

Proceedings of a workshop of the City Commission of Palatka, Florida held on the 19th day of December, 2002.

PRESENT:	Mayor	Karl N. Flagg
	Commissioner	Mary Lawson Brown
	Commissioner	James Norwood, Jr.
	Commissioner	George Sanders

ABSENT:	Commissioner	Hernan Azula
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ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Allen R. Bush, City Clerk Betsy Jordan Driggers, Police Lt. Rodney Harper, Fire Chief Ken Venables, Planning Director Adam Mengel, W&S Supt. Rhett McCamey.

Mayor Flagg called the meeting to order and read the following call:

TO MESSRS: MARY LAWSON BROWN, HERNAN AZULA,
JAMES NORWOOD AND GEORGE SANDERS:

You are hereby notified that a special workshop meeting of the City Commission is called to be held at the regular meeting place of the City Commission at City Hall 201 N. 2nd Street, in the City of Palatka, at 10:00 a.m. Thursday, December 19, 2002.

The purpose of the meeting is to hold a workshop on the proposed "Fire Flow Ordinance" which has been proposed by Fire Chief Ken Venables.

/s/ Karl N. Flagg
Mayor

We acknowledge receipt of a copy of the foregoing notice of a special meeting on the 27th day of November, 2002.

/s/Mary Lawson Brown

/s/ James Norwood, Jr.

/s/ George Sanders

Chief Venables distributed information on what was to be a PowerPoint presentation, but the program met with technical difficulties and was not shown.

Chief Venables said in the Fire Department they reference several different codes and standards, which are used and cross-referenced; one is the Southern Building Fire Code, which is a maintenance code and does not come into play until after a COA has been issued for the building. There are other construction codes that work in tandem with the Building Code. For developers, engineers, architects, it can be very confusing when you are trying to balance the building code with the state fire code, Southern Building Code, and so on. He is trying to put a 'user friendly' ordinance together that will give everyone involved in the construction process a simple guideline as to what is required in terms of needed fire flow. This needs to be addressed in the early planning process in renovating or constructing a building. This can show what needs to be included and what does not need to be included. In addition to a hard copy of the Power Point presentation, he distributed a copy of the proposed ordinance and the Fire Prevention section of the Southern Building Code that is used in the City. He then went through and discussed the presentation via hard copy (filed). He noted that when water pressure drops below 20psi, it really stirs up the mains and results in there not being enough pressure to fight a fire, in some instances. Needed fire flow is determined by the type of construction, occupancy, land exposures, by using a team approach with published standards. Planning should begin with meeting with developers and contractors as early in the construction permitting process as possible. This ordinance provides a fair and even way to accomplish their goals by making available the formulas and standards used in calculating needed fire flow.

Chief Venables compared the existing code to the proposed ordinance. Current code only applies to existing and renovated buildings. This ordinance applies to new and existing buildings. Currently adequate water supply is determined by the Fire Official with no guidelines for developers. The proposed ordinance includes guidance for sites with or without a water system, and the Fire Chief or his designee is the authority and has jurisdiction. The current code allows a permit to be issued before fire flow issues are resolved, and provides no incentive to developers to meet guidelines. The ordinance does not allow a building permit to be issued until the needed fire flow issues have been resolved. Unlike current code, the proposed ordinance provides specific details on the method used to determine the number of fire hydrants required, using specific published guidelines. Also, by using these formulas, public officials cannot be perceived as being 'arbitrary or capricious' by the building or renovating public, because a published set of criteria is used for all projects.

Mr. Bush said currently the W&S Distribution crews go out and determine if the existing lines will provide adequate water supply, and sign off on the permit, as does Building & Zoning. Fire Chief Holly said he signs off on fire protection, but that is interior only. Chief Venables said until the needed fire flow has been calculated, the W&S people shouldn't sign off on anything. In the case of new construction, water mains have to be installed. All the new construction along Hwy 19 has hydrants; and water systems; they want to be sure these things are adequate. In the case of downtown, the City's own system will provide the water flow. Every year they test the hydrants; they check flow history for all hydrants and look at the number of hydrants needed for a certain complex. If someone wants to build a gasoline refinery out of wood, the City does not have the infrastructure for that project, and the zoning probably wouldn't permit it. For the potential renovation and construction that might take place downtown, he is confident that the City's infrastructure will meet those needs. The hydrant spacing is excellent. Per the question, Fire Marshall Holley said he determined that the hydrants and water lines for the new Wal-Mart were adequate; he had a formula, which he applied at the time of construction, given the information he was supplied by W&S. Commissioner Brown asked if there were adequate lines at the Airport and Industrial Park; Chief Venables said there are adequately sized mains to serve those areas, based on the zoning and anticipated development. W&S also has a master plan for further enhancing the system that is now in place. The City does have some water issues east of the water tank, but they are not severe enough to recommend renovations. In the case of a fire downtown, they have, in the past, pumped water from the river. They have the necessary equipment to do this.

