is an opportunity for the Board to discuss things that are going to be pending this year.

Lynchard said the first item is a carry-over from last week:

1. Discussion of Change Order to contract with Chaver’s Construction in the amount of \$13,500 to de-water/well-pointing the site for the sanitary sewer installation at Bagdad Mill Site Park. **Lynchard moved approval without objection.**

Courthouse Follow-Up Brief from HOK

Tommy Sinclair (HOK), Steve White (Civil Engineer, Hatch Mott McDonald) and Keith Johnson (Wetland Sciences Inc.) were present to give the Board an update regarding the Santa Rosa County Judicial Center (Attachment in file).

Sinclair discussed HOK’s wetland boundary study of Pine Street and concept site plan options.

White said he met with the Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWFMD). He discussed the states requirements regarding stormwater.

Johnson said wetlands are under the regulatory purview of both the NFWFMD and the Department of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He said these two agencies have separate and autonomous processes for authorizing development activities. Johnson further discussed the state and federal permitting processes. He said from a timing standpoint, individual permits involving this development site will take twelve months. Johnson said it can take longer depending on if there is a lot of public descent or if there are a lot of comments from federal agencies with respect to the listed species or historical properties.

R. Williamson asked who defines the project scope. Johnson said the applicant. R. Williamson asked Johnson if the evaluation that he is using today uses parcel seven. Johnson said no. R. Williamson asked if it is reasonable to expect, if parcel 7 is used, the process would not be as constrained or not receive as much opposition if any. Johnson said he does not know if the opposition would change but thinks that the process would be much more streamlined.

Cole said he feels there will be a problem getting this passed by the Army Corps of Engineers, for alternative sites. He said there are several alternative sites that can be used. Cole further discussed a 49 acre parcel for \$1.6 million asking price. He said he has worked with Paul Salter, Commercial Realtor, on a proposed courthouse location layout on this property. Cole said the minimum premium for building downtown is \$1.9 million. He said once the infrastructure is in place, the remaining parcels could bring a return on investment of \$1.374 million.

R. Williamson said with parcel number 7, the county has a viable option to build the next judicial center in downtown Milton. He said he would like the Boards consideration to direct staff to begin the Municipal Services Taxing Unit (MSTU) process, in case the Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) does not pass, so that the Board can send a clear message to the citizens that the Board intends to build a judicial center regardless of the outcome of the LOST.

Randy Jorgenson (City of Milton, Planning Director) discussed a map displaying the downtown area. He said the City of Milton is willing to close Elmira Street. Jorgenson said if Elmira Street is closed, there would not be an impact to wetlands and would have more than adequate parking. He said this is not the City of Milton's courthouse, but the City of Milton has a great deal of interest in the courthouse remaining in this portion of the community and to remove it would have a profound negative economic impact on the City of Milton. Jorgenson said the Board asked the people for their opinion regarding a location and they identified this location. He said with the acquisition of parcel 7 the City of Milton has the ability to close Pine Street, from Escambia Street to Willing Street, if necessary.

Mahute asked the Board to hold an evening meeting and have it properly advertised and provide HOK's presentation.

Lynchard said this is the first time he has seen the City of Milton's information that includes the alternative of parcel 7. He said if it is determined that utilizing parcel 7 puts the county at .21 acres of wetlands, the Board can discuss this with HOK and have them look into a conceptual drawing and layout. Lynchard said this is just an outline of parcel 7; this does not include any conceptual drawings of the site plan or the parking. He said this will need to be laid out to ensure the county will have sufficient parking to move forward with this location. Lynchard said he thinks the Board will have a number of night meetings, and otherwise, between now and when the LOST is put on the ballot. He said the Board will need to confirm whether or not it wants to pursue the downtown location and then move forward.

Cole said he would like to see which properties the City of Milton has acquired and the total price of these properties. He said he would also like to see an estimate from HOK on total cost of mitigation, permitting, designs, civil engineering, etc.

J. Williamson said he feels the next step will be for this item to be placed on the next agenda and then the Board can direct staff to work with HOK on the Army Corp of Engineers process.

Lynchard said he anticipates having an item of discussion on the agenda, the second set of meetings in February, pertaining to the courthouse location.

Local Option Sales Tax Discussion

Gomillion gave a power point presentation regarding a LOST (Attachment in file). He said the ballot language deadline for the August ballot is June 1st. Gomillion said the language deadline for the November ballot is September 2nd.

Lynchard said the Board has discussed in the past, going with a 1 percent sales tax and then utilizing the revenue for both the courthouse and an infrastructure improvements capital needs program for the county.

Cole said he would like to see the Board give the citizens a “menu of items” that a LOST can be used for.

R. Williamson said he prefers a 10 year option and options that will benefit all of county residents. He said he would not have it tied specifically to the courthouse, although he thinks the courthouse is the linchpin in the decision. R. Williamson said if, for the first time ever, the Board lets the citizens know that the Board is going to build a courthouse regardless of the LOST vote, he thinks that will be the impetus that will finally give it the best opportunity to pass.

Salter said public safety, especially law enforcement, has got to be addressed as the Board moves forward with the LOST.

