

GROWTH TASK FORCE

The Growth Task Force (GTF) met at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 24, 2004 in the Alston Room at the Conference Center at Dodgertown, 3901 26th Street, Vero Beach, Florida.

Present were William Beardslee, Jr., Mary Berrigan, Chester Clem, Clete Deller, Robert Jackson and Tim Zorc, Commissioner Tom Lowther's delegates; George Blythe, Dan Corrigan, Adriene Cuffe, Dolf Kahle, Gene Waddell and Freddie Woolfork, Commissioner Ken Mach's delegates; Andy Bowler, Bob Bruce, Elwood Holzworth, Ericson Menger, Kenneth Miller and Richard Oujevolk, Commissioner Art Neuberger's delegates; Mark Brackett, John Little, Jay Smith, Tom Trolle and Grant Withers, Commissioner Caroline Ginn's delegates; Maureen Cummings, Cathy Fulton, Tony Gaskew, Bill Glynn, Donna Keys and Beth Mitchell, Commissioner Fran Adams' delegates.

Absent was Gene Winne (excused).

Also present were Dr. David Sullivan, Facilitator; Commissioner Caroline Ginn; William G. Collins II, County Attorney; Stan Boling, County Planning Director; Gary Wheeler, Aly Guadagne, Hugh Blath and Frank Coffey, Interested Citizens; Henry Stephens, Press Journal and Reta Smith, Assistant to the Executive Aide.

Welcome – Commission Chairman Caroline D. Ginn

Commissioner Ginn welcomed members of the GTF. She introduced facilitator Dr. David Sullivan from Indian River Community College, and County staff. She thanked the Vero Beach Dodgers for their assistance in providing the meeting facilities at no charge. She urged the GTF to work hard and come up with some really good ideas and thanked them for donating their time and expertise.

Sunshine Law – County Attorney William G. Collins II

Attorney Collins explained the Sunshine Law to those present and answered questions from the members.

Expectations – Dr. David Sullivan, Facilitator

Dr. Sullivan stated he was originally going to pair people up to work on the Land Development Regulations (LDRs) together, but he could not do that

because of the Sunshine Law so people would be working independently on assigned tasks. He advised the group they would not be working on the Comprehensive Plan, because that would be done through the visioning process. He announced his plan was to spend some time brainstorming to narrow down the issues, break for lunch, listen to the guest speaker in the afternoon, then divide up the LDRs for the members to research on their own and bring back at the May 15th meeting. Dr. Sullivan affirmed Mr. Boling was here today as a resource and to give pointers on who some good contact people would be and where to get information on a particular LDR. He added if there were any questions from the audience, he preferred to wait until later in the afternoon to answer any of their inquiries.

Introductions

All of the members introduced themselves around the room and spoke about their reasons for wanting to be on the GTF and what they hoped to accomplish. Ms. Keys explained Mr. Winne's wife had just been released from hospital and he was taking her to rehab today so he might not be able to make today's meeting.

Identify the Issues

Dr. Sullivan clarified the Comprehensive Plan was not off limits to the GTF, and if it was going to be addressed those issues would be put in writing and probably sent as recommendations to the Visioning Task Force. He wanted the group today to identify the issues and leave with an area they were each going to tackle and come back in three weeks. At that time, the information would be presented along with the members' recommendations on the issues, and at the third meeting it would all be brought together along with both specific and general recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC).

Attorney Collins commented if anyone on the GTF had questions on legal issues when they were working on their assignments, they should feel free to get in touch with his department for guidance.

Dr. Sullivan advised the meeting room next door had been set up with four tables in each corner of the room, and the GTF would be divided up into four groups. He explained each of the tables had flip chart sheets and a marker and each sheet had a different question, as follows:

- What are our successes – what is not broken and what are our strengths?
- What are the real growth issues to tackle?
- What should we be careful not to do through this process?

- What do you predict at this time will be possible recommendations from the GTF?

Dr. Sullivan asked one person to write each group's comments on the respective flip chart sheets, and then the groups would rotate to another table where they would look at what the previous members had written and add their input. He clarified each group would rotate four times so everyone had a chance to address each of the questions, then after a short break the GTF would meet in the Alston Room and review the sheets together.

At 9:12 a.m., the members broke up into groups of four and left for the adjoining room.

At 10:20 a.m. the GTF reconvened in the Alston Room.

