Columbia County Board of County
Minutes of
February 19, 2009

The Columbia County Board of County Commissioners met in a scheduled meeting at the School Board Administration Office. The meeting opened at 7:00 p.m. with prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Commissioners in Attendance:

Dewey Weaver, Stephen Bailey, Ronald Williams, Scarlet Frisina, and Jody Dupree.

Others in Attendance:

County Manager Dale Williams, Attorney Marlin Feagle, Deputy Clerk Sandy Markham. County Planner Brian Kepner, and BCC Secretary Penny Stanley.

FACT

Marketing Specialist Ken Monaghan of the **Florida Association of Counties Trust ("FACT")** introduced FACT to the new commissioners on the Board. FACT is a non-profit liability insurance pool that provides the following insurances for Columbia County: General liability, public official's errors and omissions, and employment practices coverage. He gave a brief overview of programs.

As FACT begins their 20th year, they presented Columbia County with a **plaque of appreciation** to thank them for being a member county for the past twenty years.

Building and Zoning Department

County Planner Brian Kepner presented the following for the Board's consideration:

Hearings for Transmittal to Department of Community Affairs
Text Amendment to Comprehensive Plan:

(1) **CPA 08-2** Board of County Commissioners. This is the update of the Capital Improvements Element of the county's Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Kepner explained that this amendment comes as a result of changes made to Florida Statutes in 2005, which requires an annual submittal of the Capital Improvements Element of the county's Comprehensive Plan to DCA at the end of each year. The Planning and Zoning Board recommended approval.

The public hearing opened and closed without input.

MOTION by Commissioner Williams to approve Ordinance 2009-1. Second by Commissioner Weaver. The motion carried unanimously.

(2) Proposed **Evaluation and Appraisal Report** (EAR) of the County's Comprehensive Plan. Submission of an EAR is a requirement per Florida Statutes. Mr. Kepner explained that

the majority of the changes made are basically illustrations and maps to the text. There are a few minor changes made to correct typographical or grammatical errors. The Planning and Zoning Board recommended approval.

The public hearing opened.

Mr. David Depew of Depew & Associates thanked the county staff for their assistance and for allowing their firm to help the county with the EAR.

MOTION by Commissioner Weaver to approve the EAR. Second by Commissioner Dupree.

County Attorney Feagle noted this is being done by **Resolution 2009R-6**. Also, the date reflected should be corrected to read February 19th instead of January 22nd.

Commissioner Weaver noted that his motion would be amended to include the resolution number and the correct date as pointed out by Attorney Feagle. Second Commissioner Dupree. The motion carried unanimously.

Florida Crown Workforce – Tri-Annual Report

Chairman Bailey advised that the county received a note via e-mail from the Secretary of Executive Director John Chastain advising that they would not be in attendance for the meeting.

Commissioner Dupree made the following findings pertaining to **Florida Crown Workforce Board, Inc**.:

1. Unwillingness to recognize the role of the consortium as created through law and interlocal agreement.

2. Local business complaints pertaining to Florida Crown Workforce being unresponsive to needs and questions.

3. A demonstrated lack of communication with the Columbia County Board of County Commissioners, and a questionable relationship with Lake City Community College.

As a result of these findings, a motion was made.

MOTION by Commissioner Dupree that the Florida Crown Workforce Board be notified that the Board of County Commissioners severs its agreement for workforce development services effective June 30, 2009. In addition, staff will be directed to prepare a list of available options to be considered for future workforce development service. Second by Commissioner Weaver.

Discussion:

Commissioner Weaver asked the County Manager if he had any ideas on how to proceed from this point. The County Manager responded that if the motion passes, the county would call

Tallahassee to solicit the Workforce Innovations Group's input regarding options. The County Manager said that he would surmise that the options could range anywhere from creating a new region to possibly joining an existing region that may adjoin Columbia County.

Commissioner Williams said that there needs to be a good working relationship between all of the entities within the county when it comes to something of such importance. Commissioner Williams said that there has been a break down between the Board of County Commissioners and **Florida Crown Workforce**. The Commissioner said that he did not understand why Florida Crown could not meet with the Board of County Commissioners just as everyone else does in an open meeting so that concerns can be discussed. Commissioner Williams said that he did not feel that the Board needed to meet with the Florida Crown's director individually. The commissioner said that an open meeting with everyone present is the best dialogue, but for some reason the county doesn't seem to be able to get "that" dialogue. Commissioner Williams said that he agreed with Commissioner Dupree.

