

JANUARY 11, 2001 – WORKSHOP

The Board of County Commissioners, Walton County, Florida, held a workshop on Thursday, January 11, 2001 at 9:00 A.M. in the Boardroom of the Walton County Courthouse.

The following Board members were present: Commissioner Tim Pauls, Commissioner Larry D. Jones, Chairman Herman L. Walker, Vice-Chairman Lane Rees and Commissioner Gene Ryan. Ms. Shirl Williams, Administrative Supervisor, and Ms. Martha Ingle, Clerk of Courts, were also present.

Chairman Walker called the meeting to order and stated that the purpose of the meeting was to review building plans and current construction.

Mr. Ronnie Bell, Public Works Director, and Ms. Shirl Williams presented information relating to the property the county currently owns adjacent to the courthouse along with other properties that have been made available for purchase. Some of the buildings include the McHenry Building, Chandler Building, Anderson property, Henderson property and vacant property north of the annex. The county recently purchased the Rushing property that lies directly east of the courthouse. Commissioner Rees questioned which buildings county staff occupies and their location. Ms. Williams explained that after renovations have been completed at the Warren Building the Supervisor of Elections, Veteran's Office, Section 8 Housing Staff, Human Resource and Ken Little would all be relocated over there to free up space at or near the courthouse.

Mr. Bell explained that staff at the County Shop would be consolidated into the new Public Works Building. The Shop will be renovated by removing the upstairs portion of the building therefore creating a larger bay. This will provide better service on

county vehicles. Commissioner Pauls explained that problems exist with exhaust fumes and felt that this was a good idea; there are also concerns with ADA requirements regarding the upstairs area. Mr. Bell explained who would be relocated to the new 6,000 square foot Public Works Building.

Discussion was held regarding the court facilities. Judge Lindsey has requested additional space in the courthouse when the Supervisor of Elections moves out. Ms. Williams stated that it would be approximately six weeks due to the delay for installation of fiber optic lines for communications.

Mrs. Sue Carter, Tax Collector, asked the Commissioners to consider the amount of growth her office has experienced and the overcrowding situation. She also stated that the increase in services in South Walton would not decrease the need for space at the main office.

Discussion was held regarding the location of the Public Defender and the State's Attorney's Office. Mr. Bell explained that the Public Defender is currently located at the old Sun Bank Building and the State's Attorney is located in the McHenry Building, which the county rents at an approximate cost of \$38,000.00 per year. Its possible that the State's Attorney will be relocated to the Section 8 Housing Building if space permits.

Dr. Susan Turner, Walton County Health Department, stated that when the new health department is completed it would free up an additional county owned building of approximately 17,000 square feet. She also stated that there would be additional space for construction of another building at the site of the new health department.

Other buildings the county owns are the Agricultural Center, Farmer's Market and the Property Appraiser's Building.

Mr. Finley Skocdopole and Mr. Paul Trimble, CarlanKillam Architectural Firm, presented an overview of the existing courthouse and parking situation and explained what properties are available that could be used for additional parking. Mr. Skocdopole explained that the current number of parking spaces is below the city's requirements. The City is requiring that adequate parking be provided with any new construction. All setbacks must meet the City's requirements and all parking must be within the allowable distance. Ms. Williams presented CarlanKillam's cost of \$1.3 million for the parking addition.

Discussion took place regarding how the jail was constructed to house 101 high security inmates. There is a maximum of 16-20 maximum-security inmates at any one time and the remaining jail is filled to capacity with other inmates. The need for additional space to house low security inmates was also discussed.

Ms. Williams presented costs of purchasing and renovating the old Wal-Mart Building at \$3,009,700.00 versus the cost of constructing a new courthouse at a cost of \$8,800,000.00. Discussions also centered on the most cost effective manner to construct a new jail/prison camp for low security inmates.