Mr. Sullivan felt everyone was moving down a road that would stay fuzzy at least through today, but it would start to clear up at the next meeting on May 15th. He had been asked what it was he was asking the GTF to do, and related the marching orders he had was to identify the issues and bring together recommendations on the LDRs that impacted those issues. He clarified if along the way the members identified issues relating to the Comprehensive Plan, he would keep those together and send them on to the Visioning Task Force, who would be addressing the Comprehensive Plan.

Dr. Sullivan disclosed when the group was at lunch, Mr. Boling would be taking the notes from the breakaway session and aligning them with the LDRs to make sure we would be addressing each of the issues.

Mr. Blythe mentioned his group had a feeling they would be more of a visioning group than a nuts and bolts entity, and had not foreseen they would be working on twelve foot side yards, etc.

Dr. Sullivan said that might happen, but at the end of the day he would try to line up a person's strength with the LDR that followed suit, however if anyone had a specific LDR they would like to work on, that could be arranged. Dr. Sullivan clarified the GTF had the ability to send on anything it wanted to the VTF, and if that was really a passion for some members, they might want to get involved in the VTF if the opportunity presented itself.

Dr. Sullivan thought it might be beneficial if we took the first hour of our next meeting to look at what the County was doing now, insofar as projects that were currently happening, and suggested we get an update from County staff on May 15. It was the consensus this would be a good idea.

A discussion followed.

Mr. Boling exhibited the Future Land Use Map and disclosed how it was used as a fundamental framework for all the decisions that were made for zoning, and laid the foundation for the LDRs. He described what the different colors on the Map depicted and explained how the Comprehensive Plan had come about. Mr. Boling discussed how the Comprehensive Plan could be changed through annexation by the municipalities.

Dr. Sullivan advised if the final recommendation came out with suggestions that 20 members felt strongly in favor of a certain issue and 10 felt strongly against it, he would provide all of that data to the BCC so every vote would be presented on every topic taken forward.

Mr. Boling said one thing that may come out of all of this was a better understanding of how the LDRs actually controlled density more restrictively than the Comprehensive Plan did.

The visioning process was discussed. A lengthy discussion followed about the Comprehensive Plan.

Dr. Sullivan advised the GTF was really not here today to deal with the Comprehensive Plan, and asked the group to go with the flow. He inquired who had any feelings about the apartments that had recently been built at the corner of Indian River Boulevard and 12th Street, and everybody raised their hands. Dr. Sullivan stressed the GTF could make an impact on the future by working through the LDRs and making changes that would impact projects like the Palms of Vero. He mentioned the members would mostly be addressing one LDR and did not have to read through all the LDRs, although some people had expertise in more than one area and would be addressing more than one.

Dr. Sullivan thought it might be interesting to keep the sheets that asked the question "What do you predict at this time will be possible recommendations from the GTF?" and bring them out at the last meeting to see how closely the answers tallied with the results. He reviewed the sheets as follows:

What are our successes – what is not broken and what are our strengths?

1. Good tax base
2. Natural beauty/protection of environment
3. Good height limits
4. Airport – economic engine
5. Excellent cultural activities

6. Focused on excellent educational system
7. Somewhat isolated (a good thing)
8. We have a Comprehensive Plan
9. Relative low traffic
10. Basis of a good landscape requirement
11. Task Force empanelment
12. Caring concerned community
13. We have learned from South Florida's mistakes
14. Indian River County Land Trust (environmental land purchases)
15. Parks and Recreation – beach access
16. Good medical facilities and availability
17. Emergency Services
18. Indian River Lagoon and Marina
19. Climate
20. Low crime/perception of crime rate
21. Good growth to date
22. Active and effective Chambers of Commerce
23. Good road network
24. Followed Comprehensive Plan

What are the real growth issues to tackle?

1. Preservation and creation of open space
2. What are the real numbers of growth? (population and units approved)
3. Preserve agricultural land
4. Impact of national developers
5. What is the total maximum build-out units
6. Subdivisions vs. PD (Planned Development) and PUD (Planned Urban Development) density
7. Is concurrency being met?
8. Extent of zoning regulations applied
9. Impact of traffic
10. Lack of affordable housing
11. Pressure on services and infrastructure
12. Seasonal growth
13. Urban sprawl versus high density
14. Economic development: jobs, jobs, jobs
15. Water quality – Indian River Lagoon, beaches, etc.
16. Preservation of environment
17. Private property rights
18. Need for improved urban/community planning
19. Do we want to remain a retirement community or become more balanced?

