Court ruling opens the door for many Veterans

The U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims has announced a landmark decision that will directly affect thousands of Vietnam-era veterans. The court’s ruling states that the Veterans Administration’s requirement for “boots on the ground” as the definition of “service in the Republic of Vietnam” is unreasonable. The court further stated that veterans who served on ships which sailed in close proximity to the shores of Vietnam or those who received the Vietnam Service Medal were exposed to Agent Orange and are now eligible for benefits associated with this exposure. This ruling opens the possibility of covering individuals based in Thailand who flew over Vietnam but did not land in Vietnam.

The ruling was handed down earlier this week by the Court in the case of a former sailor who served on an ammunition ship during the Vietnam War but never stepped foot on land. This veteran successfully argued that clouds of the toxic defoliate, which the U.S. sprayed on Vietnamese jungles, drifted out to sea, engulfing his ship and landing on his skin.

There are a number of medical conditions presumed to have been caused by exposure to Agent Orange such as Diabetes Type II, Prostate Cancer and a variety of respiratory cancers. All veterans who served in these areas and any veteran who was previously denied VA benefits due to this exposure or any surviving spouse of a deceased Vietnam veteran who was exposed to Agent Orange are encouraged to contact their local County Veterans Service Officer. Veteran advocates are encouraging individuals to seek coverage quickly because the ruling left it up to government officials whether to change federal regulations in a way that could deny coverage.

Alachua County Veterans Service Officer Jim Lynch is standing by to assist local veterans in making applications and for questions regarding Agent Orange. Please contact him at (352) 264-6740.
On Thursday, September 7, 2006 at 5 p.m. in the Alachua County Commission Chambers there will be a public hearing of the Final Assessment Resolution for Stormwater Management. The County Commission is urging the public to attend and participate in the public hearing.

Alachua County staff has identified various problem areas throughout the County which frequently flood and cause structural damage or accessibility issues. In addition, water bodies within the County have been identified as being impaired or having water quality deficiencies based on state and federal regulatory criteria.

Recognizing the significance of the flooding and the need to protect natural water bodies, specific guidelines in the 2001-2020 Comprehensive Plan (adopted 2005) call for better stormwater management. The result of these guidelines is a Stormwater Management Program (SMP).

Staff has recommended the provision of a dedicated funding source in order to implement the SMP. The funding mechanism proposed by County staff for the SMP, is a non-ad valorem assessment of each County parcel. The assessment is based on the size of impervious areas, such as concrete driveways, within each parcel.

Four remaining public meetings planned in August will provide opportunities for public input and questions. The meetings will be held from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. at the following locations on the listed dates:

August 29 - Ft. Clarke Middle School - 9301 NW 23rd Ave., Gainesville
August 31 - Kanapaha Middle School - 5005 SW 75th St., Gainesville

For additional information, please visit the SMP website at www.stormwater.alachua.fl.us or call the stormwater information hotline at (352) 264-7020.
What is the Mitigation Credit Policy? How can I request mitigation credit? Do I need to pay extra money to the County?

The credit policy is for a reduction in assessment amounts for properties that have on-site stormwater facilities or to land owners who already contribute monetarily to a non-county owned stormwater management facility.

What is the money being used for?

The revenues collected from the assessment would fund maintenance and operations of the County’s existing stormwater facilities and flood hazard mitigation and prevention. It would also address water quality issues and enhance and protect Alachua County’s valuable water resources. Funding from this assessment would also strengthen the County’s ability to review new development and construction, thus lessening future flooding, water quality, and erosion & sedimentation control issues.

If I want to object, what do I need to do?

You may attend one of the last two public meetings: August 29 at Ft. Clarke Middle School at 6 p.m. or August 31 at Kanapaha Middle School at 6 p.m. You can also start a petition, write an objection letter to the Board, or voice your opinion directly to the Board of Commissioners at the September 7 Public Hearing.

What is a hard surface?

Hard surfaces include all impervious areas listed in the Property Appraiser’s database: the footprints of, for example, a building, a paved or concrete driveway, sidewalks, swimming pools, etc. To determine the amount of hard surfaces on your property, either visit the Property Appraiser’s website at http://www.acpafl.org/ or call (352) 374-5230.

