



MEETING MINUTES
JOINT MEETING WITH LAKE COUNTY ELECTED OFFICIALS
OUR COMMUNITY – OUR FUTURE
Session 4
Wednesday, June 11, 2008
Bob Norris Auditorium, Lake County Agricultural Center
1951 Woodlea Road
Tavares, Florida 32778

Present:

- Council Member Ray Goodgame
Commissioner Jennifer Hill
Commissioner James Rotella
Council Member Glenn Burns
John Harris
Sean Parks
Mayor Matthew Baumann
Mayor Pro-Tem Mary Marquard
Commissioner Linda Stewart
Council Member Jack Hogan
Mayor David Yeager
Commissioner Darrel Martin
Commissioner Sharon Kelly
Mayor Chris Bell
Commissioner Albert Goldberg
Vice Mayor John Gunter
Mayor Evelyn Smith
Mayor Melissa DeMarco
Mayor Hillard "Shep" Shephard
Mayor Nancy Clutts
Councilmember Norb Thomas
Council Member Keith Mullins
Council Member Allen Sherrod
Council Member Jim Gearhart
Council Member Judy Tice
Russ Sloan
Dottie Keedy
Harry Fix
Lou Fabrizio
Jan Zacharchuk
Ray San Fratello
Ron Wallace
Sandra Carter

Representing:

- City of Clermont
Lake County BCC
City of Eustis
Town of Montverde
Lake Soil and Water
Lake County Water Auth.
City of Groveland
City of Mascotte
Lake County BCC
City of Clermont
City of Minneola
City of Fruitland Park
City of Fruitland Park
City of Fruitland Park
City of Fruitland Park
City of Fruitland Park
City of Eustis
City of Mount Dora
Town of Astatula
City of Tavares
City of Tavares
City of Clermont
City of Groveland
City of Groveland
Town of Astatula
Lake-Sumter Comm. College
Lake County Economic Dev.
Lake County School District
East Lake Chamber
Leesburg Chamber
South Lake Chamber
Chamber Alliance
Recording Secretary

Welcome and Introductions

The Joint Meeting of the Lake-Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization (LSMPO) and Lake County Elected Officials was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Clermont Councilmember and LSMPO Chairman Elect Ray Goodgame, for the purpose of discussing and sharing information regarding "Our Community – Our Future". This was the fourth session. He then gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was properly noticed.

Mr. T. J. Fish, Executive Director, Lake-Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization, asked that each individual present at the table introduce themselves, at which time he applauded the City of Fruitland Park for having its entire City Commission present. He stated that community stakeholders, elected officials, and regional resource agencies were present to discuss, in a panel format, solutions to the following four issues, known as the Big Four:

- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Water
- Education

Mr. Fish pointed out that these were not the only issues of concern - that there were also issues concerning public safety, health care, affordable housing, etc., but that he felt it would be good if they could focus on the interrelationship of these four issues and what opportunities there are for partnerships and develop a template of how to tackle the bigger picture issues. He stated that, in a time of scarce resources, partnerships will be discussed a lot.

Education – Projects, Concurrency and Educational Initiatives

Mr. Harry Fix, Growth Planning Director, Lake County School District, gave a brief power point presentation on some of the things that are happening in the Central Florida area, with regard to education, at which time he discussed the County's capital program and how it ties into school concurrency, as well as some educational initiatives that are happening and how they tie into the economic development that is going on in the County. He pointed out the fact that, in 1887, Lake County was carved out of both Orange and Sumter Counties and, over the next 100 years, was one of the largest producers of citrus throughout the State. However, in the 1900s, a housing boom in Orange County began spreading westward into Lake County, along SR 50 and the Turnpike. People came to Lake County, because of better access to roads and schools and what was perceived as a high quality of life. Between 2000 and 2007, Lake County schools experienced a 50% increase in enrollment – from 26,600 students to just over 40,500 students. The population in the County has been growing gradually for several decades, with the slow sell off of many of the groves, and the School District has had to have an aggressive capital plan, to keep pace with the residential development. The 2008-2012 Capital Plan is in excess of \$700 million dollars and seeks to add approximately 10,000 new student stations to its system, in trying to keep up with the growth and economic development that has been going on in the County. Presently, the

District is comprised of 53 schools, 13 of which have opened since 1990. The 2008-2012 Facilities Work Plan includes the construction of two new high schools, one a medical magnet high school; two new middle schools; five new elementary schools, and many additions to existing schools.