Mr. Boling explained County Planning staff had been working with a consultant for close to a year to develop a computer model that would take information from the Property Appraiser, Building Department and data from the Community Development Department about potential “in the pipeline” units. The goal was to see what was actually happening out there right now and how many lots were vacant and what the potential was in those existing lots, plus what was coming in the pipeline. He advised this was called Vacant Land Analysis, and was being funded through the Metropolitan Planning Organization. Mr. Boling clarified there may be “x” number of buildable parcels in the Urban Service Area, but everybody was not going to build all at once and it was a matter of trying to predict when and how that would happen.

Mr. Boling specified the goal of the visioning process was to get the County and all the municipalities to commit to their Comprehensive Plans. He acknowledged annexations could occur and jurisdictional boundaries could change, and the County wanted a commitment from all the governing bodies to agree in essence on one kind of plan.

Mr. Little wondered what the maximum population would be if the County built out according to the current Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Boling thought the GTF should concentrate on what they wanted the finished product to look like.

Dr. Sullivan reminded the members they were tackling the LDRs, because it was the first step in the process. He said it may be decided to make a recommendation to continue on in some other fashion or with some other direction, but right now the focus was to get through the LDRs by June 5th.

Mr. Withers asked how many in the room were aware before they walked in the door that the GTF would not be talking about the Comprehensive Plan. A few of the members raised their hands. Mr. Withers then asked how many did not know that the Comprehensive Plan would not be part of the GTF assignment, and most of the members raised their hands.

Dr. Sullivan said he was sorry if the group did not get appropriate communication, but we were all here so let’s get it done. He stressed if anybody was unhappy and didn’t want to be involved, there would be no hard feelings if they left. Nobody left.

A brief discussion followed

Ms. Keys mentioned a person in her group was concerned with the way concurrency was calculated. Mr. Boling said this was in the LDRs and would be addressed at the next meeting.

Affordable housing and the cost of vacant land were discussed.

Mr. Boling brought up the fact the Palms of Vero was an affordable housing project and if you were to make changes in the way it looked, it might not be affordable.

Mr. Brackett observed the County could either have LDRs that would increase the quality of life, which would drive property values and ultimately the housing costs up, or it could have affordable housing. He maintained the two could not be mixed unless affordable housing was separated to a different area and held to less of a standard. He opined you could not require all of the things that cost money and maintain affordable housing unless you had subsidies or a different set of LDRs.

Issues the GTF members thought should be addressed were:

1. Corridor Plan for Indian River Boulevard to address multi-family
2. Architectural issues
3. Height versus setback
4. Landscape requirements and buffers
5. Utility easements
6. Consider public transportation
7. Underground utilities (new subdivisions)
8. Pro-active road right-of-way and road construction prior to construction
9. Ingress and egress
10. Incentives for low income housing

Dr. Sullivan reviewed the following:

What should we be careful not to do through this process?

1. We do not want to become South Florida (Fort Vero)
2. We don't want to stop development or new construction
3. We want to be careful not to over-burden our current infrastructure
4. Do no alienate (burden) any one segment of population (i.e. construction, retirees, etc.)
5. Do not allow County staff to be overwhelmed – add staff or reduce flow
6. Do not extend the Urban Service Area without thought or referendum
7. Do not lose trees
8. Do not lose road grid system
9. Do not compromise ecology (Indian River and Sebastian River)
10. Do not waste time
11. Do not ignore private property rights

12. Do not think short term
13. Do not create vague regulations
14. Do not succumb to knee jerk reaction
15. Do not create new LDRs without first reviewing/revising the Comprehensive Plan

Mr. Menger pointed out that statistically for every 1,400 home owners, one was also an aircraft owner and over time there would be more aircraft owners wanting to use the current aviation facilities. He mentioned that would bring noise concerns, etc. and he hope long-term thinking would hopefully save the taxpayers a lot of lawsuit dollars down the road. He thought this was important when discussing concurrency, because along with roads there were also runways.

The GTF broke for lunch at 11:45 a.m. and reconvened at 12:30 p.m.

Guest Speaker – Michael J. Busha, Executive Director, Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council

Mr. Busha gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled Towns, Cities, Villages & The Countryside Coping With The Next Wave of Growth, a copy of which is on file in the County Commission office.

The GTF wondered how they could take what we had in the County and make it good. Mr. Boling suggested the best place to start would be to look at what was in a particular area, such as landscaping, that the members liked and thought worked. The next thing would be to look at the way the regulations were set up and see if there should be certain things required and certain things that should not be allowed. Dr. Sullivan suggested a short term solution would be to adjust some of the LDRs for projects that were coming through the pipeline now so they actually resembled some of the things the members liked.

