

March 14, 2017
Board Workshop
Judicial Annex Building
Live Oak, Florida

9:00 a.m.

The Suwannee County Board of County Commissioners met on the above date and time for a workshop and the following were present: Chairman Ricky Gamble; Commissioner Don Hale; Commissioner Clyde Fleming; Commissioner Larry Sessions; and Commissioner Ronnie Richardson. Eric Musgrove, Deputy Clerk; Ms. Logan Woods, Deputy Clerk's Assistant; and Randy Harris, County Administrator, were also present. James W. Prevatt, Jr., County Attorney, was not present (but arrived later).

Chairman Gamble called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and led the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

The purpose of the workshop was to discuss several items related to the County.

The first item on the agenda was to discuss Sold Waste Collection site services and handling of materials.

County Administrator Harris noted that the Board had been given handouts regarding the Solid Waste budgets. He then discussed the budget figures in great detail, pointing out that most of the Solid Waste funds had been freed up for other uses. County Administrator Harris stated that the collection sites were currently operating at a loss; he was not proposing an increase in household assessments, merely the better use of the available funds. He then discussed in further detail the various collection sites. County Administrator Harris noted that the collection site hours needed to be changed, and also that valuable scrap items such as metal were being stolen during the sites' closed hours. He also discussed the vast amount of commercial, out-of-county, and illegal waste that was being dumped at the County's collection sites instead of being taken to the landfill in their respective counties.

County Attorney Prevatt arrived at the meeting at 9:29 a.m.

Commissioner Fleming asked if the proposal would remove all dumpsters from within the City of Live Oak. County Administrator Harris replied that those dumpsters were owned by the City and would not be affected; they were brought to the County's landfill. The proposal was for County-owned and operated dumpsters only.

County Administrator Harris discussed replacing 6- and 8-yard dumpsters with 40-yard containers in conjunction with trash compactors that would multiply the capacity of the containers while saving the County money.

Commissioner Richardson asked what would happen to the liquids that were compacted. County Administrator Harris replied that the liquid would remain within the container until dumped at the landfill, at which time it was removed and transferred to the City of Live Oak for proper disposal. Little, if any, liquids would be leached at the collection sites, unlike with the current dumpsters.

County Administrator Harris suggested leasing roll-off trucks instead of outright buying them, as it would save expenses in the long run. He also discussed increased labor costs if the County decided to increase the collection sites' open hours, but the increased costs would be more than offset by the use of 40-yard containers and compactors, as well as a reduction in vandalism and theft of scrap metals. The purchase of new equipment and other improvements to the collection sites (estimated to be \$1,566,000) would be paid for by funds that were no longer needed for landfill purposes.

After questioning from Commissioner Fleming, County Administrator Harris noted that the County's independent auditor, Richard Powell, had determined that there were sufficient freed-up funding sources to pay for all the proposed collection site changes.

Discussion ensued on the increased revenue from scrap metals if the collection sites were closed (no walk-in gates) and monitored with security systems. Discussion also followed on whether it was fair to punish all citizens for the improper actions of a few and the mixed results from a security camera system.

Chairman Gamble recognized City Administrator Ron Williams, who had to leave for a meeting but wished to speak first.

City Administrator Williams, a former graduate of the Douglass High School, voiced his support for Douglass Center upgrades before he left to attend another meeting.

Discussion continued on solid waste collection sites and the savings that would be had by moving to 40-yard containers with compactors and closing the collection sites when they were not attended (under their longer operating hours). It was also pointed out that surrounding counties had the same collection site issues as Suwannee County.

Chairman Gamble suggested improving the collection sites in phases, starting with locked gates and increased collection site hours.

Long discussion continued on methods to save the County expenses, reduce theft and liability, and improve the look of the collection sites.

The consensus of the Board was to move forward with directing the County Administrator to close collection sites and expand site open hours.

Chairman Gamble called a brief recess at 10:34 a.m.

10:43 a.m.

Chairman Gamble called the meeting back to order, and because of the number of citizens present, moved to a discussion on plans for the Douglass Center.

The third item on the agenda was to discuss future plans for the Douglass Center.

Commissioner Richardson stated that he was concerned about the condition of the existing Douglass Center buildings and the County's liability on the premises. He was also concerned with leasing certain buildings on the property when adjoining buildings were abandoned and frequently the scenes of drug sales and other illegal activities. Commissioner Richardson suggested fencing off the classrooms from public access, or even the demolition of some of the structures, until the County could make sufficient plans for the remaining properties.

Commissioner Fleming gave a brief history of the Douglass Center discussions, stating that there had been several instances in which previous Boards had discussed demolishing the Douglass Center, but when demolition had not occurred, the Douglass High School Alumni and Historical Association had stepped in and repeatedly requested public improvements. The County had set aside funding for Douglass Center work, but had not yet performed the work. There had been some disagreements, even among alumni, in what could be financially done at the Douglass Center to improve the property for public uses. Commissioner Fleming noted that the County Commission was not hindering work at the Douglass Center, but sufficient funding was not available to make many improvements at this time. He pointed out that at no time had the Board of County Commissioners voted to tear down any part of the Douglass Center, although it had been discussed in several meetings.

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Chairman Gamble suggested that the Board should first determine intended uses for the Douglass Center, which would then drive future plans.

Discussion ensued as to the possibility of using the Douglass Center, or at least the buildings that would remain after partial demolition, as a charter school. The Alumni Association was firmly against using the property as a charter school.

