

Proceedings of a special called joint meeting of the City Commission of the City of Palatka, Florida, and the Putnam County Board of County Commissioners, held on the 8th day of March, 2002.

CITY COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Mayor	Karl N. Flagg
Commissioner	Hernan Azula
Commissioner	James Norwood, Jr.

CITY COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Commissioner	Mary Lawson Brown
Commissioner	George E. Sanders

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Chairman/Commissioner	Brad Purcell
Commissioner	Kevin Durscher
Commissioner	Nancy Harris
Commissioner	Linda Myers
Commissioner	Herman Somers

Also Present for the City: City Manager Allen R. Bush, City Clerk Betsy Jordan Driggers, Police Chief Gary Getchell, Fire Chief Kenneth Venables, Planning Director Adam Mengel, Water & Sewer Supt. Gene Garrett, Code Enf. Officer Debbie Banks

Also present for the County: County Administrator Rick Leary, Clerk of Court Tim Smith, Sheriff Taylor Douglas, Senior Planner Ray Spofford, Tax Assessor Larry Pritchett, Tax Collector Ken Mahaffey, BOCC Clerk Toni Pace

Also Present: Wes Larson, President; Putnam County Chamber of Commerce; H. C. Dunning, Summerville Electric; and Virginia Wissell, Palatka Daily News Reporter

INVOCATION – Rev. Mayor Karl N. Flagg, Pastor; Mt. Tabor Baptist Church

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Commissioner Herman Somers

Chairman Purcell called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. He made opening remarks on behalf of Putnam County and set meeting protocol. Mayor Flagg called the meeting to order as well, made opening remarks on behalf of the City of Palatka and thanked the BOCC for arranging this meeting in order to foster a collaborative relationship.

VISIONING OVERVIEW – Ray Spofford, BOCC Sr. Planner distributed an outline of the Community Visioning Process Plan, phases I, II & III. All municipalities within Putnam County should conduct a ‘town meeting’ visioning process within their jurisdiction in order to get community input. Palatka officials were asked to set a date for that meeting and advise Mr. Spofford of that date.

Mr. Spofford passed out a draft survey the County plans to conduct over the next 60 days. Suggestions were taken on how to improve and/or condense the survey. Discussion also centered around the best way to conduct the surveys. Suggestions included having personnel to conduct surveys at festivals and the county fair, asking county and municipal employees to fill out a survey form, and incorporating the survey findings with data from a recently conducted Chamber of Commerce survey. The survey should be made available in Spanish. Work continues on a better method of pinpointing what region the survey respondent resides in besides zip codes only. People can make additional suggested improvements to the survey up until the end of next week; all comments should be directed to Mr. Spofford.

INTERLOCAL AGREEMENTS – Mayor Flagg said many city/county interlocal agreements are old and outdated, and many of them are not even aware of all of the agreements that are now in force. Consensus to direct Mr. Bush and Mr. Leary to meet for a review of the agreements in order to bring a report to both the City and County Commissions for discussion.

Officials agreed that today's meeting was extremely beneficial, and similar meetings should be held on a quarterly basis. Officials also agreed that a City/County Public Works coordination meeting should take place at least quarterly in order to communicate about and collaborate on upcoming projects.

Commissioner Myers announced that the Northeast Regional Planning Council is holding a meeting at 10:00 a.m. on April 4 at the SJRWMD Boardroom. They would like to showcase local tourism, and asked officials to gather brochures and information about points of interest in Palatka and Putnam County to be used for a display.

OTHER TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Old Train Station – Commissioner Harris said her Waterfront Development Committee has approached the City about the need for a safe, clean transportation hub located in the City in order to promote tourism. The Old Train Depot is centrally located and currently the City of Palatka has a grant in the works for its renovation. They would like to see the City, County and Chamber join forces to hire a full-time ticket agent. They also envision providing space to both police and sheriff's deputies for a sub-station, so that security will be available to the area. They would like to see phone services and a cab stand there, as well as a travel agent. They would like to see bus and shuttle services provided at that location as well. There are city/county collaborative 'waterfront neighborhood' grants available. They want to concentrate on that area's unique resources that one cannot find in the main shopping district on Hwy 19. Points of discussion included improving not only the Train Depot, but also an area two or three blocks in each direction surrounding the depot. Course of action discussed was:

1. Take care of the immediate problems of safe, clean facilities and security around the depot and surrounding facilities.
2. Investigate the purchase of the surrounding properties in order to clean up and develop them.
3. Put together a committee during the city's visioning meeting to develop a plan of action.

Traffic Signals/Lighting – Mr. Bush said he asked this be added to the agenda as the City would like to see lighting on Hwy 20 as far west as possible. He introduced H. C. Dunning, who maintains most the traffic & security lights in the city & county, and asked him to talk about the FDOT's lighting reimbursement program.

H. C. Dunning, Summerville Electric, said FDOT is instituting a program wherein the State will reimburse the maintenance costs for traffic signals. During the next three years they hope to work up to a funding level of \$2,200 per signal light per year. They also want to work up to funding up to 90% of the cost of street lights, up to \$150 per light.

Chairman Purcell said the BOCC has already voted to ask FDOT to light Hwy 20 from Hwy 19 all the way to the St. Johns Avenue Extension (Motes Road). FDOT has said they plan to light the highway all the way up to Nine Mile Swamp. Mr. Dunning said he is concerned about FDOT's plans to install a flashing light at the intersection with Hwy 309, as they are ineffective for all practical purposes. Chairman Purcell said he would have Mr. Merton with Public Works to follow up on these issues.

Discussion turned to the increase traffic loads to Reid Street, especially after the 4-laning of Hwys 207 and 20 is completed. Reid Street is already overloaded, and FDOT has not begun to address the effect these widening projects will have on Reid Street. Mayor Flagg asked that a representative from FDOT be asked to appear before the Commission for an update on their plans, and to discuss what needs to be done.

Fiber Optics – Tax Assessor Larry Pritchett said he is interested in seeing a fiber optic line upgrade, which will tie all government and school board complexes together and improve communications between agencies, as well as departments. It will enable agencies to exchange information easily and efficiently.

H. C. Dunning was asked to contact FDOT and arrange a joint City/County FDOT meeting to discuss street & security lighting and fiber optic line installation.

MISCELLANEOUS DISCUSSION:

Mayor Flagg said the uneven intersection of Moody Road and St. Johns Avenue is confusing and dangerous, especially due to the high number of emergency vehicles navigating that intersection. An effort should be made to square up that intersection so people don't have to make that 'jog' when crossing St. Johns Avenue.

Commissioner Azula asked the County to consider locating two ambulances in the City of Palatka, one at each Fire Station. Many times the city's one ambulance is used for non-emergency transport, and there have been times that ambulance response times have been as long as 28 minutes, as an ambulance has to come from the Melrose station.

Mayor Flagg introduced Kenneth Venables, the new Palatka Fire Chief.

Mayor Flagg said it is very encouraging to see the new cooperative spirit between public safety and public works officials with both the City and County.

Mr. Pritchett said it is remarkable how slowly Putnam County is growing, compared to the growth experienced by surrounding counties. If our population does not grow, our tax base does not grow. There is no single reason for it; a variety of reasons should be identified and addressed.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

CITY CLERK

MAYOR