Mr. Boling advised outside of the Urban Service boundary the County already had development policies in the Comprehensive Plan for rural villages and new towns and traditional neighborhoods, with a center and mixed uses and green areas, and basically transferring density from agricultural areas into a center. He confirmed those policies had been in place for years and he thought another step might be to go even further and master plan some of those areas outside the Urban Service Area. Mr. Boling thought the LDRs would be what were effective on the inside of the Urban Service Area for what the County had right now. He promised to show at the next meeting a project the Planning and Zoning Commission had been looking at in the area south of Oslo Road.

A discussion followed about roadway grids and the necessity to widen roads.

A member noted a lot of people in the room were generally happy with what Vero Beach was or had been and liked a lot of things about it, and he asked Mr. Busha whether Vero Beach as it currently was had the type of development he was saying we wanted to have, or did this type of development actually not really exist very much here. Mr. Busha responded there were parts of Vero Beach that were very good, i.e. some of the older neighborhoods and the beach had a mixture of uses and businesses. He observed it was difficult to create that context under the rules we had today where we had to do one subdivision at a time and you were not allowed to repeat anything like Vero Beach again.

Mr. Busha asked the GTF to think about where the County was going to put the next 60,000 people who came to the area. The members gave Mr. Busha a round of applause and Dr. Sullivan declared a five minute break was in order.

Dr. Sullivan suggested the members might want to take a digital camera with them while researching their particular LDR, and show things they did and did not like. He wondered if there was a place in the LDRs to have a community philosophy to put on the table what people wanted to see that the developers should read and think about before coming to the County with a proposal. He thought perhaps we could even use some of Mr. Busha's slides from his presentation to show the types of things we thought were worthwhile.

The members suggested along with density and heights, the County should have a mission statement of a vision of how we would like to see things be as part of something a developer had to sign when he came in with a project. It was felt a water management plan was important, and instead of each person providing their own stormwater management, some type of master stormwater management plan could be in place. There was a suggestion that improvement of road grids should be considered important to future development and perhaps a master connectivity plan.

One member agreed Mr. Busha's presentation was wonderful, but the Task Force's work would be with 10 to 30 acre parcels within the Urban Service Area, and the visioning group would be working on the properties that Mr. Busha's concept might fit. Another member noted we were not just talking about Vero Beach and stressed the importance of incentives for preservation of citrus groves, equestrian centers and cattle ranches. It was suggested perhaps there could be incentives to small landowners to join together with other landowners to come up with a larger property for a more viable PD.

Mr. Boling talked about the importance of communities to retain a sense of identity.

Dr. Sullivan had the members open their books to the LDR section. He handed out a list of issues and which LDRs related to those issues, noting he would be assigning people to work on certain areas. Mr. Boling went over each of the LDRs contained on the list. Dr. Sullivan suggested some members might want to stay and touch base with Mr. Boling about possible sources for research on a particular topic. Mr. Boling and Dr. Sullivan wrote down their e-mail addresses for the GTF in case members had questions during their assignments.

Mr. Little explained he could not see very well, except with a large magnifying glass, and he did not drive a car. He related he would be happy to be part of the GTF, but he could not get involved in rewriting the LDRs. He said if Dr. Sullivan wanted him to step down and not come to any more meetings he would do so, otherwise he was willing to attend and offer the benefit of his experience and expertise.

After a brief discussion with Mr. Boling, Dr. Sullivan told Mr. Little they would find an alternative project for him that did not involve reading or driving.

Mr. Zorc suggested if the members of the GTF concurred, it might be a good idea to have everybody in attendance who wanted to be part of the visioning process be placed first on any sort of a list the BCC might have for that purpose. Dr. Sullivan said he would bring this up with the Commissioners and have an answer at the next meeting. He asked for a show of hands on how many people would be interested in participating in the visioning process, and approximately 95% of the GTF members raised their hands.

Dr. Sullivan asked if anyone from the audience had any questions. No one did.

Mr. Boling explained he had assigned certain LDRs to a person if he knew somebody had a background in a particular area, but they could reject his choice. Dr. Sullivan said people should feel free to volunteer for a certain LDR if they wanted to. He gave each member their assignments, and a copy of the assignment list with the respective names is on file in the Commission office.

Dr. Sullivan told the members they might want to summarize their findings and bring 35 copies to the next meeting so they could share the information with the group. He confirmed he would have a laptop and projector at the May 15th meeting for the members' use.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:28 p.m.