

MINUTES

Levy County Planning Commission May 21, 2007 EAR Workshop 6:30 p.m.

The Levy County Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Thad Barber. Other members present were:

Thomas Harper
Vaughn Lee
Ron Grant
Toni Collins

Also present was Planning Director, Ms. Kathy Winburn and County Attorney Anne Brown.

NEW BUSINESS: PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Ms. Winburn explained that the purpose of the workshop was to discuss the proposed new Springs Protection Element to the goals, objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Winburn further explained that the County received a small county technical assistance grant through the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to draft the springs protection element. Staff worked with consultant Gail Easley along with Richard Deadman from DCA in producing the draft element. Ms. Winburn gave the board a brief overview of the proposed springs protection element and the EAR process. Ms. Winburn stated that one of the issues within the EAR report was water quality which included springs protection.

Mr. Richard Deadman from Department of Community Affairs and Mr. Tom Greenhalgh from Florida Geological Survey, a part of, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) were present to conduct the workshop.

Mr. Greenhalgh gave an overview of how DEP delineates the Springshed, vulnerability of the aquifer system, and the condition of the springs in Levy County. Mr. Greenhalgh stated that in delineating the Springsheds in Florida that they are trying to determine the area where the water that is discharged out of the springs comes from. Mr. Greenhalgh further stated that not all of the County Springsheds have been delineated. Mr. Greenhalgh stated that the Florida Geological Survey defines the springshed as those areas within ground and surface water basins that contribute to the discharge of the springs. Mr. Greenhalgh stated that the three first magnitude springs in Levy County are Fanning Springs, Manatee Springs and Rainbow Springs. Mr. Greenhalgh explained that there is a Florida Aquifer Vulnerability Assessment (FAVA), the purpose of the project was to review the areas in Florida where the aquifer is extremely vulnerable to contamination. Mr. Greenhalgh further explained that in reviewing Levy County compared to the rest of the State that the County is highly vulnerable to groundwater contamination. Mr. Greenhalgh explained that Fanning Springs has a large amount of nitrates coming out of the springs and further stated that Fanning Springs is the most heavily impacted large discharging spring in the State of Florida.

Mr. Richard Deadman gave a power point presentation regarding the Best Management Practices (BMP) for groundwater protection and he explained some of the standards that other counties within the State are placing in their comprehensive plans that apply to new development. Mr. Deadman stated

that Wakulla and Marion County have incorporated new development standards in their comprehensive plans. Mr. Deadman stated that the three critical issues that impact groundwater are wastewater, Stormwater and protection of recharge/open space.

Mr. Deadman stated that wastewater is the largest impact on groundwater protection. Mr. Deadman explained that Florida Statutes states that whenever possible that homeowners should hookup with central water and sewer from the municipalities when it becomes available and that they have a year to do this. Mr. Deadman stated that at the present time stormwater is not an issue in Levy County because of the growth within the County but that standards need to be put in place before development and population growth impacts the County. Mr. Deadman explained that issues that need to be considered regarding the standards for stormwater are roadside swales, minimize curb and gutter, direct runoff from impervious surfaces to vegetated areas and impervious surface ratios. Mr. Deadman stated the definition of open space as the land area that remains undeveloped or minimally developed with boardwalks and trails as part of a natural resource preserve or passive recreation area and shall include land preserved for conservation purposes, open spaces are areas not exposed to fertilizer application. Mr. Deadman explained the need in protecting recharge and open space and stated that design standards could be put in place so that all new residential development would require that fifty percent of the site remain in open space and nonresidential development would maintain thirty-five percent of the site in open space. Mr. Deadman stated that the protection of karst features is also an important issue. Mr. Deadman further explained that the County has karst features that are sensitive to development and that the karst features direct waters straight into the aquifer. Mr. Deadman explained that the karst features could be protected by placing a buffer around the areas that are direct connections to the aquifer, cave systems, sinkholes by designating a protection zone. Mr. Deadman explained that the state has recommended placing buffers around springs and Springsheds at a minimum setback of three hundred feet. Mr. Deadman stated that the County needs to have a planning process for Springshed protection. Mr. Deadman further stated that there is not a one size fits all for springs protection and that each county should evaluate its own needs.

Ms. Winburn explained that the County needs to decide what type of standards to set. Ms. Winburn explained that Wakulla County applied standards to the entire county while Citrus County created an overlay district and adopted policies within their conservation element. Ms. Winburn stated that some of the key issues will be delineating the springs protection area, stormwater best management practices, setback requirements for karst features and requiring performance based septic systems.

ISSUES OF CONCERN:

The Board stated a concern about saltwater intrusion due to water levels, whether there is any work being done to trace the source of the nitrate in the water. Mr. Greenhalgh stated that the water levels fluctuate but that if levels become too low that saltwater intrusion could occur. Mr. Greenhalgh explained that they are currently working on a project to try to trace the source of the nitrate in Fanning Springs. The Board questioned what County Department would be responsible for inspecting and requiring property owners to update their septic systems. Mr. Deadman stated that the County could place in the comprehensive plan a policy that would require property owners to replace old septic systems that are no longer functioning properly with nitrogen removal septic systems and that the health department would enforce the policy. The Board asked what the recommended distance a limerock mine with blasting should be from a spring. Mr. Greenhalgh explained that any blasting at a limerock mine has the potential to affect the spring in a variety of ways from changing the flow pattern, collapsing the cave system within the spring or mobilize contaminants into the groundwater. Mr. Greenhalgh stated that the recommended distance would need to be determined by assessing each individual mining application along with the spring that would be affected and make the decision based on the best information available. The Board asked whether the springs protection zones would

be for all the springs or just the first magnitude springs within the County. Mr. Deadman explained that the zone would be for the first magnitude springs only but that the zone could be delineated for all the springs. The Board asked whether the County's goal should be for the springs to remain as they are now or to try and improve them because that will affect what restrictions the County sets. Mr. Greenhalgh stated that the objective is to reduce the load going into the water. The Board asked whether the proposed standards are enough protection or should the County establish stronger policies. Mr. Deadman stated that the State will help the County in the process and provide the best available data to enable to County to make the best decision possible. The Board stated that nitrate levels could possibly be reduced by using the performance based septic systems, however, the timber business is applying fertilizers to the pine forests multiple times during the harvesting process which allows the nitrates to go straight into the groundwater. The Board stated a concern with how the current drought may affect the goals, policies and objectives of the comprehensive plan.

Ms. Winburn explained to the Board that she had submitted her resignation and that her last day with the County would be June 15, 2007. Ms. Winburn stated that she would be presenting the first cycle proposed large scale amendments to the board before she leaves and that she has already drafted most of the proposed EAR based amendments. Ms. Winburn explained that the next step for the Board will be to possibly have another workshop on springs protection and begin having workshops on the Future Land Use Element. Ms. Winburn explained that by the end of the year the Planning Commission should be ready to hold a public hearing to make their recommendation to the County Commissioners for the entire EAR based amendments. Ms. Winburn stated that the majority of the changes to the comprehensive plan through the EAR based amendments are in the Infrastructure Element, Conservation Element and the Future Land Use Element. The Planning Commission expressed their sadness in the County losing a valued employee and congratulated Ms. Winburn on her future plans.

There being no further business for the Levy County Planning Commission, the meeting was adjourned.

Chairman