

**FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
WORKSHOP
COURTHOUSE ANNEX, COMMISSION MEETING ROOM
MAY 16, 2023
1:30 PM**

MINUTES

Commissioners Present: Ricky Jones-Chairman, Jessica Ward-Vice-Chairman, Cheryl Sanders, and Ottilie Amison

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

Call to Order

Public Comments

Nena Segree spoke on the hardship of saving to build a home and renting. She noted that the FEMA zoning changed on her property causing the cost to build to increase. She would like to be able to dwell on her own land in a camper while she saves to build a home. Chairman Jones noted that she can challenge the revision to the FEMA rezoning and told her to contact our county staff.

Cheryl Fritsch-Middleton noted there was an issue of humanity as well as an economic side to this issue. It is not all people with addictions who do not want to work that are living in campers. A lot of them are working people. Denton Cove restrictions know out a large part of our population. This issue will impact tourism due to no housing for workforce. We cannot take people out of the homes and have nowhere to put them.

Kim Council noted she would lose half of her staff if the camper ordinance were enforced. If this goes forward, we cannot attract people from other areas because there is nowhere for them to live.

Sharon Ryder noted that she lives in her motorhome on her private property and has done so for eighteen years.

Abby Shiver noted it is difficult to get people to come to our area to work due to housing shortage. Affordable housing has been an issue that has not been taken care of for twenty plus years. Expressed concern of kicking out all the campers and having shortage of educational professionals. Glad that we are starting to have a conversation.

Mike Pierce expressed concern about neighbor renting RV lot beside him against code and does not seem like anything is being done about it. Does not really have a problem with code as is. He inquired as to what the process is for enforcing ordinances. Chairman Jones noted that currently we do not have code enforcement, so the process is for Attorney Shuler to send letters for violations. Chairman Jones noted that is why the Board is holding the workshop today.

Wayne Gleasman spoke in support of ordinance noting violations in multiple subdivisions that he manages. He noted that he paid rent over twenty years while saving for a home here and would have never lived in a camper. He noted he has two scenarios in subdivisions where people have set up RVs. We have no authority from the county to move on the ordinance. In an official capacity, we wholeheartedly support the 2023 draft ordinance as it was presented.

Abby Shiver noted St. George Island has not allowed mobile homes for many years why would someone think it is okay for RVs. She is all for helping our local people. There are a lot of people that move into our community that have a vagrant disregard for our rules. As far as local people, maybe have an area where RVs are not allowed such as St. George Island.

Wanda Rose noted the Board had a difficult decision here. She said she is here because of a zoning problem. She noted she purchased her property where it is zoned prohibiting mobile homes and RVs. We are not supposed to have mobile homes within 1500 feet of the coastline. We need to do something for these people that cannot afford it. We must have people who work and working people cannot afford these homes. She noted we are going to have an issue with illegal immigrants moving in. We must have consistency. Possibly

make an area where mobile homes and RVs are allowed.

Travel Trailers, Motor Homes, & Mobile Campers Discussion

1. A.J. Smith – Sheriff

Chairman Jones noted there is a difference from where someone is living in a camper versus a zoning issue like it is zoned R1 residential. What is the sheriff responsible for? Sheriff's department is not responsible for zoning. We have had discussion about what we are going to do moving forward. Sheriff Smith noted that it must be law for him to enforce it and he is happy to do that. He acknowledged that affordable housing is crazy here. He noted that what they see is campers with no running water or sewage where drug activity is happening. He noted that the ones living in campers while building houses are not the problem. He said he sees it getting worse. We are looking at what we can do to eliminate drug activity. We are going to see more of it until we give law enforcement the ability to do something about it. Mr. Moron said the ordinance referred to earlier 82-6 says it shall be a misdemeanor to live, dwell, etc. in a trailer. Sheriff Smith noted that now we have people living in sheds and tents with no sewer or water. We get a lot of complaints. If we can catch them committing another crime we do. Chairman Jones noted the Board was trying to resolve the issue with the least unintended consequences possible. Sheriff Smith said we are here to help anyway we can. Whatever we can to help y'all we are here to do it.