Chairman Gamble stated that it appeared that the Alumni Association had certain plans for the Douglass Center that they would like to see completed. He then discussed one of the proposals submitted by the Douglass High School Alumni and Historical Association to use the Douglass Center for various community events, including sporting events.

Commissioner Fleming suggested that the Douglass Center Committee appointed by the County Commission last year review the proposed plans and come back to the County for approval.

Commissioner Richardson reiterated the need to secure the facility.

Mr. Robert Ford of 8896 135th Loop, Live Oak, President of the Douglass High School Alumni and Historical Association, discussed a brief history of County discussions of the Douglass Center, including disagreements between the Alumni Association and the Board of County Commissioners as to future plans. He was concerned that the last time the Douglass Center had been discussed at a public meeting in October of 2016, it had been an additional agenda item, which had not allowed the public sufficient advanced warning to attend.

Chairman Gamble pointed out that it was a previous Board that had last discussed the Douglass Center in October of 2016, not the current Board, and there was no need to rehash supposed mistakes made at that point.

County Attorney Prevatt clarified that the Board was well within its rights to address an additional agenda item (as had done regarding the Douglass Center in October of 2016) and had done nothing illegal, despite Mr. Ford's implications. Mr. Ford clarified that he was not implying that the Board had done anything wrong, only that there had been no time to contact interested individuals before the October meeting.

Chairman Gamble stated that he had no problem with the Douglass Alumni Association coming before the Board in a regular meeting to request assistance and approval of future plans for the Douglass Center.

Discussion ensued on a previous attempt for historical preservation at the Douglass Center that had been denied, but that the current request was merely for a historical marker.

The Board tentatively agreed to have the Douglass High School Alumni and Historical Association come before them at a regular Board meeting to request assistance and approve future plans for the Douglass Center.

Mr. Ford submitted over 200 petitions from concerned citizens regarding future uses for the Douglass Center.

There being no further business to discuss concerning the Douglass Center, Chairman Gamble returned to a discussion of solid waste collection sites (the first agenda item).

Commissioner Richardson suggested that the new Wellborn collection site should be the test site for compactors and 40-yard containers.

Discussion ensued on performing collection site upgrades with in-house labor as much as possible, although some electrical work would need to be contracted.

The Board discussed the process of extending collection site hours, closing them when no attendants were on site, and beginning the process of preparing collection sites for compactors.

County Administrator Harris stated that it would take approximately two months to modify the collection sites with a locked gate, additional fencing, and educating the public on the change in hours.

It was pointed out that the Board had already approved the closing-in of the collection sites and extension of open hours in a previous regular Board meeting.

Chairman Gamble suggested that County Administrator Harris and his staff begin looking at a priority list for closing the collection site gates and extending work hours.

County Administrator Harris asked for clarification on the number of days that the Board wished to have the collection sites open.

The Board discussed keeping the collection sites open four or five days a week for 11 or 12 hours each day.

The Board tentatively agreed upon keeping the collection sites open and attended four days a week for 12 hours each day from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Chairman Gamble opened the floor to public comments.

Mr. Bo Hancock, 6135 Higgins Road, Live Oak, discussed the history of dumpsters in the County. Dumpsters were originally unattended but then moved into a system of attended, fenced-in collection sites that was still not working sufficiently, even with the addition of security systems. Mr. Hancock suggested solving the full problem instead of slowly making one change at a time; he recommended immediately instituting the compactor system proposed earlier in the meeting, starting with the Wellborn site that would be under construction in the near future.

Mr. Greg Scott, Recreation Director, suggested opening collection sites on Sunday afternoons as well.

Glenn Clark, 27852 23rd Place, Branford, suggested that the Board look at the future. He discussed the amount of trash that was found on the sides of the roads leading to the collection sites, as well as out-of-county users who were trashing the collection sites. He suggested enforcement of the County's laws in regards to solid waste, even if it was simply positioning law enforcement near collection sites while they filled out paperwork in their vehicles. Mr. Clark suggested increasing the days that the collection sites were open and phasing in compactors.

Chairman Gamble reiterated that the gates must be closed at the collection sites before compactors were installed. A proposal would be discussed at the next regular agenda. Chairman Gamble then withdrew agenda item six for discussion at the next regular meeting and moved to the fourth item on the agenda.

The fourth item on the agenda was to discuss plans for the 176th paving project.

Commissioner Richardson briefly discussed the history of the 176th paving project and made sure that the Board was aware that this road was a priority for his first year in office.

Chairman Gamble stated that the other items on the workshop agenda would be discussed at a regular Board meeting.

The second item on the agenda was to discuss the rules for public comments during Commission meetings.

This item was pulled for discussion at the next regular Board meeting.

The third item on the agenda was to discuss future plans for the Douglass Center.

This item was discussed in the middle of the first agenda item.

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The fourth item on the agenda was to discuss plans for the 176th paving project.

This item was briefly discussed after the first agenda item.

The fifth item on the agenda was the potential for requiring permits for demolition.

This item was pulled for discussion at the next regular Board meeting.

The sixth item on the agenda was to discuss adding Good Friday to the Board of County Commissioners' holiday list in order to be consistent with other elected official offices.

This item was pulled for discussion at the next regular meeting.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 11:48 a.m.

ATTEST:

_____, DC
BARRY A. BAKER
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT

RICKY GAMBLE, CHAIRMAN
SUWANNEE COUNTY BOARD OF
OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS