

JUNE 11, 2012 – SPECIAL MEETING

The Board of County Commissioners, Walton County, Florida held a Special Joint Meeting with the Walton County Tourist Development Council Advisory Board on June 11, 2012 at 5:00 p.m. at the Walton County Courthouse Annex in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida.

The following Board members were present: Commissioner Scott Brannon, Chairman; Commissioner Kenneth Pridgen, Vice-Chairman; Commissioner Larry Jones, and Commissioner Cecilia Jones.

The following TDC Advisory Council members were present: Chairman Scott Brannon, Ms. Carol Pauls, Mr. Stephen Hillard, Mr. Scott Russell, Mr. Gus Andrews, Ms. Amy Wise-Coble, Mr. Harry Milsaps, and Mr. Maurice Gilbert.

Mr. Gerry Demers, Interim County Administrator; Attorney Toni Craig, County Attorney; Ms. Dawn Moliterno, TDC Executive Director; and Attorney Clay Adkinson, TDC Attorney; were also present.

Commissioner C. Jones led the invocation and the pledge to the American Flag. Chairman Brannon called the meeting of the Board of County Commissioners and the TDC Advisory Council to order.

Commissioner L. Jones thanked the TDC Advisory Council for being present at the meeting. He felt that the two Boards should meet to determine the needs of the TDC, and what processes should be taken to meet those needs. He stated that the public should also be involved in the process.

Commissioner C. Jones asked that public comment be allowed before any action is taken.

Mr. Pat Ballasch, AIA, DAG Architects, briefly discussed the Existing Facility Assessment Report and stated that the issues causing the most concern are: parking, facility

access, safety, ADA accessibility, and air quality issues. He stated that the current facility is not code compliant for safety standards and discussed the deficiencies. Discussion ensued regarding current access, possible expansion of the current building, increased parking with an expansion, and the lack of land available for an expansion.

Mr. Ballasch briefly discussed the Needs Assessment Report which includes the increase in staffing space, and visitors' center space. He reported that approximately 12,000 square feet would be needed to provide adequate space for current and future TDC operations. He said that 34% of the current 8,964 square foot building is unusable, or designated to air quality. Mr. Ballasch also discussed the need for a larger visitors' center. Discussion ensued regarding the current structure's usability.

Ms. Donna Amend questioned how much land would be needed to build a 12,000 square foot facility with the required parking spaces and amenities. Mr. Ballasch stated that the amount of land needed would depend upon the land composition.

Chairman Brannon asked what the parking requirements are on the current building and with a new facility. Mr. Chance Powell. Preble-Rish, stated that currently there are 30 spaces and two handicapped parking spaces, and 48 spaces with two handicapped spaces are required. Mr. Ballasch addressed the parking concerns and stated that 97 passenger spaces, including handicapped spaces, and seven RV spaces would be needed at a new facility.

Ms. Sandy Luchtefeld questioned if the TDC Advisory Council could meet at the Courthouse Annex, and if State funding would be available for an expansion. Ms. Dawn Moliterno, TDC Executive Director, stated that the Council could meet at the Annex, but that the meeting room in the TDC building is also used for workshops. She stated that there would be no

state funding available. Mr. Ballasch discussed the different visitor centers studied as a comparison.

Ms. Bonnie McQuiston questioned what the square footage was for each of the TDC's in the surrounding counties. Mr. Ballasch stated that he did not have that information, and discussed the different aspects that were compared. Ms. McQuiston stated that the information she garnered showed that the comparable buildings were on average 4,500 square foot. Discussion followed on possible satellite offices.

Mr. Bob Hudson questioned how much space would be needed for a visitors' center within a new facility. Mr. Ballasch stated that the existing visitors' center is small and limiting and that the new facility would be approximately 3,000 square feet larger than the current building. Discussion ensued regarding the fate of the current building upon the construction of a new center.

Mr. Steve Hillard, TDC Advisory Council, discussed the concept of multiple satellite offices and the problems that could arise. Commissioner L. Jones stated that cost should be considered when planning for the amenities in a new facility. He said that developing a plan for a new TDC facility will be a lengthy process.

Mr. Scott Russell discussed the marketing of the South Walton brand.

