

Putnam County/Municipal Governments LOGIC Meeting
January 28, 2004
Minutes

CALL TO ORDER – BOCC Commissioner Herman Somers

INVOCATION; PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Commissioner Somers

INTRODUCTIONS – Supt. Of Schools David Buckles

Present:

Putnam County BOCC: Hermon Somers, Brad Purcell, Rick Leary, Bob Merton, Don Hersey and Larry Pritchett

Putnam County School Board: David Buckles, Dothea Smith, JoAnne Barber

City of Palatka: Karl Flagg, Allen Bush, Betsy Driggers, Ken Venables, Rodney Harper

Interlachen: Ralph Godwin & Pam Wilburn

Crescent City: William “BJ” Laurie, Joe Smith, Lee Kinsella

Pomona Park: Alonzo Middleton, Nate Meade, Charlie Munn, Joe Lieb, D’Nel Flateau

Welaka: Gordon Sands, Joylene Taylor

Palatka Daily News: Brad Buck

PUTNAM COUNTY:

Bob Merton gave an update on the FDOT SIS Transportation Meeting, which he attended. The purpose of the meeting was to obtain comments on the SIS plan from rural counties, whose main concern was being left out of the program in favor of metropolitan areas. US 17 has not been designated as an SIS corridor, but is now on the ‘emerging corridor’ list and will get more attention, but right now there are no plans to 4-lane south of Satsuma.

Special Code Enforcement Master hearings will be held at the County Commission Meeting Room. There are no plans at present to hold meetings elsewhere for the handicapped and challenged. A special master has not been hired, but at this time they are soliciting area attorneys to see if there is any interest in the position.

BOCC GIS Manager – applications are being taken and there is an interview set up next week with a promising candidate. Mr. Pritchett noted the last GIS manager set up a data site for his office, which they hope to release for use by other county offices and cities. Please come by his office to check it out and offer comments.

Senior Center – All bids came in too high. They are looking for other funding sources.

Skate parks – Pam Wilburn said there was high interest in building a skate park in Interlachen. Mr. Leary said they are going to make that a component of a recreation master plan, which is being developed.

Bus Services - Mr. Leary agreed to contact Ride Solutions about getting the message out to outlying areas about who to contact for bus service.

CR309 & Better Place Plan Resurfacing – Mr. Merton said they are still holding out for DOT to take care of resurfacing CR309. The contractors have begun work on the Better Place Plan resurfacing list. They began west of Interlachen, and will work their way east. They will be in Rolling Hills by the end of next week. They anticipate all resurfacing will be completed by the end of February.

Better Government Task Force – Brad Purcell said they put together a task force to come up with recommendations on how to improve county government. Today they will hear a presentation on county government's strengths and weaknesses.

Intergovernmental Safety Committee – Mr. Merton said Putnam County and Palatka have been collaborating on their safety programs and attend each other's safety committee meetings. He believes they should take this one step further and create a county-wide committee that would meet quarterly or so. He invited a representative from each entity to attend the County's safety committee meetings on the 1st Wed. of each month at the Co. Ag Center in E. Palatka; 9:00 a.m.

CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS:

Larry Pritchett, Tax Assessor, said they are doing some renovations in their Crescent City office and are adding more customer waiting chairs in the Interlachen office.

Don Hersey, Elections Supervisor, provided informational calendars, booklets and refrigerator magnets. His department is in a new office with plenty of much-needed space. In March they will hold a Presidential Preference ballot election in which only pre-registered democrats can participate; you can no longer register at the poles.

David Buckles, Superintendent of Schools, said they are in the process of upgrading and refurbishing many of the elementary and middle school athletic fields, and invited everyone to ride by Beasley Middle School in Palatka for an example. As to the question of gangs, Mr. Buckles said they work closely with the PCSD to quell any gang-related activities and/or incidents in schools, particularly in South Putnam, where there seems to be more of a problem.

Mr. Buckles invited everyone to attend the various PCSB award ceremonies that are coming up soon. Please contact him for details. He introduced Chef Bjorn from the PHA Culinary Arts Program, whose students cooked and served lunch, and said they typically open for lunch on Thursdays and Fridays, and the public is welcome. Inquiries can be made at the front office.