Mr. Fix discussed some of the educational initiatives that have been occurring, noting that the State of Florida now requires that all middle and high school students declare majors and minors and, to that end, the County's high schools are all comprehensive high schools and have a very large career technical education component, so, not only are the high schools able to prepare young people for a liberal arts college, but they can also prepare them for a career in technical programs that are needed today in the economy – a very important strategy and very forward thinking, especially for a district the size of Lake County's. The Lake County School District works with local industry and post-secondary institutions and economic development councils, as well as the Agency for Workforce Innovation, to support the needs of the community, in training skilled employees. He further discussed the various programs that the Lake County School District provides and how they are tied into economic development. He stated that past demographic, economic, and enrollment trends suggest that Lake County Schools will continue to see a demand for new facilities for at least the next 15 years. Funding needs are challenging the District's resources and the School Board's ability to provide the quantity and quality of schools needed for the long term, which underscores the wisdom of an annual planning process to review and update the School System's needs. He commented that, as people continue to move into the County, the School System's annually updated Capital Plan will provide a road map to address the need for new schools and additions, as well as a plan for maintaining and upgrading existing schools in older communities. He feels it is necessary for the economic development and liability of the community that its schools be kept strong and in good condition and that programs be kept in the schools that are viable and will keep the County's economic machine going.

Mr. Fish stated that a consistent issue with schools is overcrowding and the need to build more schools and student stations, however, questioned whether it was something this group should be tackling. He stated that the five year work program is very important, but wondered whether all the issues will be able to be resolved within the next five years and whether perhaps the focus should be on capital projects, education initiatives, or partnerships.

Mayor Melissa DeMarco, City of Mt. Dora, discussed the issue of sprawl and the fact that mega-box schools, devoid of personality or sense of community, continue to be built, that students have to be bused to and then sprawl is created around them and questioned whether there was any hope of going back to building neighborhood schools.

Mr. Fix stated that there were issues involved with Mayor DeMarco's question that he did not want to get into at this time, however, noted that, if the trend continues and society does not adjust to the fuel prices, things are going to have to be done differently.

Mr. Russ Sloan, Director, LSCC Business Resource Center, stated that only two-thirds of the students in the County graduate from high school and questioned how many of them are really ready for the workplace. He commented that economic development is very much tied to education, noting that the better the educational system the County has the better the chances are of it attracting businesses. He stated that the County has got to have good, decent paying jobs, so that graduating students will have a place to stay and work - that education has got to be a high priority, noting that, if the County does not put a lot of resources into it, it is going to affect the County's economic development.

Commr. James Rotella interjected that there is a quantity problem, versus a quality one, and that he feels the issue of education is going to have to be rethought, as to what the final product is – what are students getting out of the schools that is real, relevant, and has a good return on the investment. He feels the other issue they need to look into is partnering educational facilities with commercial enterprises and businesses, so that the County can develop vocational and career training with industries of the future, to attract the right jobs and development and get an education that is meaningful for jobs.