Why now?

Any community in Florida with a substantial population should have a plan for stormwater management. Until now, Alachua County has been in a reactive mode when dealing with its stormwater issues. This method of stormwater management was severely tested during the storm events of 2004. Coupled with new state regulatory mandates and the new County land development regulations, we are faced with substantial challenges in the areas of water quality, new development, flooding, and erosion and sedimentation. Alachua County is experiencing substantial development that, if not properly controlled, can seriously aggravate these problems. The cost of waiting is becoming substantial, especially in the area of impaired waters.

Currently, stormwater maintenance is being funded solely through gas taxes. These funds could be reallocated to help address the County’s road resurfacing backlog. Many of our roads have been neglected due to lack of funding, and with the County growing, we need to free up our road maintenance money and have dedicated funding for stormwater maintenance.

For more information regarding the Stormwater Management Program, or if you have specific questions regarding your stormwater assessment, please visit us on the web at http://www.stormwater.alachua.fl.us, or call our Stormwater Hotline at (352) 264-7020.
Civic Lights Exhibition

Mark your calendars now

An exciting urban lighting exhibition is coming to Gainesville, Florida. Beginning in February 2007, the five-week exhibition will utilize innovative nighttime lighting techniques to enhance the beauty and safety of several locations throughout the city of Gainesville. Developed by the European Lighting Designers Association (ELDA+), and previously implemented in Europe, the Gainesville presentation will be a first for the U.S. For more information visit:

www.civiclights.com

Alachua County Budget Meetings

Only a few more public meetings

“As we conclude the budget meetings for the next fiscal year, we look forward to citizen input and participation as the County Commission allocates its budget,” said Suzanne Gable, Alachua County Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

August 29th - 10 a.m.
- 1:30 p.m.
- 5 p.m.

September 6th - 5:30 p.m.

September 20th - 5:30 p.m.
Annual Reverse Trade Show

Businesses turned the tables on government

North Central Florida businesses had a chance to turn the tables on local governments. The Fourth Annual Reverse Trade Show was held at Central FL Community College on July 19.

Instead of setting appointments and spending days to travel to each of the government agencies represented, businesses had the opportunity to introduce themselves and meet with purchasing representatives from all the agencies in one room during a four hour period. They were able to get pointers on dealing with the government and ascertain which entities may have a need for their services and/or products.

“The government agencies participating in the reverse trade show were eager to tap the largest possible pool of vendors,” Alachua County Purchasing Manager Larry M. Sapp, CPPB, said. “We focused a lot in reaching small and minority businesses.”

Approximately 250 visitors took advantage of the opportunity to meet with purchasing professionals representing 19 government agencies including cities, counties, state agencies, US GSA, community colleges and universities, water districts, school boards, and utilities. Many positive comments from vendors, who were delighted to be able to meet with so many agencies at one place and at one time, were received.

Our Fifth Annual Reverse Trade Show is tentatively scheduled for July 25, 2007, so mark your calendars.

Larry M. Sapp
Alachua County
Purchasing Manager

“The government agencies participating in the reverse trade show were eager to tap the largest possible pool of vendors. We focused on reaching minority and small businesses.”

Princess Brown, Alachua County Purchasing Agent speaks with vendors at the Reverse Trade Show.

Approximately 250 visitors took advantage of the opportunity to meet with purchasing professionals representing 19 government agencies.

A Community Fleet of Hybrids

An excerpt from the County Manager’s Blog

Last Wednesday’s public announcement by President Bernie Machen at the Civic Luncheon that the University of Florida will be utilizing more hybrid vehicles in its university fleet is welcome news on local efforts to build a more sustainable Alachua County. Higher gasoline prices may be a practical motivator, but the vehicles’ additional value is they are less polluting and better for the environment. Alachua County acquired some of the first hybrids in the State in 2000. We currently have 24 hybrids in the County fleet, as well as two electric vehicles used in our downtown facility maintenance efforts. I have driven a Toyota hybrid vehicle provided by the County since its initial introduction, and it has been an enjoyable experience.