CITY OF PALATKA:

Police Lt. Rodney Harper spoke on the issue of motorized/battery-operated scooters, saying they are illegal on roadways, bike paths and sidewalks. The only place they can legally be ridden is private property. You have to have a valid drivers license to operate a motorized vehicle on a public roadway, but they cannot even legally be tagged for operation on roadways in any instance. The PD has begun an aggressive education campaign and the last thing they want to do is issue people tickets, but legally they can and will as a last resort. Law enforcement agencies all over Florida are dealing with this issue, as they were a popular item at Christmas. There have been some accidents around town with property damage and there have been some deaths around the state. One of the problems seems to be that dealers who sold these items did not inform their customers of the laws. If anyone would like the PD to come and make a presentation on this issue, please contact him or Sgt. Fells at the Palatka PD. Community Suggestions have included building a park for scooter riding, but you still have the same concerns as with skateboard parks – high cost of liability insurance, must be a secure area, must be supervised when open, etc.

Suggestions from the Group:

- Give information on scooter laws to Supt. Buckles and he will see that public service announcements start running on Channel 9;
- Ask Time Warner to run public service spots on their public access channel;
- Design a flyer to be passed out at all schools and insert a flyer with utility bills; it is important that every household receive this information;
- Have students looking for community service points distribute them door-to-door;
- Require dealers who sell scooters to have customers sign 'informed consent' forms as part of the purchasing process so they will know the law up front.
- Make this part of the area's Legislative Delegation package.

Fire Chief Ken Venables said the Fire Service Task Force gave their final report last week, and one of their suggestions was a review of the manner in which fire/EMS services are funded. The County Commission may want to go the next step and solicit bids from firms to develop funding sources. Also, after 19 years as Fire Marshall, John Holley is retiring. There will be a reception for him at the Kay Larkin Station Friday at 5:00. Mark Lynady is taking his place.

Riverfront Master Plan - Mr. Bush said EDSA will hold a final public meeting to present the proposed Master Plan tomorrow night, 6:00 p.m. at Price Martin Center. This will be the last opportunity for public comment before it goes to the Commission. The next stage is to make application to DEP for the marina permit, which is a very involved process.

Riverboat update – Mr. Bush said the State budgeted more funds for this, so the Committee is looking for a larger boat at this time. Most of the new funds will go to start-up costs. They have to have the funds from the first grant spent by July, so time is of the essence.

CRESCENT CITY:

City Manager Joe Smith said at this time they are concentrating on Code Enforcement. They have installed a code enforcement board and have been working with Palatka on getting the program up and running.

Mayor Alonso Middleton said there has been an ongoing problem with gang activity, which is related to proliferation of illegal aliens in the area that come in to work the ferneries and fields. They desperately need help from the County with this problem. 400 – 500 of them congregate at the town Park on Sundays and leave a mess behind. Related crime is rampant. They will work for next to nothing and are diluting the jobs in the area. There are a lot of people out of work. They drive with no licenses and don't know traffic laws and get into a lot of traffic accidents, causing property damage and injuries.

Suggestions from the Group include:

- Notify Immigration & Naturalization Services of the problem;
- Take up the issue with the people employing them;
- Have license checks at the workplace exits to get them off the road and their vehicles impounded if they are illegal and driving without a license.

The Catfish Festival is scheduled for the 1st Saturday in April.

Commissioner Laurie asked how other municipalities or the County handles cell phone towers, and if they are regulated. Mr. Bush said Palatka has a cell tower ordinance; he can call Betsy Driggers at 329-0100 to get a copy of it.

POMONA PARK:

The Community Center is open for rentals. Call Town Hall for details.

WELAKA:

Town Clerk Pam Wilburn noted that this will be Mayor Godwin's last LOGIC meeting, as he is retiring and won't be running for office in March. Mayor Godwin was congratulated by well-wishers on his five terms of service to the citizens of Interlachen and lauded for his commitment to good government. He said he will miss being involved in local government, but it is time to retire and do some traveling with his wife.

Mayor Godwin said right now Interlachen is in a state of disrepair due to the Hwy 20 widening project, but in two years it will be finished, and it will be great. They have lost some businesses due to construction, but he hopes they will return. They have a new enterprise zone designation that follows Hwy 20 and some on 315 and are looking for lots of new businesses. The Old Town Hall renovation project is completed and looks great.

NEXT MEETING: Set for April 28 at Welaka Town Hall.

ADJOURN – 12:55 p.m.