J. Williamson said he thinks history has shown that the way the LOST has been passed, is for a certain project that the money is spent on and the citizens know when it sunsets. He said he agrees the 1 cent sales tax with a more broad scope will be better for the county. J. Williamson said he is skeptical that it will pass but certainly thinks that it is the best thing for the county.

Lynchard said he feels the Board setting out a 10 year funding plan, for improvements to the county, will give the best chance of having it be a success.

Public Safety MSTU Discussion

Gomillion gave a power point presentation regarding a MSTU (Attachment in file). He said the Board will need to have a plan by April 1st in order to provide information to the other constitutional officers, to start this process. Gomillion discussed the status of the Motorola project.

Lynchard said last budget season the Board was struggling with a way to make the budget work within the existing millage. He said in the 2007 timeframe, the county’s ad valorem property taxes collected a little over \$58 million per year. Lynchard said during the recession this dropped to approximately \$43 million per year. He said during this time the Board cut approximately 25% of the county workforce and added tens of thousands of new residents. Lynchard said this year the estimated ad valorem tax revenue is approximately \$49 million. He said as a result the Board has to look for alternative methods of funding. Lynchard said a MSTU is a way to have a dedicated funding source for the county’s capital needs, infrastructure needs, and public safety needs.

Cole said he feels if the Board is going to do a MSTU then it should not waste time on a LOST.

Brad Baker (Emergency Management Director) discussed the annual and core maintenance costs of the Motorola system.

There was further discussion of the Motorola project.

J. Williamson said he feels the Board needs to be careful about these raises, if the Board is considering a LOST. He said a LOST comes down to the trust of the Board of Commissioners.

Salter said he has always talked about trying to create a revenue model where everyone pays their fair share, including those that visit.

R. Williamson said he feels the Board should at least adhere to the MSTU process. He said if the LOST passes, then the Board does not have to move forward with the MSTU. R. Williamson said the Board can still be determining what the MTSU level will be for both the courthouse and public safety. He said if the LOST does not pass, then the Board will have the other items “teed up” to meet the obligation to the public.

There was further discussion regarding tax exemptions.

Preliminary Gas Tax Utilization Discussion

Gomillion said one of the thoughts that was discussed during the gas tax process, was whether the county will utilize the money as it comes in or does the county frontload that money through a bond or some other method.

Bell discussed a graph illustrating how the estimated \$3,500,000.00 in new gas tax revenue will be expended in the fiscal year 2017 budget (Attachment in file). She said Furman provided a five year road resurfacing estimate and plan (Attachment in file).

Lynchard said he would like the Board to move forward, in the immediate future, working with Public Works to select projects that are going to be funded out of the local gas tax for the remainder of this year. He said he wants to get these projects “on the ground” so that people can actually see that those tax dollars are being utilized in the best possible

Cole asked if there is a will of the Board to bond a certain amount money, conservatively, and get some of the road work started.

Furman said in this year’s budget, in anticipation of gas tax revenues, the Board approved \$1.5 million into district road paving where in previous years it had been \$750,000.00.

R. Williamson asked Bell how much additional revenue the gas tax will bring in for this year’s budget. Bell said \$2.8 million. R. Williamson asked how much of this \$2.8 million is going to Public Works. Bell said because of the gas tax increase, the county was able to increase paving to \$750,000.00 and put \$500,000.00 into secondary roads. R. Williamson said he does not see where we have a measurable increase in revenue getting allocated to what will make the impact that the Board promised. He said the Board has added an extraordinary amount of revenue and need to make sure it is adding an extraordinary amount of benefit. He said he agrees with Cole on the bonding. R. Williamson said he would like the Board to consider bonding a certain amount and working with Furman in determining what projects he would want to outsource.

There was further discussion regarding the Small County Outreach Program (SCOP).

County Administrator and Budget Director Comments

Gomillion said he feels the county needs to utilize the gas tax revenue to support the Road Departments operations. He said he will be sending the Board some information relative to initiatives that staff is working on for the upcoming budget. Gomillion said staff plans to get an early start on budget preparation for this coming fiscal year and he solicits any input from the Board regarding policy and guidance.

Bell said her goal is to give the Board better information and to get the distinguished budget presentation award.

Final Board Round Table of future workshop items and list of action items or goals

Lynchard said the Board has some challenging issues that it is facing whether it is the courthouse, the Local Option Sales Tax, or coming up with alternative methods to fund some of the improvements needed in the county. He said he feels the courthouse will be the priority. Lynchard said the Board will take up this discussion in a few weeks to try to nail down a location and then move forward hopefully in a cohesive fashion as a Board. He said he looks forward to seeing what the Road and Bridge Department can accomplish this year with the gas tax.

Cole said he would like Furman and Bell to work together regarding interest amounts and the length of time it will take to get a bond. Gomillion said staff will try to provide some more concise information that will help the Board make a decision.

Salter said in regards to the courthouse, he is going to continue to support what he has believed in, from day one. He said however, when this Board as a majority makes a decision, he feels this is what the entire Board should support.

Public Input

There was no public input.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting adjourned.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SANTA ROSA COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: Lane Lynchard, Chairman

Attest: Donald C. Spencer, Clerk of Court