Transportation Planning and Funding

Mr. Fish informed the group that a DRI is being contemplated for the City of Minneola and they are viewing plans for an interchange that is going to completely change the South Lake road network. He stated that he was bringing the matter to their attention, because the County has a funding problem - it does not have enough money at the present time to fix roads that are falling apart and that are over-congested, and the solution to it is public/private partnerships. He discussed the issue of concurrency and the fact that staff is trying to get more money for projects and do a better job of planning, knowing that land use decisions directly affect the road network, however, pointed out the fact that it involves several factors, including increased costs and diminishing revenue from the gas tax and other sources, and it is not just local – it is at the state and federal levels, as well. He stated that Minneola's interchange is where the job center that the County is actively trying to market for future development will be located. He commented that the infrastructure will be there and it is the right place to keep jobs in the County and reverse the pattern that hits SR 50 every day of people heading to Orange County to work.

Council Member Goodgame stated that the City of Clermont is currently faced with the issue of concurrency. He noted that LYNX is now running buses from Clermont into Orlando; however, he feels that, if the system is going to work and be a viable transportation mode for south Lake County, they are going to have to start the buses in Mascotte and have them go through Groveland and Clermont into Orlando.

Commr. Stewart interjected that the solution to the problem, which is a long term solution and will not cost the County a thing, is to stop urban sprawl. She stated that, when development occurs in rural areas, automobiles go with it and rural roads that would never have been at or above capacity will become at or above capacity.

Mr. Fish commented that that is the key at the present time, noting that cities are annexing properties, providing utilities, and changing land use designations, so what densities might have been in unincorporated Lake County are often changed to higher densities inside the cities, which is good, if they are planning employment centers, etc., but, if they are just taking a rural county road and constructing walled subdivisions along it, with one lane in and one lane out, that creates a problem. He questioned whether the group felt it should be up to the County to fund those roads and whether Commr. Hill, who attends a lot of funding discussions, saw a need for partnerships, with regard to the matter.

Commr. Hill responded, stating that the entities represented at this meeting are going to have to make those decisions and sometimes they are going to be political decisions and ones that are going to be very difficult to make and they are going to need partnerships. She addressed the issue of multimodal transportation, noting that, with gas prices going up, people may be riding bicycles more and not riding in cars and buses. She stated that it is going to come down to money and where the County and the Cities put their priorities and who is going to make those hard decisions about funding sources.

Mr. Fish discussed the fact that the Local Planning Agency clearly does not want development in the rural areas, they want it in the cities, where utilities and infrastructure are provided; the Transit Development Plan for 2020 is going to be developed in August of this year; the multimodal system is in place; and the 2035 plan goes back to the issue of funding, noting that they are required by law to do these plans, but they do not know what is going to happen over the next ten years.

Water Resources and Alternative Supply

Mayor Nancy Clutts, City of Tavares, Chairman of the Lake County Water Alliance, addressed those present stating that, in identifying problems, in order to move towards solutions, the Lake County Water Alliance has unified in a unique way, by all agreeing that a problem exists, which is the first step in seeking a solution. She recognized members that were present, noting that they are the behind-the-scenes people that are the solution seekers. She stated that everyone agrees that (a) a problem exists, and (b) it exists in the form of a date – a date that is arbitrary, being 2013, noting that everyone is being told that it has been determined that in 2013 no additional water will be permitted for withdrawal. She stated that it is a true economic development problem – a problem for current businesses in the County that wish to expand; a problem for the County, as it recruits more businesses and industry; and a problem for residential neighborhoods, noting that it has been determined that the water that everyone uses belongs to the State – whether it is water in a lake behind one's home, down the street, or the water in the aquifer. As a result, the State has multiple water management districts that everyone belongs to, with most of the people in the County belonging to the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD). She noted, however, that some people in the Cities of Leesburg, Fruitland Park, and Lady Lake, according to where they are geographically located, have the luxury of belonging to two water management districts at the same time – the SJRWMD and the Southwest Florida Water Management

District (SFWMD). She stated that the water management districts issue permits for water consumption and, as a result of the 2013 deadline, we in the State of Florida, primarily in Central Florida, are working to create an alternative regional water resource and, in this instance, everyone has to work together to unify, in order to identify where they will obtain that water – whether it will be a regional system from the SJWRMD, or a desalination plan at the coastline. She stated that there are many questions regarding it, but the Water Alliance agrees that Lake County happens to be in the bull's eye and, no matter who is involved, Lake County is going to pay the price, because it is the furthest from the source. She stated that the County is not going to have to worry much about managing growth, because residents are not going to be able to pay for their water, which is going to affect the County's businesses, schools, colleges, etc.