Commissioner Norwood asked where the City is lacking in water supply/infrastructure. Chief Venables said the city is in pretty good shape all over; there may be a problem if someone decides to build a Super Wal-Mart on the north side. Commissioner Norwood said they should assume a Wal-Mart or Kmart will be built on the north side, and asked if there is adequate infrastructure in place to do so. Chief Venables said there are a lot of variables that come into play, such as the area. In worst-case scenario, the lowest flow on the north side is at Jenkins Middle School area; there is one hydrant in that area that has a less-than-500-gpm flow, but most of them are between 500–750 gpm. Chief Venables said the hydrants in the City are spaced fairly close together, which is a plus. Using existing fire and building codes, they couldn't build a frame building, but could build a steel building or masonry block with a steel-joist roof. They would also need a sprinkler and fire alarm system. They also look at today's building code. They have a very good inspection process, and hold contractors accountable for their work. He is comfortable that a large commercial building can be built on the north side. Commissioner Norwood said several north side churches are looking at building, expanding and renovating, and some plan to build large new buildings. Per the question, Chief Venables said there are variables to be considered as to who is responsible for upgrading the existing water supply or running new lines. It could be either or both parties. Sometimes you can just put a water tank on the site. They would resolve this issue by looking at site plans, distance setbacks, credits for hydrants within 300 feet of the building, etc. The City's block structure is such that it is doubtful that there would be a building built the size of the new Super Wal-Mart. The ordinance will spell out the formula used to determine adequate water flow. It will not be based on arbitrary opinions or someone's discretion. Commissioner Norwood asked if it is possible to grant a variance on this ordinance. Chief Venables said initially they would look at how great the difference is between what

is available and what they need. If it is a great difference, it can be resolved by either upgrading the infrastructure or determining what can be done on-site, like installing a water tank. They also look at whether they are installing sprinklers and alarms, whether it will be occupied all the time or not. These variables may reduce the needed water flow. Water tanks can be installed underground. Commissioner Norwood said he does not want to prevent development by putting too many laws in place. This adds a new burden to some individuals. He does not want to see a developer have to run a water line from 18th Street to 20th Street to get adequate water flow. Mr. Bush said that is exactly what is done with new construction. Wal-Mart had to run their line from their site all the way over to the road that runs behind Winn-Dixie. Chief Venables said when the City issues a permit for a new building or significant renovation, they are committing the City to providing adequate fire protection to those buildings. Commissioner Brown said some of the churches that are trying to do new construction and upgrade the neighborhood are having problems just trying to build retaining ponds, much less improve infrastructure. Chief Venables said churches are a good thing for any community.

Mayor Flagg asked why new construction is the catalyst for water flow assessment. They should be just as concerned about providing sufficient water to homes for everyday use. If there are inadequacies in the infrastructure, they should not wait for new construction to bring that to their attention. The city should proactively know where the weaknesses are and not wait for someone to come in and say they want to build a car wash on a specific corner. You cannot separate the City's infrastructure from what is needed to put in a single family home or a 15-unit apartment building. This ordinance does not address the City's deficit. Chief Venables said the W&S Dept. has developed a plan to address and upgrade the City's deficiencies in the existing infrastructure. Water flow also includes peak demand for water. Zoning plays a big part in planning. Some uses will constitute a minimal needed fire flow, and some will have a much greater need. Water systems take into consideration zoning and codes. He does not have their list of areas that they are planning to upgrade. Until someone walks in and says they want to build a warehouse for paper towels as opposed to engine blocks, they can't really determine how much water they will need. A restaurant or car wash uses a lot of water. Wal-Mart does not use a whole lot of water; they have selling space. The occupancy of the building comes into play and really determines what the needed water flow should be. A team will sit down and determine what the need is, if they can meet the need, if they need to upgrade the system, etc. The sooner they can sit down with people and talk about their projects, the less surprises they will have down the road. Mayor Flagg said he feels this is a piecemeal way of solving the problem. They have a 20-year growth plan, but the reality is who is making application for what type of building. If they know there is a deficit, what is the plan to address it? They don't need to be as concerned with new growth as they should be with taking care of existing areas. Chief Venables said the successful businesses such as the Wal-Mart's do their homework on these things. They anticipate needed fire flow. If the city does not have the flow, they are not coming in. Commissioner Norwood said most citizens don't know to 'do their homework' as most have never built before, as he has never built a home. This ordinance will greatly impact whether or not a person builds the type of home he/she wants to build. Chief Venables said they would work with that person; they would ask pertinent questions, and advise what would apply to his project. The first issue is zoning. Commissioner Norwood asked if they have done a 'needs assessment', based on zoning, to make sure the infrastructure is in place for the type of zoning in place on those parcels. Chief Venables said that was done several years ago, and he is comfortable with the water supply west of the water tank. It is more than adequate.

