

**FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING
(CONTINUED FROM JANUARY 15, 2008)
FRANKLIN COUNTY COURTHOUSE ANNEX
FEBRUARY 5, 2008
1:30 PM**

MINUTES

Commissioners Present: Noah Lockley Jr. – Chairman, Joseph Parrish – Vice Chairman, Cheryl Sanders, Russell Crofton, Bevin Putnal

Others Present: Alan Pierce – Director of Administrative Services, Michael Shuler – County Attorney, Michael Morón – Board Secretary

Call to Order (1:30 pm)

Chairman Lockley called the Special Meeting to order.

Special Meeting (1:31 PM)

Mr. Pierce discussed the referendum election and the lowest bidder ability to be flexible with the project starting date. Mr. Pierce stated that DEP, confirmed by letter, that the State has 3.1 million of the State's estimated share of 7.3 million under contract with Franklin County and recommended removing "the gap" property owners from the project, but stated that they will still be required to pay the storm protection fee.

Mike Dombroski, a County consultant on this project, stated that removing "the gap" properties from the project will not have a substantial effect on the project.

Mr. Pierce stated that any beachfront property owner who doesn't sign the easement, will have the "swimming pool" effect in front of their property, but will be charged the assessment anyway.

Mr. Dombroski stated that over time, the "swimming pool" effect will go away.

Mr. Pierce stated that there cannot be a "pick and choose" type situation of who gets sand in "the gap", it has to be all or none of the property owners.

Mr. Dombroski explained the wording of the easement that has to be signed by the property owners that will allow the sand to be placed in front of their property.

Sam Rogers, of Alligator Point, asked about the different zones of the project.

Attorney Justin Green, of Mowery & Mitchell, representing some of "the gap" property owners, asked the Board to approve to Mr. Pierce's recommendation and remove "the gap" property owners from the project.

Jim Wetherton, of Alligator Point, also agreed with removing "the gap" property owners from the project, and read a statement that explained why sand is not needed in "the gap" area.

Bill Haughton, of Alligator Point but doesn't live in "the gap" area, stated that the project should be delayed until the main road is repaired and paved, doesn't think that Alligator Point is a highly urbanized area and therefore should not have to pay for this project, and asked the Board to delay the project because the actual cost of the project is not known. Mr. Haughton also stated that per capita, Franklin County has the highest taxable rates, did not agree with dredging because it is not environmentally safe and suggested another option, and thought that the County is rushing into the project because a hurricane like Dennis could wipe out the all of the sand that will be paid for.

Bill Wargo, of Alligator Point, expressed his displeasure with the project, didn't see a need for the vote if it is non-binding, verified that each platted parcel will get a vote but didn't think that it was fair because some property owners will get multiple votes, thought that there were too many unknown aspects of the project, and discussed the negative biological effect of the project.

Ken Osborne, of Alligator Point, asked how much is the County planning on contributing to the project, stated some of the taxes that are paid by the property owners of Alligator Point, discussed the condition of the road in Alligator Point, stated that it is the County's responsibility to build and protect the road, stated the amount of taxpayer funds used for Weem's Hospital including the new one cent sales tax, suggested that the Board use the last quarter payment of \$250,000 intended for Weems for the Alligator Point project, and also use \$30,000 from TDC annually for the Alligator Point project.

Motion by Sanders, seconded by Crofton, to allocate \$25,000 from the TDC account, per year, for the Alligator Point project if the referendum passes; Motion carried 5-0.

Mr. Haughton, of Alligator Point asked each Commissioner that if the majority of Alligator Point property owners voted against the project if they would vote the same way; each Commissioner responded that they would.

Margret, of Alligator Point, disagreed with the new location of the road.

Dick Waters, of Alligator Point, asked about the TIF option being included in the referendum wording, using the bald point trust fund for the project, and finding another funding source for the condemnation.

Betty Blair, of Alligator Point, asked why, if her property doesn't abut the bay or gulf, she still has to pay the assessment for the project, and was not in favor of the project.

Ruth Ann Adams, of Alligator Point, stated that the assessment is unfair and explained why. Christy, of Nabors, Giblin, & Nickerson another County consultant on this project, did not recommend using the TIF at this time.

Gloria Riley, Alligator Point, stated that property owners need to know, as soon as possible, when there will be a firm amount that each property owner will be responsible for.

Motion by Sanders, seconded by Parrish, to commit \$250,000 out of Bald Point Trust fund, if it is not used for condemnation, for the Alligator Point beach restoration project; Motion carried 5-0.

Motion by Sanders, seconded by Putnal, to use the staff recommendation and remove the Gap property owners from the project and proceed with the referendum; Motion carried 5-0.

Christy discussed the different finance options including Hancock Bank and Regions Bank. Attorney Shuler and Mr. Pierce discussed the ballot language.

Christy discussed the elections rules and the ballot language.

Doris Shiver-Gibbs, the County Supervisor of Elections, stated that she will not be conducting this election because it does not include registered voters of the County, but is willing to have the ballots returned to her office to be counted, and explained how this process would take place.

Camille Tharpe, of GSG a County consultant on this project, stated that her company will send out the ballots but asked Mr. Pierce and Mr. Dombroski to review the mail out list.

Attorney Shuler agreed that GSG should mail out the ballots and have the Supervisor of Election accept and count the completed ballots.

Bill Wargo, of Alligator Point, asked if unification of title would cause a property owner to only pay one assessment for the 8 year period. Attorney Shuler discussed this matter with Mr. Wargo. Ms. Tharpe stated that if it was unified before Jan 1, 2008, it would be valid.

Ms. Tharpe stated that the proposed schedule for the referendum election will be a ballot mail out on Feb 15, ballots must be returned or postmarked by March 7, and the results will be announced at a special meeting on March 11 at 9 AM.

Mrs. Shiver Gibbs stated that the ballots won't be counted until March 10.

Commissioner Parrish asked that perhaps the County consider running PSAs in the media explaining the referendum schedule.

Adjourn (3:09 PM)

There being no further business Chairman Lockley adjourned the meeting.

Noah Lockley Jr., Chairman FCBCC

Attest:

Marcia M. Johnson, Clerk of Courts