

Legislative Delegation Meetings
Tallahassee, Florida
March 25, 2009

Walton County Commissioners Kenneth Pridgen, Cecilia Jones and Larry Jones, along with Ronnie E. Bell, County Administrator, Lyle Seigler, Public Works Director, Dede Hinote, Executive Assistant, and Jason Catalano, Commissioner's Aide met with Rich Heffley and Kelly Horton, with Heffley and Associates Lobbying Firm on Wednesday, March 25, 2009 to meet with our State Legislative Delegation.

The Commissioners and Staff first met with Representative Marti Coley. Mr. Bell reminded Representative Coley of Walton County's number one priority: Widening of U.S. 331 and number two priority; widening of the Choctawhatchee Bay Bridge. The Commission's wish to not toll the Clyde B. Wells Bridge was discussed. Mr. Bell advised that the County Commission adopted Resolution 2009-34 (attached as Exhibit A) during their Regular Meeting on March 24, 2009 stating:

1. The Board requests that the Northwest Florida Transportation Corridor Authority (Authority) not advertise the unsolicited proposal for a period less than 180 days; and,
2. If the Authority is forced to advertise the unsolicited proposal for a period of 60 days, that the proposal be rejected because it is not in the best interest of the people of Walton County; and,
3. That the Florida Legislature NOT change current Florida Statutes which prohibits the tolling of existing transportation facilities; and,
4. That the Florida Legislature consider the creation of a Walton County Bridge Authority, consisting of Walton County residents, to address the need to expand the Clyde B. Wells Bridge.

Commissioner L. Jones requested Representative Coley not support legislation that would allow an existing bridge facility to be tolled.

Discussion was held regarding Public Construction Projects (HB 611/SB 616). This bill states that any construction project greater than \$200,000 must be bid out. Mr. Seigler explained how that would hurt Walton County, as the Public Works Department is able to pave some roads in-house, saving taxpayer dollars. The Commission recommended Representative Coley oppose the bill. Mr. Bell advised Representative Coley that Walton County cut \$11.2 million from the past two years budgets and must cut another \$7.1 million this fiscal year.

House Bill 1477 dealing with Advertisement Requirements was discussed. Mr. Bell advised that approximately \$80,000 is spent each budget year for advertisements, mainly due to delinquent tax notices. If the advertisement requirement could be met by posting ads on the website, it could be a huge savings to Walton County. By advertising on the County's website, it would serve the residents and visitors with more timely and detailed

information and it would solve the restrained advertisement deadline situation. This bill is not expected to be considered and will be work-shopped over the next year.

The Community Trust Grant for Padgett Park was discussed and Joint House Resolution 1467.

House Bill 7049/SB 360 relating to Traffic Concurrency was discussed. The bill will only help eight counties. Walton County needs relief from the Traffic Concurrency and Proportionate Fair Share. It was agreed that any changes to transportation concurrency requirements should be at the option of local government rather than a mandate by the state.

Commissioners and Staff met next with Senator Durell Peaden. Resolution 2009-34 adopted by the County Commission at their March 24th Commission Meeting (attached as Exhibit A) was discussed. Senator Peaden stated that he would support Walton County in this effort.

The Health Department and Dental Program in Walton County was discussed. Senator Peaden advised that the Dental School for FAMU has clinical training available in local health departments.

Commissioners and Staff met with Representative Dave Merzin who serves as the Economic Development and Community Affairs Chairman. Issues discussed with Representative Merzin were HB 611 regarding Public Construction Projects, Walton County's number one priority; the four laning of U.S. 331 from Highway 98 to Interstate 10, widening the Choctawhatchee Bay Bridge, Traffic Concurrency and Proportionate Fair Share fees. Mr. Bell advised Representative Merzin of Resolution 2009-34 adopted by the Commission (attached as Exhibit A). Commissioner L. Jones stated that the Walton County Commission would like the opportunity to review all options with regard to a toll bridge and create a bridge authority.

Commissioners and Staff met with Representative Brad Drake and discussed the issues of concern for Walton County. Discussion of the possibility of amending FS 18, Sovereignty Submerged Lands Management, to allow the spoils of the LaGrange Bayou/Four Mile Creek to be placed on upland areas adjacent to Four Mile Creek, without the landowner having to pay \$1.25 per cubic yard to dispose or sell the silt material. Currently the law reads that a landowner can accept the spoils at no cost, but if they move or try to sell the spoils, they must pay the State of Florida \$1.25 per cubic yard. Commissioners, Staff and Representative Drake met with Bud Vielhauer, Deputy General Counsel with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, regarding this issue. Mr. Bell explained that several businesses in the Freeport area are affected by the need of dredging. Ships and barges are limited to what can be carried in port due to the amount of settlement and build up of silt material.

Commissioners and Staff met with Representative Greg Evers and discussed issues of concern for Walton County. The main topic was the suspending of the proportionate fair share from 18 months to 24 months to allow economic development along U.S. 331. The language being proposed in the Senate will not assist Walton County. Walton County requests that the House consider language that will allow each County Commission or City Council to suspend the proportionate fair share with a majority vote of the Commission or Council.