Mr. Bush said they could address these issues in new construction. In the older, already developed parts of town, some of the lines have been there for 100 years or more, and they need to know if those lines are adequate. Chief Venables said he looked at the area of St. Johns & 3rd Street, and said they have 6 hydrants available at that corner, which constitutes over 4,000 gpm. In looking at the construction of the James Hotel, Wattles, etc., under today's code they would have to have certain things that they weren't required to have when built. The code would already require them to install sprinklers and alarms, for which they would receive credit towards having to upgrade certain infrastructure.

Commissioner Norwood said he has asked Mr. Bush to contact the League about a redevelopment of the 11th Street Business District. At some point they would like to revitalize that district. He asked if the infrastructure is in place for that, and what size pipe needs to be there. Chief Venables said the flows for the 11th Street corridor are on file at the downtown station; he does not know them right off. He has not studied that area in terms of needed fire flow. At some point the City may have to put larger water mains in, or do some cross connections. The City has excellent cross-connectors between the mains now. Given the layout of the city, the blocks have excellent looping, and the hydrant spacing is outstanding for the most part. Per the question, Mr. McCamey said the hydrants are all 500 gpm or 100 gpm hydrants in that area. Commissioner Sanders said they have color-coded maps available to them that shows water lines & hydrants. This can all be handled with Mr. Mengel's Department and the W&S Department, and the Fire Chief. They can look at that map and determine if a certain place has an inadequacy, and start working to improve those areas. They talk about what may be, but they can get this information for themselves and re-prioritize, of need be. Commissioner Norwood said he just went through a rather large building project, and discovered the City does have some deficiencies in infrastructure. When they propose an ordinance like this, realizing the infrastructure is not in place and looking at the zoning across the city, you have to question if they are passing an ordinance to make the citizens put the infrastructure in place? Or is the City going to put the infrastructure in place?

Mr. Bush said when new construction takes place, or a building is expanded, it is the responsibility of the developer to improve the lines to meet that new need. Mayor Flagg said if there is a deficit there, it is the City's problem. Mr. Bush said in most instances there is no deficit until a certain a certain structure is built there that creates a deficit for that particular use. Mayor Flagg said if a deficit exists, the City should not be waiting for someone to decide to build something there to address it.

Mr. Mengel said the Building Department's concern was with the applicability to newly platted subdivision, complexes, buildings and structures for which a building permit is issued. It has been said that renovations also apply, but it does not overtly state that, and the threshold is not stated. It does raise concerns about areas that are not adequately served by a water supply. In theory, the builder or permittee would have to upgrade their neighborhood. Chief Venables said the ordinance addresses that. If someone were to add third floor living space to a two-story home, they would to sprinkler to third floor. A typical single-family home is 12 – 15 ft in height. A two-story home is typically 20 ft. A fire-pumper is 24 ft high, which gets them to the roofline plus a few feet. ISO is also not concerned with like safety, and is only concerned with property safety. Mayor Flagg asked if enough flexibility is build in so as not to slow progressive development in the city; Chief Venables said there is. Mayor Flagg said they want to have a reputation of being user-friendly; they want economic development, and are look for clean industry and additional businesses to come in. He does not want the rumor circulating that business and industry should forget about coming to Palatka. Chief Venables said the ordinance is not really as restrictive as it looks. The good thing about this ordinance is it takes the 'arbitrary and capricious' factor out of the process. They did not pull these requirements out of the air; they got them from already published guidelines, which are widely accepted in the industry. Commissioner Sanders asked Chief Venables to scrutinize the existing water main/hydrant map, determine where the deficiencies are, and bring that back to the Commission at a future date. They are responsible to the citizens for providing water supply. Chief Venables said Mr. McCamey has a list of planned upgrades, which he can provide them.