GRU and the City of Gainesville also implemented the technology. In 2001, then Commissioner Newport and I visited then President Young and gave him his first ride in our County hybrid vehicle and tried to encourage the University’s transition to hybrid utilization. It is great to see President Machen follow through and the idea catch on. I can attest to how people continue to stop County employees and ask about how they operate and our experiences with them, and we are quite pleased.

We look forward to more community use of biodiesel, hydrogen fuels and other alternative forms of energy conservation and diversification opportunities in our community. Efforts to pool our need for alternative fueling stations could further this effort.

Sometimes government needs to set the example with early adaptation and sponsorship.

While the private sector develops new technology, there is a role for government to encourage, nurture and support its implementation into a market reality. That has been one of the successful marketing strategies of hybrid vehicles, particularly by Toyota who sold vehicles to government which are ideal for administrative staff and urban workforce needs, to expand exposure and dealer support.

Sean McLendon of the Alachua County Environmental Protection Department (EPD) poses in front of EPD’s hybrid Toyota Prius.

Visit the Manager’s Blog:
http://www.alachua-county.org/government/blog/

Commenting on his Blog, County Manager Randall H. Reid said, “Blogging is just another form of communication with citizens, and it puts a personal face on County government. Citizens wander around the blogosphere just as they wander around the downtown, hallways at work, university dorms, or fitness centers. Whenever a chance comes to communicate you take it.”
The Springhills Development of Regional Impact hearing and associated Comprehensive Plan Amendment hearings previously scheduled and advertised for August 31, 2006 have been canceled. These hearings will be rescheduled at a future date. An advertisement will be placed in the Gainesville Sun a minimum of 60 days before the hearing. Notice will also be mailed to surrounding property owners consistent with the Alachua County Land Development Regulations.

The SE 35th Street Park Celebration will take place on Monday, August 28, 2006 at 6:30 p.m. at the park, which is located at 2315 SE 35th Street, Gainesville. Alachua County will be celebrating the award of a $200,000 Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) grant and recognizing all who have contributed time and money towards the upcoming development of the park. The public is invited to join in the celebration.

Commissioner Cynthia Chestnut will provide a history of the park and recognize all of the groups and individuals who contributed to the development of the park. The $200,000 state grant check will be presented by an emissary of Representative Ed Jennings, Jr. Refreshments will be available.

The land for the park was originally acquired by Alachua County in 1996 for development of a community park, and state grants were awarded for its development. In 2005 the County began holding meetings to redesign SE 35th Street Park as a neighborhood park. Clark Butler, a prominent local developer, donated $250,000 to the project in 2005. On August 8, 2006 the County Commission approved a bond issue that provides $690,000 for the project. On August 22, 2006 the County was awarded the $200,000 FRDAP grant for the project.

In speaking of the project Alachua County Parks Superintendent Robert M. Avery said, “This park is sorely needed to serve the youth and families of this area. It will contribute greatly to the quality of life for County residents in this area.”

For more information, please contact Mr. Avery at (352) 374-5245.
Commission Meeting Highlights

August 8, 2006

Vice Chair Paula M. DeLaney, Chair Lee Pinkoson, Commissioner Cynthia Moore Chestnut, Commissioner Rodney J. Long and Commissioner Mike Byerly

Proclamations and Recognitions

- Proclamation declaring August 26, 2006 as “Lewis, Mann, Lawrence Family Reunion Day” in Alachua County, Florida.

Advisory Board Appointments

Alachua/Bradford Workforce Board
- Janet Kristie was appointed as a member of the private sector to a term expiring in June of 2009.
- Ted Gilson was appointed as a member of the private sector to a term expiring in June of 2009.
- Doris Horton was appointed as a member of the private sector to a term expiring in June of 2009.
- Kenneth McGurn was appointed as a member of the private sector to a term expiring in June of 2008.

