

**FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
WORKSHOP
COURTHOUSE ANNEX, COMMISSION MEETING ROOM
APRIL 18, 2023
1:30 P.M.
MINUTES**

Commissioners Present: Ricky Jones-Chairman, Jessica Ward-Vice-Chairman, Cheryl Sanders, and Otice Amison (via Zoom)

Commissioners Absent: Noah Lockley

Others Present: Michael Shuler-County Attorney and Michael Moron-County Coordinator

Call to Order

Chairman Jones called the workshop to order. He noted Commissioner Lockley was absent due to a death in his family and Commissioner Amison was appearing by Zoom due to a scheduled doctor's appointment.

Public Comments

Sharon Rigsby

Edwin Lott

Steve Fling

Carina McKuen

Terry Rigsby

John Berry

Jim Sorenson

Tom Hines

Elinor Piper

Eddie Bass

Brad Benners

John Dexter

Wayne Gate

Rudy Ming

Kathy Yeager

Ms. Sharon Rigsby and Mr. Edwin Lott appeared before the Board on behalf of the citizens who had met last week to discuss the proposed golf cart ordinance. Ms. Rigsby explained that to save time and avoid repeating themselves, the group had decided to let her inform the Board of the outcome of their meeting. Ms. Rigsby explained that the group ultimately came up with few key points being location and speed; a requirement for valid driver's license and permit with licensed driver; requirement for safety equipment on carts driven after dark (Brakes, steering, tires, mirrors, headlights, brake lights, turn signals and horn); language that operator operates cart at their own risk.

Mr. Fling inquired if the speed limit could be reduced to 35 mph. Attorney Shuler noted that the statute does not set a specific speed. However, it allows the Board to determine what is safe. Mr. Fling recommended reducing the speed limit.

Attorney Shuler read for the record and the public/Board's benefit F.S. 316.212 (1).

316.212 Operation of golf carts on certain roadways. —The operation of a golf cart upon the public roads or streets of this state is prohibited except as provided herein:

(1) A golf cart may be operated only upon a county road that has been designated by a county, a municipal

street that has been designated by a municipality, or a two-lane county road located within the jurisdiction of a municipality designated by that municipality, for use by golf carts. Prior to making such a designation, the responsible local governmental entity must first determine that golf carts may safely travel on or cross the public road or street, considering factors including the speed, volume, and character of motor vehicle traffic using the road or street. Upon a determination that golf carts may be safely operated on a designated road or street, the responsible governmental entity shall post appropriate signs to indicate that such operation is allowed.

Carina McKuen noted she was a business owner, and a lot of her customers travel to her establishment via golf cart. Terry Rigsby noted some state parks allow for golf cart use where the speed limit is no more than 35 mph. John Berry noted the potential for a liability issue especially for the rentals. Jim Sorenson spoke in support of the ordinance. Tom Hines spoke in support of the ordinance. Mr. Moron asked who all in attendance was in favor of the ordinance. Everyone present was in favor with no one who opposed. Chairman Jones noted that he realizes we cannot make everyone happy. However, safety is priority. Elinor Piper spoke in agreement with the golf cart ordinance but would like the Board to consider treating the ordinance and speed limit issue separately. Eddie Bass noted that Alligator Point is not as 'touristy' as St. George Island. He spoke in support of the golf cart ordinance. Brad Benners spoke in support of the ordinance. He noted the need for a reduced speed limit as well as consistency. John Dexter spoke in support of the ordinance. Wayne Gate noted the Department of Public Highway Safety has some information that may be useful to the Board regarding speed limits. Chairman Jones spoke about the statutorily definition of a golf cart and the low-speed vehicle. Attorney Shuler noted that most golf carts maximum speed is 15 mph. Chairman Jones noted that most all low-speed vehicles will have all safety equipment. Commissioner Sanders spoke in support of reducing the speed limit from 45 to 35 mph. However, she wanted to make the audience aware of the potential for speeding tickets in the future. Rudy Ming noted initially they did not want to make any changes to the speed limit in the effort to save time. We want to move forward quickly with the ordinance. If changing the speed limit slows the process down, would prefer separating the processes. Chairman Jones noted that we are here today to hear comments. However, he would prefer to make one change and not ten. Commissioner Sanders noted that the Board will rely on Attorney Shuler's recommendation. The Board discussed the location of Pine Street, noting is on the Hwy 98 side of intersection about a mile north of the entrance sign. A lady (name inaudible) asked if the designated golf cart area would start at the entrance sign it would include all the homes. She noted there are no other homes between the welcome sign and Hwy 98. The Board discussed stepping down the speed limit from the 55 zone to 45 then 35. He said he is not sure where the speed limit steps down and there may need to be some consultation with our engineering firm to determine where those speed limits need to step down. Chairman Jones said he believed DOT specifies distances in between speed limit step downs. An unidentified lady asked what the process of changing the speed limits is. Attorney Shuler noted that essentially can be done with the incorporation of the ordinance. Commissioner Ward also said them not being incorporated it is a good thing. She said in Carrabelle the city did not want the speed limit changed on Ryan Drive. With this change, this Board can make this decision without consulting with the municipalities. Commissioner Ward spoke in support of the ordinance, noting others get to ride their golf carts and she believes they should too. Commissioner Amison inquired about the distance where they are wanting to reduce the speed limit. Chairman Jones said what he believed has been discussed, is there is currently 35 mph on the curve. There is approximately 1.5 miles past the welcome sign that we are discussing a speed reduction. Commissioner Amison said he wants the citizens to take into consideration that once we do this, we do not want people complaining regarding receiving tickets. Commissioner Amison said it is time to have something in place to allow them to ride their golf carts. Commissioner Ward said if we do this as a Board it does become an enforcement issue for the sheriff's department. We make policy and they enforce it. Chairman Jones said if we could include something regarding rentals in the ordinance. We are already dealing with this on St. George Island. Chairman Jones said all the path that is being built with grant funds are shared bike paths and not to be utilized for golf carts. Mr. Moron said the next step is Attorney Shuler will draft an ordinance

and hold a public hearing. Mr. Moron noted we will include in it something about rentals. Chairman Jones said yes include rentals and maybe put a maximum. Attorney Shuler noted that they included a limitation in the St. George Island ordinance, limiting to five rentals. Commissioner Sanders reminded the public the ordinance is not in place and there could be possible repercussions for those driving golf carts. A lady spoke and said the consensus of the group was that rentals are not allowed. Attorney Shuler asked if there was any commercial property at Alligator Point. Kathy Yeager said the only commercial property she is aware of is the former Harbor Point Realty building, tiki hut and marina. Another gentleman noted another property previously a bar/grill/pool hall is still zoned commercial. Chairman Jones thanked everyone for attending today. There being no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned.

Ricky Jones – Chairman

Attest:

Michele Maxwell – Clerk of Courts

The audio is available upon request. Please e-mail jgay@franklinclerk.com, call 850-653-8861 to speak with the Administrative Assistant, or submit a request in writing to obtain audio of this meeting.