Mayor Clutts stated that the Water Alliance has been told that the County's alternative water system is going to charge each household, at a minimum, \$15.00 per 1,000 gallons of water consumed, and it does not take into consideration the Department of Environmental Protection and what is going to be required, once they get the water to the County. It is going to be an issue for everyone, because it is going to affect the bottom line and how they feed their families. She stated that there are options, being: (1) to deny it; (2) ignore it and hope it will go away; (3) fight it; or (4) fund a \$150,000 study for each municipality. Another option would be to unify and speak with one voice, on behalf of citizens, businesses, etc. – the entire area, which is what the Water Alliance has done. She stated that, since the last group meeting of Our Community – Our Future, the Water Alliance directed staff to create a new interlocal agreement identifying who they are and identifying funding sources, which has been done. They also agreed that they needed to streamline their purpose – what their goals and objectives are for the coming year. She stated that there are a lot of challenges ahead, but feels they will be speaking with a single voice. She noted that the Water Alliance is working on some solutions, but has gone one step further and written an RFQ, and they have received \$10,000 in grant money, for the purpose of obtaining a professional facilitator; the City of Leesburg has offered \$5,000 towards it; and the Florida High-Tech Corridor gave an additional \$5,000, because they believe it is essential to the State's economy.

Mr. Sean Parks, a member of the Lake County Water Authority, discussed funds that were not allocated this year for stormwater retrofit projects, as well as grants that are given to municipalities to take care of antiquated stormwater systems that are polluting the lakes, and the fact that the Water Authority would like for the municipalities to take advantage of those funds. He briefly touched on the issue of permits and enforcement of them and the fact that he feels the SJRWMD should share in the cost of enforcing them.

Mayor Clutts informed the LSMPO that the SJRWMD has offered information to the Water Alliance that the majority of water consumption in the County comes from unregulated wells – individuals that have dropped a well and withdraw water from the aquifer, which goes back to the issue of sprawl. She stated that it is an unregulated source of water and the municipalities will be forced to bear the cost of solving the problem. She stated

that the Water Alliance does not have a solution to it yet and invited those present to help them solve it. She indicated that she feels it is important for the municipalities to request real evidence that both water management districts are being stewards of the land, as the County is working to be stewards of it. She commented that, together, they can all become advocates, but that it is going to take businesses and industry to partner with them on this issue – that it is not a municipality, a county, or a private well owner's issue.

Mr. Fish reviewed what is felt to be some solutions to the problem, being:

- A mandate
- A unified approach
- Regional advocacy for Lake County (collective)
- Aggressive conservation and enforcement
- Education
- Incentives
- Private well issue
- Importance to the business industry in the County

Economic Development – From Plan to Implementation

Ms. Dottie Keedy, Lake County Economic Growth and Redevelopment Director, addressed those present and gave a brief overview of the County's recent plan on economic development, stating that when she was last before them, the County was just finishing the Strategic Plan, which was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners in February, 2008. She stated that it was an eight month long process and there was a lot of input from the Steering Committee and from some visioning sessions that were held. She stated that there are four very broad overriding goals, being:

- To coordinate efforts with the County's allies and leaders
- Diversify the tax base, through innovation, industry attraction, and business development
- Enhance and promote quality of place
- Develop, retain, and attract talent