Mayor Flagg said he needed to leave the meeting to attend a prior engagement, and passed the Chair over to Vice Mayor Brown.

Per the question, Mr. Bush said the City has made tremendous improvements in the city's water supply through bonds and CDBG grants. For the most part they have adequate coverage all over. Every year they change out lines and hydrants. Commissioner Brown said they need to take care of the little person who does not have the money to take care of this. They need to establish a fund through construction permit fees to help them out. Per the question, Chief Venables said there are two ways funds can come into play. ISO has an hourly rate of \$86.00/hr for plan review, which is typically 1-1/2 hours or less. A

single-family dwelling has a table based on separation. There is no cost other than if infrastructure upgrades were needed and the city determines it is the developer/owners' responsibility to upgrade. He did not specifically put anything in this ordinance dealing with fees, as that would be done on a case-by-case basis. Mr. Bush said they aren't going to ask someone wanting to build a house on a vacant lot in the City to run a line down the street to hook up. If they need to take the line to them, they will. Commissioner Brown asked how they would treat small businesses and churches. Many of these folks hardly have the money to pay for construction. Chief Venables said for the type of uses she is describing, the existing infrastructure is adequate. The problem would be if someone wanted to build a huge cathedral. That may be an issue. The whole point is to get water on a fire as soon as possible, which can be accomplished with a sprinkler system. With all other variables in place, the existing water supply is adequate, unless they are building a Super Wal-Mart or a cathedral. This ordinance actually reduces the number of hydrants required if all homes within that area have sprinkler systems. In homes, sprinkler systems are never required, but if a developer does add sprinkler systems, he can save money on hydrants. Commissioner Norwood said in the new Calvary pool building, they installed a sprinkler system over the pool in a block building because they were told they had to. It turns out they did not. The mistake was discovered during the inspection after it had been installed. In the future, they need to make sure this is not 'overkill' and the systems are needed and required. Chief Venables said when they do a plan review they look at two things: what is required and what they would like to see. If they had their way, every building would have sprinklers, but that is not going to happen. They make recommendations, which can be ignored. If there is ever a question, they will be happy to go over the code to determine what is required and what is not. Codes are the minimum requirement, so when someone says something is built to code, they are not bragging; they simply built to the minimum requirements because they had to. Recommendations are designed to get one above the minimum. Mr. Bush said deciding what is required should be the responsibility of the developer, designer or architect. That is where the overkill comes in. The fire department does not question the professional.

Chief Venables said this ordinance also creates a specific 'clear zone' so a firefighter does not get a branch in the eye when trying to hook a line up to a hydrant. They do not want to go back and correct existing buildings, but they do want to correct deficiencies in new construction and significant renovations. Mr. Bush said the information states the City will require a minimum 8" main. The city uses primarily 8" line or larger, but in the areas that are already built out, there may be some 4" lines left. Chief Venables said that requirement applies to new lines, not lines that are already there. The City does not really have any 'gaps in the water main system. Mr. Bush said if they require 8" pipe installations, eventually it will all be 8" pipe. Many places will never need an upgrade because of dead ends and the like. The majority of this will be required for new construction. Commissioner Norwood said once they know where the deficiencies are and determine what type of buildings could go in those areas based on zoning, they can take a look at the W&S Departments' upgrade plan and decide if it is adequate. Otherwise, he would be hard-pressed to vote for this ordinance. Commissioner Brown said in the past the Commission has passed ordinances that have put requirements in place that have adversely affected the average citizen, but did not mean to do so at the time, and only had good intentions when they passed these ordinances.

Per the question, Chief Venables said there is no rush on the adoption of this ordinance. It took him six months to get to this point. Commissioner Norwood said he does not want anyone leaving here thinking they do not want adequate fire protection for residents and businesses.

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m. upon a motion by Commissioner Sanders.

CITY CLERK

MAYOR