

Joint Hearing of the Tallahassee City Commission
and the
Leon County Board of Commissioners

EVALUATION AND APPRAISAL REPORT

Monday, February 20, 2006

1:30 – 2:45

City Commission Chambers

The Board of County Commissioners of Leon County met in special joint session with the City of Tallahassee on Monday, February 20, 2006 in the City Commission Chambers with Commissioners DePuy, Sauls, Rackleff, and Grippa. Also present was County Attorney Thiele, County Administrator Alam, and Deputy Clerk Diane Norvell. City Commissioners present were Mustian (Acting Chairman), Lightsey, Katz, and Gillum. Also present were Assistant City Attorney Hurst and City Manager Favors.

Facilitators were Wayne Tedder, Fred Goodrow, Craig Diamond from the Tallahassee-Leon County Planning Department.

Mr. Craig Diamond explained that the Commissions need to select three – four major issues to send to Department of Community Affairs (DCA). Those issues are going to be the focus of this evaluation and appraisal report. Mr. Diamond explained that various ideas have been recommended through the Planning Commission and various citizens group which held meetings throughout the community over the past month.

Commissioner Rackleff recommended, in the absence of a quorum, that staff hit the high points. He stated there appears to be no substantive decisions to make tonight and the Commissions are simply helping to set an agenda and give adequate direction to staff.

Staff advised that it would be necessary for the City and County Commission to take action to authorize the Mayor and Chair to send a letter to DCA with those selected target issues.

Mr. Goodrow, Planning Department, further elaborated that the purpose of the meeting is to brief the Boards on the issues that have come up through a

community process and communications with affected departments and the Planning Commission. He is looking for a sign off by both Commissions with regard to the "Letter of Intent" component of the EAR process. The letter of intent is communication from the local government as to what it expects to carry out as part of the evaluation and appraisal report. When the DCA signs off on this letter, it becomes an agreement about the scope of work that the EAR will include, so it is a list of issues that becomes the focus for the analysis and ultimately a series of evaluation and appraisal report recommendations for future amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Goodrow explained that local government agrees to go ahead and tackle those issues as part of the EAR, and the DCA will not create or add any new issues to be judged for sufficiency when the EAR is submitted to them at the end of this process.

Planning staff initiated a public input or scoping process back in the fall; four Town Hall meetings were held and an article was placed in the Tallahassee Democrat. The Planning Commission held a workshop and a scoping meeting was held with representatives of various state review agencies and representatives of local governments for the EAR Report. The agenda packet for today was distributed to major business organizations so they were notified of the issues.

Mr. Woodrow listed the highpoints:

Attachment 4 summarizes the analysis that has gone on last summer up through last month. There was a total of 91 community recommendations and staff summarized them into a total of 14 categories and then grouped them into themes of target issues which will be staff's priorities. Staff evaluated each theme to determine how well the process would suffice and turned them into a series of plan recommendations. Staff also evaluated whether or not local government, through department programs, capital improvement projects, and other planning initiatives would be equally adept at resolving or addressing any of the community issues that bubbled up through the process.

Staff noted that Attachment #4 shows the four themes which identify problems and preliminary proposals on how to proceed. The EAR is data collection and analysis and, ultimately, policy evaluation and coordination with all the affected departments which will become the basis for a series of recommendations in the EAR report for future changes or possible future

changes to the Comp plan. Those will be brought back in one and half years to the Boards and citizens for further input before any final action is made.

The 4 issues are: Transportation, Affordable housing, land use conflicts, and water quality. Under each of the headers in Attachment 4 is a long series of issues – some were reframed by staff after going through public input process. DCA requested that these be presented as a series of community concerns.

Commissioner Rackleff pointed out that there are approximately 65,000 students which have a huge impact on the area. He suggested that staff include a future list of issues to include such things as building more campus housing and multi-modal transportation district. Staff explained that this issue was raised at the regional scoping meeting with the state review agencies and they directed him to have the EAR reflect on the role that Tallahassee/Leon County serve as a concentration of college students. Planning staff will address some of the needs and impacts of large student population under both the affordable housing category, land use conflicts category, and transportation category. Staff stated that they will modify the language to make “more on campus” more pronounced. He stated the multi-modal transportation is included in the list of sub-issues under the themes and one of staff’s responsibilities is to further evaluate through the EAR reporting process the applicability and feasibility, and where the multi-modal boundaries should be set. EAR process opens the door for staff to make the necessary reviews to determine what to include and the outcome of the EAR process is a package of amendments and recommendations. This could be incorporated in the review process.

