

ALACHUA COUNTY
Environmental Protection Advisory Committee

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Mary Alford, Chair
David Moritz, Vice-Chair

May 18, 2015

Board of County Commissioners for Alachua County
12 SE 1st Street
Gainesville, FL 32601

Honorable Commissioners:

On April 29, 2015, the Environmental Protection Advisory Committee hosted the first part of "A Community Conversation about the Future of Development in Alachua County" which was a community forum focused on Water and Wetlands. It was held at the Alachua County Health Department from 6PM until approximately 8PM and was attended by over fifty people. Questions for the forum were collected in advance of the meeting from both the public and from the speakers. In addition, in order to facilitate the "conversation" part of the meeting, written comments and text messages were taken from the audience and presented to everyone from the screen behind podium. The forum was moderated by former EPAC Chair Bob Palmer and the participants included Del Bottcher (Soil and Water Engineering Technology, Inc), Marc Kramer (University of Florida), Pierce Jones (University of Florida), Mark Clark (University of Florida) and Cynthia Barnett (Journalist).

Questions were pulled from the list of questions (attached) and were supplemented, based on responses, by prompting from Bob Palmer. The audience was engaged and texted 17 questions and comments during the event. It is worth noting that no participants left the meeting and that, when polled after the meeting, everyone said they would like to attend the next event on May 27, 2015. There were some issues with sound, and we will be mitigating that with a sound system at the next event. WCJB came and set up their camera, however they left after a short while since the meeting was not contentious.

Twelve pizzas were donated by Domino's Pizza for this event (Freddie Wehbe) and water was served. While these were not particularly healthy refreshments, we think having some food contributed to the positive outcome of the meeting. We have not secured food donations for the next two events but we hope to find a similar business willing to support these meetings. Set up and cleanup was provided by Gus Olmos and staff from EPD with help from EPAC.

There were multiple ideas that were inspired from this meeting that are being considered and discussed by EPAC. We recognize that some of these items may not be in the County's scope. Some of these ideas came directly from the forum and others were generated during EPAC meeting discussions after the forum.

- Decrease allowed summer watering (once a week versus twice).

- No “waste” of water – similar to the ordinance from Clermont. The interpretation of this ordinance could change with needs, ramping up over time.
- Publish water use averages by neighborhood.
- Require HOA documents to be reviewed every 7 years – the justification is that County Comprehensive Plans must be reviewed and revised as necessary every seven years, and HOA documents are basically Comp Plans for the neighborhood.
- Change how we charge impact fees to take into account water use and size of lot. Currently impact fees are calculated based on square footage of the structure only and, even though the justification is for infrastructure, it does not consider lot size.
- Set the goal of being the lowest water use for the region – be the leaders.
- Prepare a 50 year plan to address expected water resources and changes to county population, etc., and modify with the Comprehensive Plan as new information becomes available.
- Consider no irrigation in urban areas.
- Calculate and prepare a water budget for Alachua County. Make the public aware of how everyone contributes to that water budget.
- Change pricing structure of water, recognize water as a commodity.

The success of this meeting was dependent on help we received from County Staff, in particular Gus Olmos, EPAC’s EPD liason, and Mark Sexton, who helped publicize the event. We appreciated Commissioners Byerly and Cornell attending the first in this series of events, along with County Manager Niblock, and we hope that some of you will attend the next event. It is scheduled for May 27, 2015 at 6PM at the Alachua County Health Department.

Sincerely,



Mary C. Alford, PE
Chair, Alachua County EPAC

cc: Dr. Lee A. Niblock, County Manager
Chris Bird, EPD Director