Mr. Bill Fletcher asked if U.S. 331 was the most optimal place to put a center, and why the current building was allowed to be built without a vapor barrier. Ms. Moliterno discussed the history of the current location, and referred traffic count information to Mr. Cliff Knauer. Mr. Knauer stated that a study showed that there were 26,000 trips on U.S. 98, and 11,000 on U.S. 331. He reported that the study was done the year of the oil spill. Mr. Knauer stated that the

International Airport is also a factor. Mr. Steve Hillard stated that the traffic includes residents and visitors.

Ms. Page questioned the costs associated with vacating the current building. Ms. Moliterno discussed the current lease with Forestry.

Ms. Brenda Rees discussed the visitor recognition, and felt that there should be more public input on what the TDC needs to be.

Commissioner L. Jones addressed the costs associated with the existing facility and felt that it should be considered and included in the overall plan. Mr. Steve Hillard stated that the public had not been excluded and that the meetings had been properly noted. Ms. Page discussed the meeting schedule which combines regularly scheduled quarterly meeting with erratically scheduled special meetings. She also addressed the inconsistent agenda terminology. Discussion ensued regarding the meeting notices and terminology.

Ms. McQuiston spoke in favor of the joint meeting, and reported that the initial resolution established a Walton County TDC which was not limited to South Walton. She recommended that the TDC and Chamber work together for the betterment of the county.

Mr. Jim Bagby questioned which TDC's were used as a comparison for the needs for the Walton County TDC. Mr. Ballasch stated that all visitors' centers are different and discussed how each are individual and meet the individual area. Mr. Bagby stated that like centers should be compared to determine what is needed. Discussion ensued on the needed physical space of a new TDC facility.

Ms. Moliterno reported that the assessments were available for review on www.visitsouthwalton.org.

Ms. Sandy Luchtefeld questioned if the ability to receive county information digitally through phone applications, would adversely affect the need for a larger building. Ms. Moliterno discussed the availability of phone application interaction, and stated that it would not affect the number of patron utilizing the visitors' center.

Commissioner C. Jones questioned what size of property would be needed. Mr. Ballasch stated that 4 acres of usable dry land would be a minimum. Mr. Powell addressed the elements to be considered when looking for the appropriate site: parking, retention ponds, wetlands, etc. Discussion continued on land requirements.

Ms. Cindy Meadows felt that a budget should be in place before purchasing any land and development of a site plan. She also felt that there should be more public input.

Ms. Johnnie Rider White requested that public workshops be put on the agenda. Ms. Moliterno stated that public workshops would be a part of the process.

Ms. Mary Nielson felt that the first item to be addressed is functionality and that the process should begin slowly.

Many other citizens expressed the need to have a budget prior to land selection and site plan development. Some citizens addressed the need for satellite offices and an assessment to determine what exactly is needed in a new facility.

Commissioner L. Jones suggested that a facilitator be sought to guide the county, TDC and public through the process to determine exactly what is needed in a new TDC facility, and the location of that facility. Discussion continued regarding the need for a facilitator. Mr. Hillard suggested advertising a RFP to hire a facilitator to conduct visioning sessions to identify how the county and TDC needs to move forward.

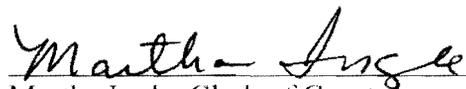
Several citizens spoke in favor of identifying the needs of the County, TDC, and community. Ms. Meadows suggested utilizing someone from Northwest Florida State College as a facilitator.

TDC Advisory Council Motion by Mr. Stephen Hillard. second by Mr. Gus Andrews, to recommend to the Board to advertise a RFQ for a consultant that would facilitate visioning sessions to determine what is needed in terms of space for administrative function, Visitors' Center space, and multiple locations, engage the public in the process and present the findings to the Board of County Commissioners. Ayes 8, Nays 0. Brannon Aye, Gilbert Aye, Millsaps Aye, Wise-Coble Aye. Pauls Aye. Russeil Aye, Andrews Aye, Hillard Aye.

Motion by Commissioner L. Jones. second by Commissioner C. Jones, to approve the recommendation of the TDC Advisory Council. Ayes 4, Nays 0. Brannon Aye, Pridgen Aye, L. Jones Aye, C. Jones Aye.

There being no further items to present the meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.


Scott Brannon, Chair


Martha Ingle, Clerk of Courts