2. Department of Health – Environmental Health Staff

Ms. Sarah Quaranta spoke about what defines a sanitary nuisance noting there must be a specific health danger. The health department is all about disease prevention. Untreated sewage, standing water and garbage can all contribute to a sanitary nuisance. Karry Leonard noted that a lot of the calls are not actual sanitary nuisances. Commissioner Sanders inquired as to what the response time is when they receive a complaint. Ms. Leonard noted that they try to respond that day or within a day or two. She noted that a lot of times the complaints are anonymous, and they have no way of knowing how to contact the complainant to follow up. If the caller provides contact information, we follow up with them immediately. Zach Rogers noted there is a legal process they must follow. Commissioner Sanders said there was a particular situation she was referring to that was not followed up on in a timely manner. Mr. Rogers noted that he will follow up on this issue.

3. Commission Discussion

Chairman Jones began saying the Board was here to solve the problem. He then asked Mr. Pierce if he had something to say because he was unable to talk over him. Mr. Pierce asked what the legal ramifications of the health department were once they find a violation. Chairman Jones noted that he could speak with the representatives from the health department outside of the meeting setting. Chairman Jones noted the Board was having this workshop to help come up with a solution. He said the county is in support of the health departments efforts and intends to work in connection with them. Ms. Quaranta noted that if there is ever a question about a particular property, they can always give them a call. Mr. Moron noted that we need to be effective and fair but show compassion. He said it sounds easy, but it is tough to get there. Commissioner Ward noted that she has ideas but does not know how we would pay for it. Chairman Jones noted that the county had approached the school board a couple of times regarding the property they own near the jail. Each time there was no agreement. He noted the Eastpoint Water and Sewer District was in the process of a potential housing project. Mrs. Leonard noted that when notices to abate are sent out they are mailed to the property owner. Property owners should be aware they are responsible for the fine when they allow someone on their property. Commissioner Sanders noted the housing market has driven property prices through the roof here. We have locals who cannot afford to buy, and we must balance it out. The last thing we want to do is force locals out of our county. Mr. Rogers noted that once the county has a code enforcement officer, they can work in conjunction with the health department on violations. Commissioner Ward noted that each time she has contacted the health department she has received a prompt response. Mr.

Moron noted that his staff looks at each complaint they receive and try their best to come up with a solution within the perimeters they are allowed. Commissioner Ward noted that with no code enforcement we send letter after letter, and they are just thrown away. She noted that we need a solution the right way as quickly as possible but effective. Attorney Shuler noted the current ordinance does not require a license or permit but does have a time limit of seven days. The proposed draft would require a free permit. The question would be how you keep up with the seven days. The permit would start the clock. Chairman Jones noted that we do not want to take an ‘us and them’ mentality. We could have a hardship permit application which would renew annually. If we take the ‘no RV’ stance it would be detrimental to a lot of people. He noted that we could do a seven-to-fourteen-day permit but absolutely no rental of RVs unless they are on C3 zoned property. Mr. Moron noted that an added provision could be that if you have any illegal activity at your property, you lose the hardship permit. Commissioner Ward noted that she is in support of adding code enforcement into the upcoming budget. Chairman Jones noted that the issue of multiple RVs on one property needed to be addressed and there should be no rental of RVs. Ms. Wanda Rose asked the Board to ban RVs on vacant lots. Commissioner Amison inquired about pole barns on vacant properties. Mr. Patterson noted that there should be no secondary structure constructed on a property without a primary. He said we issue permits for power hook up without building permits. He noted he has been seeing a lot of this on the east end of the county. It seems that people are being able to get power poles without a primary structure or permit. He noted the Duke group from Wakulla normally service that area. Chairman Jones inquired if there was something the county could do to have the power disconnected or prevent it from being connected. Mr. Patterson noted that once Duke turns power on to a property it is almost impossible to get them to shut it off. Commissioner Ward noted that we need a strong, fair, and sympathetic ordinance and she believed it would take a couple more workshops to talk this through. However, she noted that she would like to get this done as soon as possible. Commissioner Amison noted that a former long serving commissioner gave him some advice which was to never make any decision too quick because it is hard to roll back.

Adjournment

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.