Mr. Skocdopole presented the proposed courthouse addition plans, uses of space and costs for the various phases of the projects. Lengthy discussion was held regarding possible duplication of functions between the Architects and Construction Manager. Mr. Charles Carlan presented alternative ways to lower the costs, however, several people spoke against giving up that portion of CarlanKillam's service because they felt it is necessary for checks and balances during the project and for quality control. Chairman Walker asked if Mr. Imfeld could assume that responsibility as a means of checks and

balances. Mr. Imfeld advised that he does not hold engineering qualifications and that he would have to rely on the certifications of other people. However, he does oversee the indirect costs related to the project.

Mr. Jack Huggins voiced his concerns with proper checks and balance and stated that it would be risky to terminate the services of CarlanKillam for this phase of the project. Mr. Carlan stated that the county could amend their contract and pay only for specific services as they are provided.

Mr. James Lewis, Clemons and Rutherford Architectural Firm for the Coastal Branch Library, stated that he feels the service is necessary because of certain risks involved.

Mr. Mike Richards stated that he would not consider eliminating the services.

The Commissioners recessed briefly.

Mr. Bell addressed the issue of the Wal-Mart Building, which contains 44,780 square feet. Comparison information was also presented relating to the shopping center building purchased in Santa Rosa County and the costs of renovation. Chairman Walker voiced concerns with the costs of possible roof renovations to Wal-Mart.

Commissioner Ryan stated that the goal is to consolidate county services by gaining space that is accessible to the public. He questioned why funds should be spent to renovate the current courthouse when future expansion may be needed and would have nowhere to expand in the future. He felt that Wal-Mart would provide sufficient space for the current needs and also provide additional space for future expansion. Parking should also be considered when expanding the courthouse facility. He also stated that construction of a work camp would be less costly than building a new jail, the current jail

could continue to be used for high security inmates and would also provide the additional needed space for females and juveniles.

Commissioner Jones stated that if space is freed up around the courthouse then offices could be consolidated, eliminating rent payments and unnecessary properties could be liquidated.

Attorney Kelvin Wells stated that the Wal-Mart Building could be used for all non-judicial facilities with room for future expansion.

Commissioner Pauls questioned if a community consensus had been taken. Former Commissioner Van Ness Butler Jr. gave an overview of the public hearing that was held in 1997 stating that there was a public outcry in opposition to the purchase of old Wal-Mart. Mr. J.W. Adkinson stated that the majority of growth is taking place near the Interstate and would eventually be congested and feels that the Wal-Mart facility is not the proper location for courthouse facilities. Mr. Jack Huggins agreed and felt that the courthouse should remain in the present location.

The Commissioners recessed for lunch.

The Board reconvened with a presentation regarding the South Walton Governmental/Education Center and a brief discussion of the settlement agreement. Mr. Skocdopole explained the layout of the 114 acres along with the 6.8-acre tract the county purchased separately. He showed a map depicting the layout of the proposed buildings and stated that further development northward depends on the removal of the Eglin tower. Attorney Miller advised that Eglin is agreeable to replacing the tower with fiber optic lines.

Ms. Susan Paladini addressed the Board regarding the settlement agreement and the proposed bike paths and greenways. Ms. Paladini feels that amendments have been made reducing the amount of trails and bike paths not in agreement with the Settlement Agreement.

Mr. Skocdopole presented the conceptual schematic floor plan for the South Walton Governmental Education Center, phase I. Attorney Miller stated that according to the plans, there is a courtroom and if that is the case then judges chambers and a jury room would also be necessary.

Mr. Carlan reiterated again that the only costs for changes that have been made are the changes associated with the relocation of the Sheriff Department's property.

Chairman Walker stated that a determination needs to be made as to the amount of required space by each constitutional officer and what space is needed for non-governmental agencies that might be placed on the 40-acre site on J.D. Miller Road. Chairman Walker voiced concerns with the amount of space a post office will take up due to the use of large vehicles. Mr. Butler stated that a post office would serve the needs of South Walton and being a government agency it would be allowed in the Town Center.

Mr. Joe Stanko, representing the Cultural Arts Association, addressed the Commissioners regarding their proposed facility, which has expanded to 15,000 square feet from the originally proposed 2,500 square feet.