Click here to view the Proclamation

Click here for an application
Commission Meeting Highlights

**County Attorney**

- The Board authorized the following concerning the Challenge to City of Hawthorne – Southern City Limit Annexations:
  1. Authorize the County Attorney to file a lawsuit challenging the annexations approved by the City of Hawthorne’s Ordinances #s 2006-32 through 2006-38.
  2. Adopt the resolution attached hereto to implement the Florida governmental conflict Resolution Act.
  3. Authorize the County Attorney and the County Manager to coordinate the meetings and events that are required pursuant of the Florida Governmental Conflict Resolution Act.

**Community Planning Group**

- The Board authorized a Professional Services Agreement with Volkert & Associates, Inc. for Engineering Services as for County Project 6336, North Main Street from N 8th Avenue to N 23rd Avenue. Amount: $323,927.44

- The Board authorized an Inter-local Agreement for Public School Facility Planning as required by Florida Statues to incorporate a process for the establishment of public school concurrency.

- The Board approved the Amended Initial Rate Resolution for Stormwater Management Assessment.

- The Board authorized the advertisement of the Ordinance Amending the Stormwater Ordinance to Add a Hardship Exemption.

- The Board approved a request to add one classification to the FY05/06 Non-Bargaining Pay Plan; add six (6) FTE’s in the Road & Bridge Division of the Public Works Department for Construction and Pavement Management.
Commission Meeting Highlights

County Manager

- The Board approved the execution of the Grant Contract between Alachua County, Florida Communities Trust and the City of High Springs for the City of High Springs Reservoir Project on the Alachua County Forever Active Acquisition List.

- The Board authorized the County Manager to enter into an option agreement with Diamond Sports Park to be next in line should the School Board not buy the park.

Public Hearings

- The Board adopted an amendment to Alachua County Animal Services Ordinance.

- The Board approved a request to conduct a Public Hearing Request to Adopt Resolution and Approve Budget Amendment by Recognizing Fund Balance and Appropriating Reserve/Expenses for Santa Fe Hills Water System. Amount: $10,000.00

Commission Comments

Commissioner Chestnut made the following requests:
1. Place Mr. Gardner’s request, concerning the Community Coalition for Older Adults, on the agenda for a future meeting.
2. Consider hiring in house teams to do some jobs such as roofing and general repairperson projects.
3. Place an agenda packet at the downtown library.
The Alachua County Commission is committed to citizen involvement on its 33 advisory boards and is soliciting applications for the following vacancies:

- **Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Board**: One citizen-at-large
- **CHOICES Advisory Board**: One alternate who is a CHOICES program participant
- **Citizen Disability Advisory Committee**: Three citizens-at-large
- **Cultural and Environmental Funding Advisory Board**: One Cultural organization member, one Heritage organization member, one Nature-based organization member, Professional Arts Producing Institution member, one Alachua County resident, one Alachua County resident alternate
- **Economic Development Advisory Board**: One Representative of UF
- **Environmental Protection Advisory Board**: One alternate
- **Fair Housing Human Rights Board**: One lending institution representative, one citizen-at-large, one alternate
- **Gainesville/Alachua County Cultural Affairs Board**: One citizen-at-large
- **Health Care Board**: One low income consumer, one Alachua County Dental Association representative, one Shands representative
- **Health Facilities Authority**: One alternate
- **Housing Finance Authority**: Two citizens-at-large
- **Poverty Reduction Advisory Board**: One representative of Alachua/Bradford Workforce Board, one citizen-at-large with a disability, one low income citizen, one faith based organization representative, one low income citizen
- **Recreation and Open Space Advisory Committee**: Four citizens-at-large, one alternate
- **RTS Advisory Board**: One senior citizen
- **Rural Concerns Advisory Committee**: One member from an unincorporated town
- **Tourist Development Council**: One owner/operator
- **Veterans Service Advisory Board**: One citizen who is a Veteran
- **Victim Services and Rape Crisis Center Advisory Board**: Eleven voting citizens (four of which must have a history of victimization), one alternate

Get Involved

Alachua County Advisory Boards

Applications are also available at the County Manager’s Office on the Second Floor of the County Administration Building, 12 S. E. First St., Gainesville.

For more information, call Darlene Ryon, Advisory Board Coordinator, at (352) 264-6906