Commissioner Bailey said he agrees as well and that in his opinion, this has been an on-going issue even prior to his being elected. The Commissioner said that from businesses all the way down, there has been complaints and problems. He said that the breakdown of communication with Florida Crown is simply unacceptable. Commissioner Bailey said that you can't communicate with someone who doesn't want to communicate.

Commissioner Weaver added to the discussion that ultimately, the Board of County Commissioners is responsible and has to answer for the actions of Florida Crown.

The motion carried unanimously.

Industrial Development Authority

Executive Director Jim Poole gave a brief overview of what has taken place in Columbia County in the 15 years he has served the county. Mr. Pool expressed that it's always good to take a look back. He provided the following approximate numbers:

	1993	**Today**
Population	42,000	67,000
Jobs	20,000	30,800

Mr. Poole reported that he spoke with a business interested in locating in Columbia County this week who stated that they came to Columbia County because the people with the state and surrounding counties told them [the business] that if they truly wanted to make a project work. that they'd be better going to Columbia County, which was a great compliment. He said that the interest in this county continues to be strong, especially in the area of manufacturing and distribution.

Mr. Poole said that at one point in the 2008 calendar year, there was a positive job growth of 1,500 in the county. Toward the end of the 2008 year the county began to see the impacts of the recession on many of those jobs, but was thankful to end the 2008 calendar year with 352 more jobs than it had in 2007. He said that the positive number came in part due to the Target Distribution Center and U.S. Cold Storage locating in the county.

Some businesses such as Publix and Food Lion closed and then reopened larger stores, and a few of the hotels were remodeled or torn down and rebuilt. These rooms offer better quality and will bring better room rates, which in turn will generate additional tax dollars.

Mr. Poole said that the Ellisville exit is the only interchange that Columbia County has that is undeveloped on I-75. He reported that he and the County Manager began discussions and exploring options for developing the Ellisville exit approximately ten years ago, but hit many roadblocks along the way. He reported approximately three years ago that he was working with three distribution centers that were willing to guarantee their opening dates at the Ellisville exit. Unfortunately, these companies dropped their projects when the county could not give a guarantee as to when the needed utilities would be put into place. Mr. Poole believes the Ellisville Exchange has great potential and could offer many opportunities. He said that the county has an opportunity to carefully plan for the Ellisville exit by using tools such as the Evaluation and Appraisal Reports. Mr. Poole said that the community needs to come together to decide exactly what type of businesses it would like to see in Ellisville, and then begin to put their visions into creating a marketing plan to ensure the interchange will grow and prosper. Mr. Poole said that they have continued to focus on locating businesses in manufacturing and distribution, and on businesses that will increase healthcare services.

Columbia County is considered a Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern (RACEC). Approximately eight years ago former Governor Bush and the legislature created three RACEC areas in order to encourage counties in the designated areas to come together and work on economic development projects as a team. Mr. Poole said of the surrounding rural counties that Columbia County is the catalyst county that creates most of the jobs in this area. The fourteen counties have submitted sites to be considered for development. This region was awarded two catalyst sites; one in this county and the other in Suwannee County. There is a formula for the other counties who have invested to receive a return. Mr. Poole said that when the economy began to dip, everyone began to wonder how development would be possible without the funding that was available in years past.

Mr. Poole said that the **Plumb Creek Land Company** contract in the commissioner's agenda packet was placed there for discussion purposes. Mr. Poole said that he and Attorney Feagle would meet regarding the contract next week. Mr. Poole said that Plumb Creek owns large tracts of land on the eastern side of the county. He has had an opportunity to speak with the Plumb Creek group regarding a possible inland port.

Mr. Poole said that there are promising discussions taking place between the IDA and two businesses. He said they are working together on locations. If everything goes well, more information about the companies could be released in May and August.

Mr. Poole acknowledged that this country is in a very difficult economic era, but expressed that he personally feels that the county's past experience in dealing with difficult times will prove to be beneficial in dealing with the economic downturn.

Commissioner Bailey asked Mr. Poole to touch on his involvement with the current businesses. Mr. Poole said that the Chamber of Commerce is the arm that deals most with the existing businesses. The Chamber hosts FOCUS groups to learn what is on the minds of the local businesses and to help them find solutions to any challenges they may be facing. He said that you have to address the companies training issues. He also said that the County has helped a lot of existing businesses to grow by helping them to get some of the same grant applications and opportunities as the newcomers have had. Mr. Poole said that he continues to try to find some type of incentive or assistance for the already existing, long term businesses of the county.

