

CALHOUN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
WORKSHOP – DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY GRANT, COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
APRIL 25, 2017

PRESENT AND ACTING:

DANNY RAY WISE
GENE BAILEY
DARRELL MCDUGALD
JERAL HALL
FRANK SNOWDEN, COUNTY PLANNER
MATT FUQUA, ATTORNEY

The workshop was called to order by Chairman Danny Ray Wise at 5:00 p.m., CT.

Ms. Pennington stated that a couple of years ago a grant was obtained from the Department of Economic Opportunity to revise the comprehensive plan for the county. Revisions included an economic development element and GIS maps. The revisions have been incorporated into the comprehensive plan. As part of the effort, problems were identified with the future land use elements.

Upon review, there were a number of discrepancies and contradictions discovered in some portions of the plan and between the plan and the future land use map. Ms. Pennington stated the Comprehensive Plan is the ultimate law governing property use. The Land Development Code needs to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, but currently these are inconsistent.

Another grant has been obtained from DEO to correct the inconsistencies. Last November, a public workshop was held to point out the discrepancies and to gain feedback on how the county and public would like to have the plan changed. With the feedback from the last meeting, Ms. Pennington has worked with Frank Snowden, Angie Smith, Joe Wood and Jace Ford to discuss what the best options were for the county. After bringing the proposed changes to the county attorney, this public workshop is being held to discuss the proposed changes.

Ms. Pennington began the discussion with residential land use category. Currently, one unit per acre with a private well and a septic tank. If there is central water and sewer, twelve units are allowed. If the site has wetlands/floodplain but one usable acre, one unit per five acres is allowed. The land development code shows that two units are allowed per acre, not twelve like the plan states.

Chairman Wise asked if there was a definition of a central water system. Ms. Pennington stated that most local governments identify a central water system as a municipal water system, not a well or septic tank. Mr. Snowden stated that a commercially permitted well is more than likely what they are describing. Commissioner McDougald stated that the way that he interprets it is if you have more than one unit on an acre, that is central water. He stated that he has a 4 inch well that requires strict testing from the Health Department. He currently has nine units on one water system.

Chairman Wise pointed out that currently the way that the plan reads, it is not clear on if a well and septic tank are required for each unit. Ms. Pennington stated that she would look into the definition and bring an answer back at the next meeting.

Ms. Pennington continued with the mixed-use categories. There are currently two, mixed use rural residential and mixed-use urban fringe. Mixed-use rural residential was created to identify existing communities i.e. Kinard and Hugh Creek. Mixed-use urban fringe is identified as communities right outside of the municipalities. Currently, mixed-use residential states that one unit per one acre is allowed with private well and septic system, two units to an acre with central water, and twelve units to an acre with central water and central sewer. One unit per five acres is allowed in floodplain/wetland areas with one usable acre of land. The Future Land Use map two units per one acre, code one unit per acre. The county staff recommended that the plan be changed to 2:1, not 12:1. There were no comments. For mixed-use urban fringe, the code allows two units per acre with private well and septic system, four units to an acre with central water. The plan allows two units per acre with private well and septic system. The code allows eight units per one acre with central water and sewer while the plan allows for twelve units per acre with central water and sewer. In discussions, the recommendation was that with no central water and sewer, one unit per one acre should be allowed. With central water two units per acre and with central water and sewer, four units to an acre. There were no comments.

Ms. Pennington began discussing the agricultural land use categories. One unit per ten acres are allowed in these areas. There are subcategories within the plan that allow one unit per five acres, one unit per three acres, and one unit per one acre. Public discussion at the November workshop asked the question if the subcategories should remain. The discussion was that yes, the categories should be kept. Therefore, the map has been modified to show the subcategories. Through a process, a landowner can apply for a land use change to have a higher density on their property.

Commissioner McDougald stated that he thought that he thought that if the property is on a county or state road, they can be allowed one unit per acre. Ms. Pennington said that that is still the case. Commissioner McDougald asked if the plan could be changed so that citizens would not have to go through an amendment change. He asked if it was state law to not have one unit per one acre in agricultural areas. Mr. Snowden stated that we do not have the GIS mapping capabilities for this as well as not enough money in the grant to address that issue at this time. Attorney Fuqua asked for clarification. Commissioner McDougald gave an example of family land that would be broken up for members of the family, one acre at a time. He then asked if a comprehensive plan amendment is difficult to obtain. Mr. Snowden and Attorney Fuqua both stated that it is not a difficult process. He asked how long it typically takes to be approved by the State. Ms. Pennington stated that it is usually within sixty days. Ms. Smith asked if there was a cost. Ms. Pennington stated that there is not cost from the state. Attorney Fuqua stated that the county does have fees associated with this, typically they are \$500-\$1500 depending on the change.

Ms. Pennington continued to industrial use categories. In the table, there were three industrial uses. There was the industrial park, the airport within the industrial park and light industrial. The map was amended to one category: industrial and light industrial. Commissioner McDougald stated that a Mr. Williams had discussed an agricultural industrial mixed use. Mr. Snowden stated that once these areas are identified, if there was a land owner that wanted a change, they would go through the comprehensive plan land use change. Mr. Snowden stated that a land use change at this time would be pointless.

