

## FEBRUARY 05, 2004-TOWN HALL MEETING

The Board of County Commissioners, Walton County, Florida, held a Town Hall Meeting on Thursday, February 05, 2004 at 6:00 p.m. at the Eucheeanna Community Center.

The following Board members were present: Larry Jones, Chair, Tim Pauls, Vice-Chair, Commissioner Lane Rees, Commissioner Kenneth Pridgen, and Commissioner Ro Cuchens. Mr. Ronnie Bell, Interim County Administrator, and Attorney Gary Vorbeck, Director of Legal Services were also present.

Commissioner Pridgen led with prayer followed by the pledge of allegiance to the American Flag. Commissioner Rees, host commissioner, opened the meeting by welcoming the public and introducing each commissioner. He also introduced each department head that was present to answer questions.

Commissioner Rees presented a power point program that explained various aspects of the county. The presentation, prepared by Ken Little, Citizens Services Director, gave a brief description of each county department and described current and future projects.

Mr. Rees opened the floor for public comments. One member of the audience asked if a person could dial 911 from a pay phone if they did not have any money. Mr. Bell responded that 911, or 0, could be dialed from any pay phone. He further explained a new technology process that will make information from mobile phones more available for emergency response. The process consists of two phases: Phase I will allow cell phone numbers to be identified; Phase II will allow the proximity of a person's location to be identified.

Mr. Billy Fountain asked if the jail would remain at its current location once the renovation is complete. Commissioner Rees replied that the current plans are for the jail to remain at its present location. He asked Mr. Collier to give a more specific update on the bids being received. Mr. Collier updated the public on the bids being received and further explained the plans for the courthouse and jail renovations.

Mr. Bruce Peacock asked what roads in the Eucheeanna area were on the list for the road-paving program. Commissioner Rees listed several roads in the area that are on the list. Mr. Russ Barry, Public Works Director, further discussed right-of-way and drainage issues. He stated that soon a meeting would be scheduled to meet with the property owners in the area to discuss these issues. Further discussion was held.

Mr. Larry Foss asked what would happen if his house was built in the county right-of-way. Commissioner Pauls spoke about similar situations that he has had to contend with. Further discussion was held regarding right-of-ways and drainage.

Mr. Sonny Heath asked if the County or the City owns the right-of-way from Bay Avenue to Circle Drive. One member of the audience explained that the County owns the right-of-way up to Second Street and the city owns from that point on.

Mr. Bill Steadley-Campbell asked Commissioner Rees what he has done to improve the Eucheeanna area since he had been elected as commissioner. Commissioner Rees listed several past and current projects. Further discussion was held.

Mr. Fountain inquired about the status of the old hospital building. Mr. Collier, Construction Manager, spoke about several options that have been considered. Discussion was held regarding one of the options: demolition of the building and allowing the City of DeFuniak Springs to construct a park in its place. Mr. Jim

Armstrong expressed concern with the county's responsibility to repay the bond. Several other members of the audience spoke in favor of establishing an assisted living facility.

Mr. Gayland Jones asked about having a sign for the community center placed by the highway to make public announcements. Staff was directed to review the issue.

Commissioner Pauls spoke about future changes that he expects will dramatically affect the lives of the Walton County residents. He urged the citizens to become more involved in making decisions for the future. Chairman Jones thanked everyone in the audience for attending the meeting. He urged the public to contact the commissioners via email or by phone to discuss issues or address problems. Commissioner Pridgen also expressed his appreciation to the public for attending the meeting. He encouraged the public to contact the Board to address their concerns. Commissioner Rees gave a brief history of past town hall meetings and invited the public to attend the regular BCC meetings.

Discussion was held regarding water issues.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
Larry D. Jones, Chairman

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Martha Ingle, Clerk of Court