Mr. Diamond explained that the nature of this Ear report is different than it has been in the past; the State is interested in having each local government concentrate on what its core community issues are - begin to get the comp plan to target them more aggressively. That is why they use this letter of intent and the issues identified as the basis or part of the basis for sufficiency and review. This list of issues is the minimum of what staff expects to carry out – they can do other things, but they want to keep the list manageable.

Commissioner Lightsey referred to the last bullet in the document regarding the water quality issue which states that there is no way to address inter-county water quality matters. She stated that there is no new way of doing it, but the regional vehicle which they have is the regional planning council.

She wanted to know why this was not utilized more effectively, although there was no need to reinvent the wheel. Commissioner Lightsey further stated that all the political jurisdictions are represented at the Apalachee Regional Planning Council and they have tried to address some of the water quality issues, the septic tanks, the buildings and flood plains. She wanted to know why there was no recognition that the vehicle, Apalachee Regional Planning Council, exists.

Craig Diamond responded that at this time in the process, they are not evaluating solutions but their task is to identify concerns and issues, and solutions may be a future policy of the Comp Plan to more rigorously engage the regional planning council - these are all possible responses. Staff is currently trying to narrow the scope of issues that they will actively address and label, or identify sets of solutions that may be solvable without plan-based amendments or without EAR amendments; they may be able to address some on their own outside the process. Staff is using this as a vehicle to define the scope of activity and research and they may come back with a set of recommendations that include such policies as increased intergovernmental coordination using existing bodies and responsibilities to address certain issues such as inter-county water quality concerns.

Commissioner Thaeil stated that he wanted to "shoe horn" the community's growing concern with energy usage and suggested developing comprehensive energy policies for the community. Commissioner Thaeil suggested looking at innovative strategies for promoting reduced energy perhaps through regulation and development incentives. He asked that staff find a way to address that through the EAR process.

Commissioner Gillum referred to the affordable housing issue and indicated that there are two emergencies, the unavailability of affordable housing and low and/or no-income housing. It was noted that the Housing Authority's waiting list is 900 plus and two years' long. Commissioner Gillum pointed out that the lack of affordable housing is driving the size and growth of the surrounding counties, which is not a bad thing except that it affects the entire transportation system if the County does not take a more aggressive approach to transportation planning. He suggested incorporating the low-income and no-income into the affordable piece, it would help resolve burgeoning community issue.

Mr. Diamond responded that the issue was looked at in the scoping meeting with DCA and the state reviewing agencies and the relationship between the housing market here and adjoining communities. Staff would be looking at this in more detail.

Commissioner Rackleff stated that in reality we are running short of oil and energy costs will be much higher which impacts transportation and housing and other areas. The second item he mentioned was that it is clear that nationwide housing prices are overpriced - 4,000 - 6,000 square feet homes are not affordable homes.

Commissioner Lightsey stated that the City has the Tal Tran Renaissance in trying to get more rider ship on transit and will be pursuing that aggressively. She suggested that perhaps alternative fuels could be used in fleet vehicles and building code modifications be considered. Commissioner Lightsey suggested that perhaps the County would provide increased support for transit. Also, colleges and governments do not have aggressive programs for green buildings for energy efficiency and conservation measures. Commissioner Lightsey suggested a visual preference survey be conducted; this would demonstrate that there could be higher density and intensity land use if the structures are designed effectively and wanted to know if both governments would commit to that.


Commissioner Katz stated that apparently there is a lot of flexibility on the themes and noted the importance of housing issues in the community. He felt that energy conservation issues fit in closely with the other items discussed today and felt the list was good and covered in the themes.

Mr. Diamond stated that the Commissions should be cognizant that if they want to include energy through the EAR process, it is likely that policies will need to be adopted to address them as part of the Comp Plan. He noted that they could be addressed in an independent process or some other mechanism that does not need to be plan-driven.

Commissioner Rackleff stated that he does not see where the City is aggressively pursuing greater energy efficiency methods and most places that have a big energy bill are pursuing incentives. He suggested the importance of improving.


Commissioner Gillum moved, duly seconded by Commissioner Sauls and carried unanimously, to authorize the Mayor and the Chair to send the "Letter of Intent" to DCA.

There being no further business to come before the City and County Commissions, the joint meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

APPROVED: 
Bill Proctor
Chairman

ATTEST:





Bob Inzer
Clerk of the Circuit Court