

UTILITY COMMITTEE
January 26, 2010
9:00 a.m.

The Columbia County Utility Committee met in a scheduled meeting at the County Extension Office at 9 a.m.

Members Present:

Commissioner Jody Dupree
Commissioner Scarlet Frisina
Commissioner Stephen Bailey
At Large Member Walt Graham

Members Absent:

Councilman Eugene Jefferson (other appt.)
Councilman George Ward (unknown)
At Large Member Billy Dow (other appt.)

Others in Attendance:

County Manager Dale Williams
Asst. County Manager Lisa Roberts
Deputy Clerk Sandy A. Markham
County Purchasing Director Ben Scott
County Engineer John Colson
Chad Williams, GTC Design Group

Attorney Brian Armstrong (NG&N)
Executive Utilities Director Dave Clanton
Engineer Henry Sheldon
Jeff Simmons, IDA Member
Public Works Director Kevin Kirby

Technical Subcommittee Update

Chairman Dupree gave a brief update. The Subcommittee has been working on the technical apparatus' of the utility, and they have been in discussions regarding the language that will be used in the utility ordinances. Chairman Dupree said they have also taken up issues relating to the service area and redirecting lines.

Chad Williams reviewed proposed changes to be made in the route of water distribution lines and discussed current concerns.

MOTION by Commissioner Frisina to approve the directional bore putting in the "T" crossing at Hwy 441, then proceeding north down the east side of hwy 441 to the ramp. Second by Commissioner Bailey. The motion carried unanimously.

MOTION by Commissioner Bailey to extend the westerly line south of the Scaff property, then eventually back to Howell Road. Second by Commissioner Frisina. The motion carried unanimously.

MOTION by Commissioner Frisina to cross Howell Road, pick up and run the waterline to create that loop, and bring it back to Howell Road, contingent upon required easements being obtained. Second by Commissioner Bailey. The motion carried unanimously.

There was a review of and discussion regarding the route/line behind the motel at the Bar D Ranch property. Chad Williams referred to this as the NE Loop.

MOTION by Commissioner Bailey to reduce the size of the NE line from a 12" to a 6". Second by Commissioner Frisina. The motion carried unanimously.

Informational

Chad Williams reviewed with the committee the proposed 3/4 " water meter connection locations at lots on County Road 238. The crossing areas need to be re-worked. The subcommittee has discussed not installing the meters at the present time, but instead the meters should be ordered and stockpiled. When the time comes for a customer to hook on, the meters will be available and can be installed. He said the biggest issue is that lines are being run now.

Chairman Dupree said the subcommittee's recommendation is that the crossings be re-worked, and that meters be placed in storage. This will be handled through field changes.

Regarding the crossings, Chad Williams said that the crossings can be put out for bid at a later date. They are currently 3/4" crossings.

County Manager Williams suggested that since the crossings are already in the contract and that the stimulus money is paying eighty-five cent on every dollar, that the crossings be left. The size of the crossings may need to be changed. Chad Williams said there is still a small amount of time to decide where the crossings should be located.

There was a consensus to upscale the size of the pipes from 3/4" to 1 1/2" and to have the reduced number of double meters stockpiled. County Engineer John Colson and Public Works Director Kevin Kirby will make the best decisions for locations.

Designated Service Area Ordinance

The service area boundaries were reviewed.

MOTION by Commissioner Bailey to recommend the Board of County Commissioner approve the designated service area. Second by Commissioner Frisina. The motion carried unanimously.

Draft Utility Service Area Ordinance

MOTION by Commissioner Bailey to recommend the Board of County Commissioners approve the ordinance and to adopt Exhibit "A" (A map geographically showing the Designated Service Area.) Second by Commissioner Frisina. The motion carried unanimously.

Draft Utility Connections Ordinance

The Committee discussed other changes that will be made before presenting the final ordinance to the Board of County Commissioners.

Chairman Dupree asked what roll the Utility Committee and the Board of County Commissioners play in this. He noticed all of the wording refers to the County Manager making all decisions and handling all matters. He was also concerned that the workload would be too much for the County Manager to take on. Commissioner Bailey agreed that there needs to be more flexibility. Attorney Armstrong said that he would modify the verbiage to read, "*the County Manager, his designee, or other such person who may be designated by the Board of County Commissioners.*"

Attorney Armstrong said that the language "about contiguous within 50 feet ...within a quarter of a mile," would be added to the ordinance instead of only referencing the statute.

Chairman Dupree brought up the topic of a utility authority for discussion. He said the operation the entire enterprise is going to be very demanding, especially as the utility begins to expand. He is concerned that the utility may become "bogged down" without clear leadership.

Considering the size of the utility, Attorney Armstrong said that he would not recommend an authority at this time. He suggested the following wording be added in the definition of county manager: "*The County Manager, his designee, or other such employees that may be designated by the Board of County Commissioners in the future.*"

Chairman Dupree said he wants the wording to be clear enough that the county will be able to "shift and move," as it relates to the leadership/employees. He said that he did not want to have to amend the ordinance each time a decision is made about the leadership of the utility.

MOTION by Commissioner Frisina to recommend the ordinance with changes to the Board of County Commissioners and to set the matter for public hearing. Second by Commissioner Bailey. The motion carried unanimously.

Meeting Facility

Asst. County Manager Lisa Roberts reported that the Lake Shore Hospital Authority will charge a fee for future use of their building. She asked for Board direction.

There was a consensus to use county owned facilities for future meetings.

Construction Update

As an informational item, Chad Williams gave a quick overview of contractor's progress.

Future Agenda Item

Chairman Dupree said that the Committee could expect to see the existing package plant in Ellisville on the next agenda for the purpose of condemning and taking.

Chairman Dupree asked the Committee to begin considering a 1”- 2” bleeder line be installed and routed back to the main line, at the point the water line terminates

Other

Chairman Dupree expressed appreciation for the **subcommittee’s assistance**. He said that they have been a tremendous help.

Ben Scott said regarding a **water rate study** for drinking water, that it will take Florida Rural Water three weeks to conduct a study. Their study is geared more toward everyone paying equally for the service. He said he spoke with Mike New, who is the Public Works Director for the town of Alachua that does this type of study. He will charge \$4,100 to do a study that would be geared more toward payment for the amount used.

Attorney Armstrong said that the \$4,100 is an excellent price and that the county should consider payment tiers that would encourage water conservation.

County Manager Williams recommended both be allowed to do a study. The two can be compared and the county can come up with something that is workable.

Chairman Dupree recalled the Committee’s recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners that a **Utility Director** be hired. He said that it was his understanding that the Utility Director would be in charge of the day-to-day operations of the utility. Commissioner Bailey and Commissioner Frisina said that was also their understanding.

Ben Scott asked if the County still plans to contract with someone to come in and do the **utility billing**. He said that the company the county has their accounting software with HTE does a lot of utility work. The County Manager and Chairman discussed that it may be a job that can be handled in house by the Public Works Department. Ben Scott will obtain quotes for utility software for informational purposes.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

ATTEST:

Jody Dupree, Chairman

P. DeWitt Cason
Clerk of Circuit Court