Ms. Keedy stated that, within those goals, there are a number of guiding principles, being: (1) to promote site and building locations near and within incorporated communities, primarily; (2) promote the construction and maintenance of adequate infrastructure; and (3) partner with local organizations and regional partners and remain committed to developing and maintaining talent, by advocating and promoting excellence in education. She feels these three things tie into the whole partnership idea and everything that has been discussed this date. She indicated that the plan identified five targeted industry sectors, being: (1) health and wellness; (2) clean tech; (3) agritech; (4) business services; and (5) arts, recreation and leisure and that the number one initiative that came out of the plan is to create a countywide economic development partnership and the Board of County Commissioners tasked the Metro-Orlando Economic Development Commission with creating that Council, so they are in the process of structuring it and hope to have representation from cities in the north, central, and south

part of the County and, likewise, there will be representation from the Chamber Alliance; educational representatives, including the Lake County School Board and Lake-Sumter Community College; and representation from the targeted sectors that she just reviewed. She commented that, hopefully, it will go before the Board of County Commissioners next month, along with a Resolution supporting it, and then the Metro-Orlando Economic Development Commission will begin putting together the organization. They are also in the process of hiring a Lake County business development representative that will be located in the County and that person will staff the organization, along with her department. She stated that the purpose of the Council is to implement the Strategic Plan, which identifies a number of major initiatives that they will be working on, more than likely creating task forces to focus on these specific initiatives, and there will be a lot of opportunity for input and participation with the task forces, one of them being to create a one-stop shop for entrepreneurial assistance programs and economic development services, which they would like to have modeled after Seminole County's very successful Center for Economic Development. She hopes that one day county staff, along with staff from the Metro-Orlando Economic Development Commission, the Business Resource Center, Lake-Sumter Community College, Leadership Lake County, and the Chamber Alliance will all be in one location, where they can share resources and work together on implementing the plan. She stated that they hope to promote mixed use entertainment and development in downtown areas, so partnership with the Cities is critical, and they want to create a marketing and image campaign, promoting Lake County's commitment to sustainability, as well as a place to locate or expand one's business. They also hope to work with the School Board on specialized public secondary academies that are linked to the County's economic development strategies. She stated that she looked forward to working with everyone and informed them that they can access the plan, which is 82 pages long, through the County's website.

Mr. Fish readdressed those present stating that the County has not effectively diversified its economic base, noting that a lot of jobs for residents of Lake County are not in Lake County, which is particularly prevalent in the south Lake County area, but also applies to other parts of the County, as well. He stated that there were a lot of things that came out in the plan that are solution oriented and suggested that partnerships be one of the things to focus on. He stated that it sounded to him like they needed to implement the plan, however, noted that one of the things that caught his attention was the fact that some land use decisions are going to have to be made about where job centers go, which he felt was concluded earlier that they are not going to go in rural areas - they are going to be located in the cities, so infrastructure becomes key. He questioned whether there were any firm locations that the County is marketing and was informed by Ms. Keedy that there are some opportunities in the Hills of Minneola and an office area located outside of Mt. Dora – both being on major roadways and both having adequate land. They will be marketed for office and corporate headquarter type jobs. It was noted that all of the Turnpike interchanges have opportunities and it is felt that, with the County's marketing campaign, cities can be looked at, as well.

Mr. Steve Richey, a local attorney, addressed the group stating that, with regard to the issue of partnerships, he was not aware of any efforts by the Water Alliance to bring in those businesses that will be adversely affected economically by restrictions on water, or increased costs, and indicated that he felt there should be some input from the private sector in that process. He stated that an alliance with the private sector and the business community might be beneficial, to help the Water Alliance and fund some of its efforts.