A citizen commented that if he had one unit on ten acres and then his neighbor applied for a land use change to have ten units per acre but he did not want them to develop next to him, how would that be handled. Ms. Pennington stated that it would be done in a public forum and that he (the citizen) would have the opportunity to comment on his neighbor being granted the change. Mr. Snowden stated that the land use changes are done with the benefit of the people in mind and approved by the board. If it was noted that neighbors in the area would not benefit or did not want the land use change, it more than likely would not pass. Mr. Snowden stated that properties adjacent to urban fringe or next to a subdivision would have a greater chance for an amendment to benefit the people and the county.

Another citizen asked if there would be zones, for example high density or residential. Mr. Snowden stated that at present, twelve units to an acre is way too high of a density for Calhoun County and that is why it is being removed from the plan. Ms. Pennington stated that right now the high densities would be around the cities and would be four units to an acre. The citizen stated that high density can be a good thing if it is put all together. Mr. Snowden clarified that it would be preferable to have development in proximity to an already developed area. The citizen stated that he would like to see the county move in that direction.

Ms. Pennington brought up the conservation land use category. This category was not listed in the table but there were two policies in the plan. The map also did not show a conservation land use category. The revised map now shows the conservation land use category. There are currently 1500 acres that are owned by the Water Management District. Ms. Pennington contacted Water Management District to change the land from its current designation as agricultural to conservation. The District responded that they would like to keep the land as agricultural. This may change in the future. The county cannot make a change without the land owners approval. There was further discussion on the property. Ms. Pennington clarified overlays on the map. An overlay on the map limits the use of land based on what category the overlay is. For example, a property may be rural residential, but with a floodplain overlay, it would be limited due to the overlay.

The next category discussed was the public institutional land use category. Ms. Pennington stated that before, it was not designated on the map. It has since been added. Schools, jail, and the prison are examples of this category. Commissioner McDougald asked if there was a way to add an institution, such as if the county was to get a second prison. Ms. Pennington stated that a simple land use change would be required but the answer to the question is yes.

Ms. Pennington continued with the recreational open space category. It also was in the plan but not on the map and has since been added. An example is Sam Atkins park. Commissioner Bailey inquired about conservation easements. Ms. Pennington stated that a conservation easement is a restriction. If a land use change is not acquired, it is between the land owner and the easement holder.

Ms. Pennington continued with the planned unit development. This was a land use category added to the plan due to a possible community development, titled "Sky". It has been retained in the plan in case another opportunity arises for the county to have a planned community.

Ms. Pennington summarized the meeting as a clean-up and consolidation of the comprehensive plan, the code, and the maps. Ms. Pennington asked for input on the residential land use category. She asked if the county and citizens would want to keep twelve units to one acre designation. The consensus was to keep two units to one acre.

Ms. Pennington stated the time table for the grant and the changes to the plan is as follows. Deliverable number three was submitted to the department on March 31st. Deliverable number four is the current public workshop which is due on May 15th. The last deliverable will be the adoption of the changes by the board, which must be completed by June 15th. Ms. Pennington asked for feedback by May 15th.

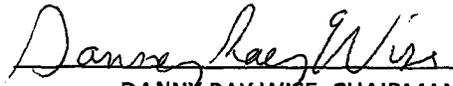
Chairman Wise brought up the central water system again. Mr. Snowden stated that Ms. Smith had found the definition of a central water system that states a central water system as having six inch mains, a municipal water supply. Chairman Wise also asked for a definition of a sewer. Mr. Snowden assured Chairman Wise that the definition would be made clear for the next meeting. There was further discussion. Ms. Pennington stated that she recognized the confusion with the two to one acre designation not identifying a central sewer system or septic system. Ms. Pennington stated that it was implied that each unit has a septic tank. Ms. Pennington state that the plan can be changed to be clear on the septic/sewer requirement.

Commissioner McDougald asked if there could be changes to the plan beyond cleaning the discrepancies. Ms. Pennington stated that there would be no changes on this grant cycle. Ms. Smith stated that they have good ideas to keep in mind for the next grant cycle, however, this grant cycle is only focusing on fixing the inconsistencies.

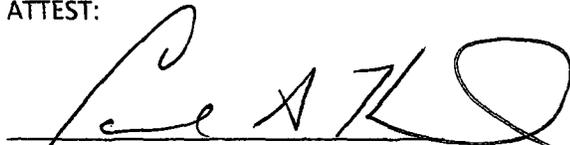
Ms. Pennington summarized the meeting and clarified the two units to one acre designation over the twelve to one unit designation. Mr. Snowden brought up that when changing the central water system and central sewer language, there should be an and/or designation as people on Hwy 71 will be tying into the central sewer system between Altha and Blountstown. Ms. Pennington stated that she would meet with Mr. Snowden on including this language.

She concluded the meeting by stating that if there were any comments or questions to contact Frank Snowden who will contact her.

There being no further business, the workshop adjourned at 5:52 p.m., CT.


DANNY RAY WISE, CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:


CARLA A. HAND, CLERK