Commissioner Williams said that for some time he has wanted to find a way to help the small, established businesses such as McDuffies Sporting Goods or Brown-Vann Paint & Carpet

to grow. The Commissioner said that he'd like to see the county find a way to subsidize the small businesses financial burden for the purpose of creating more jobs.

Commissioner Dupree asked regarding the companies who have received incentives (i.e Target, Mayo Fertilizer, Hunter Panel, etc.), where their numbers are as it relates to the number of employees/jobs that they agreed to maintain. Mr. Poole said that the numbers are reviewed each year and so far these companies have met their quotas.

Mr. Poole said that he hopes to have some information before the Board at the first meeting in March regarding a business that is looking to locate in the Industrial Park. It will start its operation with five employees. More details to come.

Consent Agenda

(1) Approval of Updated Columbia County Administrative Code – Addition of County Engineer – Article VI
(2) I-75 and Giles Martin Road (Ellisville Utility Site) – Request to Continue the Use of Property for Growing Hay
(3) Lake City Animal Shelter – Severance Pay Assistance – Fiscal Year 07-08 Fund Balance - $25,000.00
(4) Human Resource – Hiring Freeze Waiver Recommending Larry Fullard – Brush Chipper Operator Position – Public Works
(5) External Budget Amendment – Public Works – BA #08-09 – Shoulder Crew-Equipment Purchase - $23,500.00
(6) External Budget Amendment – Public Library – BA #08-08 – Donation from Busy Bees Daycare Center - $114.00
(7) External Budget Amendment – Sheriff's Office - #2 – BA #08-10 - Inmates Payment of Subsistence Costs – July 2008 through January 2009 - $10,493.22
(8) Building & Zoning – Permit Refund – Derek Williams - $319.51
(9) Building & Zoning – Permit Refund – Janis Price - $389.00
(10) Columbia County Emergency Medical Services – Refund Request – Osprey of North Florida - $291.40
(11) Indigent Burial – Dees-Parrish Family Funeral Home – Serinty Mae Harper, Deceased - $500.00
(12) Minute Approval – Board of County Commissioners – Regular Meeting – January 15, 2009
(13) Utility Permit – City of Lake City – SW Ring Court
(14) Utility Permit – AT&T (fka: BellSouth Telecommunications) - SW Woodgate Terrace

The Chair reminded the Board that at the last meeting one item was tabled from the consent agenda and one item was tabled from the agenda relating to the Animal Shelter and Richardson Community Center/Annie Mattox Park.

MOTION by Commissioner Williams to remove those items from the table. Second by Commissioner Weaver. The motion carried unanimously.

The public called for clarification on consent agenda item #1. The County Manager assisted with clarification.

Attorney Feagle noted that should consent agenda item #2 pass, an agreement will be needed to address negligence.

MOTION by Commissioner Weaver to adopt the consent agenda. Second by Commissioner Frisina. The motion carried unanimously.

Richardson Community Center/Annie Mattox Park (Tabled from the last meeting)

Regarding the Sunshine Law issue, the County Manager said that there was a meeting between himself and Mr. **Mario Coppock**, a contracted employee from the City of Lake City. Included in that meeting, at one point, was Commissioner Williams and a city councilman. The County Manager advised that according to the Sunshine Law, that two members of different boards can meet without it being a violation. The County Manager said that even if there were not an exemption for two elected officials to meet, the only thing discussed in the presence of the commissioner and the councilman was discussions of clarification. The County Manager said that he has discussed the matter with Attorney Feagle and that he concurs that no violation has occurred.

The County Manager said that no employment contract is being proposed.

The County Manager explained his salary recommendation for Mr. Coppock. Mr. Coppock's title with the City was **Athletic Coordinator**. According to a salary survey performed by the City of Lake City, the pay range for a **Recreation Director** is $43,472 - $67,382. An employee applying for the position of Recreation Director with a four year degree and thirty years of related experience would be placed in the middle of the pay range, which would be $55,427. The County Manager said that according to the Florida Municipal County Recreation and Parks Agency salary survey prepared by Florida State University, the proposed pay is justifiable.

Regarding the Summer Program, problems from last year have been corrected. There will be changes as to how the Summer Program Director is paid, and there will be no summer trip money for the enrollees through the county's general fund.