Mr. Ron Wallace, Editor, the Daily Commercial, informed those present that, from an economic development standpoint, they could be reactive and wait for someone to come to them and say they would like to take a look at the County, or be proactive and do an analysis of the County's current business conditions – What does the County need?; What can it support?; What will assist the County economically?; What will assist it from a business partnership standpoint?, etc. He stated that they have got to be proactive – they cannot be passive and sit back and wait, because the bottom line is that other counties are selling their counties and, if Lake County is not out there doing the same, the other counties are going to get the business. He stated that the quality of life that the residents of Lake County enjoy today is in direct relationship to the health and vitality of the business community, noting that it is the business community that is going to provide the money, the jobs, and the future for the County. He stated that all the chambers in the County have been working together over the last three years to promote Lake County and that is what this group can do, as well.

Mr. Ray San Fratello, a former member of the now disbanded IDA and a member of the South Lake Chamber of Commerce, discussed the fact that at least 40% of Lake County's residents leave Lake County every day to work in other counties and that Lake County needed to develop a way to recapture some of that money, so a two-fold campaign was enacted, which is scheduled to launch next week, asking businesses to think about where they are purchasing their supplies, gas, etc. and try to buy whatever they need in Lake County. He stated that the second part of the campaign, which is scheduled to launch a little later, is going to be in conjunction with the South Lake Press and the Daily Commercial and is going to involve all the Chambers and be Lake County oriented - business to consumer, or consumer to consumer, encouraging people to make their purchases in Lake County, which will bring millions of dollars of revenue back into the County. He stated that they have also geared up the economic development and the public policy committees and the need to diversify the economy in south Lake County and they are going to lobby the State in a way that they have never done before, hopefully, to recapture the \$7.5 million that was just lost in TRIP funds to improve SR 50, noting that, if the County loses the opportunity to develop the SR 50 corridor and part of Hwy. 27, there goes the County's economic development engine, to a certain extent. He commented that they have also been working with the LPA for some time, to try to identify what areas of south Lake County could be used for high end commercial, business parks, etc., because there is property available at the present time to do it. He stated that the Chamber Alliance anticipated three years ago, when it was formed, what is being discussed this date, and they need to make sure that, as they do what they need

to do, they engage the business community, noting that there have been times in this County when the business community is pummeled and pounded for things they do not deserve to be pummeled and pounded for. He stated that it is the engine that is going to make it work, so they all need to work together, or the County's schools and economy will never be improved and the County will not have the funds that it needs to do the things that it wants to do. He stated that the Chambers are here to help and look forward to doing so.

Mr. Jim Beyer, President of Power One, a technology oriented business located in Tavares, informed those present that his company is working with private investors on a \$3 million project that will seat 2,000 people, generate 250 jobs, 220,000 visitors annually, and \$7 million for the local economy. The project is the 441 Center, formerly known as PALS (Performing Arts Center at Lake-Sumter). He stated that he is a member of their Board of Directors and has been working on an economic development initiative that carries with it educational and cultural benefits for Lake County. It will provide various educational opportunities, as well as cultural enhancements, and it can be a place where political forums, concerts, rehearsals, community meetings, etc. can be held. He stated that land has been donated for the 441 Center, they have \$3 million in private cash and another commitment for \$3 million, and the State has promised to match every dollar that is raised, but it is contingent upon the local community's involvement. He stated that he is very excited about the project and is determined to make it happen.

Mr. Fish questioned whose responsibility it is to make sure that all the oars are being paddled in the same direction, in sync, and whether there was a consensus to continue to have this type of meeting on a quarterly basis. He stated that the four issues discussed this date were offered to those present simply to get them interested, noting that the whole thing started when the LSMPO was being a regional partner with How Shall We Grow? He agrees that the County needs to focus on city centers and corridors for development where it is appropriate and mass transit can be made available and that they can preserve the countryside and environmental areas, but the real issue is that they need to communicate, coordinate, and collaborate. He noted that the next meeting of this group will be scheduled for September of this year and pointed out the fact that, although the four issues discussed this date are real issues, the bigger issue is not the individual four, but what is collectively being done to comprehensively make Lake County a great community.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to be brought to the attention of the Joint Meeting of the Lake-Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization and Lake County Officials, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.