Ms. Pam Tedesco, Walton County Chamber of Commerce, appeared before the Commissioners and advised that their plans consist of a 4,900 square foot building.

Chairman Walker voiced concerns with the amount of funds that have already been spent on developing these plans and yet no development has actually taken place

yet. He also suggested beginning construction with a two-story building that would be large enough for all of the current space needs then expand to the front of the property as future needs arise.

Commissioner Pauls asked Ms. Paladini to elaborate on her concerns. Ms. Paladini stated that buffers have been removed. She also requested that paths be added from J.D. Miller Road through the property to the school and on through the Town Center. Commissioner Pauls agreed that the Town Center needs to be user friendly with sidewalks.

Mr. Doug Wright stated that it would be beneficial to the County to overlap construction projects in order to save on costs of the site supervisor being on location.

Vice-Chairman Rees requested an update on the leakage situation on the Tom Thumb property. Mr. Bell stated that contaminates showed up from time to time, however a survey was conducted and there are no contaminates showing up on the county's 40-acre parcel.

Mr. Lewis gave an overview on the progress of construction at the South Walton Library. The library consists of 3,000 square feet and has room for future expansion. Mr. Lewis stated that June 2001 has been set for their substantial completion date with a 30-day punch list date. Chairman Walker questioned if anyone foresees a problem with the water table; they did not foresee any problem.

Dr. Susan Turner gave an overview for the construction of the new north Walton Health Department facility. She stated that the county purchased the property and the state is providing \$1,021,000.00 for the construction. Mr. Hugh Mosley, Architect, stated that their proposed date for bid release is the middle of March and construction is

proposed to begin in June with final completion in approximately eight months. The building consists of 9,000 square feet and will house the WIC Program, Environmental Services and the health services. Dr. Turner planned for a 10-year projected growth and stated that the building will belong to the county upon completion of construction.

Mr. Randy Stokes, Walton County Chamber Foundation, answered questions relating to the layout of the Chamber building in the Town Center. Mr. Stokes stated that they have been communicating with Carlan Killam regarding the layout and advised that they are 85-90% complete with their plans. Ms. Tedesco stated that they would begin their fundraising in the very near future for the estimated \$400,000.00 and currently have pledges for \$165,000.00 in addition to in-kind services. The Foundation has yet to determine the amount of cash needed on hand to begin construction.

Attorney Miller reminded Ms. Tedesco that they are still suppose to prepare the property lease agreement if they have not yet done so.

Mr. Mark Davis spoke on behalf of the school board. He stated that they hope to take possession of the south Walton school in July 2001 and will open for school in the fall of 2001 with a target of 600 students grade 9-12. Mr. Davis advised that much consideration has been spent on the issue of greenways.

Vice-Chairman Rees reminded Mr. Davis of the workshop that will be held on January 30th to discuss road maintenance.

Mr. Joe Stanko addressed the Commissioners regarding the Catherine Cole Arts Center. He stated that they would be constructing a gallery that can be used for a variety of uses. They will also be constructing a theater for performing arts that will serve the

community, college and schools. They are looking at a date of June for their ground breaking. Mr. Stanko agreed to prepare a footprint for the Board's review at a later date.

Mr. Bell requested clarification regarding the following issues: whether they would like to proceed with plans for the two-story, 36,000 square foot building, or one floor 19,000 square foot Governmental/Education Building; final approval for the arts center; agreement with the Chamber; site for the post office; design for an additional building between the Chamber and the Governmental Center Building; and a master plan for the 40-acre parcel. North Walton issues of concern are the following: purchase of Wal-Mart; action on adjacent properties at the courthouse; and design on proposed courthouse addition.

Ms. Williams requested direction on how to continue with phase I of the Governmental/Education Center.

Commissioner Pauls questioned budgeting issues for capital projects, which will be addressed at a later date.

Commissioner Ryan reminded the Board that action taken at the last meeting regarding the lobbyist might cause the county to be without a lobbyist during the next cycle. The Commissioners stated that they would address this issue at the next meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 P.M.

APPROVED: _____
Herman L. Walker, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Martha Ingle, Clerk of Courts