The question of how the foregoing relates to potential future budget cuts was addressed. The County Manager said that like other county departments, everything is subject to Board appropriation. For this year, what is being proposed is well within the allocated budget.

MOTION by Commissioner Williams to set the salary for the Recreation Director at $54,405.90. Second by Commissioner Dupree. The motion carried unanimously.

MOTION by Commissioner Weaver to approve the proposed line item budget for the **Richardson/Annie Mattox budget**. Second by Commissioner Frisina. The motion carried unanimously.

The County Manager discussed the proposed job description of Recreation Director. He said that the county is attempting to create a position that is responsible for all facets of recreation within Columbia County, with the exception of facility maintenance. The county has attempted to plagiarize a description from other job descriptions. There are a few things that may need to be corrected in the job description, such as defining "designated communities" to be those communities in the unincorporated area. The language, "*…coordinates and directs the recreational programs in the center*." The word "*center*" should be changed to the word "*county*." Also, the standard wording, "*…and other duties that may be directed from time to time*." The Board was asked to submit other requested changes.

MOTION by Commissioner Williams to approve the proposed **job description**. Second by Commissioner Frisina. The motion carried unanimously.

Budget Amendment – Sheriff's Office

Former Sheriff Bill Gootee returned Fiscal Year (2007-2008) closeout money in the amount of $504,336.68. Along with the return came a budget request that the sum of $240,000 be remanded back to his operational budget for a front end alignment machine at the mechanic shop ($18,000), purchase of licenses, antennas, laptops and internet air cards to engage each emergency vehicle for mobile data ($87,000), and $135,000 to enhance, replace and rotate the department's existing fleet with five additional, fully equipped vehicles. The request also suggested that the balance of $264,336.68 be used towards the enhancement of communications at the 911 Center. The Board held the Sheriff's request in abeyance pending the seating of the new sheriff.

Regarding the year end money held in abeyance, newly elected Sheriff Hunter has requested a budget amendment in the amount of $198,000 for capital outlay for equipment at the mechanic shop, five new vehicles for replacement in the current fleet, and networking and IT upgrades within the departments. In addition to the capital outlay, there will be $42,000 in nonrecurring operating expenses to be used on computer software and implementation costs. This totals $240,000, which leaves $264,336.68 to be placed in the general fund contingency of the county. Staff recommended approval of the budget amendment.

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

Tax Certificates

The Tax Collector has notified the county of 2001 county held tax certificates. Staff requested a commissioner be appointed for the purpose of reviewing the certifications. Chairman Bailey appointed Commissioner Weaver to review and bring back recommendations for those the county may be interested in applying for.

Citizen's Complaint Policy

The County Manager offered that a more proper name for this policy perhaps would be a Citizen's Assistance Policy. The intent of this policy is to further efficiency in tracking and response, and to also create a centralized method by which citizens can express concerns, recommendations, needs, or lodge a complaint. The Board was asked to take time to consider the policy and offer suggested changes. The policy will be considered for adoption in a future meeting.

Ronald K. Witt's Request to Remove Trees

Mr. Ronald Witt owns property on County Road 240. Approximately 600 feet of this property is fronting County Road 240. Mr. Witt is asking that the county remove the trees that adjoin his property from the county's right-of-way. Staff's recommendation was to deny as this would be setting a precedent that the county could not possibly fulfill. Staff suggested that the Board consider giving the property owner permission to remove the trees if he chooses to do so.

Motion by Commissioner Weaver to deny Mr. Witt's request. Second by Commissioner Dupree. The motion carried unanimously.

Non-Agenda Item(s)

Nash Road - Bid Award

The County Manager said that Anderson Columbia was the low bidder with a bid of $939,091. He said the bid has been reviewed and determined to be responsive. Commissioner Dupree said that he has reviewed all of the tabulation forms and that he finds everything in order.

MOTION by Commissioner Dupree to award the bid to Anderson Columbia in the amount of $939,091. Second by Commissioner Weaver. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioners

Commissioner Weaver asked that at the next meeting the Board discuss the idea of placing a moratorium on **impact fees** for a specific amount of time.

Commissioner Dupree said that he received a call today regarding the county taking the initiative to build a **skate park**. He asked if that is something the county is considering. The County Manager replied that nearly four years ago Columbia County, in cooperation with the City of Lake City, made a decision to jointly fund a skate park. The County Manager said that it is his understanding there are approximately $50,000 in total committed funds, most of which has been generated from the county. He said the county has also been told that there is a commitment for the City to fund their portion, which was part of the original agreement. The county's commitment at this phase is to simply determine what the final cost of a skate park would be.