The next day, March 26, 2009, the Commission and Staff, along with Kelly Horton, met with Secretary Stephanie Koplelousos, Department of Transportation. Discussion was held relating to widening U.S. 331 and the Choctawhatchee Bay Bridge and amending the Corridor Association's language in regard to unsolicited proposals to advertise for 120 days, the same as the Department of Transportation's authority. The Commissioners conveyed their wish to not toll the bridge and their request to establish a bridge authority made up of local individuals to look at alternatives to the widening of the bridge. The Commissioners asked that all alternatives be reviewed for the expanding of the bridge, not just the addition of a sister bridge, but expanding the existing bridge which would cost much less than the current proposals. Other projects in Walton County were discussed such as, Red Fish Bridge and resurfacing County Road 30A. The maintenance yard located on Rock Hill Road between Freeport and DeFuniak Springs was discussed as well. Mr. Seigler stated that the County could utilize the facility as a holding area or staging facility.

After all the scheduled meetings, the Commissioners and Staff voiced their appreciation to Mrs. Horton for her assistance in scheduling appointments with Representative Coley, Senator Peaden, Representative Murzin, Representative Drake, Mr. Vielhauer with the Department of Environmental Protection, Representative Evers, and Secretary Koplelousos.

APPROVED: _____
Sara Comander, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Martha Ingle, Clerk

Minutes by Dede Hinote, Administration Executive Assistant

RESOLUTION NO 2009-34

A RESOLUTION OF THE WALTON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OPPOSING THE UNSOLICITED PROPOSAL BY MOVING 331 FORWARD, LLC TO THE NORTHWEST FLORIDA TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR AUTHORITY; CALLING FOR EXPANSION OF THE TIME TO RECEIVE UNSOLICITED PROPOSALS; FOR THE REJECTION OF THE UNSOLICITED PROPOSAL; FOR THE LEGISLATURE NOT TO CHANGE THE LAWS PROHIBITING THE TOLLING OF EXISTING TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES; AND FOR THE CREATION OF A WALTON COUNTY BRIDGE AUTHORITY

WHEREAS, the Walton County Board of County Commissioners (the "Board") is the local general-purpose government body elected by the citizens of Walton County, Florida to protect the general health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Walton County, including, among other things, the improvement and protection of Walton County transportation corridors such as Highway 331 and the Clyde B. Wells Bridge; and,

WHEREAS, the NorthWest Florida Transportation Corridor Authority (the "Authority") is a special purpose government agency whose members are appointed by the Governor of Florida to seek ways to improve transportation corridors in NorthWest Florida, which includes Walton County; and,

WHEREAS, the Authority has notified the Board that it has received an unsolicited bid from Moving 331 Forward, LLC, a private for-profit limited liability company, to, among other things, four lane Highway 331 and build a second bridge span adjacent to the existing Clyde B. Wells Bridge; and,

WHEREAS, officials from Moving 331 Forward, LLC have indicated that they plan to pay for the improvements to Highway 331 by forcing users of Highway 331 to pay a toll; and,

WHEREAS, Highway 331 is the only practical, economical and efficient way for citizens and visitors of Walton County to cross the Choctawhatchee Bay between North and South Walton County; and,

WHEREAS, the Authority has notified the Board that, pursuant to Section 343.387, Florida Statutes, it intends to advertise a request for proposals to seek competing proposals to the Moving 331 Forward, LLC, unsolicited proposal for a period of 60 days; and,

WHEREAS, the Board seeks requests for proposals and other competitive bids on a weekly basis; and,

WHEREAS, based on the Board's experience of seeking competitive requests for proposals and bids for transportation projects, the Board is of the opinion that 60 days is a wholly inadequate time period to seek meaningful responses for a project of the size, scope and importance of the widening of Highway 331 and the expansion of the Clyde B. Wells Bridge; and,

WHEREAS, the Board is of the opinion that a project of this magnitude and importance should be in the hands of the citizens most directly affected by such a project;

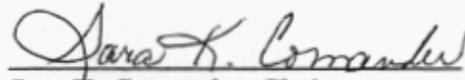
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Walton County Board of County Commissioners, that:

1. The Board requests that the Authority not advertise the unsolicited proposal for a period less than 180 days; and,
2. If the Authority is forced to advertise the unsolicited proposal for a period of 60 days, that the proposal be rejected because it is not in the best interest of the people of Walton County; and,
3. That the Florida Legislature NOT change current Florida Statutes which prohibits the

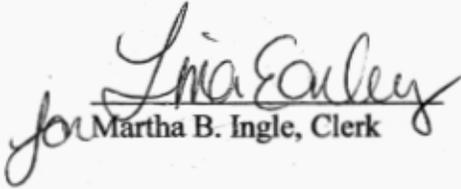
tolling of existing transportation facilities; and,

4. That the Florida Legislature consider the creation of a Walton County Bridge Authority, consisting of Walton County residents, to address the need to expand the Clyde B. Wells Bridge.

Executed this 24th day of March, 2009.


Sara K. Comander, Chairman
Walton County
Board of County Commissioners

ATTEST:


for Martha B. Ingle, Clerk