Citizen Input

Citizen Mike Nicholson is a small construction business owner in Columbia County. He said that his small business is incorporated, insured, and properly licensed. He said that with the rapid growth of the county, a set of standards needs to be established for those unlicensed contractors who call themselves a "handyman." He expressed concern that his work field is being flooded by contractors who are not licensed, and who may take advantage of homeowners or not warranty their work. He asked the Board to look into setting standards that would address this issue.

Commissioner Dupree acknowledged this to be a problem and said that the problem would continue to get worse with the economic downturn. The commissioner felt the way to "begin" fixing the problem is for the county to begin following, overall, the same guidelines as the city has. He said that currently, the county has no checks and balances in place to correct the problem.

The County Manager said that he would speak with the Building Department, and that he would speak with other communities to determine how they handle this type of problem. A data sheet could then be presented to the Board for further direction.

Chairman Bailey asked Commissioner Dupree, Commissioner Williams and the County Manager to consult with the Building and Zoning Department and draft recommendations for the Board of County Commissioner's consideration.

Citizen Adrian Hudson a representative of Neighbors Equine Assistance Team, Inc. ("NEAT") provided the Board with a brochure providing information relating to the organization. She reported that after addressing the Board at the January 15, 2009 meeting that she had an opportunity to meet with Sheriff Hunter on January 20th regarding large animal issues. Ms. Hudson reported to the Board that at that meeting the Sheriff promised to provide

the organization with a copy of their policies and procedures as it relates to handling large animals within two days. She told the Board that NEAT is truly trying to assist the Board and the Sheriff with this matter, but, to date, the Sheriff still has not provided the rules and procedures. She said it is impossible for the organization to assist if the Sheriff does not provide what is needed.

Citizen Stew Lilker commended Sheriff Hunter for taking time to meet with NEAT, and said that hopefully the organization will receive policy soon so that everyone will be working together.

Mr. Lilker thanked Commissioner Bailey for always being courteous in promptly responding to his questions and telephone calls.

Mr. Lilker said that he could not understand how the action taken regarding Florida Crown ("FC") earlier in the meeting was not on the agenda. He asked if FC receives local funding. The County Manager replied that all of their money is state and federal funding. FC does not directly receive funding from the Board. Mr. Lilker told the Board that FC is rated #4 in the state, and that they have been commended by the governor for the job they do on more than one occasion.

Mr. Lilker said that his annual homeowners insurance premium increased by $328. All but $30 of that increase is due to the area's ISO rating, Mr. Lilker said. Mr. Lilker does not think it is reasonable to expect residents in the south end to pay $300 to be covered by the Fort White Columbia County Fire Department when High Springs is willing to provide the residents with better coverage for approximately $55 year. Mr. Lilker told the Board that the City of High Springs is willing to provide fire service for a fee of $32,000, which is approximately $55 per year for those homes affected. He said that not only is High Springs cheaper, it also offers better coverage as they are heavier staffed and closer.

Mr. Lilker said he had a discussion with the Fire Chief yesterday where the Fire Chief told him that residents living in the High Springs exchange who call 911 are probably calling into Alachua County instead of Columbia County. He told Commissioner Weaver that there may still be District 2 residents who think that their fire service continues to be with High Springs. Mr. Lilker suggested that a letter of clarification be sent to those residents in District 2.

Commissioner Weaver replied that the number of homes affected in District 2 is 513. The commissioner said that the county has spoken with the ISO Specialist who has advised that an interlocal agreement with High Springs will not lower the ISO rating for that area. Commissioner Weaver said that the Board needs to look at other options that would possibly lower the ISO ratings in the area and that the Fire Chief does have some options for consideration.

Commissioner Bailey noted that High Springs is another county and is not Columbia County. He also reported that in the past, when there was an interlocal agreement with High Springs, that Columbia County's volunteer fire departments have also responded to those calls for assistance along with High Springs.

Commissioner Williams added that he has the same issue in District 1. There is a portion of his district that is in the 397 exchange. He explained that when a citizen calls 911, the call

actually goes into Hamilton County, but there is an immediate ring down (transfer) to Columbia County 911. The caller does not have to hang up and redial another number for emergency assistance.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

ATTEST:
Clerk of Circuit Court

_____
P. DeWitt Cason

_____
Board of County Commissioners